

# GOD AND MY SUFFERING



“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies...

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 17

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In a world that does its best to minimize or medicate suffering and attempts to maximize pleasure, Christians must understand suffering is not meaningless. God is always working in and through our suffering to produce His greater purposes. On this side of eternity it is difficult to discern every meaning to every suffering ([Deuteronomy 29:29](#); [1Corinthians 13:12](#)) but we can understand a degree of God's purposes, of which here are a few:

✿ **Suffering humbles us to God's sovereignty** ([Job 1:21](#), [40:3-5](#); [Psalm 73:25](#); [Psalm 77](#), [139](#))

**Is my pride and arrogance causing me to have a sense of entitlement without recognizing God's sovereignty and requesting God's gracious blessings?**

✿ **Suffering identifies us with Jesus** ([2Cor 4:10-12](#); [Gal 6:17](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [1Peter 4:16](#))

**Am I attempting to isolate from God and God's people?**

- **Suffering teaches us to trust and depend on God's resources and not our own** ([Psalm 119:71](#); [2Cor 1:8-9](#); [12:7-10](#); [Philippians 4:11-13](#))

**Am I attempting solutions to my suffering from a human or worldly perspective?**

✿ **Suffering matures our faith and character** ([Romans 5:3-4](#), [8:28-29](#); [James 1:2-4](#); [1Peter 1:6-9](#))

**Is there an area of my life and spiritual growth that needs maturity?**

✿ **Suffering chastens us to holiness** ([2Corinthians 12:7](#); [Hebrews 12:5-29](#); [James 5:13-20](#))

**Is there an area of my life that needs surrendering and repentance to God?**

✿ **Suffering equips us to comfort others** ([Hosea](#); [2Corinthians 1:3](#), [4:7-18](#))

**Am I so self-focused that I am missing opportunities to see & share God's grace and comfort?  
How can I turn my misery into ministry?**

✿ **Suffering glorifies Jesus** ([John 9:3](#), [11:4](#), [12:23-28](#), [12:32](#), [17:1](#); [Romans 8:17-18](#); [1Peter 4:13](#))

**Am I seeking personal glory or credit for things in my life without gratitude to God?**

✿ **Suffering prepares us for redemptive death in hope of an eternal home** ([Psalm 90:10-12](#); [John 11:4](#), [15:2](#); [Romans 8:18-29](#); [2Corinthians 4:17 - 5:10](#))

**Am I holding too tightly to this world? Am I ready to face God for my eternal destiny?**

**Indeed**, it is humbling to reflect on each of these divine purposes for suffering. These purposes and questions do not make circumstances easier. However, they can inform the way we respond in the midst of suffering. God's Word and purposes should shape the way we think, feel and act. In our affliction we can be reminded that we do not have to be completely crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; not forsaken nor destroyed ([2 Corinthians 4:8-9](#)). Scripture provides us the words and prayers to reflect faith and moving forward in life. As you may go deep in suffering you may also grow deeper with the Savior.

The doorway of joy comes from the pavement of sorrow. We cannot go around suffering but only through it. These two experiences (sorrow and joy) can only be compatible when you understand the purpose of life from God's perspective.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus teaches us that suffering is inescapable and overwhelming, so we must prepare and pray (Luke 22:35-46). As servants of God we are not greater than the Savior who experienced the agony of crucifixion and the aloneness of the "cup" of God's wrath. We learn from Jesus that we must pray and persevere trusting in the great eternal hope of resurrection.

We trust this hope for you. Know you are not alone in Christ and with this church family.

Some further quotes as encouragement and inspiration in your journey...

**Samuel Rutherford** said that when he was cast into the cellars of affliction he remembered that the great King always kept his wine there.

**Charles Spurgeon** said, "they who dive in the sea of affliction bring up rare pearls."

**John Piper** "God intends for the afflictions of Christ to be presented to the world through the afflictions of His people. God really means for the body of Christ, the church, to experience some of the suffering He experienced so that when we proclaim the Cross as the way of life, people will see the marks of the Cross in us and feel the love of the Cross from us..." (Desiring God, pp.269-270) "We must talk so as to make suffering seem normal and purposeful, and not surprising in this fallen age. The forces of American culture are almost all designed to build the opposite worldview into our minds. Maximize comfort, ease, and security. Avoid all choices that might bring discomfort, trouble, difficulty, pain, or suffering. Add this cultural force to our natural desire for immediate gratification and fleeting pleasures, and the combined power to undermine the superior satisfaction of the soul in the glory of God through suffering is huge." (John Piper, *Counseling Suffering People*, JBC, Winter 2003)

**Jesus** said, "In this world you will have trouble. Take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).