

POWER OF SUFFERING

- ❖ If there is a God then why do we suffer?
- ❖ Why Bad things happen to Good People?
- ❖ Where was God when I lost my Job?
- ❖ Is God interested in me?
- ❖ Where was God when tragedy struck me?
- ❖ Why is God not doing anything about my family?



POWER OF SUFFERING

-BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Source of Suffering

Reasons for Suffering

Your attitude towards Suffering

Purpose of Suffering

When we suffer-Question & Response



OVERVIEW

- ✘ For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you. (2 Cor. 13:4)
- ✘ **That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death. (Philippians 3:10)**
- ✘ . . . Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (II Corinthians 12:9-10)

JESUS SUFFERING ON THE CROSS

- ✘ We view suffering through human reasoning. By every standard of human reasoning the cross of Jesus was a waste of a great and noble life. But in the reasoning of God it was the greatest demonstration of His power. It resulted in the salvation of man.
- ✘ We never see power in weakness or failure. This is a strange attitude for people whose center of faith is the cross. Jesus experienced the resurrection after He had suffered. Resurrection power comes through the fellowship of His suffering.
- ✘ True spiritual power is demonstrated not in the absence of suffering, problems, and crises, but in the midst of them. Power turns what the world calls an ordeal into an opportunity for the demonstration of the power of God.

THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING

- ✘ God did not create suffering. Came through Man's Sin. Originated from Satan
- ✘ Happily, in the life of a believer, God can take suffering, which Satan intends for evil, and turn it for good to accomplish His purposes. It can actually become an opportunity for the power of God to be demonstrated in your life.

THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING 1

✘ OTHERS AROUND YOU:

ex. Joseph. He said: Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . so now it was not you that sent me hither but God. (Genesis 45:5,7)

THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING 2

✘ CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE:

ex. Naomi- Death of husband & Sons

When Naomi experienced these difficult circumstances of life, she said, "No longer call me Naomi (which means blessed), but call me Mara." The name Mara means "bitter."

THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING 3

✘ YOUR MINISTRY:

The New Testament speaks of suffering for His name's sake (Acts 9:16), in behalf of Christ, (Philippians 1:29) for the Kingdom of God (II Thessalonians 1:5), for the Gospel (II Timothy 1:11-12), for well doing (I Peter 2:19-20; 3:17), for righteousness sake (I Peter 3:14), as a Christian (I Peter 4:15-16), and according to the will of God (I Peter 4:19).

ex. Paul & Others

THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING 4

✘ DIRECT SATANIC ACTIVITY:

ex. Job - "Why do the righteous suffer?" God's testimony of Job was that he was a righteous man (Job 1-2). Job did not suffer because he had sinned, as his friends claimed. They believed if Job repented, his circumstances would change.

His friends tried to make a universal application based on individual experience. There is a warfare going on in the spiritual world over you. That warfare is manifested in the difficult circumstances you experience in the natural world. An important truth evident in Job's suffering is that nothing can enter the life of a believer without the knowledge of God. God does not cause your suffering. Satan inflicts it, but God sets its limits. God's power is greater than that of Satan, and you will experience victory if you continue to trust Him.

THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING 5

✘ YOUR OWN SIN:

Ex. Jonah In disobedience to God, Jonah headed the opposite direction from Ninevah where he had been commanded to go and preach repentance. He experienced a terrible storm at sea and ended up in the belly of a great fish because of his own sin (Jonah 1-2).

God uses suffering to correct you and bring you back to His will for your life: Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy Word. . . It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. . . I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that THOU in faithfulness hast afflicted me. (Psalms 119:67,71,75)

THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS SUFFERING

Trouble is not necessarily a sign of being sinful.

The Bible declares, "many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalms 34:19).

When you suffer innocently and not because of your own sin, you should maintain a proper attitude towards suffering. The real test of your spirituality is how you respond in the day of distress:

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. (Proverbs 24:10)

THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS SUFFERING

- ✘ **You should not be ashamed:**

If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. . . (I Peter 4:16)

- ✘ **You should commit your soul (your suffering) to God, knowing He works all things for your good:**

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator. (I Peter 4:19)

- ✘ **You should be happy when you suffer according to the will of God:**

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)

Paul says you should be: Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

. . . being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it. .(I Corinthians 4:1)

. . . in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses. . . (II Corinthians 6:4)

PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

✘ TO TURN BAD TO GOOD:

. . . worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. (Ephesians 1:11)

✘ TO TURN LOSSES TO WINS:

God turns natural losses to spiritual gains. Paul wrote of his losses in the natural world: But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. (Philippians 3:7-8)

✘ TO TURN WEAKNESS TO STRENGTH:

Paul knew that. . . . the weakness of God is stronger than men. (I Corinthians 1:25)
God told Paul. . . . My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. (II Corinthians 12:9)

PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

✘ TO TEST YOUR FAITH:

Everything in the spiritual world is based on faith. This is why the strength of your faith must be tested: That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:7)

✘ TO EQUIP YOU TO COMFORT OTHERS:

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (II Corinthians 1:3-4)

✘ TO TEACH YOU NOT TO TRUST IN YOURSELF:

Paul spoke of the purpose of his sufferings in Asia:

. . . In Asia we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead. (II Corinthians 1:8-9)

You will come to recognize that. . .

. . . we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Corinthians 4:7)

PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

✘ TO DEVELOP POSITIVE SPIRITUAL QUALITIES:

We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, (resulting in the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts). (Romans 5:3-4)

. . . after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you. (I Peter 5:10)

These qualities conform you to the image of Jesus, which is God's plan for you (Romans 8:28-29; Hebrews 2:10,1).

✘ TO MANIFEST THE WORKS OF GOD:

When the disciples saw a man who had been blind from birth, they asked who was responsible for his condition. Was it the sin of his parents or of the man himself? Jesus answered:

Neither this man sinned nor His parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in Him. (John 9:3)

✘ TO PERFECT THE POWER OF GOD:

And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (II Corinthians 12:9)

PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

- ✘ **TO REMOVE THAT WHICH IS UNSTABLE:**
- ✘ **TO CHANGE YOUR FOCUS:**
- ✘ **TO CHANGE THE OLD SELF-NATURE:**

God said of the nation of Moab:

Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. (Jeremiah 48:11)

Because Moab had not experienced the troublesome pouring out and stirring similar to that necessary to develop good wine, the nation did not change. Moab was at ease and settled in prosperity and because of this did not develop and mature properly spiritually. Therefore there was no change. His "own scent" remained in him.

Suffering rids you of the old self-nature. As you are stirred, troubled, and poured out, your spiritual scent changes from carnal to spiritual.

PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

- ✘ **TO PREPARE YOU FOR MINISTRY:**

- ✘ **TO PREPARE YOU TO REIGN WITH CHRIST:**

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. . . (II Timothy 2:12)

- ✘ **TO GIVE YOU SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS:**

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)

- ✘ **TO TEACH YOU OBEDIENCE:**

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. . . (Hebrews 5:8)

- ✘ **TO TEST THE WORD OF GOD WITHIN YOU:**

The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. (Psalms 12:6)

PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

✘ TO HUMBLE YOU:

Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end. . . (Deuteronomy 8:15-16)

✘ TO ENLARGE YOU SPIRITUALLY:

This means you grow spiritually: Thou has enlarged me when I was under pressure.
(Psalms 4:1 Revised Standard Version)

✘ TO HELP YOU COME TO KNOW GOD INTIMATELY:

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

When you suffer according to the will of God, you should realize you are not alone. Many other believers are experiencing similar battles:

. . . knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (1 Peter 5:9)

WHEN WE SUFFER

Question	Response
Am I being punished by God for Sin?	Confess known sin
Is Satan attacking me as I try to survive as a Christian?	Call on God for Strength
Am I being prepared for a special service, learning to be compassionate to those who suffer?	Resist self-pity. Ask God to open up doors of opportunity and help you discover others who suffer as you do.
Am I specially selected for testing like Job?	Accept help from the body of believers. Trust God work his purpose through you.
Is my suffering a result of natural consequences for which I am not directly responsible?	Recognize that in a sinful world, both good and evil people will suffer. But good people have a promise from God that his/her suffering will one day come to an end.
Is my suffering due to some unknown reason?	Don't draw inward from the pain. Proclaim your faith in God, know that he cares and wait patiently for his aid

FINAL REMARK

- In order for God to demonstrate His power through suffering, you must respond correctly while experiencing it. You should not murmur and complain. This was the response of Israel to suffering. They murmured against Moses (Exodus 15:24). But all murmuring is actually against God and His plan to conform you to the image of Christ. All things work together to conform you to His image. When you complain about suffering, you are complaining against this process. Romans 8:28-29.
- When experiencing suffering, do not allow a bitter attitude to develop. Bitterness is a wrong response to suffering. It is a hateful, blaming, complaining, vengeful attitude. If you allow bitterness it troubles and defiles you (Hebrews 12:16), prevents you from hearing from God (Exodus 6:9), creates a vengeful spirit (I Samuel 30:6), causes depression and discouragement (Lamentations 3:18- 20), and poisons you spiritually (Acts 8:23).