

WHY SUFFERING

By Dr. Hal Webb, Evangelist

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy". I Peter 4:12 &13.

Suffering is something that at first thought no one desires, few look forward to, and most hope to avoid. Struggling with it is never easy, and accepting it as God wills and desires, demands great surrender, and true dependence upon God. To be honest, I think most believers hope to avoid suffering, concentrate on health slogans trying to avoid the "ouch" of human problems we all face. There are far more things to consider than I can compress into this little sermon. Suffering is one of the results of our sinful nature that God can reshape, and use for His glory. It can help us take our place with Jesus, who endured great suffering for us when He went to the cross. Our sufferings unite us with Him if we have trusted Him as our Saviour. He conquered and rose above them as we shall do in eternity. "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus." **(1). Suffering Humbles:** *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:2-4. We go through different stages of resistance, and rebellion, in our attempts to avoid it. No one thinks at first that hurting is something to anticipate with the joy of expectation. It is part of life, and because of our sinful birth it will catch up with us all sooner or later. Humbly accept the fact that the day will come, and God will use that suffering to accomplish great things. Has He not said,"*

Lo I am with you always"? No one is exempt from times of suffering, as it is a part of making us like Christ, a great opportunity for sincere prayer, and a time of true trusting in His grace and mercy. **(2). Suffering Teaches:** Chapter one in James teaches some great lessons about the value of our sufferings. (Verse 2) shows us our attitude usually needs adjustment to joy. We can rest at Jesus feet in the midst of trial, and be like Him. (Verse 3) speaks of learning patience from our trials. (Verse 4) This patience well learned will get us through hours of suffering, and draw us to Him for help. It will also help us to grow in our maturing life, living for the things of eternity. It will bring about growing and contentment. (Verse 5) It brings us wisdom. and the answer to "why" becomes clearer. (Verse 6) We are challenged not to waver, but to increase our faith in the one who walks with us in this testing time. In my lifetime of service I have heard so many say that when they were down, it brought them closer to Christ. Together they faced the problem, and with Christ they rose above it. Avoiding all suffering and pain would keep us from learning many deeper truths God has for us as James 1:2&3 teaches. **(3). Suffering Reactions:** Facing suffering can be a huge challenge. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* I Cor. 10:13. Do not compare and weigh your problems against others, feeling we are better than them and why should we suffer. Don't compare yourself with others, and wish you had their way of life. Don't consider your pain to be unfair. Don't call for a pity party and feel sorry for yourself, and the experience you are going through. Try not to drag others to join your self-pity, lamenting how tragic it is for all of us. Don't Get Angry With God: shaking your fist, and biting your lip considering it unfairness after

all you have done. Sinners often feel God is to blame for their suffering, and often believers as well feel wronged. Don't be angry! *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."* James 1:19 & 20. In the midst of your suffering, anger with God will not help. He very much cares, and when He wills, the whole thing will bring glory to His name. He knows your hurt, works to teach whatever lesson is needed, and will give you strength to endure. After all, He is God and wants the best for us, even when sometimes we don't see it. Don't cry to be set free from it all. Leave the problem and its consequences with God. Rest in the Lord ready to see and accept the reason of the test. Question quietly and calmly, to see if God is using this to teach you a needed lesson. Don't fail to keep praying in the midst of your testings and trials. **Never doubt God in the midst of your suffering.** He is trying to get you to see His mercy, care, and sovereign love. He knows what He is doing, and the very inner needs of your hurting life. If you are a believer and have deliberately disobeyed Him, He may take you to the woodshed for correction. Dear sinner your actions and sins can bring great grief upon yourself. Like smoking for instance leads to much suffering and life ending cancer. Many sins result in great lifetime trouble and the Bible warns *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* Numbers 32:23b Humans bring a lot of suffering upon themselves because of foolish decisions and habits, and the rejection of Christ. Lean upon the great promises of God. *"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."* Isa. 41:10. It is human to experience many negative thoughts and emotions when you suffer. Concentrate not on how to get your suffering over with, but in learning how to enjoy the fellowship of sharing in Christ's

sufferings. *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Phil. 3:10 & 13,14.

Why Suffering is a Privilege:

- (1). So we can know His presence:
(Heb. 4:15-16 13:5-6).
- (2). So we can experience His sufficient grace:
(II Cor.12:1-9).
- (3).To exchange our weakness for His strength:
(II Cor 12:9-10.)
- (4). To know the Comforter the Holy Spirit:
(John 14:16-17, 26).
- (5). To know how to comfort others:
(II Cor. 1: 3-6).
- (6). To develop maturity and perseverance:
(James 1:2-4).

In Conclusion: No matter how rough things get never forget you are on the winning side. God will not abandon you, but always restores His people. He has a purpose and plan for all suffering. After suffering He will call us into His everlasting glory. There is no suffering in Glory. If you suffer a little while, He will make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. Keep on keeping on and don't give up. Be encouraged, be sympathetic, be willing, be obedient, be understanding, be helpful, and share others struggles in your prayer taking time to encourage them, and help them in their need. Remember: **Testings don't come to stay, they come to pass.**