

Suffering and Deliverance

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- I. Suffering, affliction, persecution, tribulation, and trouble are part of the Christian life (**Act 14:22**).
 1. Sometimes God delivers His children from these difficulties.
 2. At other times God allows us to experience them for various reasons.
 3. This study will cover the following topics:
 - A. God is our Saviour, not only eternally, but also temporally.
 - B. When and why God allows us to suffer and doesn't deliver us from it.
 - C. Examples of when God doesn't even deliver His children from death.
 - D. Three possibilities of how judgment will be meted out to a nation.
 - E. Biblical examples of God either delivering a people for the righteous among them or delivering the righteous alone.
 - F. Having hope because of past deliverances, both Biblical and personal.

- II. Along with His many other attributes, God is our Saviour (**2Sa 22:3; Psa 106:21; Tit 1:3**).
 1. Saviour *n.* - 1. a. One who delivers or rescues from peril.
 - A. To deliver is to save from something.
 - B. Deliver *v.* - I. 1. *trans.* To set free, liberate, release, rescue, save. Const. *from, out of, of.* a. To release *from* a place. b. Now *esp.* To set free *from* restraint, imminent danger, annoyance, trouble, or evil generally.
 2. First, foremost, and most importantly, God has delivered us from eternal death and punishment in hell and the lake of fire (**1Th 1:10; Rom 5:9-10; Rev 20:15**).
 3. But that's not the only thing God has delivered us from.
 4. There are many different types of deliverances/salvations (**Psa 44:4**).
 5. God delivers us from:
 - A. falling and tears (**Psa 116:8; Jud 1:24; Php 1:6; 2Ti 1:12 c/w Pro 24:16**)
 - B. our enemies (**Psa 44:7; Psa 136:24; Luk 1:71, 74**)
 - C. trouble (**Psa 41:1; Psa 50:15; Psa 91:14-15**)
 - i. Trouble *n.* - 1. a. Disturbance of mind or feelings; worry, vexation; affliction; grief; perplexity; distress.
 - ii. Do you struggle with worry, stress, or depression?
 - iii. Call upon the Lord and He will save you from it (**Psa 116:3-8**).
 - D. violence (**2Sa 22:3**)
 - E. persecution (**Psa 7:1, 13; Psa 31:15; Psa 35:3; 2Ti 3:11**)
 - i. Persecute *v.* - 1. To pursue, chase, hunt, drive (with missiles, or with attempts to catch, kill, or injure). *Obs.* 2. To pursue with malignancy or enmity and injurious action; *esp.* to oppress with pains and penalties for the holding of a belief or opinion held to be injurious or heretical.
 - ii. If you endeavor to live a godly life, you shall suffer persecution (**2Ti 3:12**).
 - iii. But if you trust in God, He will deliver you from it.
 - F. distresses (**Psa 107:13, 23-30**)

- i. Distress *n.* - I. 1. a. The action or fact of straining or pressing tightly, strain, stress, pressure; *fig.* pressure employed to produce action, constraint, compulsion; less usually, pressure applied to prevent action, restraint. 2. a. The sore pressure or strain of adversity, trouble, sickness, pain, or sorrow; anguish or affliction affecting the body, spirit, or community.
- ii. Are you under pressure and stressed?
 - a. First of all search your heart and your life to see if it's not a result of your own foolish decisions (**Psa 107:17-18**).
 - b. Then cry unto the Lord and He will save you out of it (**Psa 107:19**).
- iii. But don't expect this to happen though if you're not willing to change your lifestyle.

G. death (**Psa 55:18; Psa 116:8**)

- 6. Many times in Israel's history God gave them saviours to save them out of the hands of their enemies when they cried unto Him (**Neh 9:27; Isa 19:20**).
- 7. Though the Lord used other men to be saviours of his people in a temporal sense, God is the only true Saviour (**Isa 43:3 c/w Isa 43:11; Hos 13:4**) of His people spiritually and eternally (**Tit 3:4-5 c/w 2Ti 1:9**).
- 8. Jesus Christ, who is God (**Joh 1:1, 14**), is our Saviour (**Php 3:20; Tit 1:4; 2Pe 1:1**).

III. Sometimes God causes or allows us to suffer and does *not* deliver us from it for various reasons.

- 1. Christians are appointed to affliction by God (**1Th 3:3; Act 9:16**).
 - A. Affliction *n.* - 1. The action of inflicting grievous pain or trouble. 2. The state of being afflicted; sore pain of body or trouble of mind; misery, distress.
 - B. Appointed *ppl.* - 1. Fixed by agreement; settled beforehand. 2. Fixed by authority; ordained.
 - C. In the same way that God has given us the gift of faith (**Rom 12:3**), so he has given us the gift of suffering for His sake (**Php 1:29**).
 - D. When God chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles, He also ordained that he would suffer greatly for Him (**Act 9:15-16**).
 - E. The more wisdom, knowledge, and faith that is given to a person, the more grief, sorrow, and chastisement he should expect to receive from God (**Ecc 1:18; Ecc 7:4; Luk 12:47-48**).
 - i. Grief *n.* - 1. Hardship, suffering; a kind, or cause, of hardship or suffering.
 - ii. Sorrow *n.* - 1. a. Distress of mind caused by loss, suffering, disappointment, etc.; grief, deep sadness or regret; also, that which causes grief or melancholy; affliction, trouble.
 - iii. Stripe *n.* - 1. A blow or stroke with a staff, sword, or other weapon, with a missile, with the claws or hoofs of an animal, etc. 2. A stroke or lash with a whip or scourge. Now *arch.*, chiefly in *pl.*
 - F. Jesus Christ, our Lord, Master, and Saviour, was a man of sorrows (**Isa 53:3**).
 - i. As His disciples we should expect to suffer like He did (**Joh 15:20**).
 - ii. The multitude of the elect which no man could number that John saw in heaven had come out of great tribulation (**Rev 7:9, 14**).
 - iii. So if you're a Christian, or desire to be one, don't expect to get through this life without suffering.
- 2. God may permit suffering for the purpose of:

3. punishment

- A. When God's people are living like the heathen, God will punish them with the heathen (**Jer 9:25-26**).
- B. Punish *v.* - 1. a. *trans.* As an act of a superior or of public authority: To cause (an offender) to suffer for an offence; to subject to judicial chastisement as retribution or requital, or as a caution against further transgression; to inflict a penalty on.
- C. If God's church (which Jerusalem was symbolic of) is living in wickedness, it will not be unpunished when God judges the world (**Jer 25:29**).
- D. God will not completely destroy His people when they are judged with the world, but they will not be left unpunished (**Jer 30:11**).
- E. The LORD chastens whom He loves (**Heb 12:5-8**).
 - i. The chastening is grievous (**Heb 12:11**).
 - ii. But its purpose is to bring about the peaceable fruit of righteousness (**Heb 12:11**).
 - iii. Wise people will recognize God's punishment, receive it, and correct their behavior (**Pro 9:9**).
 - iv. But fools will be ground to powder and never change (**Pro 27:22**).

4. growth and improvement through suffering

- A. Sometimes God lets us suffer to humble us and strengthen us as we rely on Him (**2Co 12:7-10**).
 - i. Paul had a thorn in the flesh which buffeted him (v.7).
 - a. Thorn *n.* - 1. A stiff, sharp-pointed, straight or curved woody process on the stem or other part of a plant; a spine, a prickle. 2. *fig.* (or in *fig.* context): Anything that causes pain, grief, or trouble; in various metaphors, similes, and proverbial expressions, as *a thorn in the flesh* or *side*, a constant affliction, a source of continual grief, trouble, or annoyance; (*to be, sit, stand, walk*) *on thorns (a thorn)*, (*to be, etc.*) in a painful state of anxiety or suspense.
 - b. Whatever Paul's thorn in the flesh was, it was a continual source of grief, trouble, and pain for him.
 - c. Buffet *v.* - 1. *trans.* To beat, strike, esp. with the hand; to thump, cuff, knock about.
 - ii. He suffered with infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses (v.10).
 - a. Infirmity *n.* - 1. Weakness or want of strength; lack of power to do something; inability. Also with *pl.* an instance or case of this. 2. Physical weakness, debility, frailty, feebleness of body, resulting from some constitutional defect, disease, or (now mostly) old age.
 - b. Reproach *n.* - 1. A source or cause of disgrace or shame (*to* a person, etc.); a fact, matter, feature or quality bringing disgrace or discredit upon one.
 - c. Necessity *n.* - 1. a. The fact of being inevitably fixed or determined. *Obs.* 10. a. The condition of being in difficulties or straits, esp. through lack of means; want, poverty. 11. A situation of hardship or difficulty; a pressing need or want. (Chiefly in *pl.*)

- d. Persecution *n.* 1. a. The action of persecuting or pursuing with enmity and malignity; esp. the infliction of death, torture, or penalties for adherence to a religious belief or an opinion as such, with a view to the repression or extirpation of it; the fact of being persecuted; an instance of this.
 - e. Distress *n.* - 1. a. The action or fact of straining or pressing tightly, strain, stress, pressure; fig. pressure employed to produce action, constraint, compulsion; less usually, pressure applied to prevent action, restraint. 2. a. The sore pressure or strain of adversity, trouble, sickness, pain, or sorrow; anguish or affliction affecting the body, spirit, or community.
 - iii. Paul took pleasure in these afflictions because God made him strong through his weakness (v.10).
 - iv. Pleasure *n.* - 1. a. The condition of consciousness or sensation induced by the enjoyment or anticipation of what is felt or viewed as good or desirable; enjoyment, delight, gratification. The opposite of *pain*.
- B. Temptations and trials work patience which works in us to bring us to perfection (**Jam 1:2-4; Jam 1:12**).
- i. Patience *n.* - 1. a. The suffering or enduring (of pain, trouble, or evil) with calmness and composure; the quality or capacity of so suffering or enduring.
 - ii. Perfect *adj.* - 1. Thoroughly made, formed, done, performed, carried out, accomplished. *Obs.* 2. a. Fully accomplished; thoroughly versed, trained, skilled, or conversant. 4. a. In the state of complete excellence; free from any flaw or imperfection of quality; faultless. But often used of a near approach to such a state, and hence capable of comparison, *perfecter* (= more nearly perfect), *perfectest* (= nearest to perfection).
 - iii. Without suffering and enduring pain, trouble, and evil we would never learn to do so with calmness and composure and would therefore not grow into mature Christians.
- C. Tribulation works patience which works experience which brings hope (**Rom 5:3-5**).
- i. Tribulation *n.* - 1. A condition of great affliction, oppression, or misery; ‘persecution; distress; vexation; disturbance of life’
 - ii. Experience *n.* - 1. a. The action of putting to the test; trial. *to make experience of:* to make trial of. 2. Proof by actual trial; practical demonstration. *to put in experience:* to fulfil in practice. *Obs.;* passing into 3. 3. The actual observation of facts or events, considered as a source of knowledge.
 - iii. Hope *n.* - 1. a. Expectation of something desired; desire combined with expectation.
 - iv. Hope, along with faith and charity, is one of the three chief Christian virtues (**1Co 13:13**).
 - v. In order to have the lofty virtue of hope we must endure suffering affliction, oppression, and misery.
 - vi. Hope will save us temporally, enabling us to faithfully finish our course in this life (**Rom 8:24-25**).

- D. The Lord lays affliction on us to prove us and try us as silver is tried (**Psa 66:10-11**).
- i. Prove v. - 1. a. *trans.* To make trial of, put to the test; to try the genuineness or qualities of; to try, test.
 - ii. Try v. - 1. a. *trans.* To separate (one thing) from another or others; to set apart; to distinguish. 2. a. To separate the good part of a thing from the rest, esp. by sifting or straining; hence, to sift or strain. 3. *spec.* To separate (metal) from the ore or dross by melting; to refine, purify by fire; also, to remove (the dross or impurity) from metal by fire.
 - iii. When God tries His children He separates the men from the boys.
 - iv. Silver has to be put through the fire to remove impurities from it (**Pro 25:4**).
 - v. Likewise the Lord tries our hearts to remove sin from them (**Pro 17:3; Mal 3:3**).
 - vi. God tries our work and burns off that which is not profitable in our service to Him and leaves what is (**1Co 3:12-15**).
 - vii. If we purge ourselves of our dishonorable qualities we will be prepared for greater service to God (**2Ti 2:20-21**).
- E. Another way God brings suffering into our lives for the purpose of growth and improvement is through marriage.
- i. Marriage is a great blessing, but it is also a source of trouble (**1Co 7:28**).
 - ii. Trouble n. - 1. a. Disturbance of mind or feelings; worry, vexation; affliction; grief; perplexity; distress.
 - iii. Getting married will bring out carnality and character flaws in you that you didn't know about and which would not have been revealed otherwise.
 - a. Marriage will (or should) greatly facilitate growth in the Christian life.
 - b. It is important for husbands and wives to correct sinful and foolish behavior and tendencies in their spouse because nobody else will.
 - c. When your spouse smites you (figuratively, of course) because of your sinful or foolish behavior, realize that God is using him or her to improve your character, and thank him or her for loving you enough to correct you (**Psa 141:5**).
 - iv. Marriage will give you a graduate level course in bearing trouble patiently and learning to both forgive and ask to be forgiven.
5. an example of suffering patiently to others
- A. God allowed the prophets to suffer as an example to us of how to suffer patiently (**Jam 5:10**).
 - i. Example n. 1. A typical instance; a fact, incident, quotation, etc. that illustrates, or forms a particular case of, a general principle, rule, state of things, etc.; a person or thing that may be taken as an illustration of a certain quality. 6. A person's action or conduct regarded as an object of imitation; often qualified by adjs. *good, bad, evil*, etc. Phrases, *to give, leave, set an example*. Also, a person whose conduct ought to be imitated; a 'pattern' of excellence.
 - ii. Consider just a few of the prophets.

- a. Think about how prophets like Jeremiah who was persecuted and was imprisoned in horrible conditions for preaching the truth.
 - b. Consider Elijah who stood alone against hundreds of prophets of Baal and was persecuted by the king and queen of Israel.
 - c. Think about Micaiah who was persecuted by king Ahab for telling him the truth in opposition to the other 400 false prophets.
 - d. (Details will be given on these prophets later in the study.)
 - iii. The examples which the prophets left us of suffering patiently have provided millions of Christians with hope and courage for thousands of years.
 - iv. Their suffering had a purpose that extended beyond their own lives.
 - v. God allows us to suffer for the same purpose.
- B. God allowed Job to suffer unimaginably as an example for us to endure affliction patiently (**Jam 5:11**).
- i. **Endure** *v.* - II. To last; to suffer continuously. 2. *intr.* To last, continue in existence. Also, to persist, 'hold out' in any action, etc. 3. *trans.* To undergo, bear, sustain (continuous pain, opposition, hardship, or annoyance); properly, to undergo without succumbing or giving way.
 - ii. Those who continue in pain, opposition, hardship, or annoyance without giving up are blessed.
 - iii. They are a good example to others.
- C. The Lord allowed Paul, our apostle, to suffer long and endure persecutions and afflictions as an example for us to learn from (**2Ti 3:10-11**).
- i. Paul's suffering was "fully known" (**2Ti 3:10**) to Timothy and others because he as a minister of God was to serve as our pattern and example (**Tit 2:7; 1Ti 4:12; 2Th 3:9**).
 - ii. Paul was longsuffering (**2Ti 3:10**).
 - iii. **Longsuffering** *n.* - Patient endurance of provocation or trial; longanimity.
 - iv. He wrote about his tremendous suffering so that Christians would have an example to follow. Consider the things he suffered (**2Co 11:23-28**):
 - a. Paul received stripes "above measure" (v.23).
 - (i) **Stripe** *n.* - 1. A blow or stroke with a staff, sword, or other weapon, with a missile, with the claws or hoofs of an animal, etc. 2. A stroke or lash with a whip or scourge. Now *arch.*, chiefly in *pl.*
 - 1. **Whip** *n.* - 1. a. An instrument for flogging or beating, consisting either of a rigid rod or stick with a lash of cord, leather, etc. attached, or of a flexible switch with or without a lash, used for driving horses, chastising human beings, and other purposes.
 - 2. **Scourge** *n.* - 1. a. A whip, lash. Now only rhetorical, with reference to the torturing of human beings, or to ascetic discipline.
 - 3. **Lash** *n.* - 1. a. *gen.* A sudden or violent blow; a dashing or sweeping stroke (*obs.*). b. *spec.* A stroke with a thong or whip.

- (ii) Above *adv.* - 7. Higher in degree; surpassing in quality; in excess of, beyond; more than. *above all*: beyond everything; first of all; chiefly. *above measure*: beyond or more than what is meet; in excess of moderation; excessively.
 - (iii) Measure *n.* - II. Prescribed or limited extent or quantity. 10. What is commensurate or adequate; satisfaction (of appetite, desire, need). *Obs.* 12. a. An extent not to be exceeded; a limit. b. In *advb. phr.* *beyond (above, without, over) measure*, also *out of measure, out of all measure* (arch.): beyond all bounds, excessively. Formerly (esp. Sc.) used also predicatively = boundless, unlimited, excessive.
 - (iv) Paul was whipped and scourged excessively far beyond what was called for for his supposed crimes.
- b. Paul was in prison frequently (v.23).
- (i) First century Roman prisons were dreadful places.
 - (ii) They would have been dark, cold or hot, filthy, and very uncomfortable.
 - (iii) Prisoners were often put in chains (**Act 12:6; Act 21:33; Act 28:20; 2Ti 1:16**) or in the stocks (**Act 16:24**).
 - (iv) Stock *n.* - 17. Stocks, plu. A machine consisting of two pieces of timber, in which the legs of criminals are confined by way of punishment. (Webster's 1828)
 - (v) Even when Paul knew that prison time and affliction awaited him, it did not move him because he didn't count his life dear unto himself (**Act 20:23-24**).
 - (vi) Paul was an example to us to not be afraid of imprisonment for practicing our faith.
- c. Paul "oft" faced death (v.23).
- (i) Oft *adv.* - a. = often
 - (ii) Often *adv.* - 1. a. Many times; at many times, on numerous occasions; frequently. Opposed to *seldom*.
 - (iii) He indeed did face death or was nigh unto it often (**2Co 1:9; Act 23:12; Act 27:20; etc.**).
- d. Paul received 39 stripes from the Jews five different times (v.24).
- (i) The Jewish beatings were limited to 40 stripes (**Deut 25:2-3**).
 - (ii) It was tradition for them to never exceed 39 stripes.
 - (iii) Being beat with 39 strikes of a rod or a whip would be excruciatingly painful.
 - (iv) These five beatings were in addition to the "stripes without measure" which he listed earlier (v.23).
- e. Paul was beaten with rods three times (v.25).
- (i) Rod *n.* - I. 1. a. A straight, slender shoot or wand, growing upon or cut from a tree, bush, etc. 2. a. An instrument of punishment, either one straight stick, or a bundle of twigs bound together.

- (ii) These beatings were in addition to the "stripes without measure" (v.23) and the five times he was given 39 stripes by the Jews (v.24).
- f. Paul was stoned once (v.25).
 - (i) Stoned ppl. - 1. Pelted with stones.
 - (ii) Stone v. - 1. a. *trans.* To throw stones at, pelt with stones; esp. to put to death by pelting with stones.
 - (iii) It doesn't take much imagination to know how painful a stoning would be.
 1. Have you ever been hit in the head or the body with a stone or even a baseball?
 2. Imagine that pain, multiplied by 100, simultaneously.
 - (iv) Paul was left for dead after being stoned in Lystra (**Act 14:19**).
 - (v) After being left for dead, Paul rose up and went to Derbe the next day and preached the gospel there (**Act 14:20-21**).
 - (vi) After preaching the gospel in Derbe and teaching many, Paul returned to Lystra where he had been stoned and confirmed the disciples there and exhorted them to continue in the faith and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (**Act 14:21-22**).
 - (vii) Paul suffered tremendously but nevertheless continued in the faith as an excellent example for us to follow.