

## Biblical Answers to Difficult Questions: What is the Purpose for My Suffering

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Various

**Four Theological Foundations Stones of Suffering:** 1) **God's Ownership:** Ex. 19:5; Job 41:11; Ps. 50:12: God owns everything, submit willingly to Him. 2) **God's Control:** Job 2:10, everything comes from God. God uses evil and Satan to bring about His purposes, Is. 46:8-10. 3) **God's Integrity:** Rom. 8:28, "all things work together for good." 4) **God's Glory:** Rom. 11:36, the ultimate purpose of all that is done. Ps.88 doesn't negate the pain and agony of suffering.

### **Eight Purposes for Suffering:**

- 1) **Suffering draws me to the Bible:** Ps.119:71, we learn obedience. The psalmist learned: a) Obedience, V67 & b) God's faithfulness, V75.
- 2) **Suffering produces endurance:** James 1:2-4, the journey of trials. Starting at V4, maturity, and completeness, lacking nothing created by endurance and steadfastness, coming from suffering in trials, with the hope that joy is experienced by the believer knowing the God is faithful and is growing you in the process.
- 3) **Suffering increases holiness:** Heb. 12:5-6, don't regard suffering lightly, God shows love by disciplining His children. Discipline increases holiness, V10. Brings fruit of righteousness, V11. Helps others during this race, V1 & 12-13, as an example to unbelievers.
- 4) **Suffering inspires fellow believers:** Phil. 1:14, "are much more bold to speak the word without fear" as a result of Paul's sufferings. Suffering brings glory to God.
- 5) **Suffering completes Christ's afflictions:** Col. 1:24, not works to add to the atonement by Jesus, but our identification with Christ through suffering, Rom. 8:17, and His glory.
  - a. **Paul's suffering: Blessed the church:** Phil. 1:12. In addition, Epaphras and Philemon took Paul's letter to Colossae. It gave Paul personal benefit: Phil.3:10, 2 Cor. 1:5.
- 6) **Suffering drives you to prayer:** Heb. 5:7, Matt. 26:38-39, Luke 22:44, Jesus prayed for Himself, Jn. 18:3-11, in V11, Jesus was strengthened to finish the will of the Father.
- 7) **Suffering exalts God:** 2 Cor. 12:8-10, take pleasure in accomplishing in God's strength what you could never do in your own. V10, Christ is strong, not us.
- 8) **Suffering increases heavenly rewards:** 2 Cor. 4:16-18, the light affliction is working, on my behalf, a greater reward. Rom. 12:4-5, 1Cor. 12:26, all believers rejoice for each other members' rewards in heaven.

### **Practical Spiritual Preparations for Suffering**

**DON'T:** 1) **Underestimate the sovereignty of God:** Gen 50:20, God means to bring about something better.

2) **Squander the opportunity:** grow, it gives joy, worship, plead to suffer well.

3) **Compare yourself to anyone else:** run your race.

**DO:** 1) **Cultivate a right perspective of suffering:** 2 Cor. 4:17, Paul's "light affliction," defined in 2 Cor. 11:22-30. Jesus is our best example, Heb. 12:2, He despised the shame accepting it and enduring it, He took it on Himself.

2) **Expand view of time:** God is not obligated to solve my problems in this lifetime. Heb. 11:30-40, esp. 39-40, if the kingdom would have come centuries ago, we would never have received salvation or known the Father. Be thankful for the delay.

3) **Set your mind on things to come:** 1 Thess. 4:13-18, "comfort one another." Rev. 1:3, 22:12-14, "blessed" are those who read and do the Lord's commandments. Jn. 14: 2, Jesus is preparing a place for you. Ps. 30:5, "joy comes in the morning."

## Further Discussion and Application

Make a list of the sufferings and trials in your life that you went through. Identify what you learned from each of the trials. Look at your present and see which ones preserved you or prepared you for obedience to the Lord. Which ones created in endurance? Which trials came to your life and helped you avoid sin and temptation? What is the goal of trials according to James 1:1-8 & 2 Cor. 4:16-17?

How does the hope of eternal life and our eternal home in heaven help us to endure suffering while here on earth?

What are the promises of Rev. 21:1-8? How do we know that we will endure to the end? See Rom. 8:18-39, what are the promises given to us by Paul that will keep us and encourage us to keep going?

Look at Rom. 8:18 again. Define and apply this verse based upon first make a list of the things in life that you hold dear and put value in? Then make a list of the sufferings you have endured in life and then, finally, write a promise from God's Word about what happens to that suffering when you are reunited with the Lord on THAT DAY?

What perspective and view of life do you have now that could be better prepared for heaven? What would you need to do to better prepare? How might you better prepare for your next trial and suffering? What practices started today will ensure you patiently endure your next trial?

How can you help those who are suffering in the body of Christ? How can you strengthen and encourage others in times when you are suffering? What promises of God can you say or give to others while you are suffering to be an encouragement to them?