

## **Transformed By Truth / Sunday, January 14, 2024**

The goal of our time together in this next session is to take the idea that we are to glorify God in all things and see how we platform that in the throes of a difficult circumstance or even a difficult life. Do we just roll over and give up? Do we seek to get out of the trial at any cost with the belief that a good God could never appoint hardship and certainly would not seek to actually use it for a higher purpose in our lives? Can marital strife, a hard relationship, sickness, wayward children, a lost job, financial struggle, a car accident, termites, a vicious snowstorm and every other hardship actually become instruments in God's hands to bring about something magnificent that changes us into His image and brings Him even greater glory? That's what we're going to explore today.

So to start us out, I believe what we are talking about today should be part of the very beginning of discipleship with those who are professed new believers. If you remember the parable of the 4 seeds, one of those seeds did not take because of trials. I believe people need to know suffering is part of the Christian life: denying self, considering others more important, humbling ourselves, repenting, worshipping our way through trials. How many people do you know that were professed believers but slipped away because hard times come? Something to think about.

Because of that, the sheet you have is for your use during this talk. One section, write down people you know that could use some insight into how we handle trials and suffering for God's glory. The second section is for to make note of struggles, trials, suffering, hardships in your own life, up until now, that you have seen God do what we are talking about today.

These are for your use only, but know that you will get a full set of my notes at the end of class for you to use to help others. All the verses are written out in these notes as well.

## **THE BEGINNING AND END OF TRIALS AND SUFFERING**

### **1. *Trials & suffering are unnatural***

- God's original creation was very good (**Gen. 1:31**)  
And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
- In the garden, Adam & Eve experienced perfect harmony with each other and with God (Gen. 2)

### **2. *When Adam & Eve sinned, suffering entered God's good creation (Gen. 3)***

- Physical suffering – death (2:17; 3:19), painful childbearing (3:16), difficult work (3:17-19)

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil | you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat<sup>4</sup> of it you mshall surely die.” **Genesis 2:17**

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; <sup>o</sup>for you are dust, and <sup>p</sup>to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:19

- Relational suffering – alienation from God (3:8-10, 23-24), alienation between people (3:12), marital discord (3:17)
- Emotional/psychological suffering – guilt & shame (3:7-10), fear (3:8-10)
- As a result, suffering is universally experienced (Rom. 8:20-23)

**Romans 8:20-23** For the creation <sup>p</sup>was subjected to futility, not willingly, but <sup>q</sup>because of him who subjected it, in hope **21** that <sup>r</sup>the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. **22** For we know that <sup>s</sup>the whole creation <sup>t</sup>has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. **23** And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have <sup>u</sup>the firstfruits of the Spirit, <sup>v</sup>groan inwardly as <sup>w</sup>we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, <sup>x</sup>the redemption of our bodies.

**Are you sensing a greater escalation of groaning in these current days?**

**TEACHER NOTES:** In a profound sense, all suffering is a result of sin. The Fall brought with it every form of suffering we experience in this world. This does not mean that suffering is directly caused by sin, as if there is a 1:1 correlation between a person’s sin and their suffering. It simply means that if sin had never entered the world, there would be no need for this lesson. It is human beings, enticed by Satan, who are responsible for the massive suffering seen in our world.

### **3. God suffers with his creatures**

- Sin and its consequences grieve God (Gen. 6:5-6; Eph. 4:30)

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every <sup>c</sup>intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. **6** And <sup>d</sup>the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it <sup>e</sup>grieved him to his heart. **Genesis 6:5,6**

And <sup>d</sup>do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, <sup>e</sup>by whom you were sealed for the day of <sup>f</sup>redemption. **Ephesians 4:30**

## **SO WHAT DOES GOD DO ABOUT OUR GREATEST SUFFERING?**

- God immediately promised a coming rescuer who would defeat the Serpent and suffer in the process (Gen. 3:15)

**Genesis 3:15** I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring<sup>s</sup> and <sup>h</sup>her offspring; <sup>h</sup>he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

- This promised rescuer who suffers – Jesus – turns out to be God himself (John 1:1-3, 14; Phil. 2:5-11; Acts 20:28)

**John 1:1-3** In the beginning was <sup>b</sup>the Word, and <sup>c</sup>the Word was with God, and <sup>d</sup>the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** <sup>e</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

**John 1:14** And <sup>z</sup>the Word <sup>a</sup>became flesh and <sup>b</sup>dwelt among us, <sup>c</sup>and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son<sup>4</sup> from the Father, full of <sup>d</sup>grace and <sup>e</sup>truth.

**Philippians 2:5-11** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>1</sup> **6** <sup>p</sup>who, though he was in <sup>q</sup>the form of God, did not count equality with God <sup>r</sup>a thing to be grasped,<sup>2</sup> **7** but <sup>s</sup>emptied himself, by taking the form of a <sup>t</sup>servant,<sup>3</sup> <sup>u</sup>being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by <sup>v</sup>becoming obedient to the point of death, <sup>w</sup>even death on a cross. **9** <sup>x</sup>Therefore <sup>y</sup>God has <sup>z</sup>highly exalted him and bestowed on him <sup>a</sup>the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus <sup>b</sup>every knee should bow, <sup>c</sup>in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and <sup>d</sup>every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is <sup>e</sup>Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Acts 20:28 <sup>a</sup>y careful attention to yourselves and to all <sup>m</sup>the flock, in which <sup>n</sup>the Holy Spirit has made you <sup>o</sup>overseers, <sup>p</sup>to care for <sup>q</sup>the church of God,<sup>5</sup> which he <sup>r</sup>obtained <sup>s</sup>with his own blood

- Jesus, the God-man, took on flesh so that by dying he **WOULD** destroy the one who brought death into God's good creation, the devil (Heb. 2:14)

**Hebrews 2:14-16** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise <sup>h</sup>partook of the same things, that <sup>i</sup>through death he might <sup>j</sup>destroy <sup>k</sup>the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who <sup>l</sup>through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. **1**

#### ***4. God will one day end all suffering (Rev. 21:1-22:5)***

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and <sup>i</sup>death shall be no more, <sup>j</sup>neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:4

- The death and resurrection of Jesus secured victory over death (1 Cor. 15:54-57)

**1 Corinthians 15:54-55** **53** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and <sup>w</sup>this mortal body must put on immortality. **54** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: <sup>x</sup>"Death is swallowed up in victory." **55** <sup>y</sup>"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" **56** The sting of death is sin, and <sup>z</sup>the power of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God, <sup>a</sup>who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Just like in the garden, God will once again live among his people (Rev. 21:3)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, <sup>f</sup>the dwelling place<sup>1</sup> of God is with man. He will <sup>g</sup>dwell with them, and they will be his people,<sup>2</sup> and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and <sup>i</sup>death shall be no more, <sup>j</sup>neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” **Revelation 21:3,4**

- The curse pronounced in Genesis 3 will finally be removed (Rev. 22:3), and there will be no more suffering (Rev. 21:4)

**TEACHER NOTES:** Jesus has suffered on our behalf, and through his resurrection he has conquered death. One day he will fully renew all of creation, but we still live in an age marked by trials & suffering. It’s universal. Each one of us suffers – some people more than others, and some seasons more than others – but we all suffer. Because of its universality, it is crucial that we learn how to walk through trials & suffering in a godly way.

## THE VARIETIES OF TRIALS AND SUFFERING

### *1. Suffering as a result of our own sin (Ps. 107:17)*

- David – after his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, the child conceived dies and his family unravels. All of this is predicted beforehand by the prophet Nathan as a direct result of David’s sin (1 Sam. 12:9-12).
- Ananias & Sapphira – The Lord strikes them dead after they lied to make themselves look more generous than they really were (Acts 5:1-11).
- The proper response when our own sin causes our suffering is confession & repentance (2 Sam. 12:13; Psalm 32; Psalm 51), though this doesn’t necessarily remove sin’s consequences (2 Sam. 12-18)

David said to Nathan, <sup>i</sup>“I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, <sup>j</sup>“The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. **2 Samuel 12:13, Psalm 32, 51**

**Read Psalm 32, 51, 38.**

### *2. Innocent suffering*

- The suffering of mystery

- Job – Though his friends argue incessantly that Job must have sinned to deserve his suffering, in reality he was described by God himself this way: “there is none like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil.” (Job 1:8)

But remember, Job valued this at the end. I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 therefore I despise myself, and repent<sup>1</sup> in dust and ashes.” Job 42:5,6

- Suffering for righteousness’ sake
  - Paul – the apostle was stoned, whipped, beaten, imprisoned, threatened, slandered, deserted by friends, suffered poverty, all because of his efforts to spread the gospel and plant churches (see 2 Cor. 11:23-29)

2 Corinthians 11:23-29 Are they <sup>b</sup>servants of Christ? <sup>c</sup>I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, <sup>d</sup>far more imprisonments, <sup>e</sup>with countless beatings, and <sup>f</sup>often near death. **24** Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the <sup>g</sup>forty lashes less one. **25** Three times I was <sup>h</sup>beaten with rods. <sup>i</sup>Once I was stoned. Three times I <sup>j</sup>was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; **26** on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, <sup>k</sup>danger from my own people, <sup>l</sup>danger from Gentiles, <sup>m</sup>danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; **27** <sup>n</sup>in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, <sup>o</sup>in hunger and thirst, often without food, <sup>2</sup>in cold and exposure. **28** And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for <sup>p</sup>all the churches. **29** <sup>a</sup>Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

- The suffering of loss
  - Mary & Martha – The sisters of Lazarus grieve over the death of their brother, and even Jesus himself, who is about to raise Lazarus from the dead, weeps (John 11).

**3. *Because of the variety of suffering in this world, we must not have a one-size-fits-all response to it. We must be sensitive, thoughtful, and wise in the way we approach each person who is suffering.***

## GOD’S PURPOSE IN SUFFERING

### **1. *God is sovereign over all trials & suffering***

- God was sovereign over Jesus’ sufferings (Acts 2:23; 4:27)

23 this Jesus, <sup>3</sup> <sup>h</sup>delivered up according to <sup>i</sup>the definite plan and <sup>j</sup>foreknowledge of God, <sup>k</sup>you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. **24** <sup>l</sup>God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because <sup>m</sup>it was not possible for him to be held by it. **Acts 1:23,24**

or truly in this city there were gathered together against your <sup>u</sup>holy servant Jesus, <sup>v</sup>whom you anointed, both <sup>w</sup>Herod and <sup>x</sup>Pontius Pilate, along <sup>y</sup>with the Gentiles and <sup>z</sup>the peoples of Israel, **28** <sup>a</sup>to do whatever your hand and <sup>b</sup>your plan had predestined to take place. **Acts 4:27**

- God was sovereign over Job's sufferings (Job 1:12; 2:6)

And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord. Job 1:12

6 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." Job 2:6

- God is sovereign over the suffering of Christians (John 21:18-19; Acts 9:16; Rom. 8:28-29; Rev. 6:10-11)

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, <sup>e</sup>you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." 19 (This he said to show <sup>f</sup>by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, <sup>g</sup>"Follow me." John 21:18,19

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for <sup>w</sup>he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name <sup>x</sup>before the Gentiles and <sup>y</sup>kings and the children of Israel. 16 For <sup>z</sup>I will show him how much <sup>a</sup>he must suffer <sup>b</sup>for the sake of my name." Acts 9:16, 17

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together <sup>h</sup>for good, <sup>8</sup> for <sup>i</sup>those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he <sup>f</sup>foreknew he also <sup>k</sup>predestined <sup>l</sup>to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be <sup>m</sup>the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:28, 29

10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, <sup>7</sup>holy and true, <sup>a</sup>how long <sup>b</sup>before you will judge and <sup>c</sup>avenge our blood on <sup>d</sup>those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then they were each given <sup>e</sup>a white robe and <sup>f</sup>told to rest a little longer, <sup>g</sup>until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers <sup>3</sup> <sup>h</sup>should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. Revelaion 6:10,11

- God promises never to allow any trial to be more than we can bear and will always provide a way of escape from sin (1 Cor. 10:13)

13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. <sup>w</sup>God is faithful, and <sup>x</sup>he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

## 2. God has many good purposes for trials & suffering

- God uses suffering to glorify himself (John 9)

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, <sup>c</sup>"Rabbi, <sup>d</sup>who sinned, <sup>e</sup>this man or <sup>f</sup>his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but <sup>g</sup>that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 We must <sup>h</sup>work the works of him who sent me <sup>i</sup>while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, <sup>j</sup>I am the light of the world." John 9:1-6

- God uses suffering to discipline his children & bear the fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:1-11)

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields <sup>o</sup>the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. **Hebrews 12:11**

**Jeremiah 29:11-14** For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare<sup>2</sup> and not for evil, <sup>x</sup>to give you a future and a hope. **12** <sup>y</sup>Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, <sup>y</sup>and I will hear you. **13** <sup>z</sup>You will seek me and find me, when you seek me <sup>a</sup>with all your heart. **14** I will be found by you, declares the Lord, <sup>b</sup>and I will restore your fortunes and <sup>c</sup>gather you from all the nations and all the places <sup>d</sup>where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

- God uses suffering to test & purify our faith (Job 23:10; Ps. 66:10; 1 Pet. 1:6-7)

**Job 23:10** But he <sup>y</sup>knows <sup>z</sup>the way that I <sup>a</sup>take; when he has <sup>b</sup>tried me, I shall come out as gold.

**Psalms 66:10-12** For you, O God, have <sup>l</sup>tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. **11** You brought us into <sup>m</sup>the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; **12** you let men <sup>n</sup>ride over our heads; we went through fire and through <sup>o</sup>water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

**1 Peter 1:6,7** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by <sup>p</sup>various trials, **7** so that <sup>q</sup>the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes <sup>r</sup>though it is tested by <sup>s</sup>fire—may be found to result in <sup>t</sup>praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- God uses suffering to produce perseverance & godly character (James 1:2-4; Rom. 5:3-5)

**James 1:2-4** Count it all joy, my brothers, <sup>2</sup> when you meet trials <sup>f</sup>of various kinds, **3** for you know that <sup>g</sup>the testing of your faith <sup>h</sup>produces steadfastness. **4** And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be <sup>i</sup>perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

**Romans 5:3-5** Not only that, but we <sup>f</sup>rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering <sup>g</sup>produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and <sup>h</sup>hope does not put us to shame, because God's love <sup>i</sup>has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- God uses suffering to conform believers to the image of Jesus (Rom. 8:28-29)

**Romans 8:28-29** And we know that for those who love God all things work together <sup>h</sup>for good, <sup>8</sup> for <sup>i</sup>those who are called according to his purpose. **29** For those whom he <sup>j</sup>foreknew he also <sup>k</sup>predestined <sup>l</sup>to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be <sup>m</sup>the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also <sup>n</sup>justified, and those whom he justified he also <sup>o</sup>glorified.

- God uses suffering to make us useful in ministry to others (2 Cor. 1:3-7)

**2 Cor. 1:3-7** Blessed be the <sup>g</sup>God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and <sup>h</sup>God of all comfort, **4** <sup>i</sup>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. **5** For as we share abundantly in <sup>j</sup>Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. <sup>1</sup>**6** <sup>k</sup>If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. **7** Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you <sup>l</sup>share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

- God uses suffering to teach us to rely on him (2 Cor. 1:8-9)

**2 Cor. 1:8,9** For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, <sup>2</sup> of <sup>m</sup>the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. **9** Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us <sup>n</sup>rely not on ourselves <sup>o</sup>but on God <sup>p</sup>who raises the dead.

- God uses suffering to keep us humble & display his power in us (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

So <sup>f</sup>to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, <sup>1</sup> <sup>g</sup>a thorn was given me in the flesh, <sup>h</sup>a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. **8** <sup>i</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. **9** But he said to me, <sup>j</sup>"My grace is sufficient for you, for <sup>k</sup>my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that <sup>l</sup>the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** <sup>m</sup>For the sake of Christ, then, <sup>n</sup>I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For <sup>o</sup>when I am weak, then I am strong. **2 Cor. 12:7-10**

- God uses suffering to wean us off of this world and create in us a longing for the new creation (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18)

**Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time <sup>n</sup>are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** So we do not lose heart. <sup>f</sup>Though our outer self<sup>4</sup> is wasting away, <sup>g</sup>our inner self <sup>h</sup>is being renewed day by day. **17** For <sup>i</sup>this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, **18** <sup>j</sup>as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

- God uses suffering to reveal our heart (Matt. 13:20-21)

**Matthew 13:20-21** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately <sup>o</sup>receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but <sup>p</sup>endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word,

## GOD'S INSTRUCTION IN SUFFERING

1. Expect to face trials (Matt. 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 4:12; Phil. 1:29, 3:10; Rom. 8:22-23; 2 Tim. 3:1, 12)



**Matthew 10:24-25** A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant<sup>6</sup> above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. <sup>8</sup>If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign<sup>7</sup> those of his household.

**1 Peter 4:12** Beloved, do not be surprised at <sup>2</sup>the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

**Philippians 1:29** For <sup>c</sup>it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also <sup>b</sup>suffer for his sake,

**Philippians 3:10** that I may know him and <sup>t</sup>the power of his resurrection, and <sup>f</sup>may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may <sup>k</sup>attain the resurrection from the dead.

**Romans 8:22-23** For we know that <sup>s</sup>the whole creation <sup>t</sup>has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have <sup>u</sup>the firstfruits of the Spirit, <sup>v</sup>groan inwardly as <sup>w</sup>we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, <sup>x</sup>the redemption of our bodies.

**2 Timothy 3:1-5** But understand this, that <sup>y</sup>in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be <sup>z</sup>lovers of self, <sup>a</sup>lovers of money, <sup>b</sup>proud, <sup>b</sup>arrogant, abusive, <sup>b</sup>disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 <sup>c</sup>heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, <sup>q</sup>not loving good, 4 <sup>r</sup>treacherous, reckless, <sup>e</sup>swollen with conceit, <sup>f</sup>lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but <sup>g</sup>denying its power.

**2 Timothy 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to <sup>v</sup>live a godly life in Christ Jesus <sup>w</sup>will be persecuted,

## 2. Remain firmly committed to the word of God, trusting and obeying it (2 Tim. 3:10-17)

**2 Timothy 3:10-17** You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me <sup>q</sup>at Antioch, <sup>r</sup>at Iconium, and <sup>s</sup>at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet <sup>t</sup>from them all <sup>u</sup>the Lord rescued me. 12 Indeed, all who desire to <sup>v</sup>live a godly life in Christ Jesus <sup>w</sup>will be persecuted, 13 while <sup>x</sup>evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and <sup>y</sup>being deceived. 14 But as for you, <sup>z</sup>continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom<sup>1</sup> you learned it 15 and how <sup>a</sup>from childhood you have been acquainted with <sup>b</sup>the sacred writings, <sup>c</sup>which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 <sup>d</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that <sup>e</sup>the man of God<sup>2</sup> may be complete, <sup>f</sup>equipped <sup>g</sup>for every good work.

## 3. Go to Jesus, our High Priest who suffered for us and who understands what we're going through, for help (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16)

**Hebrews 2:17-18** Therefore he had <sup>n</sup>to be made like his brothers in every respect, <sup>o</sup>so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest <sup>p</sup>in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered <sup>q</sup>when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

**Hebrews 4:14-16** Since then we have <sup>d</sup>a great high priest <sup>e</sup>who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, <sup>f</sup>let us hold fast our confession. **15** For we do not have a high priest <sup>g</sup>who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been <sup>d</sup>tempted as we are, <sup>h</sup>yet without sin. **16** <sup>i</sup>Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

4. Remember the preciousness of the presence of God in trials & suffering (Ps. 23:4; Ps. 34:18; Is. 43:1-5; 1 Pet. 4:14)

**Psalm 23:4** Even though I <sup>k</sup>walk through the valley of <sup>l</sup>the shadow of death, <sup>3</sup>

I will <sup>m</sup>fear no evil, for <sup>n</sup>you are with me; your <sup>o</sup>rod and your staff, they comfort me.

**Psalm 34:18** The Lord is near to <sup>q</sup>the brokenhearted and saves <sup>r</sup>the crushed in spirit.

**Isaiah 43:1-2** But now thus says the Lord, <sup>m</sup>he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: <sup>n</sup>“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; <sup>o</sup>I have called you by name, you are mine. **2** <sup>p</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; <sup>p</sup>when you walk through fire <sup>q</sup>you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

**1 Peter 4:14** If you are insulted <sup>d</sup>for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory<sup>2</sup> and of God rests upon you.

5. Don't interpret your suffering as the withdrawing of God's love from you (Rom. 8:35-39)

**Romans 8:35-39** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? **36** As it is written, <sup>w</sup>“For your sake <sup>x</sup>we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” **37** No, in all these things we are more than <sup>y</sup>conquerors through <sup>z</sup>him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

6. Look to the reward we will receive at the consummation (Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 10:32-36; 11:24-26; 13:12-14)

**Matthew 5:10-12** “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for <sup>u</sup>theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** <sup>g</sup>“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely <sup>h</sup>on my account. **12** <sup>i</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for <sup>j</sup>so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time <sup>n</sup>are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**2 Cor. 4:16-18** So we do not lose heart. fThough our outer self<sup>4</sup> is wasting away, gour inner self his being renewed day by day. **17** For ithis light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, **18** jas we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

**Hebrews 10:32-36** But recall the former days when, after fyou were enlightened, you endured sa hard struggle with sufferings, **33** sometimes being tpublicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. **34** For uyou had compassion on those in prison, and vyou joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had wa better possession and an abiding one. **35** Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has xa great reward. **36** For yyou have need of endurance, so that zwhen you have done the will of God you may areceive what is promised.

**Hebrews 11:24-26** By faith Moses, when he was grown up, srefused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, **25** tchoosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy uthe fleeting pleasures of sin. **26** vHe considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to wthe reward.

**Hebrews 13:12-14** So Jesus also nsuffered ooutside the gate in order to sanctify the people pthrough his own blood. **13** Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear qthe reproach he endured. **14** For rhere we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

#### 7. Follow Jesus' example of suffering righteously (1 Pet. 2:20-25)

**1 Peter 2:20-25** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But yif when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21** For zto this you have been called, ybecause Christ also suffered for you, aleaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** bHe committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** cWhen he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, dbut continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** eHe himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we fmight die to sin and glive to righteousness. hBy his wounds you have been healed. **25** For iyou were straying like sheep, but have now returned to jthe Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

#### 8. Imitate those who have suffered well (1 Thess. 1:6)

**1 Thessalonians 1:6** And pyou became imitators of us qand of the Lord, for ryou received the word in much affliction, swith the tjoy of the Holy Spirit,

#### 9. Entrust yourself to our faithful and just God, resist the temptation to take revenge, and overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19-21; 1 Pet. 2:23, 4:19)

**Romans 12:19-21** Beloved, <sup>m</sup>never avenge yourselves, but leave it<sup>9</sup> to the wrath of God, for it is written, <sup>n</sup>“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” **20** To the contrary, <sup>o</sup>“if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

#### 10. Rejoice in the midst of suffering (Matt. 5:12; Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-4)

**Matthew 5:12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for <sup>l</sup>so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Romans 5:3-5** Not only that, but we <sup>f</sup>rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering <sup>g</sup>produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and <sup>h</sup>hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love <sup>h</sup>has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

**James 1:2-4** Count it all joy, my brothers, <sup>2</sup> when you meet trials <sup>f</sup>of various kinds, **3** for you know that <sup>g</sup>the testing of your faith <sup>h</sup>produces steadfastness. **4** And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be <sup>i</sup>perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

### WALKING ALONGSIDE SUFFERERS

1. Ask for wisdom, and think carefully about what kind of suffering this person is experiencing (James 1:5)

**James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, <sup>k</sup>let him ask God, <sup>l</sup>who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

2. Weep with those who are weeping (Rom. 12:15; Job 2:11-13)

**Romans 12:15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

3. Don’t be too quick to speak (Job 2:11-13)

**Job 2:11-13** Now when Job’s three <sup>a</sup>friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz <sup>b</sup>the Temanite, Bildad <sup>c</sup>the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to <sup>d</sup>show him sympathy and comfort him. **12** And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they <sup>e</sup>tore their robes and sprinkled <sup>f</sup>dust on their heads toward heaven. **13** And they sat with him on the ground <sup>g</sup>seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

4. Don’t be afraid to speak (Eph. 4:15)

**Ephesians 4:15** Rather, <sup>y</sup>speaking the truth in love, we are to <sup>z</sup>grow up in every way into him who is <sup>a</sup>the head, into Christ,

5. Pray with them and for them (Rom. 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:11)

**Romans 12:12** Rejoice in hope, <sup>a</sup>be patient in tribulation, <sup>b</sup>be constant in prayer.

**2 Corinthians 1:11** You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf <sup>t</sup>for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

6. Comfort those who are suffering with the same comfort you have received in suffering (2 Cor. 1:3-7)

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7** Blessed be the <sup>g</sup>God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and <sup>h</sup>God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> <sup>i</sup>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. <sup>5</sup> For as we share abundantly in <sup>j</sup>Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. <sup>1</sup> <sup>6</sup> <sup>k</sup>If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. <sup>7</sup> Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you <sup>l</sup>share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

7. Encourage those who are suffering, and be patient with them (1 Thess. 5:14)

**1 Thessalonians 5:14** 14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish <sup>p</sup>the idle, <sup>3</sup> <sup>q</sup>encourage the fainthearted, <sup>r</sup>help the weak, <sup>s</sup>be patient with them all.

8. Be willing to help in practical ways (Rom. 12:13)

**Romans 12:13** Contribute to the needs of the saints and <sup>d</sup>seek to show hospitality.

“Frequently in the midst of suffering the most comforting ‘answers’ are simple presence, help, silence, tears. Helping with the gardening or preparing a casserole may be far more spiritual an exercise than the exposition of Romans 8:28.” (D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?*, p. 249)

9. Help them use their trials & suffering to know God better (John 17:3)

**John 17:3** And this is eternal life, <sup>u</sup>that they know you, <sup>v</sup>the only <sup>w</sup>true God, and <sup>x</sup>Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

10. Help them look outward to love God and other people (Mark 12:30-31)

**Mark 12:30-31** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> <sup>x</sup>The second is this: <sup>y</sup>‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment <sup>z</sup>greater than these.”

**Questions we need to ask:**

- If the circumstances of my life are meant to be a platform for God's glory and yet some of these circumstances are unfavorable and not preferred by me, how should I respond to God in them?
- Why would God use things that are so hard to get me to be more godly? Why not use good and preferred circumstances to bring that about?
- How does my navigating trials in the fruit of the Spirit actually benefit things and make people see God differently?