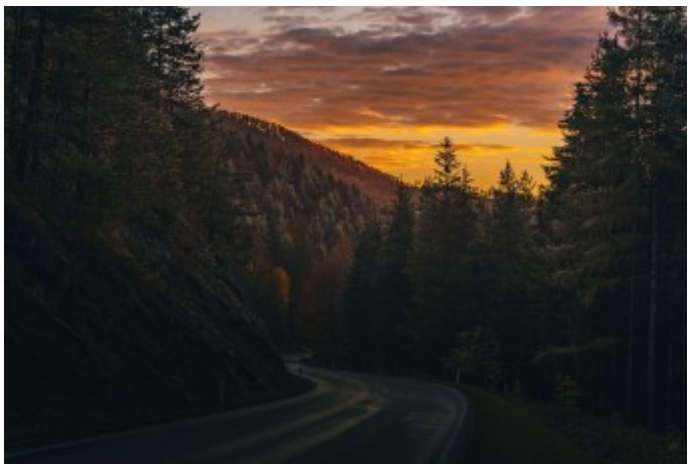
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What GOD Wants You to Know About Suffering



By Steven J. Hogan

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A key part of God's plan for a Christian is suffering, and it relates to God's purposes and glory, and results in his spiritual growth and receiving God's blessings. Suffering, that is, trials, difficulties, hardships, and persecution, is a major subject in God's word. In this post, you will learn many things about suffering, and how it's vital for your life.

*** Psalm 23:4** – *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."* In this favorite Psalm, we read about trials – and what do we learn? 1) The *"valley"* means you are experiencing a dark and difficult time in your life. 2) You are not stuck in this trial, you are going *"through the valley",* you are making progress, and soon enough, whether it's a day or a year or ten years, this trial will end. 3) You need *"fear no evil"*, for God is with you, His Spirit is in you, and He will never leave you. 4) God's *"rod"* and *"staff"* is to comfort you. His rod, His

hand of discipline, is to teach and train you. And His staff is referring to the mercy, kindness, and consolation of God. 5) The rest of the Psalm is relevant in your trial. Vs. 6 says God loves you every day of your life, and then you will live forever in *"the house of the Lord".*

*** Psalm 119:50** – *"My comfort in my suffering is this – Your word revives my life."* God's word is to comfort you when you suffer. God has given you many truths and promises that, when believed and held in your heart, will encourage you, strengthen you, and help you to keep living for Him, to persevere until Christ takes you home.

*** Psalm 119:67** – *"Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep Your word."* A Christian going "*astray"* is "*afflicted"*, which should to motivate him to "*keep"* God's word. A purpose of suffering, of trials, is to get you back on track, back on the road to obedience. If you are in sin, God will often afflict you so that you turn to Him and do what He wants you to do.

*** John 15:18, 20** – *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it has hated you… If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."* Always remember that Christ was hated and persecuted, and greatly so. And if you are to be like Christ, then you too will be persecuted. So don't be surprised when you suffer, and greatly so.

* **Acts 14:22** – *"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."* The life of a godly Christian is often filled with trials and tribulations. That's the way it was for Paul and to some degree, by God's sovereign decree, will be the way it is for you.

*** Romans 8:28-37 –** *"God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become*

conformed to the image of His Son… tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword… in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Christians suffer in all kinds of ways, and some are greatly persecuted, especially when the Antichrist is ruling the world. But your wise, powerful, and loving Father is sovereign, is causing all things to work together for His purposes and glory, and for your present and eternal good.

* **Philippians 1:12-14** – "*My circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known…"* Paul suffered in prison and it resulted in people hearing the gospel and getting saved. It is usually true that the darker the night, the greater the light, the harder the trial, the more Christ's life will be seen in you and His word spoken through you.

* **Philippians 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."* Consider it an honor to live and suffer for Christ. It is for His sake, for His purposes on earth and for His eternal glory that you suffer.

* **2 Corinthians 4:8-11** – *"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we who are alive are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake."* When you suffer, you share in Christ's death, not that you are dying to pay for your sins, but you are identifying with Christ. You are sacrificing and suffering for Christ and His work in the church. Suffering also results in sharing in Christ's life, in His life being revealed in and through your life. Gal. 2:20 says the same thing – *"I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."*

***2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 6** – *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions so that we will be able to comfort those in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."* Suffering results in experiencing God's comfort. It also results in being able to share with others who are suffering the comfort you received from God. *"If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort."*

* **2 Corinthians 4:17** – *"Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison."* Your suffering, your trials, is momentary – it does not last long compared to the eternal glory you will receive. And your suffering is not severe, not that difficult, compared to the incredible amount of glory you will receive.

* **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** – "*'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will boast about my weakness, so that Christ's power may dwell in me. 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."* Trials and suffering reveal your weakness so that you look to Christ and experience His grace, His power. Only as you learn this principle of being weak in yourself and strong in Christ can you truly live for Him. So boast about and be content with your weakness, for then you are living for God and giving glory to Him.

* **Hebrews 12:3** – *"Consider Him who has endured such suffering by Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* You are in a spiritual war, and the battles you face are fierce and can make you weary. Think about Christ and all that He did for you, for this will help you have the spiritual strength and stamina to keep going for Him.

* **1 Peter 1:6-7** – *"You greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so the proof of*

your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." From this, we learn many things about trials and suffering. 1. There are *"various"* trials, all kinds of ways a believer suffers. 2. Trials are *"distressing"*, are hard, and sometimes extremely difficult. 3. Trials are *"necessary"* for your life and God's purposes. 4. Going through trials builds your faith, which is most important, more *"precious than gold"*. 5. Trials only last a *"little while"* – they don't last long compared to eternity. 6. A believer can *"greatly rejoice"* because he has hope, he knows he will be glorified in *"the last time",* at the *"revelation of Christ."*

*** 1 Peter 2:19** – *"This finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly."* As a Christian you will suffer *"unjustly",* but God sees you when you suffer – He knows what is going on. And He is pleased when you trust Him and are strengthened by Him, and continue on for Him.

*** 1 Peter 2:21** – *"You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."* Christ suffered for you, and this should motivate you to be willing and glad to suffer for Him. When it comes to suffering, Christ is your primary example, and so look to Him and learn from Him.

*** 1 Peter 4:12** – *"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."* Don't be surprised by trials and by very hard trials. Learn from Paul who said, *"We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead."* 2 Cor. 1:8-9

*** 1 Peter 4:19** – *"Those who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."* Don't

suffer for doing what is wrong, suffer for doing what is right, for doing the will of God. As you suffer, look to God and trust Him, and He will greatly bless you, He will give you present grace and future glory.

*** 1 Peter 5:8** – *"Resist him* (the devil), *firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."* Don't think you are the only one who is suffering for Christ – Christians all over the world are going through hard times. And to suffer honorably, you must trust God, you must believe that He will give you the grace to persevere, to stand firm against the devil.

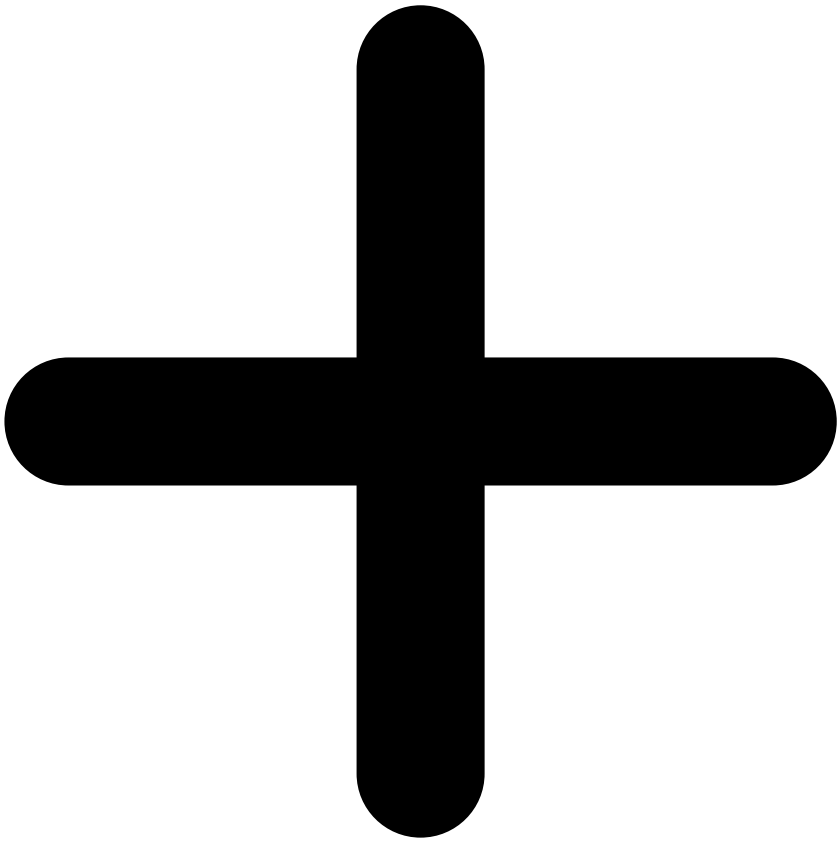
*** James 1:2-3** – *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."* Your faith is being tested and tried when you go through trials, and it results in endurance, which is a mark of a Christian, and is necessary to do God's work. Knowing the godly outcome of trials will cause you to rejoice, to be filled with joy of the Lord.

*** Matthew 24:9** – *"They will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."* This refers to the end-times when the Antichrist is persecuting and killing Christians all over the world. If you are living during this time of great tribulation, be assured that God will give you an abundance of grace and peace, and great eternal rewards. Keep living for Christ, keep witnessing to the lost, and soon enough, the end will come, the trumpet will sound, Christ will return, and you will see Him and be glorified, and forever be in heaven with Him and all the believers.

As you can see, there is much said in God's word about trials and suffering, and that's because it's a critically important part of God's plans for you, for being a godly Christian and being able to fulfill His

eternal purposes. *“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, 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.”* Jude 24-25

P.S. A person who knows how to suffer in a godly way is a mature Christian. Might you *“consider it all joy when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance… so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”* (James 1:3-5). If you have not yet read it, I encourage you to read my last post – *“Present Suffering and Future Glory.”*



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