

How Suffering Helps Us

How many of us really enjoy suffering? I'm willing to bet none of us do, but today I want to talk about how suffering can really help us. We see in Ecclesiastes 7:2-3 that it is better to mourn than to feast and in Matthew 5:4, Christ says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." How are some ways that suffering helps us?

First of all and most important, Christ suffered. Think about everything that He went through for us, that He was willing to suffer for our salvation. The garden and the cross were steps that He had to take to the right hand of God. In Hebrews 5:8, the Hebrew writer says, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which he suffered." And if we partake of Christ's sufferings, we will partake of His glory. In 1 Peter 4:12-13, Peter encourages us by saying, "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." We should be not only willing to suffer, but rejoice that we suffered for the name of Christ as the apostles did in Acts 5:41.

Second, Paul suffered. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul recounts everything that he had gone through for the cause of Christ. He said, "Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches." Even with Paul having to endure all of this, he was given a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7). In seeing everything that Paul was willing to endure for the cause of Christ, it should make us stronger and bolder to go out to preach the gospel.

Third, Job suffered. For those who do not know the story of Job, he was very blessed in everything he had. If anyone had it all, it was Job until the Devil spoke to God and tested Job to see if his faith would stand even if he lost everything. Not only did he lose everything, but his friends turned against him and even his wife told him to curse God and die, but through all of that, Job never wavered and he was patient through it all. In James 5:11, it reads, "Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful." We need to have the patience and endurance of Job.

Fourth, troubles teach us to depend on God. It's easy to rely on God when times are easy, but it's when things get tough is when your true faith will show. Romans 8:28 tells

us, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." We have to believe that even if we suffer much, God will work all things together for our good. Riches are also uncertain, and their loss has caused people to turn to God (1 Timothy 6:17).

Finally, troubles make us better. We cannot see courage and wisdom in the face of a tiny baby. We see these qualities in the face of a wrinkled graying old man who has experienced many hardships in life. We see in Hebrews 12:6 that the Lord will chasten those whom he loves and in James 1:2-4 that troubles make us patient. To those who are patient and long suffering, we will receive an amazing gift. In Revelation 7:13-14, John tells us, "And one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Those who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?' And I said to him, 'My lord, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" How is your faith? How is your race in this life going? God never said it would be easy, but He did promise that it will be worth it in the end. Keep up your endurance and one day you will receive that crown of righteousness.

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