

THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN SUFFERING

"LOOK TO THE REWARD"

Consider this response in times of Suffering:

In times of trouble say :

First - He brought me here; it is by His will that I am in this difficult place; in that I will rest.

Next - He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child

Then - He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow

Last - In His good time He can bring me out again - how and when He knows.

- Andrew Murray

- Questions to Ask Yourself When Suffering**
1. What is God doing here?
 2. What is he teaching me?
 3. What sin is he exposing to me?
 4. How is he drawing me closer to Him?
 5. In what ways is He making me more like Jesus?
 6. How is He preparing me for some future glorious task?
 7. How am I responding to it?
 8. How should I respond to it?
 9. Am I learning from it?
 10. Does my response demonstrate faith, love for God and for others, Christ-like character, values, commitment and priorities?
 11. Can I see ANY WAY God can take the pain in this situation and make something good out of it ?

**CHRIST-
OUR MODEL**

Hebrews 12:2

Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross

REWARD

James 1:12	Romans 8:35
Blessed is the man who perseveres under trials; when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life	Nothing (death, life, demons, the present, the future or any powers) can separate us from the love of Christ!

**GOD'S
PURPOSE**

Romans 8:28	Romans 8:29	Genesis 50:20
God causes all things to work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose	For those God called "Christians" He predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ	Joseph's response to his brothers: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."

**GOD'S
GIFT**

Philippians 4:7	1 Peter 4:14	2 Corinthians 1:3-4	1 Peter 5:8-9
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus	If you're reviled for the name of Christ you are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you	The Father of all compassion comforts us in all our troubles, so we can comfort those in trouble	Resist the devil, stand firm in the faith, and God will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast

**JESUS
SAID**

John 15:20	2 Corinthians 12:9a	John 16:33	Luke 9:23	Luke 22:31a
Jesus said, "No servant is greater than his master; if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."	Jesus said to the suffering Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness"	Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble - But take heart! I have overcome the world"	Jesus said, "Anyone who comes after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me"	Jesus: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail"

**ETERNAL
PERSEPECTIVE**

Matthew 5:11-12	Romans 8:18	2 Corinthians 4:17	1 Peter 1:6-7	1 Peter 4:13	Phil 3:20 / Phil 1:21
Rejoice - your reward in heaven is great when you are persecuted because of Christ	Our present sufferings do not compare with the glory that is to be revealed to us	Our momentary, light afflictions are producing an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison	Your trials have come so that your faith may be proven to be genuine..... when Jesus Christ is revealed	Rejoice if you share in the sufferings of Christ so that at Christ's revelation you may rejoice with exultation	Our citizenship is in Heaven... To live is Christ; to die is gain

**MY
RESPONSE**

James 1:2-3	James 1:4	Romans 5:3-4	1 Peter 2:23	1 Thes 5:16-18	Ephesians 6:10-11	Job 1:21
Respond with pure joy in trials because the testing of your faith produces perseverance.....	Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything	Glorify in your sufferings because suffering produces perseverance, which produces character then hope	A Christlike response - When Jesus suffered, he did not threaten but rather committed Himself to God	Rejoice always; Pray without ceasing; In everything give thanks for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus	Put on the full armor of God so that you are able to stand against the wiles of the Devil	Job said - "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord"

**MY
EXPECTATION**

1 Peter 4:12	Phil 1:29	1 Peter 2:21	1 Timothy 3:12	Galatians 2:20	2 Corinthians 12:9b	Philippians 4:13	2 Corinthians 12:10
Do not be surprised at your fiery trials and don't think it's strange when they happen to you-they are for your testing	For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for Him	To this you're called, because Christ suffered for you, as an example, that you should follow in his steps	In fact, everyone who wants to live a Godly life will be persecuted	Paul said "I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me"	Paul said, "I will boast in my weaknesses so that Christ's power rests on me"	I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me	Paul said, "I delight in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions - For when I am weak, then I am strong"

Psalms 34:1	2 Corinthians 7:4-6	Matthew 5:44	Psalms 119:71	Acts 16:25	Acts 7:59-60	Philippians 4:11
I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will ALWAYS be on my lips	Paul said, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation."	Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"	"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn your statutes."	It was about midnight - Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God - and prisoners listened!	During the stoning of Stephen, he fell to his knees and said, "Lord do not hold this sin against them"	Paul said, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am in."

Principles of Christian Suffering

Thomas M. Fischer

<p>1. True faith will be tested. Christians will inevitably undergo constant testing. Gal 2:20</p> <p>2. The stronger the potential faith, the greater the testing one should expect. Job 1:1,2</p> <p>3. Testing and suffering reminds us who really is Lord of our life...and it's not us!!! I Corinthians 6:20</p> <p>4. The hardest thing about suffering is remembering the central focus of the test: to keep our faith strong. If we lose this focus, we fail the test. Failure is never final; God is always forgiving. Romans 14:7-8</p> <p>5. For this reason, as the Christian regularly and daily prays for a stronger faith, he can also expect that the strengthening of his faith may best be accomplished through the experience of testing</p> <p>6. Even when we fail, Jesus never forsakes us; He constantly prays for us before, during, and after testing. Luke 22:31</p> <p>7. In order for faith to be strengthened, it must be refined...by fire.</p> <p>8. As our faith is refined, our feelings will, if possible, undermine our faith. Thus, testing ought to drive us to the objective certainty of faith and not to the subjective despair of emotion. I Peter 5:8-9</p> <p>9. God allows Satan to test us for the purpose of demonstrating to Satan just how strong a believer's trust in God is; it is Satan who does the damage... Job 1</p> <p>10. God sets the maximum boundaries for the "allowable" limits of suffering we will endure; Satan pursues them to the max Job 1</p> <p>11. The limits of suffering may be exceeded if we neglect all of God's provisions for our physical, emotional well-being. It will almost certainly be exceeded if we give up our primary defense: Absolute trust in God as He has revealed Himself in Word and Sacraments. Ephesians 6:13</p> <p>12. God does not wish us to suffer; However, He must test us as we need to be tested. Therefore, the most critical and difficult testings which we will endure can be expected to involve those things, people (friends, family, etc.) and issues which, from our perspective, are most highly prized, precious, valuable, esteemed and loved. Indeed, every essential value, belief, moral, attitude, motivation, world-view and perspective by which we live will be severely tested and, through such testing, leave us strengthened for God's service. This is the ultimate focus of trial-to strengthen our Christian character.</p> <p>13. Before, during, and after testing, we ought to constantly examine in which ways our armor is weakened so as to prepare ourselves for the inevitable next--and greater--testing. The longer and more severe the testing, the more zealously we need to examine our armor. Ephesians 6:10-11</p> <p>14. We need not--and should not--blame God for suffering which is a result of our own foolish, intentional sinful actions. Such actions ought to direct us to the unlimited forgiveness and grace of God.</p> <p>15. Suffering, for the Christian, is not punishment. It is discipline, specifically the discipline of Christian character. It is the way God demonstrates that we are His children. Romans 8:31</p>	<p>16. Christians are never alone in their testing, even when we feel we have left God or He has left us. As Jesus prayed for Peter while being "sifted like wheat" and as the Father continued praying for the return of his lost son (Luke 15), so God never takes His loving attention from us. He is always praying on our behalf. Romans 8:35</p> <p>17. Suffering is not a Means of Grace. It is, however, a gracious and careful preparation of God for greater exaltation in His grace.</p> <p>18. Thus, whatever suffering we endure as a testing of our faith is cause for joy, not despair. James 1:2-3</p> <p>19. The Christian's final response to the suffering and testing of God is always to bless God. Job 1:21</p> <p>20. "Why" questions, are an important part of the Christian's grieving process in that they acknowledge God's power and our weakness before Him. The answers may be received, as part of the testing, at a later time or, more often, in the eternal courts of God. During our pilgrimage on earth, one of the most useful purposes of "Why" questions are to shape patient, hopeful, and persevering Christian character.</p> <p>21. A Christian's trial is not completed until such time that we have used the promises of God in Word and Sacrament to deal effectively with grief. Christians who continue attitudes of anger, self-pity and confusion will continue experiencing the overwhelm of these emotions until such time that God's will has been accepted and assimilated into the Christian's heart and life. Only at such time will Christians learn how to consider such sufferings "pure joy" James 1</p> <p>22. Death, at God's time, is the final blessed deliverance from suffering. Until that time, life will be full of difficulties as we walk in the valley of the "shadow of death" (Psalm 23). For the Christian, death from an eternal perspective is never a "tragedy"; instead it is the blessed deliverance from an evil pain-filled world. Job 19:25-27</p> <p>23. The most power testimony of our trust and faith in God is patient endurance which trusts that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. II Corinth 12:8-9</p> <p>24. After trial, we are never the same. Trial, as God intends, exposes and deepens our weaknesses even as it uncovers and develops new strengths and opportunities for ministry. The tears of trial, therefore, are the chisel God uses to change the Christian's heart painfully--but skillfully--to enliven our hope in Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1-5</p> <p>25. Those whom--or the things which--God graciously provided to sustain the Christian in trial may also be painfully removed, as part of the trial, at such time God deems necessary.</p> <p>26. God ultimately uses suffering as an act not of Law, but of Gospel, to draw us and renew us in the suffering, death, resurrection and forgiveness of Christ into which we have been baptized. Thus, the ultimate focus of trial is to highlight God's gracious and undeserved love for us in Christ Hebrews 12:5-6</p>
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