

# DOCTRINE OF SUFFERING

May 17, 1987

- I. Preliminary considerations.
  - A. This doctrine will focus on the believer and the divine viewpoint respecting his sufferings.
  - B. The Christian faces the same sufferings or tests that are common to all men (1Cor.10:13).
  - C. The difference is that the positive believer's sufferings and tests all work together for his good (Rom.8:28).
  - D. While in the midst of them, the believer can have inner peace (Jn.16:33), and happiness (Jam.1:2).
  - E. Some of the categories of suffering include:
    - 1. Persecution.
    - 2. Living grace testing.
    - 3. Health tests.
    - 4. Various dangers.
    - 5. Temptation.
  - F. See Doctrine of Testing.
  
- II. Suffering cannot separate us from God's plan (Rom.8:35-39). No common human problem (CHP) can remove us from God's plan, including death.
  
- III. The sufferings of Jesus Christ (Isa.53:3,4):
  - A. Were the subject of prophecy (Acts.3:18; 17:2,3; cp. Mt.16:21; Lk.24:26,46).
  - B. Include His unique sufferings as related to bearing sins (Heb.2:9,10; 13:12).
  - C. Include His resistance to all manner of temptation (Heb.2:18; 4:15).
  - D. Include such things as:
    - 1. Rejection by His own people (Isa.53:3; cp. Jn.1:11).
    - 2. Could not tap into His deity for His own benefit (Phil.2:58).
    - 3. Betrayal by a close associate (Ps.41:9; cp. Mt.10:4).
    - 4. Forsaken by His disciples (Zech.13:7; cp. Mk.14:50).
    - 5. Accused by false witnesses (Ps.35:11; cp. Mt.26:59-61).
    - 6. Hit and spit upon (Isa.50:6; cp. Mt.26:67; Lk.22:63).
    - 7. Mocked (Ps.22:7,8; cp. Mt.27:31).
    - 8. Scourged (Mt.27:26).
    - 9. Hands and feet pierced (Ps.22:16; cp. Lk.23:33; Jn.20:25).
    - 10. Crucified with thieves (Isa.53:12; cp. Mt.27:38).
    - 11. Rejected by His own family (Jn.7:5).
    - 12. Hated for no reason (Ps.69:4; cp. Jn.15:25).
    - 13. Friends stood at a distance (Ps.38:11; cp. Lk.23:49).
    - 14. People shaking their heads (Ps.109:25; cp. Mt.27:39).
    - 15. Garments removed and divided (Ps.22:18; cp. Jn.19:23,24).
    - 16. Stared at (Ps.22:17; cp. Lk.23:35).

17. Suffered thirst, for which gall and vinegar were offered Him (Ps.69:21; cp. Mt.27:34; cp. Jn.19:28).
- E. Christ is our supreme example under suffering (1Pet.2:21,23).
- IV. Suffering is a regular part of the Christian's experience in the cosmos (Jn.16:33 "*In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world*").
- A. Jesus taught His disciples to expect it (Jn.15:17-20).
- B. Paul briefed new converts on the eventuality of it (Acts.14:22 "*strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'*").
- C. There is both a variety and an abundance of CHPs for the believer in time (referred to as Phase 2 of the plan of God; Ps.34:19; 2Cor.1:5; 1Pet.1:6).
- D. The Christian way of life also has various blessings that parallel our CHPs (Mk.10:28-31).
- E. We will be persecuted for the truth (1Thess.1:6; 2Tim.3:12).
- V. All suffering and testing are accompanied by comfort and encouragement from the Lord (2Cor.1:4-7).
- A. The more you face sufferings that are undeserved, the more you can expect to be encouraged by God (2Cor.1:3).
- B. But you must be in fellowship and looking for the many forms in which this comfort comes to you.
- C. Obviously, complete deliverance from the test brings comfort, but God also comforts you while under the test itself (2Cor.1:8-11; 1Thess.3:6-8).
- VI. Undeserved suffering is the category of suffering that brings blessing to the believer.
- A. First Peter is the epistle of undeserved suffering, as seen in the expressions:
1. Doing right (1Pet.2:15,20; 3:6,17).
  2. Suffering unjustly (1Pet.2:19).
  3. Prove zealous for what is good (1Pet.3:13).
  4. Suffer for the sake of righteousness (1Pet.3:14).
  5. Share the sufferings of Christ (1Pet.4:13).
  6. Suffer as a Christian (1Pet.4:16).
  7. Suffer according to the will of God (1Pet.4:19).
- B. The epistle deals with their persecutions by those from the outside (mainly verbal slander).
- C. Such suffering finds favor with God (1Pet.2:19,20).
- D. The believer is not to fear such attacks (1Pet.3:14,15).
- E. He is not to be ashamed (1Pet.4:16).
- F. Deserved suffering brings no blessing or cursing or divine discipline (1Pet.2:20; 3:17; cp. 4:15).
- G. Believers are not to be surprised when negative volition persecutes and maligns them (1Pet.4:12; 1Jn.3:13).
- VII. The mental attitude toward suffering that the adjusted believer is to possess.
- A. Inner peace (Jn.16:33; Phil.4:6,7).

- B. Inner happiness (2Cor.7:4; Jam.1:2; 1Pet.4:13).
  - C. Must be willing to do so (Rom.12:12; Phil.1:29; 2Tim.2:3,9).
- VIII. Suffering produces the virtue of patience (Rom.5:3,4; Jam.1:2-4).
- A. Suffering and surpassing grace blessing in eternity (SG3).
  - B. Suffering and the tests of the Christian way of life which we pass accumulate P3 reward (1Pet.1:3-7; Jam.1:12).
  - C. Those who remain positive under the various testings and sufferings associated with the body of death reap surpassing grace reward in P3 (2Cor.4:17,18).
  - D. Our present sufferings pale when compared to our P3 glory (Rom.8:18; 2Cor.4:17; 1Pet.5:10).
  - E. To the extent you are willing to acclimate to your allotted CHPs, you will inherit P3 reward (1Pet.4:13; cp. Rom.8:17).
- IX. Some things to keep in mind.
- A. The Lord knows your sufferings and will deliver you from them all (Ex.3:7; Ps.9:12; 35:10).
  - B. God will not put upon you tests you are not ready to handle (1Cor.10:13).
  - C. He will supply you with the grace to handle any test (Prov.3:34).
  - D. Failure to handle persecution and testing explains why some peel off from doctrine (Mt.13:20,21).
  - E. You will not face unique tests (1Pet.5:9; cp, 1Thess.2:14; 2Cor.1:7).
  - F. Suffering renders you worthy of God's kingdom (2Thess.1:5).
  - G. Your sufferings help complete the measure of suffering of the corporate body of Christ necessary before the Church's glorification (Col.1:24).
  - H. Avoid fear and soul fainting (Rom.8:15-17; Heb.10:32ff).

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