

IV. The Place and Purpose of Suffering in the Life of a Christian

A. Suffering in a fallen world is inevitable.

1. Why do we as Christians respond so complainingly at times to suffering?
 - a. Have we accepted the lie that says we don't deserve suffering because we're innocent?
 - b. Are we unaware that the temporal consequences of sin have not been removed?
 - c. Have we forgotten that even Christ learned obedience by the things He suffered?
 - d. Do we assume that we know better than God what we need to experience?
 - e. Perhaps we have forgotten that we have a malicious enemy in Satan.
 - f. Are we assuming the object of redemption is happiness rather than holiness?
2. We need to remember or to learn these things about suffering:
 - a. It is an essential feature of the Christian life; in fact it is a calling (1 Pet. 2:21), a destiny (1 Thess. 3:3).
 - b. It is an evidence of God's love (Heb. 12:5f.) showing He seeks our betterment.
 - c. It is for our sanctification (Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 1:5; 4:10; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:9f.).
3. Scriptural reasons for suffering.
 - a. 2 Cor. 1:3-9: to learn trust; to comfort others.
 - b. 2 Thess. 1:4-7; Acts 14:22: become worthy of the kingdom of God.
 - c. Heb. 12:10: to share in His holiness.
 - d. Phil. 3:10f.: attain to the resurrection of the dead.
 - e. Rom. 5:3; Jas. 1:2-4; Heb. 10:32f.; 1 Pet. 5:10: produce endurance.
 - f. 2 Pet. 2:13; Gal. 6:7f; Jn. 5:14; Psa. 7:16: the ages of doing wrong.
 - g. 2 Cor. 4:7: produce an eternal weight of glory.
 - h. 1 Pet. 1:6f.: for praise and honor at the revelation of Christ.
 - i. Rom. 8:17f.: to enable us to be glorified with Him.
 - j. 1 Pet. 2:20ff.; 4:1; 2 Cor. 12:7; Psa. 119:68, 71: enable us to die to sin.

B. How should I handle this particular suffering?

1. Reflect: have I recently sinned?
2. Recall: God has His purpose though unknown to me; remember Job.
3. Remind: I remind myself that God is never unfair or unjust.
4. Remember: I must be careful of my response by remembering that:
 - a. God is sovereign, wise and good.
 - b. I am not all-wise or good.
 - c. I need to learn to trust without getting the reasons I desire.
 - d. I need to keep my eyes on Christ and His redemptive work.
 - e. I am not suffering more than I can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).
 - f. I need to persevere for His glory and my sanctification.