

DOCTRINE OF SUFFERING

- I. Preliminary considerations.
 - A. Suffering is defined as bearing or undergoing something that causes pain, grief, distress or injury, either through submission or forced.
 - B. This doctrine will focus on the believer and the Divine viewpoint respecting his sufferings.
 - C. Believers face the same sufferings, tests, and common human problems (CHP's) that all men experience. 1Cor.10:13
 - D. The difference is that the sufferings, pressures, and testing of the positive believer all work together for his/her good. Rom.8:28
 - 1. In view are all things, both pleasant and unpleasant.
 - 2. It is not just that all things work together for good, but that God actively causes (not by chance) them to work together for good to those who love God.
 - 3. But God is not causing all things to work together for good for all people; He does this only for positive believers.
 - a. Those who love God are those who keep His commandments. Joh.14:15; 14:23
 - b. Only positive believers fulfill this order.
 - c. Thus the promise that God causes all things to work together for good applies only to positive believers.
 - E. Because God is actively causing all things to work together for the ultimate good of positive believers, the believer with Bible doctrine can have inner peace and happiness while he/she suffers pressure and testing in the Angelic Conflict. Joh.16:33; Jam.1:2
 - F. Suffering is a normal and regular feature of the CWL and those that advocate otherwise are not sound in the faith. 1Pet.5:10
 - G. Some of the categories of suffering include:
 - 1. Persecution.
 - 2. Living grace testing.
 - 3. Health tests.
 - 4. Various dangers.
 - 5. Temptation.
- II. Suffering cannot separate us from God's plan, (Rom.8:35-39). Nothing attached to CHP's can remove us from God's plan, including death.
- III. The sufferings of Jesus Christ. Isa.53:3,4
 - A. They were the subjects of prophecy. Act.3:18; 17:2,3; cp. Mat.16:21; Luk.24:26,46
 - B. They included His unique sufferings as related to bearing sins. Heb.2:9,10; 13:12
 - C. They included His resistance to all manner of temptation. Heb.2:18; 4:15
 - D. They included such things as:
 - 1. He was rejected by His own people, Isa.53:3 cp. Joh.1:11
 - 2. Adhering to kenosis and not tapping His Deity to eliminate

- suffering for His own benefit. Phi.2:5-8
3. A close associate betrayed him. Psa.41:9 cp. Mat.10:4
 4. His disciples forsook him. Zech.13:7 cp. Mar.14:50
 5. He was accused by false witnesses/liars. Psa.35:11 cp. Mat.26:59-61
 6. He was hit and spit upon. Isa.50:6 cp. Mat.26:67; Luk.22:63
 7. He was mocked. Psa.22:7,8 cp. Mat.27:31
 8. He was scourged. Mat.27:26
 9. His hands and feet pierced. Psa.22:16 cp. Luk.23:33; Joh.20:25
 10. He was crucified with thieves and thus treated as a criminal. Isa.53:12 cp. Mat.27:38
 11. His own family rejected him. Joh.7:5
 12. He was hated for no reason. Psa.69:4 cp. Joh.15:25
 13. His friends stood at a distance. Psa.38:11 cp. Luk.23:49
 14. People shook their heads in derision at Him. Psa.109:25 cp. Mat.27:39
 15. His garments removed and divided. Psa.22:18 cp. Joh.19:23,24
 16. He was stared/gawked at. Psa.22:17; Luk.23:35
 17. His teaching was distorted and ridiculed. Psa.56:5-6; Mat.27:39-44
 18. He suffered thirst, for which gall and vinegar were offered Him. Psa.69:21 cp. Mat.27:34; Joh.19:28
- E. Christ is our supreme example of suffering. 1Pet.2:21,23
- F. The sufferings that Jesus endured were a necessary part of His humanity's spiritual matriculation. Heb.2:10; 5:8-9
- G. The extent and quantity of His sufferings render Him a perfect comforter to those that are suffering. Heb.2:17-18; 4:15-16

IV. Suffering is a regular part of the Christian's experience in the cosmos. Joh.16:33, *"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*

- A. Jesus taught His disciples to expect it. Joh.15:18-21
- B. Paul briefed new converts on the eventuality of it. Act.14:22, *"strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'"*
- C. There is both a variety and an abundance of CHP's for the believer in time/Ph₂ (Psa.34:19; 2Cor.1:5; 1Pet.1:6) to include:
1. Persecution for the truth. Mar.4:17; Joh.15:20; 2Tim.3:12
 2. Health tests. 2Cor.4:16-18; Phi.2:25-30
 3. Lupe from -V. Luk.13:34-35; 19:41-44; Rom.9:1-3
 4. Verbal abuse. 1Pet.3:16; 4:4
 5. Temptations from within and without. Jam.4:1-3; Heb.2:17-18
 6. Other avenues through which suffering may come as we are tested in our niche:
 - a. Financial.
 - b. Social life.
 - c. Job.
 - d. Boredom, the four walls test.

- e. Application under our spiritual gift.
 - D. The Christian way of life also has various blessings that parallel our CHP's. Mar.10:28-31
- V. All suffering and testing are accompanied by comfort and encouragement from the Lord. 2Cor.1:5-7
- A. The more you face sufferings that are undeserved, the more you can expect to be encouraged by God. 2Cor.1:3
 - B. But you must be in fellowship and looking for the many forms in which this comfort comes to you.
 - C. Obviously complete deliverance from the test brings comfort, but God also comforts you while under the test itself. 2Cor.1:8-11; 1The.3:6-8
- VI. Undeserved vs. deserved suffering.
- A. There are two types of suffering that the believer will face, deserved and undeserved.
 - B. Underserved is that category that brings blessing to the believer.
 - C. Peter is the epistle of undeserved suffering as seen in the expressions:
 1. Doing right. 1Pet.2:15,20; 3:6,17
 2. Suffering unjustly. 1Pet.2:19
 3. Prove zealous for what is good. 1Pet.3:13
 4. Suffer for the sake of righteousness. 1Pet.3:14
 5. Share the sufferings of Christ. 1Pet.4:13
 6. Suffer as a Christian. 1Pet.4:16
 7. Suffer according to the will of God. 1Pet.4:19
 - D. The epistle deals with their persecutions by those from the outside (mainly verbal slander).
 - E. Such suffering finds favor with God. 1Pet.2:19,20
 - F. The believer is not to fear such attacks. 1Pet.3:14,15
 - G. He is not to be ashamed. 1Pet.4:16
 - H. Deserved suffering brings no blessing, only cursing or divine discipline. 1Pet.2:20; 3:17 cp. 4:15 *See Doctrine of Divine Discipline*
 - I. Only through application of BD and intellectual honesty can the believer differentiate between undeserved and deserved suffering.
 - J. The Jews in Jerusalem, at the time of writing the book of Hebrews, were under the danger of soul fainting and were regarding all of their sufferings as undeserved, when in fact much of it was DD. Heb.12:4-13
 - K. Believers are not to be surprised when negative volition persecutes and maligns them. 1Pet.4:12; 1Joh.3:13
- VII. The proper mental attitude toward suffering.
- A. The single most important factor in fighting the good fight is to be armed with the correct mental attitude. 1Pet.4:1
 - B. The believer is to rely upon the inner support of peace and joy. Joh.16:33; Jam.1:2; 1Pet.4:13
 - C. The inner resources of BD and prayer are essential to overcoming our suffering. Phi.4:6-7; Eph.3:16; Col.1:11
 - D. The believer must possess the mental attitude that he is willing

- (suffering by submission) to suffer on behalf of the POG. 2Tim.2:3,9
- E.** The believer should take comfort during times of suffering, recognizing that other believers are enduring the same conflicts. 1Pet.5:9
- VIII.** Suffering and surpassing grace blessing in eternity (SG3).
- A.** Suffering and the tests of the Christian way of life that we pass accumulate Ph₃ reward. 1Pet.1:3-7; Jam.1:12
- B.** Those who remain positive under the various testing and sufferings associated with the body of death reap SG₃ in Ph₃. 2Cor.4:17,18
- C.** Our present sufferings pale when compared to our Ph₃ glory. Rom.8:18; 2Cor.4:17; 1Pet.5:10
- D.** To the extent you are willing to acclimate to your allotted CHPs, you will inherit Ph₃ reward. 1Pet.4:13 cp. Rom.8:17
- IX.** Reasons why suffering exists and God allows suffering for the believer.
- A.** Suffering is evidence of a world under judgment and even creation suffers and will face demise. Rom.8:22-23; Rev.20:11; 21:1
- B.** It is evidence of the cosmic system under the rulership of Satan, -V and the STA, hostile to God. Job 1,2; Rom.1:18; Mat.11:12; 1Cor.5:5; 1Tim.1:19; Rev.2:10
- C.** It produces the virtue of patience and building of endurance in the CWL. Rom.5:3,4; Jam.1:2-4
- D.** So believers can glorify God in our witness of the life. 1Pet.2:12; 4:16
- E.** It is a test of our doctrinal tenacity and +V to the truth. Rev.2:10
- F.** It is opportunity to maximize our SG₃. 2Cor.4:17
- X.** Some things to keep in mind.
- A.** The Lord knows your sufferings and will deliver you from them all. Exo.3:7; Psa.9:12; 35:10
- B.** God will not put upon you tests you are not ready to handle. 1Cor.10:13
- C.** He will supply you with the grace to handle any test. Pro.3:34
- D.** Failure to handle persecution and testing explains why some peel off from doctrine. Mat.13:20,21
- E.** You will not face unique tests. 1Pet.5:9 cp. 1The.2:14; 2Cor.1:7
- F.** Suffering renders you worthy of God's kingdom. 2The.1:5
- G.** Your sufferings help complete the measure of suffering of the corporate body of Christ necessary before the Church's glorification. Col.1:24
- H.** Our sufferings are designed to cause us to place our trust in God and not our own abilities. 2Cor.1:9-10; 1Pet.4:19
- I.** Avoid fear and soul-fainting. Rom.8:15-17; Heb.10:32-39
- J.** All suffering and causes will be completely eliminated in the eternal state of the new creation. Rev.7:17; 21:4