

Suffering

A Study by Franklin

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A. INTRODUCTION

John 16:33 **in the world you shall have tribulation**

(affliction - trouble - distress - persecution - pressure)

Acts 14:22 **Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.**

B. SUFFERING FROM SIN

1. MAN Brings GREAT SUFFERING to HIMSELF and OTHERS

Man's sinful nature pours forth: corruption - lies - deceit - stealing - murders - violence - guns - bombs - land mines - tortures - rape - incest - malice – the list goes on and on.

Jeremiah 17: 9 **The heart is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked.**

Hebrews 3:7-19 **Lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**

SIN IS AT THE ROOT OF ALL SUFFERING IN THE WORLD TODAY.

The deadly poison of sin is in the veins of every person bringing suffering and death to him and then to others.

- Example: My friend bitten by the poisonous snake.

Sin is so exceedingly sinful that man does not know right from wrong:
Isaiah 5:20 **Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness.**

Because sinful man does not know good from evil he continually **makes CHOICES that bring him misery and suffering.**

Galatians 6:7-8 whatever a man sows, **this he will also reap**. For the one who sows to his own flesh **will** from the flesh **reap corruption**

Man not only NEEDS A SAVIOR, but also a righteous LORD to lead and guide his DECISIONS AND CHOICES.

Luke 6:46-49 **Why** do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and **do not do what I say?** (47) Everyone who **comes** to Me and **hears My words** and **acts** on them, I will show you whom he is like: (48) **he is like** a man building a house, who dug deep and **laid a foundation on the rock**; and when a **flood came**, the **torrent burst** against that house and **could not shake it**, because it was **built on the rock**. (49) But the one who has heard and HAS **NOT ACTED ACCORDINGLY**, is like a man who built a house on the ground **WITHOUT ANY FOUNDATION**; and the torrent burst against it and **IMMEDIATELY IT COLLAPSED**, and **THE RUIN OF THAT HOUSE WAS GREAT**.

This should impress on all of us the importance of PRAYING CONTINUALLY so we can hear and obey: **praying always with all prayer and supplication** (Ephesians 6:18).

The Cross shows the magnitude of our sin. Jesus was recognized by all to be a great, wise, good, pure, innocent man. He was a man who came to set the captives free, to heal the broken, to teach us truth and show us the way. Yet men put Him to death in the cruelest way ever devised (**those who call evil good, and good evil** Isaiah 5:20), and set Barabbas free. (Luke 23:18-25)

2. SIN is satan's kingdom, the sphere in which he rules.

Without Jesus Christ man is held in **the snare of the devil having been held captive by him to do his will** 2 Timothy 2:26

Ephesians 2:1-10 **And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked** according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the **sons of disobedience**. Among them we too all formerly lived in the **lusts** of our flesh, indulging the **desires** of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, even as the rest.

- The Way Out - Jesus said "**I am the way**, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." John 14:6

Acts 4:12 And **there is salvation in no one else**; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? **Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, Acts 16:30-31

Truly **BELIEVE** which results in a commitment to Jesus Christ, and **OBEY** – As **obedient** children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, (15) but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy yourselves** also in all your behavior. (1 Peter 1:14-16)

3. As a Believer, when I CHOSE To Sin, I Step Into satan's kingdom, and he Has A Legal Right to Attack Me.

Satan CONTINUALLY LURES US into his kingdom through **SIN**

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 Satan **DISGUISES HIMSELF AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT**. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

John 8:44 . . . your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a **MURDERER** from the beginning, . . . no truth in him . . he is A **LIAR** and the father of lies.

Revelation 12:9 The great dragon . . . the serpent . . . the devil and Satan who **DECEIVES** the whole world

1 John 5:19 The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Ephesians 4:22-32 **DO NOT GIVE THE DEVIL AN OPPORTUNITY**

2 Timothy 2:26 . . the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will

Example: to catch a raccoon you put a bright, shiny object on the trigger of the trap. He cannot resist touching it to see what it is or to play with it.

WRONG DECISIONS –to pursue, take, play with, what we know to be wrong, or even those things that we do not realize are wrong, opens a door for the enemy's attack.

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that shall he reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal Life."

Proverb 13:21 **Adversity pursues sinners**, but the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity.

- Satan tried to TEMPT, LURE, and DECEIVE JESUS. Luke 4:1-13

John 14:30 the ruler of this world is coming and he has **NOTHING** in Me
That is - Nothing which belongs to him giving him a LEGAL RIGHT.

- Satan TEMPTED & DECEIVED Peter through **PRIDE**. (Luke 22:24)

Luke 22:31 satan has demanded to sift you like wheat

satan had **something** in Peter. Something that belonged to him giving him a **legal right** . . . **PRIDE**.

- **UNFORGIVENESS** gives the devil an opportunity

2 Corinthians 2:9-11 FORGIVE . . in order that no advantage be taken of us by satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes

Matthew 18:21-35 turned him over to the tormentors . .

- **SICKNESS** can be caused by many different reasons but one reason is sin.

Luke 13:11, 16 a sickness caused by a spirit . . whom satan has bound for eighteen long years

John 5:5, 14 thirty-eight years in his sickness . . DO NOT SIN ANYMORE SO THAT NOTHING WORSE MAY BEFALL YOU

Example: My father divorced my mother for another woman. His sin was great. My mother became extremely angry and bitter to the point of saying if she had a gun she would kill them. Very soon thereafter she came down with Lymphoma cancer. She later totally surrendered to the LORD and

forgave my father and the woman. Soon thereafter mother was healed of the cancer.

Proverb 3:11-12 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, **because the LORD disciplines those he loves**, as a father the son he delights in.

Sin gives satan a legal right, which the LORD allows and therefore accomplishes the discipline of the LORD.

Proverb 15:5 Only a fool despises a parent's discipline; whoever learns from correction is wise.

The Way Out of the devil's traps, or How to avoid his traps:

James 4:7-8 **SUBMIT** therefore to God. **RESIST** the devil and he will flee from you. **Draw near** to God and He will draw near to you. **CLEANSE** your hands, you sinners; and **PURIFY** your hearts, you double-minded.

Jesus tries to make His listeners understand what sin is and the seriousness of sin. **Come to terms quickly** with your enemy before it is too late and you are dragged into court, handed over to an officer, and **thrown in jail**. (26) I assure you that you won't be free again until **you have paid** the last penny. (27) You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not commit adultery.' (28) But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with **lust in his eye** has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (29) So if your **eye causes you to lust**, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into **hell**. (30) And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into **hell**. Matthew 5:25-30 NLT

- The Greek work translated '**hell**' above is geennan which is a valley south and west of Jerusalem which was the city's **sewage and dump**. **Later** the Jews used this name to also mean the place of torment.
- **The message is – avoid sin at all costs as it will bring you into a cesspool, or the filth, of this world.**

Matthew 26:41 Keep **WATCHING** and **PRAYING**, that you may **not enter into temptation**; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Luke 11:21-22 When a strong man, fully armed, GUARDS his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he **attacks** him and **overpowers** him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder.

Satan attacks by: Deceit / Temptations and Lures by lust

Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of **bitterness** springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled.

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying **forgive** if you have **anything** against anyone.

Joshua 24:15 **Choose ye this day whom you will serve**: whether the gods of Egypt or the gods in this land where you are living; but **as for me and my house WE WILL SERVE THE LORD**.

C. SUFFERING FROM SINNERS – The Result of a Righteous Life

1. AS I PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL WITH MY LIFE & WORDS.

Matthew 5:10-12 **Blessed** are those who have been **persecuted** for the sake of **righteousness** . .

Luke 21:16-19 But you will be **betrayed** even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to **death**, (17) and **YOU WILL** be **hated** by all **BECAUSE OF MY NAME**. (18) Yet **not a hair** of your head **will perish**. (19) **By your endurance** you will gain your lives.

John 15:20 If they persecuted Me, **they will also persecute you**

The first preachers and evangelists experienced the truth of Jesus' words.

Paul:

2 Timothy 3:10-12 . . . **persecutions**, and **sufferings**, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! (12) Indeed, **ALL WHO DESIRE TO LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED**.

Mentally - laughed at, ridiculed, rejected. And Physically – beaten, tortured, even unto death by many horrendous means.

The response that pleases the LORD is the response of Moses:

Hebrews 11:25 **Choosing** rather to **endure ill treatment** with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; **considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt**

And the example of our Lord and Savior JESUS CHRIST:

Hebrews 12:1-3 **Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who **for the joy** set before Him (the joy of knowing He was pleasing His Father and of redeeming His own so that they would be with Him forever) **endured the cross, despising the shame,** and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For **consider Him** who has **endured such hostility by sinners against Himself,** so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

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**

Acts 8:1-4 **a great persecution arose against the church** Because they Preached JESUS. **IT IS THE SAME TODAY AROUND THE WORLD.**

- Acts 5:41 Rejoiced to suffer for His name.
- Acts 7:58 stoned Stephen – the first Christian martyr.
- Acts 9:16 **I will show him how much he must suffer for my Name**
- 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 Paul's suffering
- Hebrews 11:33-39 Those of whom the world was not worthy.

The Disciples of JESUS were Faithful unto Death in Following in His Steps, Fulfilling their Purpose and Calling. See page 24 of these notes for the way they suffered and died.

The Persecution greatly increased and spread to most all Believers throughout the Roman Empire. Many were arrested and **fed to the lions** in the Roman Coliseums both for hatred and entertainment.

More Christians have been killed for their faith in the 20th century (1900 – 1999) than have been martyred in the total history of Christianity.

While we were in India Australian missionary Graham Staines and his family, who had been in India for years ministering to and helping lepers were brutally murdered. Graham and his two sons Philip and Timothy had driven to a village to help lepers there and while sleeping in their car at night a group of radical Hindu men set the car on fire and they were **burned alive**.

Radical Hindu extremists in **India** are threatening, beating and often killing Christian believers. Sometimes locking them in their churches and setting the church on fire.

The India police have failed to arrest even a single person in connection with the persecution, in spite of repeated appeals from both local and national human rights agencies and the appeals from the victims themselves.

The blatant disregard for the law by the Hindu extremists, coupled with the inaction and often bias of the police in favor of the attackers, has left the Christian community vulnerable and helpless in the onslaught of violence.

Missionary research organizations expect that the number of **Christian martyrs** per year to be between 130,000 and 160,000. That is about 300 martyrs per day: 12 per hour, or 1 every five minutes.

Rebels in Syria today, June 2012, are committing Christian genocide. They are destroying churches and issuing threats that **all Christians** will be **cleansed from rebel-held territory**. A mass exodus of thousands of Christians is taking place. During Egypt's presidential elections of 2012, Al Ahram reported that "the Muslim Brotherhood blockaded entire streets; prevented Copts, at gunpoint, from voting and **threatened Christian families not to let their children go out and vote**" for the secular candidate.

The same is happening in **Africa**. Villages are attacked by Islamic soldiers. The elderly and infants are often killed on the spot. The children, boys and girls, are taken to military camps and tortured until they deny Christ. It is reported that one group of 13 boys had their hands and feet tied behind their backs and they were ordered to deny Christ. Each refused. Burning coals were piled on the ground. Still they refused to deny their faith, as they were held over the burning embers.

Radical Muslim extremists of Islam are doing the same to Christians and Jews in ever increasing numbers.

The Apostle Peter speaks about enduring suffering to be a good witness for the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

1 Peter 2:19-20 For **this finds favor**, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person **endures** under sorrows when **suffering unjustly**. (20) . . . when **you do what is right and suffer for it** you patiently **endure it**, this finds **favor with God**. (21) For **YOU have been called for THIS PURPOSE**, since Christ also **SUFFERED** for you, leaving you an example **FOR YOU TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS**. Who committed **NO SIN**, nor was **ANY DECEIT** found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while **suffering**, He uttered no threats, but kept **entrusting Himself** to Him who judges righteously.

- Jesus called you to “follow in His steps,” **NO SIN, NO DECEIT**, only **RETURNING LOVE** to those who crucify you. **THIS IS YOUR PURPOSE** here on this earth. This is the ultimate in being a good witness.
- **“To Follow in His steps”** – live a righteous life – the life of Christ –will bring conviction to others. This conviction will bring many to **JESUS** but will also bring great resistance, even hatred from others who will persecute you.
- This was the **PURPOSE** of **JESUS CHRIST** on this earth and **this is YOUR PURPOSE** on this earth.

1 Peter 3:10-17 But **even** if you should **suffer for the sake of righteousness**, you are blessed. . . . For **IT IS BETTER**, if God should will it so, **that you suffer for doing what is right** rather than for doing what is wrong. (4:1) Therefore, **since Christ has suffered** in the flesh, arm yourselves also **with the same purpose**, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, (2) so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but **for the will of God**.

- Do what is right, **“follow in His steps”** and you will suffer rejection and persecution. But **you will be rewarded** and **“blessed”** at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
- **Follow the world’s ways** and be accepted as “one of them” but your life will have difficulty, problems and pain and no reward in heaven as you **have not** accepted **YOUR PURPOSE** here on earth.

Romans 12:12-15 . . . rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, . . .

(14) **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.** . . .

(17) **Never** pay back evil for evil to anyone. . . . (19) **Never take your own revenge**, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord. . . .

(20) But if **your enemy** is hungry, **feed him**, and if he is thirsty, **give him drink**; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head (conviction).

(21) **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Barnes in his commentary on Romans 12:14 says:

"This is one of the most severe and difficult duties of the Christian.

To curse denotes properly to devote to destruction. Where there is power to do it, it implies the destruction of the object. Thus, the fig-tree that was cursed by the Saviour soon withered away (Mark 11:21). Thus, those whom God curses will be certainly destroyed (Matthew 25:41). Where there is not power to do it, to curse implies to pray that God would destroy them. In a larger sense still, it means to abuse by reproachful words; to express oneself in a violent, profane, and outrageous manner."

Jesus Himself lived this way and calls us to do the same:

Matthew 5:43-46 But I say to you, **love your enemies** and **pray** for those who **persecute** you, (45) **so that you may be sons** (mature) of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (46) For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Luke 6:27-31 But I say to you who hear, **love your enemies**, **do good** to those who hate you, (28) **bless** those who curse you, **pray** for those who mistreat you. (29) Whoever **hits you** on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. (30) Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. (31) **Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.** THE GOLDEN RULE

1 Peter 4:13, 14-19 to the degree that **you share in the sufferings of CHRIST, keep on rejoicing** . . . (14) If you **are reviled** for the name of Christ, **you are blessed**, because the **Spirit of glory and of God rests on you**. (16) but **if anyone suffers as a Christian**, he is not to be ashamed, but **is to glorify God by this name** (by being called a Christian).

Consider the **sufferings of Christ** that YOU might share in:

- **Rejected** by others because you do not do the things they do. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 4:17-5:14)
- **Rejected** because you believe and speak proudly that JESUS CHRIST is the one and only true Lord God Almighty and Creator of the heavens and earth. (Isaiah 45:5, & 21)
- **Rejected** because you believe and speak that there is no other way to eternal life. (Acts 4:12; John 14:6)

keep on rejoicing - Because you are fulfilling **your purpose** here on earth by being a **good witness for Jesus Christ**.

And as Peter says: 1 Peter 3:9 **Not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead: for YOU WERE CALLED FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE** that you **may inherit a blessing**.

And if you **are reviled** for living a life of righteousness and love, honoring our Lord Jesus, **you are blessed**, because the **Spirit of glory and of God rests on you**. And this is a Great Honor to be a witness for HIM!

- **This greatly pleases the LORD:** 1 Peter 2:19 **For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.**
- JESUS and God The Father **so greatly appreciate** this, that your light shines more brilliant than ever **because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you** and all those around see and know something is wonderfully different about YOU. (Ephesians 4:8-17)

2. We Are At War. The Result of War is Suffering.

- Ephesians 6:10-18 **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness.**
- Matthew 11:12 **"the kingdom of heaven suffers violence "**
- Acts 14:22 **"through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom"**

D. SUFFERING THAT OUR FATHER USES

The **problems** you face will either **defeat** you or **develop** and **mature** you depending on how you **respond** to them. Unfortunately most people fail to see how God wants to use problems for good in their lives. They react foolishly and resent their problems rather than pausing to consider what benefit they might bring.

Proverbs 6:23 . . . reproofs of instruction are the way of life

The LORD uses the problems in your life:

1. To Test Our Faith, Loyalty and Endurance

God uses problems to INSPECT you. People are like tea bags. . . if you want to know what's inside them, just drop them into hot water! Has God ever tested your faith with a problem? What do problems reveal about you?

James 1:2-3 When you have **many kinds of troubles**, you should be **full of joy**, because you know that these troubles **test your faith**, and this will give you patience.

James 1:12-15 **Blessed** is the man who **perseveres under trial**; for once **he has been approved**, he **will receive the crown of life**

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by **various trials**, that 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.

- It is easy to say "I am a believer, I am a Christian." But to live a life of righteousness and remain true and faithful when you are rejected, ridiculed and persecuted even unto death, **proves** to others that you **are** a believer, a Christian. They not only hear your words but see your loyal commitment to what you believe and this brings **praise and glory** and **honor** to Jesus Christ, and **revelation of HIM** to them. And they are faced with a decision – surrender to Him or reject Him.

Revelation 2:10 **Do not fear** what you are about to **suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may **be tested**, and you will have **tribulation** ten days. **Be faithful until death**, and I will give you the crown of life.

The Purpose of the Wilderness Deuteronomy 8:2-5

You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, **testing you**, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. (3) He humbled you and **let you be hungry**, and fed you with manna, . . . that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. (4) Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. (5) Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was **disciplining you** just as a man disciplines his son.

2. To PERFECT our CHARACTER.

1 Peter 2:19-20 This finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when **suffering** unjustly. (20) For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is **right** and **suffer** for it you **patiently endure** it, **this finds favor with God**.

God uses **problems** to **PERFECT** you. **Problems**, when responded to correctly, are **character builders**. God is FAR MORE INTERESTED in your CHARACTER than your COMFORT.

Romans 5:3-4 (LB) We can **rejoice** when we run into **problems**. . . they help us learn to be **patient**. And patience develops strength of **character** in us and helps us **trust God more** each time we use it until finally our **hope** and **faith are strong and steady**.

Hebrews 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to PERFECT the author of their salvation through SUFFERINGS.

Hebrews 5:8 Although He was a Son, He **learned obedience** from the things which He **suffered**.

JESUS gave up His throne / His position / Heaven to be one of us, to live with us, to teach us and be the sacrifice for us.

Philippians 2:4-8 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but **emptied Himself**, taking the form of a **bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) Being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of **death**, even death on a cross.

HE SUFFERED the malice, mistrust and misunderstanding of men. He entered into our sufferings. He shared our sorrows. (Isaiah 53)

1 Peter 4:1-2 Therefore, since Christ has SUFFERED in the flesh, arm yourselves also **with the same purpose**, because **he who has SUFFERED in the flesh has ceased from sin**, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but **for the will of God**.

In like manner – through difficulties, problems, suffering - we are perfected for our work of ministry and service to others.

It produces in us **moral and spiritual victory** where we can stand in HIS strength and not depend on the flesh. Experience is the best teacher, but it carries the highest tuition fee.

- Joseph is a good example: hated by his brothers (Genesis 37:4) sold into slavery (37:27), tempted by a woman (39:12) in prison for two years (39:20; 40:1).

1 Peter 5:8-10 And after you have **suffered** for a little while, the God of all grace, . . . will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

James 1:2-4 Consider it all **joy** brethren, when you encounter various **TRAILS**, knowing that the TESTING of you FAITH produces **endurance**. And let endurance have its perfect result, **that you may be perfect and complete**, lacking in nothing. (5:10-11) As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take **the prophets** who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we count those **blessed who endured**. You have heard of the **endurance of Job** and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

- Israel in the Wilderness continually complained, grumbled or murmured (1 Corinthians 10:10; Numbers 11:1). Refused to allow their character to be perfected.

Romans 5:3-4 And not only this, but we also rejoice in our **sufferings**, knowing that **suffering** brings about **perseverance**; and perseverance, proven **CHARACTER**; and proven character **hope**.

3. To Bring GLORY to HIS NAME

John 12:27-28 Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But **for this purpose** I came to this hour. FATHER, **glorify Your name**. Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and **will glorify it again**."

- Jesus had come to the time that, **to accomplish His mission**, He must face **great suffering**. It **will** be necessary for our mission also.

Hebrews 2:9-10 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the **suffering of death crowned with glory and honor**, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. (10) For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, **in bringing many sons to glory**, to perfect the author of their salvation through **sufferings**.

- **He did not ask to be delivered from the suffering. He knew it was necessary, and for a purpose.**
- His comfort was put aside **for His Father's glory**. As do many missionaries.

Much of the Church culture of the USA holds on to and believes that the **resurrection side of the cross** - the comfort side - is the **only side** we should ever encounter. This is wrong theology.

No! It is the "death side" of the cross that brings the FATHER GLORY! Then the resurrection side.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and **dies**, it remains **alone**; but **if it dies**, it bears **much fruit**.

Luke 9:22 The Son of Man **must suffer** (1st.) many things and be rejected and **be killed** and be **raised up** (2nd.) on the third day.

Through suffering, agony, pain and death:

- ❖ Sin was defeated. Death was defeated. satan was defeated.
- ❖ The LORD's people were Justified and Redeemed.

Jesus is our example; our life should also be **FIRST** and **FOREMOST** to **bring GLORY to our Heavenly FATHER** at whatever cost.

As satan tempted JESUS, **so will he tempt us to seek our own glory and not the glory of our FATHER:** *And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory"* Luke 4:6

- Jesus brought GLORY to HIS FATHER by showing the extent HE would go to Redeem HIS children. By PAYING THE PRICE TO REDEEM.

Luke 24:26 *Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*

- JESUS PAID THE PRICE to Redeem – opened the Gates to Heaven – then on the cross, said: **It is finished!** (John 19:30). **His work** of Redemption **was finished.**
- **Then** JESUS **gave US** THE MISSION OF TAKING THE GOOD NEWS TO EVERYONE - The Great Commission; Matthew 28:19.

As His mission REQUIRED Sacrifice and Suffering,
so WILL our mission REQUIRE SACRIFICE and SUFFERING.

This is what Paul meant in Colossians 1:24

Now I rejoice in my sufferings FOR YOUR SAKE, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

What is lacking is the SUFFERING NECESSARY for those of every tribe, tongue and nation to know WHO JESUS is and WHAT HE has done for them.

1 Peter 2:21-23 *For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, (22) who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; (23) and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He said no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously*

Revelation 5:12 **Worthy is the Lamb** that was slain **to receive** power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and **glory** and blessing."

Revelation 5:13 *To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.*

4. The SUFFERING of SOME SICKNESS Is For HIS GLORY.

John 11:4 This **sickness** is not unto death, but **for the glory of God**, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.

John 9:2-3 Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it **was in order that the works of God** might be displayed in him.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, **to keep me from exalting myself**, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan to torment me — to keep me from exalting myself! (8) Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. (9) And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for **power is perfected in weakness**. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (10) 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.

5. To Prepare Us For Ministry

John 12:24-26 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and **dies**, it remains alone; **BUT if it dies, it bears much fruit**. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

This verse clearly tells us:

- Death precedes fruit and death precedes new life.
- There is no resurrection until there is first death

This brings out the truth that there are **TWO SIDES to the Cross**.

- ❖ The **Suffering Side** first and then **The Life Side**.
- ❖ For a Fruitful life and ministry – **BOTH SIDES of the CROSS MUST BE ENCOUNTERED and EXPERIENCED**.

Matthew 10:38-39 He who does not **take his cross** and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and **he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.**

Romans 8:35-37 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) Just as it is written, "**FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.**" (37) But **in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.**

2 Corinthians 4:7-12 . . . 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, THAT the LIFE of Jesus also may be manifested** in our body. For we who live are **constantly being delivered over to DEATH** for Jesus' sake, **that the LIFE of Jesus also may be manifested** in our mortal flesh. **So DEATH works in us but LIFE in you.**

The above verse again emphasis the necessity of the **TWO SIDES OF THE CROSS** for ministry to others.

We must experience the DEATH SIDE before we can fully experience the RESURRECTION SIDE.

Philippians 3:10-11 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the **fellowship of His sufferings**, being **conformed to His death**; (11) **IN ORDER THAT I MAY ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.**

- This verse clearly brings out BOTH sides of the cross, AND THE ONLY ORDER IN WHICH THEY WILL BE EXPERIENCED.

We become a living example of the LOVE and SUFFERING of Jesus for others to see and learn of HIM.

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 ". . . Love suffers long ... bears all things ... endures all things ... Love never fails."

John 15:2 every branch that bears fruit, **He prunes** it SO THAT it may bear **more fruit**. (8) **By this is my Father glorified**, that **you bear much fruit**, and so **prove to be My disciples**.

Matthew 10:16-25 Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . **scourge you** in their synagogues; (18) and you will even be brought before governors . . . (21) Brother will **betray** brother to death, . . . (22) You will be **hated** by all because of My name, . . . (23) But whenever they **persecute you** . . . (24) A disciple is not above his teacher. . . (25) It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher . . .

- ❖ It is especially hard for Americans to learn to die to self and to the pleasures of this world.
- ❖ A consumer-driven culture results in a strong desire to satisfy every want and to avoid suffering.
- ❖ This has carried over to a theology of health, wealth and prosperity now, with no suffering.

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**

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in **suffering for the gospel** according to the power of God

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 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 affliction** so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the **SUFFERINGS** of Christ are ours **in abundance**, so also our COMFORT is abundant through Christ."

- THE COMFORTER - The Holy Spirit - is always with us to comfort us in every situation. However, sometimes we reject His Comfort, His Words, and chose only to look at the negative side and allow BITTERNESS to poison our mind.
- We must be careful in our dealings with people. If all we give them is some knowledge from our heads and not the COMFORT OF GOD from experience, we can add to their bitterness.

6. To Protect Us and/or Guide Us

The LORD sometimes uses problems to **DIRECT** or **GUIDE** us.

Sometimes HE must light a fire under us to get us moving, and then open some doors and close others.

- Moses: knew he was to be a leader of his people. He took charge **in his way** and in **his time** and found a closed door (Exodus 2: 14-15). He completely gave up and ran to the wilderness. It took a "fire," a "burning bush" (Exodus 3) to get Moses moving in God's plan for his life and ministry.

Problems often point us in a new direction and motivate us to change.

The LORD has a PURPOSE / a PLAN / a MINISTRY for each one of us.

2 Timothy 1:9 who has **saved us and called us** with a holy calling, not according to our works, but **according to His own purpose and grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity

To find / obtain / and walk in HIS Purpose for our life, begins with:

FIRST: It is **revealed in HIS Word** and stated in many different ways:

Micah 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act **justly** and to love **mercy** and to **walk humbly** with your God.

SECOND: A deeper commitment:

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies** a living and **holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

The word "sacrifice" does not have the connotation of a pleasant, easy life. It requires laying down your life, your will. Taking up your cross. Obeying HIM. Living for others . . . not self.

It is possible to RESIST or MISS HIS Purpose for your life. Especially by rejecting HIS Word and HIS Will for your own will and desires.

Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers **rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.**

- **Jonah** rejected the Word and Will of the LORD, and you know what the result was. HE Will have HIS way. To resist HIS Will brings "whale size" problems into our life.

Romans 9:19 ". . . For who resists His will?"

Another example:

- **Paul and Silas** imprisoned and the jailer converted. Acts 16:22-34

When we are persecuted it is not only us but Jesus that suffers.

- Acts 9:5 And he said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom **you are persecuting.**

God uses problems to **PROTECT** you. A problem **can be a blessing in disguise** if it prevents you from being harmed by something more serious.

- **Joseph** had many problems with his brothers. They wanted to kill him, however to save his life the LORD put it on the heart of his older brother to sell him into slavery. The LORD **Protected** him.
- Later Joseph was falsely accused and placed in prison, all for the purpose of being in the right place (Egypt) at the right time to save a nation (Genesis 37-48). Problems **Guided** him.

7. Some SUFFERING Is The Result of GOD'S DISCIPLINE

God uses problems to **CORRECT** you. Some lessons we learn only through pain and failure. We tell our children not to touch a hot stove. But almost all children learned by being burned.

Sometimes we only learn the value of something ... health, money, a relationship. . . by losing it. David said: **It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.** (Psalm 119:71-72) and David was a man of integrity.

Hebrews 12:4-11 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your **striving against sin**; (5) and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the **discipline** of the LORD, nor faint when you are reprov'd by HIM; (6) for those whom the LORD loves HE **disciplines**, and he **scourges** every son whom HE receives. (7) It is for **discipline** that you **endure**; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not **discipline**? (8) But if you are without **discipline**, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (9) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to **discipline** us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? (10) For they **disciplined** us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us FOR OUR GOOD**, so that we may share His holiness. (11) **All discipline** for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have **been trained by it**, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

To help us be more fruitful, God will prune us.

John 15:1-2 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. (2) Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, **He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit**.

Psalms 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

We must realize this truth: God is at work in your life - even when you do not recognize it or understand it. But it is much easier and profitable when you cooperate with Him and endure the pain of suffering and quickly learn!

Philippians 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

The following is from the Devotional: "Jesus Calling" by Carol Young.
August 18

Expect to encounter adversity in your life, remembering that you live in a deeply fallen world. Stop trying to find a way that circumvents difficulties. The main problem with an easy life is that it masks your need for Me. When you became a Christian, I infused My very Life into you, empowering you to live on a supernatural plane by depending on Me.

Anticipate coming face to face with impossibilities: situations totally beyond your ability to handle. This awareness of your inadequacy is not something you should try to evade. It is precisely where I want you—the best place to encounter Me in My Glory and Power. When you see armies of problems marching toward you, cry out to Me! Allow Me to fight for you. Watch Me working on your behalf, as you rest in the shadow of My Almighty Presence.

Revelation 19:1 *"After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God"*

Psalm 91:1 *"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."*

The Beginning of Christian Persecution

The Historical Account of the LORD's Disciples:

Stephen was preaching the gospel in Jerusalem on the Passover after Christ's crucifixion. He was cast out of the city and stoned to death. About 2,000 Christians suffered martyrdom during this time (about 34 A.D.).

James, the son of Zebedee and the elder brother of John, was killed when Herod Agrippa arrived as governor of Judea. Many early disciples were martyred under Agrippa's rule, including Timon and Parmenas (about 44 A.D.).

Philip, a disciple from Bethsaida, in Galilee, suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified (about 54 A.D.).

Matthew, the tax-collector from Nazareth who wrote a gospel in Hebrew, was preaching in Ethiopia when he suffered martyrdom by the sword (about 60 A.D.).

James, the Brother of Jesus, administered the early church in Jerusalem and was the author of a book in the Bible. At the age of 94 he was beat and stoned, and finally had his brains bashed out with a fuller's club.

Matthias was the apostle who filled the vacant place of Judas. He was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

Andrew, the brother of Peter, preached the gospel throughout Asia. On his arrival at Edessa, he was arrested and crucified on a cross, two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground (thus the term, St. Andrew's Cross).

Mark was converted to Christianity by Peter, and then transcribed Peter's account of Jesus in his Gospel. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria in front of Serapis, their pagan idol.

Peter was condemned to death and crucified at Rome. Jerome holds that Peter was crucified upside down, at his own request, because he said he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord.

Paul suffered in the first persecution under Nero. Because of the converting impact he was having on people in the face of martyrdom, he was led to a private place outside the city where he gave his neck to the sword.

Jude, the brother of James, was commonly called Thaddeus. He was crucified at Edessa in about 72 A.D.

Bartholomew translated the Gospel of Matthew in India. He was cruelly beaten and crucified by idolaters there.

Thomas, called Didymus, preached in Parthia and India. He was thrust through with a spear by pagan priests.

Luke was the author of the Gospel under his name. He traveled with Paul through various countries and was supposedly hanged on an olive tree by idolatrous priests in Greece.

Barnabas, of Cyprus, was killed without many known facts about 73 A.D. **Simon**, surnamed Zelotes, preached in Africa and Britain, where he was crucified in about 74 A.D.

John, the "beloved disciple," was the brother of James. Although he suffered great persecution, including imprisonment where he wrote the book of Revelation, he was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.