

The Value of Suffering and Testing

Phil 1:29 *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

Many of us want to be healed of our sufferings.

Many of us pray for a quick solution to our suffering, and we ask our pastor to pray for us.

But should we do that over and over? Or should we accept what God has entrusted to us???

Suffering can be a blessing in disguise from God, IF it is accepted with the right attitude. It is a means of growing into a mature and strong man/woman of God. So says the Word of God.

Rom 5:1-5 *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that **suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.***

First of all, consider that **God is proud of us when we bear our burdens for Him! Rom 8:17-18, 1Pe 4:13**

Rom 8:16-18 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

1 Peter 4:12-13 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

In the first coming of Jesus Christ, our Lord used miracles to prove he was the Messiah, God in the flesh. But he didn't heal people only to remove their suffering. Otherwise, He would have healed everyone.

God also gave the gift of healing to men like Peter and Paul, to prove they were from the Lord, so their New Testament writings would be accepted.

But God never intended the gift of healing to heal everyone, all the time. **Phil 2:27, 2 Tim 4:20**

Some Christians think the gift of healing is still around today. If that is so, why did Paul's gift of healing stop?

In the following verse, he couldn't heal his dear friend Epaphroditus:

Phil 2:25-27 *But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.*

Paul could not heal his friend Trophemis either, but he had to leave him behind, even though he needed him for the work of the Lord.

2 Tim 4:20 *Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.*

Apparently, healing is not always part of the divine plan.

And we also must conclude that good health is not a sign of spirituality or salvation.

Beware of judging those who have lost their health. Don't assume it is God punishing them for their sins!

Job is the perfect example of a believer who lost his health, but it wasn't for discipline, but "suffering for Jesus", to give glory to God in the invisible spiritual war going on around us.

In fact, the Lord offered up Job to prove a point to Satan!

Job 2:1-10 *Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. 2 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." 3 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."*

4 Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5 " However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." 6 So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."

Job was "blameless and upright" in chapter 1.

But God allowed him to be tested, to show Satan how a member of the human race could be faithful to God by the power of the Holy Spirit, even under the most severe testing.

And Job will be rewarded beyond imagination in heaven.

God can always heal if He wants to, if it is in His plan, or His will, at that time.

But testing is necessary in the invisible spiritual war called the Angelic Conflict. The greatest way we can glorify the Lord today is by staying faithful to Him **while in the suffering**.

Do not go to your pastor for every problem. You may be praying for healing when it is against the Father's will!

I say this out of love, so we can glorify God in our lives, trusting God even when we cannot see the reason for the suffering.

And God's calling at times includes suffering.

There are several possible reasons for suffering and testing...

1. Sometimes we simply **reap what we sow**, because of our own bad decisions. **Gal 6:7-9**

Gal 6:7-9 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.*

This thankfully includes reaping what we sow for our GOOD decisions, as well, as in vs. 9.

So, there is a cause and effect built into life by God Himself. We can count on His faithfulness in this matter, as well.

2. Sometimes we are under **divine discipline**, for the Bible promises God will discipline every son at times, because He loves him.

Heb 12:4-11 *You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,*

***"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;
6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."***

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

God sometimes **provides** illness as means of divine discipline, **1Co 11:30**, as a loving father disciplines his children.

And if we're wise, we'll THANK GOD when we're disciplined.

Very simply, Father knows best. He knows the right manner and the right timing for discipline.

And He will use it to help us grow up into being more like His precious Son, Jesus Christ.

3. Sometimes we go through Suffering for Jesus! What a privilege!! Job 1,2, 42:10-17, James 1:12, Rev 2:10

This is when we suffer something due to no fault of our own. Often this comes in the form of mistreatment from

others, particularly because we stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

Rev 2:10 *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

In short, God doesn't want us to run away from suffering. He would rather we prayerfully seek the divine reason for it, and accept His answer by faith.

And when He doesn't answer our prayer, we must have faith, KNOWING OUR DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER has a reason that's beyond us; that He can't reveal to us yet.

Don't just pray for healing, pray for God's will in your life.

There are several things to realize about praying for healing and the truth about suffering.

- **Your prayer is just as powerful as your pastor's.**
1Pe 2:9, Rev 1:6

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are all priests and can go directly to God in prayer.

In fact, we are commanded to go boldly to the throne of grace in prayer, because of our union with Christ. **Heb 4:16**

- **God will never give you more than you can bear.**
1Cor 10:13

Along with the testing, God promises a way of escape, so that you will be able to stay in the suffering and endure it to the glory of God (remember Job)!

And then you will be content in your heart, accepting it in peace.

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

He will give us the power to handle it.

He is teaching us about His power when we're suffering.

Suffering is only unbearable when we're reaping what we've sown. This natural law of reaping and sowing wakes us up and gets us back on the right track with God.

If we're stubborn and arrogant, and we refuse to get back into the plan of God, then the suffering could be agonizing.

But if we turn back to God in humility, confessing our sins, then God is faithful to provide us the strength needed to endure the suffering.

- **God is asking you to suffer for His Name's sake!
Be a witness in the courtroom in heaven!**

If you stay faithful to the Lord and His plan in your suffering, you can be a witness for God, against Satan.

You prove that God is fair and just, no matter what you go through. **Job 1&2, 2Cor 12:7-10**

This is why God wouldn't answer Paul's prayer in 2Cor 12.

Paul realized God needed him to suffer, both to keep him humble, and to realize that God's grace was enough to get him through the suffering.

Paul never would have learned this if God removed the suffering!

2 Cor 12:7-10 *Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me — to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And*

He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

- **God wants us to be a good soldier of Christ and bear our own cross, by faith.**

He calls us to remember the big picture. The true meaning of life is to glorify Him, even in our suffering. **2Tim 2:3-4, Joh 19:17, Gal 6:5, Heb 12:2-3, Mat 10:38, Luke 9:23**

2 Tim 2:3-4 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

All true believers in the Lord, Jesus Christ, are saved. That is a promise guaranteed to us by the grace of God throughout Holy Scripture (i.e. **Joh 10:27-30**)

So what can we do for Him, out of gratitude?

He has already done everything for us, paying the entire price for our sins on the cross.

But we have the chance in this life to suffer for His Name. We will never have that chance once we get to heaven.

And if we prove faithful to the Lord, no matter the suffering, we will be rewarded for our faithfulness to Him.

Many crowns await believers who live in God's Plan and endure suffering without complaining, **Rev 2:8-10**.

And they actually THANK GOD for the suffering, because they realize this life is the only time we will be able to suffer for His Name sake.

We believers have been given the power to rejoice in our suffering, to have joy in the midst of testing.

Acts 5:40-42 *They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*

Heb 12:1-3 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at*

the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Pressure is a privilege to the believer in Christ, not a problem. We need to choose the right perspective!

We can flick the switch in our souls at any time, and agree with the Holy Spirit, that suffering and pressure is actually a privilege given to you, to bring the Lord Jesus Christ glory with our lives.

We must remember our calling! Remember our election!

2 Tim 4:16-18 *At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Jude 24-25 *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

Suffering has eternal value in God's eyes. You have a purpose in your suffering or testing.

Men and angels are watching you. And so is the Lord who has trusted you to handle the test.

If you are not a believer, then you are not saved. You must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for your sins:

Acts 16:30-31 ..and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Jesus willingly suffered for us on the Cross, so we would not have to be judged for our sins:

Heb 10:17 "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS, I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."

And one day there will be no more suffering for those who have repented and placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Rev 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

But for the one who does not believe in Him, there will be eternal condemnation:

John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."*

If you have never believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, we beg you to be reconciled to God:

2 Cor 5:20 *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

It's between you and the Lord. We hope He grants you repentance and faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ.