

# Suffering

A Study by Franklin

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# SUFFERING

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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***

2 Timothy 3:12 *All who desire to **live godly** in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted.***

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*

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 **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

- Acts 5:41 Rejoiced to suffer for His name.
- Acts 7:58 stoned Stephen
- 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.

1 Peter 2:20-24 *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.*

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.*

1 Peter 4:13, 16-19 *to the degree that **you share in the sufferings** of Christ, keep on rejoicing . . . if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him **glorify God**. . . Therefore, let **those who suffer according to the will of God** entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

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

- Ephesians 6:10-18
- 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** 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 *For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life*

God often uses the problems in your life:

### 1. To Test Our Faith and Loyalty.

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.*

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 which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything 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** (1<sup>st</sup>.) many things and be rejected . . . . and **be killed** and be **raised up** (2<sup>nd</sup>.) on the third day.*

Through death, suffering, agony, pain:

- ❖ 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: thought 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.**

Psalm 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.*