

From Beginning to End: Part 5 Pastor James Bell

Philippians 1:6 NLT

6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

From Beginning to End, God is working his master plan within our lives. From Beginning to End it will always be our beautiful surrender. From Beginning to End means a continual process. Part 5 will open our eyes to the surrender of accepting suffering.

What does suffering look like? Suffering can be experiences at different intensities within different areas.

Suffering can be found commonly within four areas:

- Physical
- Mental
- Affliction
- Hardship

Suffering will be found when our obedience to God and His word meets up with resistance and opposition from a fallen world.

Jesus said it best in Matthew 16:21

Matthew 16:21 NLT

21 From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly...this means that Jesus had been giving hints to what must take place. Up to this point He had not fully come out and spoken what was going to come to pass but the leading of the Holy Spirit kept Him in tune to the preparation.

The greek work for necessary is also translated as must. Its meaning implies to have need of or inevitable. It implies what has to take place. This part of the process is vital to move forward. It's not a recommendation to skip this part because it is the preparation for what is to come. This meaning is not popular among people. It is often viewed as negative but Jesus embraced it as he knew that it was vital to fulfill what had to take place at the end. When we leave out the parts that God has ordained then we end up with an ending that is incomplete. An ending that is evident of our unwillingness to accept what God desired to purpose within us and others. Within each of our spiritual walk we must accept the God appointed suffering. Suffering is painful to our flesh but we will find that suffering is necessary. If we want what God desires then the acceptance of suffering is inevitable.

Not the suffering that is self inflicted. Self imposed suffering is not God appointed suffering. Suffering for the cause of the Kingdom is the appointed adversity that brings about Spiritual maturity. This type of suffering matures our bond with Christ. This type of suffering refines our character. God appointed suffering brings our focus to obedience.

Romans 5:3 NLT

3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.

This way of thinking is contrary to the way the world operates. To rejoice means to boast or to give praise. How do you respond when problems and trials come your way? Let's look at how Paul kept himself prepared for accepting suffering.

Acts 20:19–24 NLT

19 I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. 20 I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. 21 I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus. 22 “And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, 23 except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. 24 But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

Humility is a key step in our acceptance. Paul never said that it didn't hurt. It is painful in but is important to know that how we respond keeps our heart in the proper position. Paul was prepared because “From Beginning to End” he followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we stay tuned to the Holy Spirit we will always be prepared for the season that is ahead of us. How we respond tells the position of our heart. Do we value our own selves over what God has orchestrated? Unless we finish our assignment then we will not finish well. Accepting the assignment is accepting everything that comes with it: the blessings and the suffering.

Romans 5:3–5 NLT

3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Many Christians do not want the adversity that comes with walking out everything that God has called us to. We are witnessing to many comfortable Christians because they have not accepted the God-appointed suffering that is supposed to accompany the walk. We have all heard the saying, “No pain, no gain”. How will you grow if you do not face opposition? God never called us to comfortable... He called us to carry our cross and what comfort is there in carrying a cross. The same cross that we are to die upon! Does this sound like comfort? We mature in the midst of suffering.

Philippians 1:29 NLT

29 For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.

Jesus was not automatically immune to suffering, he was just always triumphant over it. Why was this? Because Jesus was still flesh which means He had to accept what the Father had destined for Him. He had to surrender His will to the Father's will. How is this accomplished? By facing what we fear most! Death... but in reality it is spiritually dying to self. When we accept the testing permitted by God we are accepting death to self and we lose what we have been holding on to. When Jesus stood before His accusers He knew that they could not take His life because He had already accepted the suffering and surrendered His life to God. He accepted what God had ordained to take place from beginning to end.

Hebrews 12:1–2 NLT

1 ...let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Romans 8:17–18 NLT

17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. 18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

Being His heirs means we inherit all that is His. So as we share in His glory we share in His suffering. It's easy to go with the flow but against the flow is where the friction takes place. Going against the flow is what suffering is. Imagine walking down hill

verses walking up hill or going with the flow of the water verses going against the flow. This is the adversity that we must face. Remember Jesus said that it is necessary. It is inevitable.

Philippians 3:10 NLT

10 I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,

Suffering brings intimacy with Christ Jesus. Suffering brings us closer to Jesus. This is the drawing near to God and then He will draw near to you. Obedience in the midst of our suffering solidifies our bond.

1 Peter 4:1–2 NLT

1 So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. 2 You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.

Jesus had a made up mind and He displayed it by the way He lived. And we are challenged here today to walk in this same manner. No matter the call and no matter the price, we are to operate in obedience from beginning to end.

We are not rewarded by our talents or callings. It's how we steward them that determines how we are rewarded.

John 15:14–15 NLT

14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

Jesus saw their faithfulness and transitioned them from slaves to friends. And we know that friendship isn't anything that we hand over easily. It is a bond that is created. A bond that constitutes trust. And this is the same thing spiritually. Eternal trust must be earned in the same manner that the disciples earned the title friend. Obedience in suffering shows God that we can be trusted eternally. God does not promote talent, He promotes trustworthiness.

Matthew 24:9–10 AMP

9 Then they will hand you over to suffer affliction and tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 And then many will be offended and repelled and will begin to distrust and desert [Him Whom they ought to trust and obey] and will stumble and fall away and betray one another and pursue one another with hatred.

Jesus has already warned us that because of suffering affliction and tribulation that many will be offended and fall away. To many people want the easy road. They want the glory anointing upon their lives but they don't want the oil press. You will not have oil on your life if you don't embrace the press.

In closing:

1 Peter 4:12–16 NLT

12 Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. 13 Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. 14 If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. 15 If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. 16 But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!

Maturity is developed in the midst of suffering but don't be confused with God's appointed suffering. Suffering from illness or poverty is self-inflicted suffering. This suffering is because of ignorance and ungodly behavior. We are not bringing God glory because of our ignorance.

James 1:2 NLT

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.

Although suffering is painful and its experience is not gratifying to the flesh we are encouraged to carry our demeanor in a manner that is contrary to our flesh. How we reflect outwardly is the evidence of what we have accepted spiritually.

Let me pray with you!