**The Gift of Suffering**

**"The Forgotten Gift"**

(Philippians 1:27-30 KJV) Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*{28}*And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*{29}*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*{30}*Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be*in me.

No one likes to think of suffering as a gift of God. Often people use the circumstances around them as a means of determining whether or not God is pleased with them. Too often, people think that if things are going well then God must be pleased with them and if things are not going well then it must mean that God is trying to get their attention or is punishing for something they had done.

**Suffering, an opportunity**

We are given an opportunity to suffer for Christ's sake. Our attitude toward suffering is not something that we *have* to endure but rather, that we should look forward to the opportunity to suffer. That was Paul's attitude toward suffering and our example.

(1 Corinthians 11:1 KJV) Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am*of Christ.

(1 Corinthians 4:9-13 KJV) For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.*{10}*We *are*fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are*wise in Christ; we *are*weak, but ye *are*strong; ye *are*honourable, but we *are*despised.*{11}*Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;*{12}*And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:*{13}*Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are*the offscouring of all things unto this day.

Paul lists the things that he had to endure; he says that they are made as the filth of this world and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

(1 Corinthians 4:14-16 KJV) I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn *you. {15}*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye*not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*{16}*Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

**Warning**

Paul writes about the things he has to endure as a warning, these things will occur not only to the apostles but also to those who follow them. Yet, in spite of that, he still writes, "Follow me".

Paul's message is not one of health, wealth and prosperity.

(2 Corinthians 11:24-30 KJV) Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes*save one.*{25}*Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*{26} In*journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in*perils of robbers, *in*perils by *mine own*countrymen, *in*perils by the heathen, *in*perils in the city, *in*perils in the wilderness, *in*perils in the sea, *in*perils among false brethren;*{27}*In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*{28}*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*{29}*Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*{30}*If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

Paul wrote that he will glory in the things which concern his infirmities, of which he just listed.

Paul never tells us to use physical circumstances to be the indicator of what God is doing in our lives. Paul endured these things because he was obedient to God.

(2 Timothy 3:10-12 KJV) But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,*{11}*Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them*all the Lord delivered me.*{12}*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Using his own life as an example, Paul tells us what we can expect. In this dispensation of grace, there is no promise that we will be protected from the sufferings and hardships in this life.

**Creation and You**

(Romans 8:22-23 KJV) For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*{23}*And not only *they,*but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit,*the redemption of our body.

All creation is under the curse. Verse 23 says that not only creation but us also. Whatever the curse brought to creation happens to us too; we see creation degenerating, becoming disorganized.  We will suffer as fallen creation suffers, waiting for redemption.

**How To View Suffering**

1. You can view suffering as you being under the circumstances, having a defeated attitude.
2. You can view suffering as you being over the circumstances, having a unrealistic viewpoint that nothing can happen to you (especially if you always say the right words).
3. You can view yourself going through the suffering and coming out victorious, stronger that you were before. This is why we can rejoice in suffering.

**Suffer and Reign with Him**

(2 Timothy 2:9-13 KJV) Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even*unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.*{10}*Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*{11} It is*a faithful saying: For if we be dead with *him,*we shall also live with *him: {12}*If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him:*if we deny *him,*he also will deny us:*{13}*If we believe not, *yet*he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

This passage is referring to suffering and reigning. If we suffer, we will reign with him. If we deny Christ it may reduce our suffering but then Christ will deny us the opportunity to reign with Him. Because of our position in Christ, He will always remain faithful to us concerning our salvation.

(Colossians 1:15-16 KJV) Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*{16}*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be*thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

The things that are in heaven are invisible and the things that are in earth are visible.

**Manifesting His Grace**

(Ephesians 2:4-7 KJV) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*{5}*Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*{6}*And hath raised *us*up together, and made *us*sit together in heavenly *places*in Christ Jesus:*{7}*That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his*kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Verse 7 tells us why we are given a heavenly position; that we might show the exceeding riches of His grace.

The phrase "but God" in verse 4 means that God intervened and took us from what we were and placed us in the heavenly places. When we take our heavenly position we will manifest God's grace. The angelic host will rejoice at what we are in Christ.(Ephesians 3:10-11)

Our job is to manifest God's grace. God is looking for people who are experienced in manifesting His grace. Here in this earth, we manifest His grace through **suffering**.

Too often, we do not rely on God when things are going well. Suffering makes us rely on God because it lets us know our inability to produce results.

**Suffering, But for a moment**

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18 KJV) For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man*is renewed day by day.*{17}*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and*eternal weight of glory;*{18}*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are*temporal; but the things which are not seen *are*eternal.

Our light affliction here in earth works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

(Romans 8:18 KJV) For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are*not worthy *to be compared*with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Our affliction here is light and but for a moment compared to what the glory will be like. We need to go through our circumstances in this life in grace, allowing God to work through us.

**Why To Rejoice In Tribulations**

(Romans 5:1-5 KJV) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*{2}*By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*{3}*And not only *so,*but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*{4}*And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*{5}*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.

We are not to just rejoice in the glory that will be someday but we are to rejoice in the tribulations that we suffer now.

Tribulation works patience; patience works experience. God is looking for people with experience to fill the positions in heaven.

Our job is to manifest His grace and suffering is the best way things we have to help us do that. When we pray to have the suffering removed we are also asking to have the eternal glory taken away.

Suffering = eternal glory, manifesting God's grace.

Suffering also brings about spiritual maturity, we learn to wait. As children, when we want something we want to receive it immediately.

God takes our suffering and works it together for our eternal glory. What we experience now, our light affliction, is nothing compared to what we will have in eternal glory.

Suffering produces eternal glory.

(2 Timothy 2:9-13 KJV) Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even*unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.*{10}*Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.