

1. SUFFERING TEACHES US THE BADNESS OF HUMAN SIN

This answers the question of why we suffer. And suffering isn't just limited to persecution of being a believer, it evolves all of human suffering. Here are some truths we need to bear in mind when we endure and come face to face with suffering.

Suffering doesn't mean you have committed some sort of sin. Job is a perfect example of this. God asked Satan if he had considered his servant Job? Consider the magnitude of Job's losses. Children, livestock and the accusation of his wife and friends that he must have done something to deserve this. Job 2:9 **"Then his wife said to him, do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"** But Job's response to her was wise and one we should all learn from, Job 2:10, **"But he said to her, 'you speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?'"** Furthermore, the Scripture says **"In all this Job did not sin with his lips"** (Job 2:10b)

His friends weren't much help either. They assumed something sinister had taken place as well. And God answers his "counselors" in Job 42:7 **"It came about after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has."**

It was common thought to assume some sin or retribution of someone's sin was the response of someone suffering. John 9:1-3 **"As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind? Jesus answered, It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him."**

Suffering isn't a silent subject of the NT or Scripture for that matter. The word suffering and suffer appears 77 times in the NT. 2 Timothy 2:3 **"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus"** 2 Timothy 2:9 **"for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned."** 1 Peter 4:19 **"Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."** 1 Peter 5:10 **"After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."** Revelation 2:10 **"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."**

Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; 12:7-10 (Many if not all of the disciples died martyrs).

2. SUFFERING TEACHES US THE BREVITY OF LIFE

I won't spend a lot of time on this subject since we have covered it a lot. But let's be reminded of this, that is clearly a theme and subject in Scripture that's mentioned a lot. James 4:14 **"Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."** Proverbs 27:1 **"Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."** It may be a sobering theme, but it does remind us that life is not long in view of eternity. Human flesh isn't forever, Hebrews 9:27 **"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."**

Job understood this so well. I won't belabor this point but its worth noting. Job lost it all, literally. And he reminded us all of that. Job 14:1 **"Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil."** Job 7:6 **"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And come to an end without hope."** Job 9:25,26 **"Now my days are swifter than a runner; They flee away, they see no good, They slip by like reed boats, Like an eagle that swoops on its prey."**

What this reminds us of is life is short and suffering and trials bring about the reality that we are all dying.

3. SUFFERING BRINGS ABOUT A FUTURE GLORY

Suffering and trials make us long for heaven. Paul said this in Philippians 1:22-23 **"But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."**

We are children of God and heirs of Christ. Therefore, we have all that He has. Vs. 17 gives us this hope, if we suffer with Him we will glorified with Him. The hope of John 14:1-3 **"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."**

Vs. 18 has two different translations, some translate **"glory to be revealed in us"** others **"to us."** The Greek word is *eis* which means *"into or unto"* so both are correct. Suffering for a believer is only temporary but the glory is eternal. The glory in portion to this life is not comparable. The glory never fades, never grows old and outweighs and outshines every possible distress we experience.

We hope for this glory and glorification, vs. 23-25. We will see the glory of God and it will be revealed in us. 2 Corinthians 3:18 **"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed unto the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord."** The process of sanctification is doing just this. 1 John 3:2-3 **"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope set**

on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” Even our bodies will be transformed to be like His, Philippians 3:21 **“Who will transform the body of our lowly condition into conformity with His glorious body, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”** Vs. 23 (Romans 8) defines our bodies will be transformed in to a glorified body, from whatever state it is in.

1 Peter 5:1 **“Therefore, I urge elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and one who is also a fellow partaker of the glory that is to be revealed.”**

Romans 8:25 describes the desire of every true believer, the hope of eternal life, a glorified body and perfection with no struggle with the flesh. This is what suffering and trials do for the believer. They bring about a closer and more narrow vision of home. We all long for this whether we realize it or not. Suffering is a necessary part of the longing process. It brings our vision into sight. Paul argued if we have hope in this life only we are miserable.

Conclusion: The path to glory is paved with suffering. Christ suffered more than anyone else, yet without sin. Philippians 3:10 **“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”** Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and let's not a few closing points:

- We don't lose heart in our current climate or state we are in
- Even though the outer man is decaying, and it is for all of us, our inner man, the redeemed soul is being transformed more and more into what Christ wants us to be like
- This light, momentary affliction is only shaping us for glory that cannot be imagined

Consider the most difficult thing you have endured or are enduring and consider it will not compare to the glory to be revealed to us and in us.