

The Suffering of the Believer

I. An outline for this passage (1 Peter 4:1-5:11)

- A. Notice that Christ suffered as our example (4:1, 4:13) See also Heb. 2:18
- B. Don't be surprised when you suffer (4:12-19)
- C. Make sure and minister to those who suffer (5:1-9)
- D. Remember, suffering has a purpose (5:10-11)
- E. Notice the nature of suffering (1 Peter)
 - 1. Distressed (1:6-7), slandered (2:12), insulted (3:9), harmed (3:13), reviled (4:14), suffered as Christian (4:16), suffered as part of God's will (4:19) and suffered temporarily (5:10).
 - 2. In general it is: painful, perplexing (causes us to ask why), a process (Rom. 5:3-4), a purifier, pre-determined (1 Pet. 4:12-13) and inevitable (1 Thes. 3:3)

II. The causes or reasons for our suffering:

- A. It's the natural repercussion of living in a fallen world (See Gen. 3:15-19)
- B. It's a way for the works of God to be displayed

John 9:3 "Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.'"
- C. It's the reaping of our sowing

Gal. 6:7-9 "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

Embrace the testimony of the psalmist (Ps. 119)

Before affliction:	Straying and ignoring (vs. 76a)
During and in affliction:	Learning and turning (vs. 71, cf. vs. 59)
When under affliction we need to:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Determine Causes if we can (Is it because of something I have done?) (2) Determine Objectives (What is God wanting to do in my life or in others?) (3) Determine Solutions (How does God want me to handle this?)
After affliction:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Knowing and changing (vs. 67b, 97-102) (2) Resting and valuing (vs. 65, 72)

(from www.bible.org)

D. It allows the Son of God to be glorified

John 11:40 *"Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?'"*

E. It's a form of God's discipline for his "kids"

Heb. 12:6 *"For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."*

F. It may be persecution because of our faith

2 Tim. 3:12 *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."*

G. It's a way to develop our capacity and sympathy in comforting others

2 Cor. 1:3-5 *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 5For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows."*

H. It may help to keep down our pride

2 Cor. 12:7 *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."*

I. It can be a training tool

Heb. 12:5 *"And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,'"*

James 1:2-4 *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

- J. It can help us witness to others

2 Tim. 2:8-10 *"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."*

2 Cor. 4:12-13 *"So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. It is written: 'I believed; therefore I have spoken.' With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,"*

- K. Suffering helps develop a continued dependence on the grace and power of God.

Eph. 6:10 *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."*

- L. Suffering may broaden our ministries

Phil. 1:12-14 *"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly."*

- M. Sometimes, we have to acknowledge that we will not ever (this side of glory) know the reason for our suffering.

III. So what? "Things to keep in mind when suffering becomes a part of our life experience." (Neil Chadwick's notes)

- A. Remember, it is temporary

Ps. 30:5 *"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."*

- B. Remember to keep on praying (even when it seems hopeless)

1 Peter 4:7 *"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray."*

- C. Remember to keep loving others (deeply!)

1 Peter 4:8 *"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."*

- D. Remember to rejoice and keep on praising the Lord

See Acts 16:25 and notice what Paul and Silas were doing

- E. Remember to keep "doing good" (sometimes a re-focus is very helpful)

1 Peter 4:19 *"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."*

Discussion Questions:

1. It's our natural inclination to avoid or ignore any kind of "suffering." Why is that not a good idea?
2. Since it is not possible to always know the reason for our suffering, how do you handle comforting those with a loss?