

SUFFERING AND UNDESERVED SUFFERING OF CHRISTIANS

1. General causes for Suffering:
 - A. Loss of health.
 - B. Function of justice and law enforcement.
 - C. Slander, gossip, maligning by other people.
 - D. Privation, hunger, thirst, or exposure to elements.
 - E. Weather, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, etc.
 - F. Social suffering, loneliness, boredom, etc.
 - G. Mental suffering due to bitterness or negative reaction in the soul due to loss of loved one, divorce, business failure, or any traumatic event.

2. There are two categories of suffering:
 - A. Suffering in time for believers and unbelievers.
 - B. Suffering in eternity for unbelievers only.

3. Premise for suffering:
 - A. All Christian suffering is designed for blessing in time, 1 Peter 1:7-8; 4:14.
 - B. The exception is divine discipline, Hebrews 12:6.
 - C. Divine discipline is removed by confession of sin and change of attitude towards sinful behavior, 1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians 11:31.
 - D. Cursing is turned to blessing thru confession of sin, Romans 8:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

4. Reasons why Christians suffer:
 - A. Trying to be filled with the details of life to the exclusion of doctrine in the life.
 - B. Suffering as discipline occurs in the Christian's life when the priority of learning and applying the Word of God and living for Christ is replaced with;
 - 1) Secular education
 - 2) Creativity in areas of hobbies, building projects, etc.
 - 3) Adhering to human philosophies, humanism, socialism, etc.
 - 4) Using human good to alleviate man's sufferings in programs of feeding, clothing the poor, fighting for the rights of minorities, etc. all to the exclusion of what God thinks about the issues of the day.
 - 5) Working double shifts, triple shifts, and substituting a career for

happiness and fulfillment instead of taking time to learn Bible doctrine.

- 6) Using sex as a source of happiness, skirt-chasing.
- 7) Social life, wine, women and song, etc.
- 8) Health conscious, trying to live longer than God wants you to. You never grow spiritually, you just stay healthy.
- 9) Power and approbation lust to control others.
- 10) Family life and parties substituted for Bible class training.

Principle: These ten areas may or may not be pursued by a believer, but the point is that a believer needs daily spiritual food from the Word of God. The book of Ecclesiastes teaches this.

B. Reasons Christians suffer from the positive standpoint.

- 1) To develop the faith-rest life, Hebrews 3:17-4:3.
- 2) To teach or clarify some point of doctrine, Philippians 1:12-13.
- 3) To witness, 2 Corinthians 3:4; 2 Timothy 2:8-9.
- 4) To remind of God's strength, 2 Corinthians 12:10; 11:24-33.
- 5) To keep pride in check, 2 Corinthians 12:9.
- 6) For growth, 2 Corinthians 4:8-11, Psalm 1:3; James 1:1-6.
- 7) Separation, Galatians. 5:9; 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; Romans 16:7-8.
- 8) Association with one who suffers, 1 Corinthians 12:26; Romans 14:7.
- 9) To maintain grace orientation, Ephesians 4:29.
- 10) To learn to help others in suffering as you go thru it first, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Psalm 119:67-71.
- 11) For blessing, 1 Corinthians 9:27
- 12) For divine discipline, Hebrews 12:6.
- 13) To develop a genuine spirit of hospitality, 1 Peter 4:9.
- 14) Correct use of spiritual gift, 1 Peter 4:10.
- 15) Advancement, Philippians 1:12.
- 16) Great Courage, Philippians 1:14.
- 17) To clarify the authority of God, pastor-teacher, other authorities. Acts 5, Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.
- 18) Undeserved suffering to prove the integrity of God is more powerful in a mature believer than evil in the world, Job 1-42.

5. Suffering can be caused by a guilt reaction to sin and suppression of the sin in self-consciousness, 1 Timothy 1:5-6, 19-20, 3:9; Genesis 29 and 30.
6. Suffering can be caused by failure to isolate sin and to use the "mental death" procedure, Hebrews 12:15; Genesis 29 and 30.

7. Suffering is caused by scar tissue on the soul, called “callous” in the Greek of Ephesians 4:17-19.
8. Suffering is caused by the rejection of authority levels, Judges 19-21; Matthew 7:29-9:13; Jeremiah 7; Proverbs 30; 1 Peter 2:18-20.
9. Suffering from rejection of the institution of marriage, Ezekiel 16, 23, 1 Corinthians 7.
10. Suffering from rejection of Bible doctrine, Jeremiah 13.
11. Suffering from the angelic conflict, 1 Peter 1:12; 3:17; Ephesians 3:9-13.
12. Suffering from national disaster, Isaiah 59:15-21.
13. Suffering from temporary loss of norms and standards, Jeremiah 2:24-25.
14. Suffering from war, Deuteronomy 21, 24, Matthew 24:6-7.
15. Suffering from emotional short-circuit of the soul in time of personal tragedy, John 20:9-18; 11:18ff.
16. Suffering from dying, Job 5:20.
17. Suffering from having a spiritual gift, like apostle, that puts you in the public eye, 1 Corinthians 4.
18. Co-partners in conflict in areas of the believer’s ministry:
 - A. Be objective, 2 Corinthians 1:15-20.
 - B. Aim a person so they can be self-sustaining, 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5.
 - C. Teach them Scripture, Ephesians 4:1-2; 1 Timothy 4:12, Philippians 3:16.
 - D. Relate personal experiences, Ephesians 4:17-19; Philippians 3:4-8.
 - E. Respect their privacy to decide, Romans 14:1, 7-12.
 - F. Be available to others, Philippians 2:25-30, 4:18.
 - G. Do not get involved beyond your capacity, Philippians 2:20, James 5:14.
 - H. Be ready to refer them to someone else if you cannot handle the case, Matthew 8:5-13; 2 Peter 3:15-17.
 - I. Have prayer with them, 1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:16.
 - J. Do this to the glory of God, 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 4:16.
 - K. Do this without regrets, without apathy; do it with a grace attitude, Ephesians 4:29; 1 Tim 2:1.

19. Other doctrines to help the believer orient when in suffering are:

- A. Grace optimism, Matthew 10:32-38.
Study the Psalms and note David's optimism, Psalm 4:5, 25:2, 26:1, 33:21, 37:3-5, 40:3, 52:8, 55:23, 56:3-4, 62:8-10, 141:8, 144:2.
 - 1) Optimism is based on knowing that God has all things under His control.
 - 2) Psalm 30:5, weeping is temporary, optimism comes in the morning.
- B. Doctrine of Days, Romans 14:5-6, Ephesians 5:16-18; Proverbs 27:1, Psalm 103:1-3.
- C. Doctrine of Divine Good, Romans 12:21, Colossians 1:10, 2 Tim 2:21, 2 Thessalonians 2:17, 2 Corinthians 5:10.
- D. Doctrine of standing believer, (see category)
- E. Doctrine of the Strategy of Satan in Time, 2 Corinthians 2:11.
 - 1) To accuse believers of sin, Job 1:6-11; Revelation 12:9-10.
 - 2) To turn believers negative to doctrine, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Corinthians 10:19-21; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 13-15; 1 Peter 5:7-9.
 - 3) See category
- F. Doctrine of Divine Guidance (see category)
- G. Doctrine of Jesus Christ Controlling History (see category)