

Trusting God in Suffering

Part I & Part II

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Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy (I Peter 4: 12-13).

Lesson Scripture: **Part I:** II Corinthians 12: 1-10 **Part II:** I Peter 1: 3-9

Part I: God's Comfort: The apostle Paul wrote: *"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 tribulation"* (2 Corinthians 1: 3-4). ***Comfort** does not mean *"sympathy."* In the English it means *"with strength,"* and in the Greek it means *"to come alongside and help."* It is the same word used for the Holy Spirit (**"The Helper"**).

God's Comforting Grace (2 Corinthians 12:1-10) **Grace: the unmerited goodness or love of God; God's lovingkindness and favor on undeserving sinners demonstrated by the gift of His Son.** Grace is all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the cross.

We don't know what Paul's thorn was, and it's a good thing we don't know—because no matter what is the cause of our suffering—Paul's experience can speak to us. Physical pain, fear of the future, illness, cancer, emotional pain, economic issues, national issues—these belong to the human part of life, and Satan will fight us to doubt God's goodness through them.

God helps us to pray in the Person of the Holy Spirit. He carries our need to the Father. He turns your groanings, words that you cannot even utter, to the Throne of Grace, and God listens and acts on your behalf as God did with Paul: *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered* (Romans 8: 26).

God had a higher purpose for Paul than to remove the thorn: *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness"* (8). **"For Christ's sake"** makes all the difference (10). We can use the trial for God's glory. We need God's strength for that high calling. It helps knowing that Paul had been to heaven and heard things about God's eternal purpose. Paul could write: *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (2 Cor. 4: 17). Paul knew how to take heaven and bring it down to earth. We are a heavenly people. When Paul had trials, he remembered heaven. So should we. Our hopes, our joys, and the One we love best are all in heaven, and that is what makes suffering "our light affliction."

The Suffering of Christ: *For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (I Peter 3: 18).* Always look at the present situation in the whole plan of Redemption for you, which began with the Gospel. You will never understand God if you detach your circumstance from the Gospel. Few things in our lives picture the Gospel more clearly than moments of suffering. Suffering can actually be a means to show me where real life is to be found—not in my job, my education, my retirement, my relationships, or my health—but in a Person, Jesus Christ Who loves me.

His love has no limit. His grace has no measure; His power has no boundary known unto men; For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again. (Annie Johnson Flint, **The Making of the Beautiful**).

Part II: Our Heavenly Calling (I Peter 1: 3-10)

God's Comforting Hope: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to **a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* ~I Peter 1: 3. We have "**a living hope**" based upon the **living Word** made possible by our **living Savior**.

Unfading Inheritance: *We have "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (4).* Our hope becomes more glorious and real with an unfading inheritance—which is our salvation (third tense)—our glorification.

"Kept by the power of God": *The LORD is your keeper: the LORD is your shade upon your right hand . . . The LORD will preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and even for ever more (Psalm 121: 5, 8).*

Peter seems to be saying, *"If you are thinking of the scene where Christ is, and where you will be with Him, if your hearts are dwelling on the thought of that inheritance which He is keeping for you, and of the home which you will share with Him, where all is unfading brightness, you will be rejoicing."*

If Need Be: *"Though now for a little while, **if need be** . . . you are in heaviness of trials . . ."* There is a "need be" in the training of His children. God wants to draw out, to develop, His grace working in us. You and I may not see the "need be" for this or that trial but what does God say? There is a "need be," and as it is only "for a season" and it is not to last forever . . . only for a "season." Trials are controlled by God. We trust in His sovereignty.

Jesus Christ: Our Refiner: Our Lord Jesus is called our Refiner—another name for our Lord Jesus. When you are going through the furnace of affliction, He is with you, sustaining you in the refining process that you might come forth as gold.

Peter says: *“There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials at this moment. These trials will show that your faith is genuine, **as tested by fire and purifies gold—though your faith is more precious than mere gold.** So when your faith remains strong through the many trials, it will bring much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ will be revealed to the world.”*

God’s Comforting Presence: *“Tested by fire”* is a beautiful picture of the three Hebrew teenagers, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were tried by fire (Daniel 3: 12-30). Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace and said he saw four in the furnace and One walked with them, and the form of that One was *“like unto the Son of God.”* God shows us where He is—sometimes it’s so personal. God opens our eyes to the reality that He is with us.

The Hiding Place by Corrie ten Boom: *You are my hiding place: You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance* (Psalm 32:7). **Psalm 91:1** was the ten Boom’s favorite verse. *“He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”*

God’s Comforting Love: In Whom having not seen you love. Why do we love Him? God’s love has been shed abroad in our hearts. I am loved! There is nothing I can do to be unloved by God. When the question arises, *“How much does God love me?”* the answer is found in Christ. He stretched out His arms on the cross and died for me. If you want to measure God’s love for you, take a close look at Calvary. **God loves on you through people as well:** *That we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves are comforted by God* (2 Cor. 1:3).

God’s Comforting Word: *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us* (1 Corinthians 1: 20). All the promises God has made are *“Yes”* in Christ. And we can say *“Amen.”* We believe His promises to the glory of God. It is our faith in His Word that releases His power for us to stand when suffering.

The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Corrie ten Boom wrote, *“By my suffering I could understand a fraction of the suffering of Jesus.”* *Oh, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death* (Philippians 3: 10). **We have God’s comfort in His grace, hope, presence and love.** But what really helps me is to know that Jesus suffered as well. He understands what I’m going through. The Cross shows that God will go to any length to provide for His children.

One day when we are with the Lord, we will praise Him for showing us His side of our suffering. But why can’t we thank Him now by faith, knowing that we are loved and nothing will be done apart from His love for us? We will be singing of the grace and love of God throughout eternity.

Study Questions

1. What comfort about God’s presence can you find in **Psalm 139: 1-18**? Write verses **17-18**.

2. Christ's resurrection Power went to work in Paul's life to lift him above His circumstances. Christ's power through the Holy Spirit will lift you above your trial(s) as well. How will your trial enable you to "*know Him*" personally? Read **Philippians 3: 10** and write the verse.
3. How will the knowledge of our suffering Savior encourage us in our suffering and affect our perspective? Read **I Peter 4: 13** & **I Peter 2: 23** and write the verses.
4. How does God use suffering for our eternal good and glory? Read **2 Corinthians 4: 16-17** and write the verses.
5. One of God's purposes in suffering is to get us prepared for our eternal assignment. God loves us and is getting us ready to be Jesus' Bride for eternity. Read **2 Timothy 2: 12** and write the verse.
6. Our Lord Jesus accompanies us through our sufferings. He lives with us through the Holy Spirit. Whatever happens to us happens to Him, also. Read God's promise in **Hebrews 4: 15** and write the verse.
7. We are not always aware of how tenderly the Lord Jesus is sustaining us, but we know that He is. Read God's promise in **Psalms 56: 8** and write the verse.

Reflections

8. Remember that anything that comes to us must first come through God's loving hands. We have a three-fold protection: Christ lives in us; we are placed in Him; and our Lord Jesus is in the Father. Read **John 17:22-23** and compare with **Colossians 3:1, 3: Galatians 2:20**. What a comfort to know that God's plans are for our good! We are so precious to Him that no small detail goes unnoticed or uncared for.
9. Sometimes we suffer with emotional pain when the hurt is so deep. Rest in His arms, knowing that He is sustaining and delivering you through it. Read God's promise in **Psalms 34: 17-19** and find comfort.
10. Who has God sent into your life as **ambassadors of God's comfort and love (2 Corinthians 1:4)**? Thank the Lord for them and write their names below: