

A Guide To Suffering

Neville Salvetti

Suffering

You will never be asked to suffer more than you can handle

It will come to an end some way

You will be rewarded for suffering properly (Heb 11:6)

The Holy Spirit will help you and guide you in your suffering

When it is over your character will be more matured into the character of Jesus if you suffer correctly.

A prayer for when you are suffering or going through a trial

Lord,

I don't know what is happening or why I am here in this situation. All I know is that you are in control and are working for my eternal best and that you are not asking me to do anything you have not prepared me for and will help me to learn what I need to get through what is ahead. I thank you that the way to overcome the trial has already been prepared by you and that as I obey you I will walk in this way of escape.

I give this trial/suffering to you to be Lord off so Satan I command in Jesus' Name you must go from it to The Lord Jesus and take all you are doing in this trial with you.

In Jesus ' Name I command healing and restoration of all you did and ask you holy Spirit to fill my soul.

Thank You Jesus

He will deal with it in His Time for His Glory and your maturing through it. So if He does not answer immediately there are lessons to learn or perhaps a sin to deal with.

Satan may be allowed to test you so will not go when commanded to in Jesus' Name because it is not His Will at that moment. oO if Satan does not go then you know God is using it for your best.

Foreword

Either God is Love or He is not.

If God is Love you are a fool not to trust Him.

If He is not then we have no real hope of happiness now or after death or of a worthwhile future or purpose.

This Trinitarian God I speak of Loves us deeply and endures much from us.

He is kind and generous to us, not dealing with us as we deserve to be treated.

He is not jealous of anything we have as He has given it to us and rejoices in our enjoyment of these things.

He does not promote Himself or His accomplishments but does His best to develop us into our full potential regardless of the price He personally has to pay to do this.

He always behaves appropriately towards us, not seeking His own benefit but always what is best for us.

He guides us through it and strengthens us to keep going.

He is not easily angered by what we do but has infinite patience towards us as we work through the lessons He has prepared for us.

He never plans anything evil towards us but is always thinking of what is best for us.

He is saddened when we do wrong but rejoices joyfully over us when we do His Will.

He supports us in all we do.

He always Looks positively towards us and our abilities

There is never anything negative in God and His actions,

And endures all that is necessary as He works in our life to become like Him!

He is Love and will never fail us.

This is the character He seeks to mould us into – His Character!

He guides us to be like Him and removes all in us that hinders our being like Him, if we let Him.

He does this through the sufferings and trials He places us in which either removes things from our life, changes our character for better or brings us back to where we should be on the path He has prepared for us to walk in.

The potential to be like Him, Character wise, is in us and it is up to us whether we allow Him to release it in us or it is rejected by us.

It is through suffering this is developed and released and whether you allow God to work with and in you to release it is up to you and you will have no one to blame if you do not mature in any way into the character of God!

It requires trust in God's Love and faithful obedience and control of all our circumstances and the choice to believe in these is yours alone and no one else!

Frontispiece

Remember! Jesus will never ask you to do anything He has not prepared you for and will help you learn what He wants you to learn in the trial or experience you are going through. To do anything else would mean He is not a god of Love.

These trials have been specifically planned for you by God to get you where He want you to be and are a sign of His Love and the esteem that He has for you that He thinks you are worthy to go through them.

Remember, the trials are to mature and strengthen you and to prepare you for what is to come so He can give you the giftings and authority you need for the next phase of serving Him!

If you ask God to make you like Him or to draw you closer to Him and He puts you through trials to do this then you should not complain about the trials you are going through. The only other reasons a Christian has for trials is to be directed back to where God desires them to be. So to complain about the trial is also wrong because in both of these circumstances God is working for you best so you should really rejoice because He is showing His Love towards you!

Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

2Ch 18:18-21 Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left. And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so.

1Co 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

From the above it can be seen God limits Satan as to the type of trial he can place on us and to the degree of the trial he places on us. This is because God is Love and does not allow Satan to tempt us in areas we will fail in as we are not able to handle them and as well makes a way for us to defeat the temptation or trial if we accept this way of escape that God gives us.

You will only endure suffering to the degree you trust God's Love and Faithfulness in all that happens to you. Unless you trust God's Love and faithfulness toward you, you will not trust His stewardship of you as well as the plans He has for you.

Your are responsible for your attitudes to suffering and in this you are a steward of these.

Unless you believe God loves you and is Faithful to you in all you do. you will not trust Him sufficiently to endure the suffering He allows you to go through.

There is always a reward for trials faithfully dealt with (Heb 11:6).

Unless you trust God, your attitudes will not be correct. You will not suffer as you should and the lessons of the suffering will not be correctly learned

Do not look for a beginning or an end of the trial. Just look to Jesus to move in the midst of the chaos and the darkness. That is the important thing as the beginning and ending are in His perfect timing and should not be a concern for you. You should be more concerned with hearing His voice so you can do His will rather than the trial ending. Although it is always good when it is over.

You should not ask God 'how much longer' or 'when will you release me from this suffering'. That implies His timing is off. We should not ask 'why are you taking so long' or 'what are you doing as this implies He is not working for our good behind the scenes

Trust accepts what happens and gets on with what God calls them to do each day. The Mat 6:33 principles implies we suffer and accept it without questioning as in the future there is good in it for us (Rom 8:28).

These are other attitudes we need to be content with what God allows to happen to us.

Jeremiah 33:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

A part of his drawing is the refining and that occurs through trials and suffering in faith holding onto him. So in his love he draws us and refines us to be suitable to him.

So your suffering is part of His drawing you into his love and making you suitable for his purposes

Introduction

All that will live Godly lives as followers of Jesus will suffer, if only because they live in the kingdom of His enemy.

1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Mat_24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

God desires you to be in heaven with Him and is preparing a place for you to live there but also has to prepare you for this place, thus the trials and tribulations you go through as He strips from you all that is stopping you from getting to heaven, serving Him, or hindering you from relating to Him as you should or from reaching your full potential in Jesus. He does not have to do this but Loves you so does it for your sake.

To walk the path He has for you that prepares you for heaven you must obey Him, trust Him and believe His love is behind all that happens to you so that you will be content in what ever happens to you Matt 6:33, Rom 8:28). The trials He allows you to go through are a sign of His Love for you and you should not complain about God showering you with Love!

He has given you all you need to do His Will and prepares you to face any trial He has set up for you. He also makes a way through the trial and Temptation so you can overcome it. He would not be a God of love if He did not do this. He also guides you through it He is so concerned for you to succeed and be with Him in heaven. He limits what Satan can do to you (1 Cor 10:13) as He is in complete control of everything involved in your trial or temptation. You must believe this and act

in faith on this belief. You must believe in His Love, Purposes, Plans and Control or you will not endure as you should in these trials and temptations (1 Pet 5:22 He is our keeper and protector).

You must desire Him and to be with Him in heaven and relate to Him on earth correctly or you will not endure the trials and temptations He sends to change you so you will reach heaven and be with Him. You will only desire these if you understand His love for you and His desire for you to be with Him, otherwise doubt, uncertainty and fear will be stirred up in you by Satan so you will not relate to God as you should.

Earth is God's training ground for heaven and suffering is one of the main tools God uses to prepare you for heaven,.

You must also do what is required of you to get there and also believe it is worth striving to get there (Heb 11:6). Only as you value and desire a relationship with each member of God above anything else, only as you desire the things of God more than the things of earth, will you love and serve God as you should and walk the path He has prepared for you that guides you to heaven (Mat 6:33) and establishes the relationship God desires you to have with Him now as well as in heaven.

Introduction to suffering

Either the suffering is deserved or it is not deserved. It is either a result of something we have done or allowed by God for our benefit. You need to work out which is it as and act accordingly. If it is a sin you need to repent. If it is allowed by God you need to learn what the lessons is so that the suffering is shortened.

In the later category of undeserved suffering is the example of Jesus and those who suffer for their faith for Him. These are they that lay down their life for their friend Jesus, and show how great their love for Him is. In the former category are those that suffer the result of sin and are allowed to suffer so they will repent and turn away from their sins back to God and His Will for them. In this the degree of suffering is often in proportion to the resistance to repent.

To understand suffering one needs to have a correct perspective to it. This perspective is based on an appreciation of our role as a citizen of The Kingdom of God as well as on the relationship to its King resulting from our being a citizen of His kingdom.

We need trials to unsettle us so we do not become complacent or too comfortable as well as to stretch us and mature us through this discomfort being correctly dealt with by us.

Suffering is necessary for Christian growth and for sorting out those who wholeheartedly follow Jesus from those that halfheartedly follow Jesus. Only those that endure correctly to the end of their suffering will be saved!

God has evaluated where you are at in your Christian life and from before time has prepared the next step for you to walk in so that you will continue to grow as a Christian.

The trials which God gives you are His growth plan for you and are a result of His Love and personal interest in you.

As you patiently endure them you develop your faith in His Love and Control of your circumstances and worship Him through your obedient trust of Him in the trial. By this you bring Him Glory!

It is the patient suffering in trials trusting Him for all that happens which matures you as a Christian.

Don't look for a beginning or an end to the trial. Just look for God to move in the midst of the chaos and the darkness. That is the important thing as the beginning and ending are in His perfect timing and should not be a concern for us. We should be more concerned with hearing His voice so we can do His will than the trial ending. The principle in Matt 6:33 is for you to do what He tells you to each day and trust Him for what has happened and will happen, Anything else will make you insecure.

Do you need to know where God is in this trial? All you need to know is that He is in control of it all and all He does is out of His Love for you. This knowledge that He is in control and knows best should be the basis for enduring the trial. If you are not sure of this you will not endure as you should.

We should not ask God 'how much longer' or 'when will you release me from this suffering'. That implies His timing is off.

We should not ask 'why are you taking so long' or 'what are you doing (that I need to suffer longer)' as this implies He is not working for our good behind the scenes

We should not ask 'Why have you done this' as this questions His Love to to you.

Trust in God accepts what happens and gets on with what God calls them to do each day. The Mat 6:33 principle implies we should suffer and accept it without questioning as in the future there is good in it for us (Rom 8:28). If you do not trust Him in any area you need to ask why. Perhaps you need deliverance from or understanding of something

When you successfully finish a trial You complete a season in your life usually, especially if it has been a major trial. God will usually give you rest at the end of a season and prepare you for the next trial so He can teach you new aspects of the Christian life and new ministry skills. (Ministry = service of another).

He cannot give you a new season until you have the lessons of the trials you are in so that the lessons of the current season are learned. Until you have learned to handle the problems of the season you are in God cannot give you new problems to learn to deal with.

You need to remember that God will not ask you to do any thing He has not prepared you for and as you go through the trial He will teach you how to deal with the new problems He gives you to face. If He did not do this He would not be a God of Love.

At the end of each trial there is spiritual promotion, a rest or both. This is evidenced by increased spiritual authority or a period of apparent inactivity in ministry. There are also the rewards in heaven resulting from obedient service in the trial: to God and then to others as He has directed!

Our example in suffering is Jesus and it is proposed to examine His attitude to suffering as well as what other writers of The New Testament said about it.

The sufferings of Jesus were prophesied in the Old Testament and the four so-called "Servant Songs" deal with this more fully than elsewhere. They foretell the attitude of Jesus to suffering and these will be examined first. Then a few glimpses of the life of Jesus will be used to illustrate His

attitude to suffering and this will be followed by comments on specific passages in New Testament writings (apart from the Gospels).

The Four Servant Songs and the Example of Jesus

The servant (Jesus) is commissioned Is 42.1-4: God (His King) has anointed Him to minister. So He knows His mandate to minister is from God. He also knows His relationship to His King

His Trust in God's Purposes is described Is 49.1-6: He knows He is called by God and prepared by God (v1,2) yet His labour seems in vain but He declares the purpose and result of his suffering are for His King and thus the purposes of the King and have not been in vain and will glorify His King (v.3-5) This knowledge will be His strength because He knows God is using Him in all this (v6-9)

The servant's reliance on God is spoken of Is 50.4-9: His attitude to opposition is shown here. God has prepared Him for ministry (v4) and He listened to God completely (v5) and did not defend Himself when what He was teaching was attacked (v6). He trusted in God to help Him and as it was God's work He expected God to do something about the opposition (v6-9)

His steadfastness in God's purpose is declared Is 52.13 - 53.12: All His life he was rejected (52:13-13:3) and did not complain (53:7-9). His suffering was not for Himself but for others (53:4-6). God took delight in His obedient suffering servant and honoured Him greatly because of His Sacrificial Love towards God and others. The Servant knew it was better for one to suffer for the sake of the King and his Kingdom because of the benefit it would give to others.

As it can be seen Jesus did not defend Himself. He defended God's work and trusted God to defend Him. He trusted that God would reward Him for His suffering service as He believed in God's Love towards Him. This is the attitude all great people of God have, complete trust in God in all circumstances.

The example of Jesus.

Jesus never owned a home or land. He never had much in the way of possessions yet He never complained and trusted God to supply all His need. He preached and taught His Father's Kingdom and was rejected by those in religious authority who should have been helping Him. He warned them about their actions and words towards Him (and thus The Kingdom of His Father) but never defended Himself, only the Father and His Kingdom.

He fasted 40 days and nights and never complained of hunger. He was unjustly tried and tortured being put to death cruelly and never complained, defended Himself or spoke accusingly to his tormentors and judges. He only thought of others: the thief on the cross, His mother, and forgiveness for those who crucified Him as they did not know what they had done.

He went through all His Father had asked Him to go through in ministry as well as in the crucifixion. For the sake of humanity and out of Love for The Father and us He willingly did so. There was also the joy of the promised rewards as well that also sustained Him. The reward was not just lordship of the universe and all else, but the smiling happy faces of all those that would go into The Kingdom of The Father as a result of His death on the cross.

Lessons from Job

The first history book we have recorded is the book of Job. Then we have the book of Genesis.

Why this order?

In Job we are told about God's complete control over nature and the supernatural (which includes Satan and his demons).

So in Job God shows us He controls everything then in Genesis He explains why: He made everything including Satan and his demons so can control Satan and protect what He gives us.

So the first thing God wanted to tell us is that evil does not occur unless Satan has a right to attack us in area and this right occurs when Jesus is not Lord of an area.

Now everyone thinks Job had not sinned for Satan to be able to attack him and so this suffering was unjust. But after the two attacks of Satan Job states the following:

Job_3:25 (KJV) For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

(CEV) and my worst fears have all come true.

In other words Satan was able to attack Job and his possessions because Job had not believed God could completely protect them. It was not a full belief as it had doubt.

The way Satan attacks shows he knew this weakness in Job even though Job had done all he knew to be in a correct relationship with God but had kept back his full trust in God in one area. That is why Satan says to God:

Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

Job 1:11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Note:

Satan attacks the protection of Job by God because Job has some fear God cannot protect what he had been given. So first God shows us His control over Satan and our circumstances because He limits what Satan can do to Job.

The first attack occurred and Job still trusts God but still does not trust God completely. The point is that Job does not realise this lack of trust is making him open to the attacks of Satan.

So Satan attacks Job again:

Job 2:4 *And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.*

Job 2:5 *But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

Job 2:6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

The other thing to note that what man has he is only steward of and not owner so Satan is given permission to attack these things because God owns them and give this permission to Satan to attack them.

So Job is attacked personally with sickness and then He complains about how God has treated him.

His wife is still there and says to Him to curse God, that is complain to God how He has apparently returned all Job did to please Him with evil. But Job still declares God is correct in what He has done to Job. it is just that Job does not understand why it has happened.

Job 9:20 If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.

In other words, If I say I am correct and God is wrong I will condemn myself for my wrong viewpoint about God.

Job does not realise that, although He did his best to serve and please God and did so better than anyone on earth, he still had hidden in his heart a lack of trust in God and his protection and control of his life.

So in a sense this is a warning to make certain everything in your life is completely under the Lordship and thus protection of God so that suffering is for purposes of preparation for eternity and to bring Glory to God so that is beneficial and not just a restoration to where we should be in our Christian walk.

Job's comforters gave him all the theological arguments for God dealing with Job in the way he did but missed the whole point. Job had not deliberately sinned but had been fearful about something. So it was not a sinful act but a wrong attitude towards God.

Remember that God looks at our attitudes and not our results.

Job was restored to where he was before all this happened and God prospered him in his repentance and new attitude to God.

What can we learn from this:

God is in complete control of everything, including Satan

It is the subconscious attitudes we have that can allow Satan to attack us even though we do everything consciously correct.

Regardless of what happens we need to trust God as it is all working for our best.

God restores us to what we should be when we repent and what are restored too will be better than what we lost, even only because of our better relationship with God.

The basic attitude necessary to deal with trials

God is Love and is control of all your circumstances so you do not need to be concerned about them.

Do not look for the end, look to keep Right with him now.

Praise him in the trial on the basis of your belief that God is Love and in control of all circumstances. Rest in this and look to keep in a correct relationship with him

Praise him for His love and control and look for his working in His time in His way

Praise is an act of worship and as you trust him in all things in the trial it is worship and our life should always be an act of worship, usually through faithful obedience.

How are we to approach suffering?

The bible gives us at least five reasons for suffering:

A consequence of sin: While the spiritual side is forgiven and judgment is no longer, the physical consequences must still be dealt with (Gal 6:7-8). An example is a single woman falling pregnant.

A consequence of our serving Jesus and His Kingdom: This is the one that gives joy to God because of the love expressed towards Him by the person willing to suffer the undeserved suffering for the purposes of The Kingdom of God.

To prove our love for Jesus by accepting suffering that we do not deserve as we do His work.

To turn us back to Jesus and God's Will for our life.

To mature us to His image (Character) preparing us for heaven and greater earthly ministry (service to others).

What separates one Christian from another is how they handle their 'baptism of suffering', the so-called 'dark night of the soul' and the associated 'wilderness experience'. How you handle these will determine the degree to which God can mould you and use you.

In John 17 we are told that Jesus looked forward to His 'Baptism of Suffering' and embraced it because of the good that would result from it.

Now to look at what The New Testament says about suffering. There are many passages on suffering in the New Testament so I will examine only a few.

Hebrews Ch 11

This contains the so-called "Hall of Fame" of the Bible, a list of great men and women of faith. All persevered because of their faith in God's promises and this is the first key to suffering. We must believe God is, Who He says He is and that it is worthwhile to suffer for Him because He is a rewarder of those seeking Him and His Will (Heb 11:6).

In verse 2 we are told faith is necessary to please God and in v 13 that these people did not see their reward in this life. Their perspective was spiritual in that they desired God's rewards and not rewards here on earth (v13-16). All these great men of faith obtained a good report from God but did not receive their reward in this life.

While we are encouraged to follow the example of these people of faith we are to focus on Jesus, the supreme example of suffering for the Kingdom and for the benefit of others (Heb 12:v1-4). We are to remember that suffering is used by God to mould us and mature us to His Image as well as prepared to serve Him as He desires us to be so to avoid suffering is to avoid being moulded in His

image and prepared for greater service to Him and life in heaven with Him. So we should not complain or be angry or discouraged at what is happening but rejoice God is working in our life for our eternal best.

That is why we are to look to Jesus and see how He dealt with suffering on behalf of mankind and for the purposes of The Father.

1 Peter and some of his comments on suffering

Peter was writing to people who were under persecution and his first letter discusses the matter of suffering for the sake (purposes) of Jesus and His Kingdom.

Peter starts off by reminding them of the suffering Christ went through so they could have their redemption (ch1:2). and that as a result of the resurrection of Jesus we have a future far better than anything on earth (1:3) providing you trust God to keep it until you get to heaven (1:4).

Peter then reminds them that suffering ends as it is only for a season and that we are allowed this testing to determine the genuineness of our faith and that through overcoming suffering we bring Glory to Jesus (1:6-7) that will result in our salvation (1:9) and that when Jesus appears it will be worth it all (1:13)

When we suffer for the sake of Jesus there is great purpose to our suffering (2:19) and if we suffer without complaining, trusting God for our circumstances then we are behaving as God desires us too (2:20). We are following the example set by Jesus in suffering and serving God's purposes just as Jesus served them.

We need to have the same attitudes as Jesus did (1 Pet 3:8-11)

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Peter states we should be happy to suffer like this for Jesus and not to be afraid of what happens to you (3:14) when you show His Love for them. We should be always ready to tell everyone of the hope we have in Jesus that enables us to rejoice in suffering (3:15). Christ also is our example in this (3:19). and in the next few verses Peter details the Glory that resulted for Jesus after his sacrificial suffering for mankind.

We are told to expect suffering as we are followers of Jesus (4:12-16) and that God judges the body first (all believers who are united through The Holy Spirit and who seek to do His Will) to prepare and purify it so He can use it for the purposes of His Kingdom and, because it represents Him, to ensure they do so properly in accordance with His Will. This preparation is especially necessary for the end time revivals and the Tribulation so the body will be able to represent Him and survive victoriously in the time of trials ahead.

When suffering we are to trust God for the keeping of our soul and salvation (4:19) in other words we must believe He is faithful in all matters concerning us.

In suffering we are to humble ourselves and accept what God allows to happen to us so He can exalt us when we overcome the trial and so we should cast all our cares and problems onto Him so He can help us (5:6-7).

Peter then reveals the cause of our suffering - Satan, God's enemy, who seeks to destroy the followers of Jesus (5:8). We are reminded that we are not the only ones suffering (5:9) as Satan is attacking Christians through out the world.

The benefits of suffering are mentioned as well as the involvement of God in their occurring to us (5:10):

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect (mature), stablish, strengthen, settle you.

And of course the final point of suffering (5:11) is that it brings Glory to Jesus.

Philippians 2:5-10

The next passage that teaches us something about suffering is this famous one detailing the humility and subsequent rewards of Jesus.

Jesus is God but gave up all this meant out of obedience to The Father and came to earth as one of us, dying for all mankind in accordance with the wishes of The Father and as a result is exalted to the position of Lord of all. He did not lose His divinity but gave up all usage of it to limit Himself to what we humans had to use for the service of The Father. In other words He was God but limited Himself to what we could do.

There are three comments to make about this:

Suffering is out of obedience to the Will of God and we do what God asks us to even though we know we will suffer.

Jesus gave up something worthwhile when he came to earth. We give up our evil things that are of no value in God's economy. God owns everything and we cannot give up what we do not own. All we are expected to do is to be a good steward of all He has given us to look after for Him and to discipline our 'flesh' as well as any wrong desires or attitudes we have.

While suffering dealt with properly is rewarded this is not the reason for suffering. It is our Love for God and His kingdom as well as the people in the Kingdom that drives us to suffer. We suffer for our own sake because we are either being disciplined for our own benefit or serving Jesus out of love and reaching our full potential as a person knowing we will be rewarded for this suffering.

People go through what is called "The Dark Night of The Soul". Every person God wants to use has to go through it to burn the world out of them so He can use them. You usually experience this for only a short time (few months to a year or so) and it is so traumatic. You survive and are stronger for it and more usable by God. You need to take your eyes off your circumstances and look at God and His plan or you will have problems coping with the trial.

Jesus must be Lord before He is Saviour and the dark night of the soul is to burn this lesson in for future strength and also to draw you to a closer walk with Him. How you handle this dark night may affect your salvation and certainly will affect how God is able to use you when it is finished.

God has isolated you from the world to be intimate with Him and learn of His ways so the world and its system (controlled by Satan) can not interfere. The only weapons Satan has to attack you are your thoughts, emotions, lusts and/or use or those he controls that are still around you. This is often where your worst enemy are your close family and friend who cannot understand what God is doing and consider you have sin or error in your life that needs to be dealt with. They do not consider God has allowed it to purify you to what He desires you to be.

You are protected by Jesus who has already said He loves you and will look after you. This is because you are His subject and Satan cannot cause you to sin or give up unless you allow him too by giving in to the thoughts or emotions he tries to place on you. Remember you are a stranger and pilgrim in a foreign land controlled (the world) by the enemy of your King and will always have opposition as you seek to do the Will of Jesus and learn of Him.

This 'dark night of the soul' occurs because you are in a correct relationship with God or He could not use this period to build on what is already there as He is using suffering to bring to the place where He can put you through this 'Dark Night of the Soul'.

Jesus will always restore to things that are better for you than you lost in this season of darkness. They will be more appropriate to His purposes for you and will not hinder you in any way as you serve Jesus unlike those things Satan tries to get you to accept.

Gethsemane and The Cross was the 'dark night of the soul' for Jesus and is a good example of how to handle this season.

God delighted in the sufferings of Jesus

Isa 53:10-11 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Jesus embraced these sufferings also.

Luk 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Luk 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

Luk 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

Jesus was directing all he did (straightened) to be ready to die on the cross in the manner The Father wanted Him too. He resolutely went to Jerusalem to do it when the time had come to go there and willingly did the will of the father despite the cost to himself.

Martyrdom

Sometimes you may be called to die for Jesus because of your faith and your death will be used by Him to turn people to faith in Him and His promises. He prepares His martyrs and gives them the faith to face their death. They have their own special reward in heaven (the martyr's crown). Only they and Jesus have this crown as Jesus was also martyred for His Faith in The Father as well as in all The Father had promised Him.

Miscellaneous comments on suffering

What follows is comments based on what other scriptures in The New Testament teach about suffering.

I begin with the benefits of suffering

Rom 5:3-5 talks about this.

Rom 5:3-5 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Note the importance of enduring suffering in the moulding character.

James 1:2-4 say similar:

v2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

We should accept suffering as it matures us and perfects us so that we lack nothing in regards in our Christ likeness.

2 Cor 1:3-5 By the way we suffer we can encourage others in their sufferings

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

God is able to comfort us in all our suffering so we can then comfort others. Suffering also makes Jesus to be more important to us and helps us to confirm His Lordship in our life. 2 Cor 3:7 also states that because we have suffered in doing the Will of God we will also share in the reward for doing this.

Phil 1:12-14 talks about us encouraging others to greater boldness for Jesus because they see the way we suffer and conclude it is worth suffering for Jesus and are thus willing to do His work and suffer for Him as well.

2 Cor 12:6-10 God reveals Himself to us when we are weak, when we have nothing left to fight with as it is then that He alone is Glorified by what happens and He can show His Love as no one else can deliver you but He. Even though He is God He still has time to take a personal interest to help you and then deliver you from the trials when His Purposes have been done.

James 1:12 informs us there is a crown for surviving trials (temptation) - The Crown of Life. This can only be eternal life and shows how important obedience as this life is promised to all those that are willing to suffer out of obedience to the Will of God for them and overcome the attacks of the enemy. All who belong to Jesus will suffer. Satan makes certain of that.

Heb 4:15-16 Jesus suffered as we are and knows what it means to suffer and how to overcome suffering so we can come boldly to His throne for help in time of suffering.

Phil 1:28-29 Believing in Christ (i.e. His being Lord and your doing His Will) will automatically result in suffering.

1 Cor 10:13 We will never be tested more than we can handle and that also applies to Suffering. God is Love and cannot test you above what you are able to bear by virtue of His Nature of Love.

Rom 5:4 The Promises of God as found in The Bible give us hope to endure in our suffering.

2 Cor 5:1 Even if we die as a result of our suffering we have a better place to go to so death is not a problem to those that trust God.

A Christian is the only person who has to die to gain all that they are promised.

1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

The Proving of your faith

Even though God knows you will pass a test and end up as He desires you to be He must still put you through the test to show Satan and yourself this. Experience is very important in knowing what you are capable of and this is one reason suffering is so important as it shows you what you can do and achieve in spite of the opposition around you.

Trials are used to achieve this experience and show God is correct in His evaluation of your capabilities for Him. He knows who will pass and who will fail but needs to put you through the trial to show this to Satan so Satan cannot attack your level of spiritual authority, saying it was not earned.

The reward of passing suffering is usually greater spiritual authority and so it is necessary to pass through trials to obtain promotion in this way. This is why those who have suffered the most often have the greater spiritual authority and maturity.

Summary

Trials are God's method for proving your faith, maturing you and checking your worth to be given more spiritual authority and/or gifts. Trials are designed to show what God Already knows about you but needs to have you actually work it out to show Satan that God is correct in the way He has planned the path for you to walk on (Mat 6:33) and that all He does for you is in accordance with the principles of Gal 6:7-8.

God prepares you for the trial and gives you everything you need to go through it as well as for Him to build on in the trial to mature you more. You take the first step and he will help you take the next ones.

During the trial God gives you what you need to endure and pass it. He uses the trial to mould your character and gives you the gifts, authority and the necessary understanding to pass through the trial successfully so you can prepare for the next trial (maturity event) He has planned for you.

As you wait for the trial to end your faith is matured through patient trust in God. The lessons you need to learn are burnt in your heart and consolidated as you patiently wait for the trial to end. The quicker you learn your lessons and consolidate them the quicker the trial may be over. You cannot progress to the next level of authority/service until you pass the current trial preparing you for the level of authority you are maturing towards.

Remember that trials are God's ways of maturing you and preparing you for further service so until the lessons of the current trial are learnt He cannot take you further. Too many give up just before the trial is over and miss out on the blessing associated with it as well as being able to be used for higher service to Jesus.

After the trial are the rewards for passing it and a period of rest to recuperate and prepare for the next trial.

The rewards on earth are spiritual rewards as the physical treasure Jesus gives you are in heaven. On earth you are given more gifts to use (which will be necessary for the next period of service) and/or greater spiritual authority. These may eventually work themselves in to the physical but not necessarily.

God promises physical rewards in heaven and what we need on earth to provide for our needs. He may give us more than we need on earth but that is because He wants us to help others with the excess He gives us and not just spend it on our self. This is how God prospers us through having more than what we need to give to others. The moment prosperity is said to come from God but is spent on self then the whole point of the prosperity is lost to that person.

Seek treasure in heaven and the gifts you need to serve on earth and you will live as God requires you too.

Faith and Suffering

These two are inter linked. If you have not faith in the Love of God and His purposes for you, you will not suffer in the manner you should.

Faith is saying to God. 'I trust you completely' when He no longer seems to hear you, when His Love and Promises are not apparent, when your life also seems to be falling apart all around you. Faith says, 'I trust you completely' and continues to do His will no matter what the cost is to you.

All will have to go through this test at some stage so God can use you as He desires to but He can only use you if you pass this test of your faith.

Faith is uncompromising acceptance of what The Lord allows to happen to you and your continuance in love and obedience towards Him while these things are happening, shows He is truly Lord of your life and also your Saviour.

Patience in trials

God can do anything. The fact He has not delivered you from your situation means it is for His purposes for you to be in the trial and that what is happening is best for you.

This is why you should not complain but be thankful as what He is doing will mature you more to the image of the Character of God and obtain for you more rewards in heaven and greater ministry service on earth.

This is why for a Christian there is no such thing as a bad day.

To say that would say God was a liar, that Rom 8:28 was not true and that He was not dealing with you in Love.

It is just that we cannot see the good for us that God is doing for us that day.

God's Guidance

Sometimes Jesus does not tell you what is going to happen so that Satan will not know what God is going to do. This stops Satan causing problems as he tries to prevent it happening,

God will tell you what you need to know do what He wants you to do and will give you dreams to encourage you but will not give times or dates.

God has not forgotten you but is using a tactical device - keeping the enemy ignorant of what He is going to do so you need to trust Him and be patient.

Trials - periods of apparent inactivity

In a trial there is a time when all seems to have stopped and nothing seems to be happening. This period means a new stage is starting or the trial is about to end and change is about to occur. It does not mean God has forgotten you.

He has removed things and is now going to replace them with better (things more suited to His work for you) or is giving you a period of rest so He can remove more. Whatever happens it is working for your good so trust and keep going in the faith.

At times we are in a wilderness as God appears and not doing anything and to be far away and we do not know what to do. This is where faith is really tested. It is at this time Satan is allowed to isolate us from encouragement and help. This when our faith in God is really tested.

Breakthroughs

Remember that God works in the spiritual so the breakthrough is first in our character and then in the physical world

This is to ensure you can handle the breakthrough that will occur in the physical

God is the God of the suddenlies. One minute you're in the trial. The next minute it is over and you are in a new state you could not have achieved if you did not go through the trial.

Trials and Suffering

Do you have problems that do not appear to be solvable or trials you appear not able to bear? Then you must believe in a God who is greater than these, who is in control of all circumstances and

events and who loves you, doing all for your best and who will give you all you personally need to endure the trial. If you do not believe this then you have a god who is not greater than your problems or who does things for His own benefit and not yours and who is not able to help you.

If we fail in the trial it is not because God was not in control and we were tempted beyond what we could bear. It is because we approached the trial wrongly and developed a wrong perspective and attitude towards it.

What wrong perspective or attitude?

We may believe God cannot solve the problem as our image of God is a small one in our thinking so He is not really in control of our situation (Jer 32:27)

We may believe it is greater than we can bear, even though He promises it will never be (1 Cor 10:13)

We may see no way out of the situation and become discouraged or depressed even though He promises there is a way out of it and the wrong attitudes you have towards it. (1 Cor 10:13)

We may not be able to see His Love in it even though His every action is Love (Jer 29:11).

We may not realize we are being punished and God is trying to call us back into His perfect will (Heb 12:11).

We do not believe all things work for our good and that in the situation we are in God is doing what is best for us (Rom 8:28).

We may forget that we are a citizen of His Kingdom and not the King of it and that a good citizen trusts His King accepting what the King requests of them to do and does not tell The King what to do. He trusts in the king knowing what is needed to be done.

What ever the wrong reason it will be the result of a wrong attitude. There is only one wrong attitude that occurs and from that flows all the others.

What is that attitude? A lack of trust in God which results in doubts about His over riding control of the circumstance or problem and also causes us to question His Love for us.

If we do not believe God Loves us (Jer 31:3) we will serve a fickle God who does things to suit Himself and not for our benefit.

The only way to survive as a Christian is to believe that God is Love, is greater than all, does not change in His attitude of Love towards us and that it is really worth all this suffering as there is a reward at the end of it all, not necessarily on earth but in heaven (Heb 11:6).

One needs to change their perspective and look not on the physical (what you can see) but the spiritual (God's eternal purpose in that situation). If you cannot see His eternal purposes then you need to trust His Love that they are for your best.

God's eternal purpose is to mould us to the image of Jesus so we can spend eternity with Him. To look upon life's purpose as a satisfaction of our fleshly needs and see no other purpose misses the whole purpose of the Christian life which is to control the flesh so you do not fulfil its lusts (selfish desires), seek a deeper relationship with your king and to promote the things of God and His

Kingdom because you are a good citizen of His Kingdom. All of which is done out of love and thanksgiving for what God has done for you.

Jesus said that in this world we will have trials and that all His followers will suffer persecution (2 Tm 3:12) but He is greater than them (Jn 16:33). Opposition is to be expected as we are living in the territory of His enemy whose desire is to destroy the followers of Jesus. In fact, if you are not persecuted at times you should question if you really are a follower of Jesus.

What then is the purpose of trials, suffering and persecution? It is to focus our attention on Jesus, to test our belief in who He is and to mature us to the image of Jesus as the things of the world (his enemies values and purposes) are purged from us. God is Love and does not allow these things to occur because He just feels like it.

Another purpose of trials, suffering and persecution and a very important one is to bring Him Honour and Glory (both in the physical and spiritual) through the way we deal with it. The way we deal with trials is also an act of worship towards Him as we show by patient faith in Him that He is worthy of being obeyed and followed (worshipped).

Survival strategies

God promises to supply all our needs and not our greeds. We will never want the necessities of life as He sees it.

He is Love and does all in Love and Mercy - even discipline.

Be thankful in all things - even adverse circumstances as God is working through them for your good (Rom 8:28).

What God promises and says in His Bible is the basis for all things to do with God and your relationship with Him and others.

God requires you to be a good steward of what He has trusted you with and being in adverse circumstances does not negate this.

When you die, all you will take to heaven is your relationship to God, others and yourself as well as the way you carried out the stewardship of all He had trusted you with - Gospel, possessions, you life, His authority, The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

You need to trust God He will keep His word and that it will be worth it all in the end. In this life there will be pleasures - God delights in giving His children Joy, but overriding this is their need for preparation for eternity and the suffering here is a doorway to greater things. Look for His reward promised after you die and accept what God needs to do to get you there.

When in trials or just having a difficult time the Psalmist would look at what God had done for them in the past and be encouraged to continue on in the trial or situation. God also reminded people to remember what He had done at various times.

God also reminds us to look at His Love for us as illustrated by these former blessings of His as well as how He has expressed it to others when He dealt with their problems or situations. This is why personal testimonies as to how God has worked in your life are important as they encourage others to keep on going in their trials.

We do not spend enough time talking to God and looking back at the things He has done for us in the past. We also don't thank Him enough for these things He has done for us or is doing for us now.

These attitudes help us fight the attacks of Satan who wants us to focus on the negative things of our situation and take our eyes off Jesus and His Love expressed to us. Remembering the past things God has done for us defeats this attack of Satan.

How should we then approach trials?

We should cast all our cares (1 Pet 5:7) on Him and give Him all our problems so we do not dwell on them so we can clearly hear His Holy Spirit's directions (Jn 16:13) so we know how to cope with the trial. (Satan will try and clutter our minds so we cannot think clearly or hear The Holy Spirit's guidance). So you need to make Jesus Lord of whatever is happening.

The Five Steps helps with this.

We must trust His Love and complete control and never doubt these so we will obey and not be concerned about the consequences and if we are we must trust God to help us through them and to cope with them.

We must draw even nearer to Jesus and resist any temptation so the devil must flee (James 4:7). This is also the basis for deliverance.

We must know how God wants us to think in the trial (be led by The Holy Spirit in the trial) so we are not overcome by the ways of the enemy (Phil 4:4-8).

We must believe it is worth it all (Heb 11:6. Heb 10:36) that there is purpose in the sufferings during the trial (Rom 5:3-5, James 1:2-4)

Trials and Mat 6:33

Ps 23 and Mat 6:33 state that God will provide all our needs if HE is our LORD. This includes what we need in trials as evidenced by The Bible and His testing of people in it. Trials serve His purpose and must be necessary. They are a sign of His Love (a part of His provision for us) and His desire for us to mature and grow spiritually. To complain about trials then is to complain about God's Love and His desire for us to be better people and as a result of this serve Him more and gain more rewards in heaven.

Remember that trials are for our purposes as God does not need them.

This knowledge should help us be content no matter what happens. This will be true if we believe He is Lord and in control of our circumstances and that all He does to us is out of His Love for us

Theoretically, the quicker we learn the lesson of the trial the less of it we need of it to go through. The quicker we apply this lesson to our lives the quicker God can use us as He desires too as a result of what He wanted to teach us in that trial.

Satan tries to make you take your focus off this path prepared for you by God from before creation so you will take your focus off Jesus and His love for you as well as His Love for you that made Him give you this trial. If he succeeds then you will be sidetracked and have to go through even more trials as God tries to get you back to the place you were sidetracked from.

The path Satan tries to sidetrack you from is the path of Mat 6:33 and Eph 2:10 on which are all the promises and service God wants you to do for Him. So trials are an effort to keep you on this path through obeying God in all you do and resisting all Satan tries to do through the trial to remove you from this path. If Satan can divert you from this path he can theoretically stop you from being used by God to serve Him and His Kingdom or to reduce your effectiveness in doing this.

So you need to obey God to stay on the Mat 6:33 path and it is this effort to obey God patiently waiting in faith for the promised deliverance that matures you and focuses you even more on Jesus and His Love for you.

How should people see us in trials?

They should see no difference in us. If we really trust God then there will be no worry, anxiety, apprehension, lack of trust, depression, feelings of despair or hopelessness or other negative emotions. We will be able to be thankful for what we actually do have and rejoice in God's Love and presence and have the peace that passes all understanding.

They will wonder why we are coping so well and the explanation of our coping will allow us to preach to them the Gospel of God's Love and Control over our life.

To complain about your trials and sufferings implies God has made a mistake or does not know what He has been doing. If you truly believe Mat 6:33 you will accept what He is doing in your life believing He knows best (Rom. 8:28) and you will not complain about your situation but get on with doing what He wants you to do.

What should our coping mechanism be? Every time a negative thought or doubt occurs we should take it straight to Jesus and affirm the positives of our relationship to Jesus and thank Him for what He did for us at Calvary so that Satan cannot fill our mind with his negative thoughts. We should cast off the demons behind that attack and send them to Jesus then ask The Holy Spirit to take their place replacing the negative thought placed there by a demon with God's positive one.

Having given the problem to Jesus, we should just continue on with the task He has given us. If thoughts about the problem keep recurring then it is either our fears or demons troubling us. Tell the demons to go in Jesus name (Mark 16:17) asking The Holy Spirit to replace them. If it is the flesh then we must discipline it and continue to ignore the wrong thoughts and focus on positive ones. The best way to do this is to be thankful in all you do and dialogue constantly with The Holy Spirit.

We may also need some deliverance but The Holy Spirit will tell you if that is necessary as well as what you need to deal with.

Remember that God is training you as His children like a faithful Loving parent does and is not there just to make your life miserable (Heb 12:5 ff)

Remember that a negative mindset (attitude/way of thinking) will stop you seeing God's presence working in your trial or circumstance. We will not see Him as we are looking at the problems and circumstances we are in. This is why Satan tries to make us look negatively at things so we will not see God at work in our circumstance and be encouraged to continue in the trial.

A prison is not walls but in your mind

I use to tell people I was in a spiritual prison Jesus had placed me in. I was corrected by The Holy Spirit.

Jesus and He are there. It is not prison. It is a throne room, His Temple.

So now I know why we are to rejoice in our apparent prisons as they are man made and cannot confine or limit God.

In summary, remember, we have as our example Jesus who suffered in all areas as we have (Heb 4:15) and who knows what it is to live on earth and to suffer trials and be persecuted and as a result understands and knows how best to survive these trials and suffering and who is waiting to help us get through them victoriously and who help us in any way He can to overcome our circumstances and trials.

Heb 12:1-3 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Unity in Suffering

1Co_12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with them and a affected in some way by what happens to other Christians.

The church should be united in one spirit so that it is sensitive to the needs and trials of the body around it. There should be no denomination or parachurch organizations dividing the body and reducing this sensitivity to other parts of the body through the negative reactions these divisions cause in people as each tries to maintain their part of the 'body' (denomination) separate to the other parts. How is the Love of Christ shown if one church is struggling and poor and a nearby rich church ignores its need.

It was a master stroke of Satan to cause denominations to divide The Body of Christ.

This verse shows how far removed the modern church is from the concept of The Body that Jesus created. We do not show the same care for one another either in our own church or other churches in our own or other countries. We do not feel their suffering or even care about them. When was the last time you were concerned for a Christian in your own church let alone in another near by who was not a friend or relative.

When was the last time you cried over the salvation of a relative?

The Bible says their suffering should be felt by us in our spirit and not handed over to a minister to deal with so that we ignore our responsibility in this area.

You will not be judged by God for what you did not do because you were not asked by God to do anything about their situation. You will be asked why you did not help those you were able to and were asked too or were not concerned about other things when you heard there was a need you were told to meet in some way.

Trials and Ministry

God seems to have a principle

Unless you have experienced the trials you are going through as well as the depth of pain and hurt these trials have you cannot really minister to these people as God desires you too as you do not have the experiential understanding of what they are going through.

This is why all who minister greatly for God have suffered in the area they are effectively ministering in .

Do you want to minister for God?

How much are you willing to suffer to be able to minister as He desires you too?

You who would be great for God are you willing to pay the price He asks, of suffering, and isolation from the world? Or are you too comfortable with what you have.

Resist not Evil

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Literally “Don’t fight the devil working through the person. Instead show God’s Love for the person being used by the demon”. Instead fight the demon using them. If you fight them you show you are no different to them but show God’s love as they cause you discomfort and they will start to wonder what is happening that you are tormented and you don’t fight back or hurt them.

Also you are to go to God for justice or the laws of the land, depending what is appropriate.

It does not mean you are a door mat but are removing yourself from any danger in the situation and having God’s representatives fight for you just as He fights Satan for us when we use His delegated Authority.

When you are in danger of physical hurt and the people will not listen, then you cannot show love but need to protect yourself.

A friend once said of this “the Holy Spirit gave me a picture for this. Say someone is about to throw a punch at me. Instead of taking a stance of defence or retaliation I just bow. Now, with whom does my attacker come face to face? Jesus. (He’s always with me.) As long as I stay in humility (bowed), it’s Jesus’ issue, not mine. In fact, it never was my issue.”

Remember. When you are attacked for doing the work of Jesus it is Him they are resisting and attacking not you.

Should we turn the other cheek?

To turn the other cheek refers to when we are insulted and attacked for our faith not physically attacked. Jesus is saying not to respond but to waive any rights to justifying self as our value is in Him and not in what others think or what we do or are in the world. They are attacking Him and not you so if anything is to be done He will do it.

You are allowed to defend your body, possessions and family as a good steward of them unless Jesus says not too.

What to do when others attack us unjustly

Rom 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Mat 5:38-39 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: . But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

These verses are in line with the Old Testament where the Psalmist often cried to God for Him to remove their oppressor or vindicate them against evil doers.

If we resist we often escalate the situation into something worse by turning the other cheek we often diffuse a situation.

Why are we not to take these things into our own hands and punish these people ourselves?

To do this would make us their judge in place of God. It would usurp His Authority over us and would show we do not understand our role in the Kingdom of God. However we are to ask The Holy Spirit what to do with them.

We represent God as His Ambassadors on earth, working in the enemy kingdom. This means we will be attacked unjustly at times. As we represent our King, complaints must be made to him by the enemy and this is what Satan does before the throne.

God then evaluates these complaints and if unjust will do what is necessary to uphold His Name (and thus us who are proclaiming it) and will deal with our accusers.

Trials - Conclusion

Trials are a necessary part of the Christian experience. As you go through trials various things happen:

Chaos occurs around you (there seems no rational reason for what you are going through)

You suffer emotional pain or spiritual uncertainty

There will be a need to make choices for the things of God

There will be a need to trust God in the trial and for the result of the trial

God will use it to refine you and teach you about Himself

God will use it to draw you closer to Himself

God will use it to make you more like Him

How you cope with or embrace these different factors of the trial determines how successful you are in the trial as well and shows the degree to which Jesus is Lord of the life He has given you.

The purpose of a trial is to increase the Lordship of Jesus in your life, to mould you more to be like Him by removing things that hinder these occurring in you and to prepare you for greater service on His behalf.

The intimacy of our worship of Jesus depends on the degree He is Lord of the life He has entrusted to us.

The depth of our prayer life and many other things depend on these two relationships to Jesus.

The more we know of Him and His workings the more we will be able to trust Him and make Him more Lord of the life He has trusted us with.

How well do we know Jesus?

His Bible? (hence we study it)

His work in our life? (mainly through trials and miracles)

His goodness to us in the way He Blesses us?

His control over our life so that all works for our best?

His Love, Mercy and Grace as we are not dealt with as we should be for the rebellion (sins) we do against Him?

Trials are part of the continuous cycle of Christian living. A trial results in growth and is followed by a period of peace and consolidation and then more trials. Any Christian not in this cycle needs to examine their basis for calling themselves a Christian.

So embrace trials as they are your growth regime to turn you more into the image of Jesus and to equip you better for serving Him.

Epilogue

With our finite minds we cannot comprehend the workings of an infinite God. We will not know until we are in heaven the purpose of our sufferings. We may get a glimmer of understanding but only then as Jesus shows us the reasons we suffered will we understand the benefit of our suffering to ourselves and others.

Until then we need to be content with what we are given by God in the way of suffering and be thankful He considers us worthy of suffering and through this suffering being moulded to His Image to be able to serve Him better as well as be prepared to be forever with Him in heaven.

Appendix 1 – Psalm 22

An example (look at Jesus also as an example)

1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

2 O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

V1-2 The psalmist is on the midst of trials. Things appear so bad it is as if God has forsaken him.

3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

v3-5 Then he remembers how God delivered Israel in past times when they cried to Him for deliverance.

V6-8 He is of little worth in the eyes of the world and they actually mock his faith in God that God will deliver him from his situation.

9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

v9-10 He remembers God was the one who gave him life and has placed him in the situation he is in. His trust in God started when he was still being breast fed and he will maintain, that hope even if he dies.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

v11 He asks God to be near him and strengthen him as there is no one around to help him to endure the trial.

12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

v12-13 His oppressors attack him as if they were a lion (Satan, goes around like a roaring lion and is using these people to attack him).

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

v14-15 The torment is so great that it is affecting his body. His mind is still clear sufficiently focused for him to keep his perspectives correct and his focus on God and God's authority over all situations, including his own.

16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

v16-18 These verses are a reference & the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus was not delivered, except by death:

19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

v19 In spite of his physical suffering being certain and death being the end of it he still is human and asks God to help him endure to the end.

20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

v20 Jesus calls His Father "My darling" a term of special endearment. for one who He loves dearly, in spite of what His Farther was allowing to happen to Him.

21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

v21 Jesus asks for deliverance from hits trials, even though death seems to be the only answer His Father offers Him.

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live forever.

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

v22-28 The psalmist praise God and declares He will be delivered and that God does not reject those suffering and will deliver them so that they will have peace and satisfaction after the trial ends.

28 For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.

29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

v28-29 God is God of all and is able to free him from his suffering as well as deal with those oppressing others.

30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

v30-31 The result of the suffering of Jesus is a spiritual seed that will bear fruit throughout the whole world and, which declare the righteousness of Jesus to all the world!.

A seed must fall into the ground and die before it can bear fruit. So must the flesh die before a Christian can bear fruit as Jesus desires them to and are only in suffering does the flesh die and the person become refined silver, spiritually fit for The Father to use as He desires to use them.