

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 30, 2019 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

1 PETER & 2 PETER FULL of Hope FULL HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF TIMES OUT OF YOUR WORST OF TIMES

A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW OF SUFFERING 1 Peter 4:12-19

Our study, “Full of Hope-full: How to Make the Best of Time Out of Your Worst of Times,” of the book (or letter) of 1 Peter has covered quite a bit of territory so far. The question, “How do I develop that kind of life and faith that enable me to be full of “hope-fullness” even in the midst of the “worst of time”... in times of hardship, suffering, and the struggles of this life or as in the case of those in Peter’s day, extreme persecution? Has been at the forefront of our study, and perhaps nowhere in the book is that more pronounced than in the last few verses of the 4th chapter.

¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. –1 Peter 4:12-19 (NKJV)

The Christian life is an overcoming life. Even though we will definitely have problems and personal struggles in this life (trials of many kinds), we will be able to overcome because of Jesus. Because of Him, we have victory over the world, including sinful habits, bitterness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and discouragement. God desires for you to live an overcoming life!

Jesus, Himself, said in 1 John 5:4-5, *“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”* Christians are overcomers and truly are to live hope-filled Christian lives every day, but let’s be honest, there are many trial and struggles, heartaches and difficulties along... times of suffering that can daily rob us of our joy and paralyze our faith, steal our hope, and destroy our relationship and weaken our walk... times of suffering can embitter and defeat us if we let it. This letter was written to help believer’s believe and grow even in times of suffering... to be “Full of Hope-full.”

Let’s be reminded, once again, of some of the rich background of this great letter written by perhaps Jesus’ closest disciple, Peter:

5 Important Background Information for the Book of 1 Peter:

1. **The book of 1 Peter is written by **PETER**** - The New Testament had four different names for Peter: Simeon (the Hebrew for Peter’s original name, Acts 15:14, 2 Peter 1:1), Simon (the Greek name for Simeon applied 49 times in the New Testament), Cephas (a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word for rock [*סִימֹן קֵפָאֵס*]; this is used to play off of *πέτρος*), Peter (*Πέτρος*) the leader and spokesman for the early disciples. This is how he is addressed in the greeting emphasizing his authority to speak. The early New Testament Church almost exclusively regarded Peter as the author of the letter. And of course there is the internal evidence supporting Peter’s authorship, the letter claims to be from “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1), the writer claims to be the readers “fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1), the writer identifies “Silas” (Silvanus) as one who helped him to write the letter (1 Peter 5:12; see also Acts 15:22 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1), the writer also sends greetings from Mark (1 Peter 5:13; see Acts 12:12).
2. **The book of 1 Peter is actually a **LETTER** written by Peter** - Peter is a letter written in normal epistle form and style. The rhetorical and didactic nature of the letter may mean that it was intended to be read aloud to the congregations. It is best to see this letter as a circular type of letter in its present form which was directed to all the churches in the areas mentioned in northern Asia minor.
3. **The book of 1 Peter was written around **A.D. 64**** - We are able to date the letter with fair accuracy because of recorded world/historical events. We know that the letter corresponds to the Neronian persecution, which helps to date the writing. Tradition holds that both Paul and Peter were victims of persecution under Nero at Rome after the disastrous fire in the city of Rome on July 19 of AD 64. The death of Paul is considered to be before Peter’s. The timing of Paul’s death does not really affect the date of 1 Peter. The letter was written from “Babylon” (1 Peter 5:13) which was probably a cryptic title for Rome... the head of the then pagan, anti-God world (see Rev. 14:8, 17:5&18).
4. **The book of 1 Peter is written to **CHRISTIANS** recipient scattered throughout the five Roman provinces of **ASIA MINOR**** - This would be the area of present day Turkey. The letter actually identifies its recipients. The letter is addressed to those who are from places in northern Asia Minor or modern Turkey (1:1): Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia.
5. **The book of 1 Peter is written to encourage Christians facing suffering through **PERSECUTION**** - Although 1 Peter does bare the form of a letter, the tone is that of a

homiletical, teaching, instructional sermon designed to provide direction for believers under persecution; at times it also includes theological considerations which support the ethical exhortations, and to exhort his readers under persecution to follow the example of Christ whose life was characterized by patient suffering

A believer's or Christians perspective of suffering is sometimes hard to come by. Our human tendency is to see suffering, pain, heartache and difficulty in life as unfair, especially brutal, to resist it at all cost and avoid it with every fiber of our being. As the world says, "Where is God in all of this?" "How can a loving, good and benevolent God allow such pain and suffering... especially the innocent to suffer?" (Who really is "innocent?"), "Why does God allow evil and suffering." These questions of pain and suffering may plague Christian and non-Christian alike. Even as Christians it is hard often for us to see much difference or to separate our approach and view of pain and suffering any different from the rest of the world and those who claim not adherence to the Christian faith. We say that a Christians ought to have a different perspective, a different worldview, a more faith0filled and spiritual view of suffering, and it may be easier to do so when someone else is going through the suffering, but not so when it is us or our loved ones.

- (1) "Men will never be great in theology until they are great in suffering." – Charles Haddon Spurgeon
- (2) "There is no university for a Christian, like that of sorrow and trial." – Charles Haddon Spurgeon
- (3) "Suffering times are a Christian's harvest times." – Charles Haddon Spurgeon
- (4) "Suffering saints are living seed." – Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What do you think he means by that statement?

"Farther Along" by Rev. W.B. Stevens

Originally known by the title, "We'll Understand it All By and By," "Farther Along" has a rather rich and storied background. The original writer has been somewhat debated. Most hymnals for the last half-century have followed the Stamps-Baxter attribution to Rev. William B. Stevens (b. 1862-d. after 1940), a Church of God preacher in Schuyler County, Missouri (U.S. Census 1930). If anyone had a motivation to write such a song, it was Stevens; he was a truly "Job-like figure" who outlived all six of his children, many of them dying in childhood (*Findagrave*). According to Davidson's biographical sketch of Stevens, he was a prolific songwriter and even published a few songbooks (Davidson, repr. Schuyler Co. Times). In the preface of the compilation, *The Best of W.B. Stevens*, Richard E. Payne states that his wife's grandparents, John D. and Sylvia Hodges Speak, sang in a quartet with Stevens; an additional note by the late Emma Perkins Johnson, a longtime resident of the area, recalled Stevens sometimes serving as songleader for gospel meetings instead of minister. If Stevens was the songwriter, he received very little benefit from such a popular song--nor did any of the other potential claimants. Stevens claimed to have learned of his song's success in a rather unexpected

fashion, years after it was written. Having hit something of the bottom in life and ministry, penniless and destitute, and having gone through the tragic loss of his own six children and wife, he happened to be in Del Rio, Texas and he heard his song on the radio being performed by The Stamps Brothers later The Stamps-Baxter Quartet. He wrote the Stamps quartet which was singing it and told them of publishing it. The Stamps Brothers own and publish a musical paper at Dallas, Texas. They wrote him and asked him to send them a brief sketch of his life, which he did. Finding that he was without a stated income they mentioned it on the air, and a collection of over \$150.00 was raised and sent to him with more to follow. This song was one of the most popular songs ever sung over the station and was entitled, "Farther Along." He said he was sitting at the organ running his fingers aimlessly over the keys. His luck had been against him and he was feeling blue, but somehow he struck a chord which came right out of the instrument and spoke of his tragic losses and life, and the many questions that plagued his heart. A strange warmth came over as he was reminded by the Spirit of God of His presence with Him and that he one day all would be made well and whole.

Tempted and tried we're oft' made to wonder why it should be thus all the day long,
While there are others living about us, never molested though in the wrong.

*Often I wonder why I must journey over a road so rugged and steep
While there are others living in comfort while with the lost I labour and weep.

When death has come and taken our loved ones, it leaves our home so lonely and drear;
Then do we wonder why others prosper, living so wicked year after year.

Faithful to death said our loving Master, a few more days to labor and wait;
Toils of the road will then seem as nothing, as we sweep through the beautiful gate.

When we see Jesus coming in glory, when He comes from His home in the sky;
Then we shall meet Him in that bright mansion we'll understand it all by and by.

Farther along we'll know all about it, farther along we'll understand why
Cheer up my brothers, live in the sunshine, we'll understand it all by and by.

**indicates lost verse not usually included in most hymn and song books*

Some questions regarding the song "Farther Along":

- (1) What are the perplexing questions that the song seems to be asking?**
- (2) Are these questions fitting for Christians? Do these questions indicate a lack of faith or spiritual insight/maturity? Why or why not?**
- (3) Why are we constantly tempted and tried and why do the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous suffer?**

Concerning pain and suffering, trials and troubles in this life Jesus said in **John 16:33**, **"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."**

John 16:33, A Biblical perspective from Jesus concerning pain and suffering in this world:

- (1) Jesus desires us to experience a “peace” in this world -
- (2) Jesus warns us that in this world we will have pain and suffering (*trials and tribulations*) -
- (3) Jesus reminds us that He has overcome the world and we can take heart in that – Why?

John 17:15-19, A Biblical perspective from Jesus concerning pain and suffering in this world:

- (1) Jesus desires not to take us out of the world in the midst of the pain and suffering -
- (2) Jesus warns us of the “evil one’s” role in pain and suffering, and reminds us of our assured protection from the enemy – Why is this important and what might He be telling us about pain and suffering?
- (3) Jesus implies that even in pain in suffering His purposes can be seen – How? How is this stated in the passage?

5 Erroneous Perspectives on Christian Pain and Suffering: The reality is, Christians suffer too. There is no getting around that. The healing which never comes despite our prayers and pleading with God for His healing... the relationship, which despite everyone’s best efforts just fell apart... the death of a loved one... the financial crisis which seems insurmountable... the impossible job situation... the desperate prayer which seems unanswered... It seems that a lot of Christians want answers to suffering. I’m not too sure that there are many. But sometimes in our search for a reason to that heartfelt “Why?” we can fall prey to one of these five errors in our thinking, and although we may not embrace them outwardly, they may take hold of our heart and dampen our walk and spirit before God. Unfortunately, some of them are even put on us by other well-meaning Christians. We must be careful not to buy into these errors about suffering.

- (1) **Christians should not go through times of suffering** - Deep down inside, there is a part of us which protests, ‘But I’m a Christian. I love God. He loves me... so bad things shouldn’t happen to me because God protects His children. Right!’ **How would you respond to this?** I believe that God does love His children, and sometimes He does protect us from terrible things. But we still live in a fallen, messed up world, and sometimes Christians experience the consequences of living in a fallen world just like everyone else! The Bible actually tells us to expect trials and difficulties. After all, God doesn’t cause suffering – and would not cause suffering for anyone, Christian or not. Life just happens, and sometimes it hurts. The only place we will ever be safe from suffering is when we get to heaven. Then, the Bible says, ‘He will wipe away every tear’ **Scriptural answer – John 16:33** *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*
- (2) **If Christians suffer it is because they have done something wrong** - We hear some say things like, “I must have really done something bad to be going through this. God must be punishing me.” **How would you respond to this?** Is our suffering because we have done something wrong? Not necessarily. Of course there are consequences to wrong doing and sometimes suffering can be the result. God does discipline us for things that we do wrong too, BUT we usually know why it is happening. Right? What sort of parent would shout at their child and send her sobbing to the bedroom without ever telling them what they did wrong? That would be both cruel and pointless. God is a good Father, and never disciplines us without telling us what we have done wrong and what we need to do to put it right. So if you are suffering the consequences of a broken relationship because of your unkind words,

God probably is disciplining you. But if, on the other hand, you are suffering with an illness and have been for a long time and you don't understand why, that is not discipline. That is living in a fallen, messed up world and God wants to pour out His mercy on you, not His judgment. Furthermore, God can actually use that kind of suffering in the life of a believer as a great witness. If a suffering Saint can exhibit a hope and a peace in the midst of this kind of suffering it can actually be contagious to a hurting world. **Scriptural answer – John 9:1-3** *“As he (Jesus) went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.’”* **What “work” of God do you suppose Jesus might be referring to?**

- (3) **If I had enough faith, this would not be happening to me - How would you respond to this?** *“If I had enough faith, this would not be happening to me.”* Pure condemnation. Yes, God does look for and reward faith, but suffering comes even to people who have the most enormous faith. Look back at some of the early Christian martyrs: they had the faith to die for what they believed, and they suffered for it. Sometimes we just have to walk through things and our faith will actually increase, even though we don't immediately see the answers to prayer that we most want. We must hold on to our faith through times of suffering, because God does reward faith, but sometimes the reward will come later and for now we just have to keep pressing on through. **Scriptural answer – Hebrews 11:1** *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*
- (4) **This is pointless and proves that life is meaningless and hopeless - I've heard it said this way, “None of this makes sense. It just seems so pointless.” How would you respond to this?** Pain and suffering rarely do make sense to us in this life and it usually does seem underserved and pointless. It can leave us despondent, empty and feeling like it's all pointless and hopeless. Let's face it, undeserved suffering can just seem pointless, difficult, painful and beyond our understanding. But the problem with this myth is that it fails to acknowledge that nothing that ever happens in the life of a believer (one of God's children) ever escapes God's eyes. He sees it all. He knows what we are going through. And there is nothing that happens to you or I that God doesn't intend to use for our benefit and His glory. I believe that. Remember the Bible says that we should *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its works so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”* Wow! That is difficult to do sometimes. God does not cause suffering but He will always teach us through it. C.S. Lewis once stated that *“Pain is the classroom of God”* and there is always more we can learn of Him when we are hurting. We might not want the lessons at the time, but later we will value them because they came at such a cost. **Scriptural answer – Romans 8:28,** *“²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* **James 1:2-4** *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its works so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*
- (5) **God has abandoned or forsaken (turned His back) me - How would you respond to this?** God has never abandoned you. Not for a second. He has wept with you, felt your pain, sung His love song over you, been with you every painful, heartbreaking step of the way. Sometimes, in the darkness, we can feel that God is distant, or uncaring. It is so important in those times to cling to what we know is the truth of who He is, rather than relying on our

emotions. We cannot trust our emotions. We can always trust our God. Keep tight hold of your faith in Him. You will not always feel this alone. He has not and never will abandon you. He loves you far too much to ever be able to do that. **Scriptural answer – Hebrews 13:5** “...God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

I. THE REALITY OF PAIN AND SUFFERING IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

2 Scriptural Reminders for Christians:

1. **Jesus warned us of the reality of our tests and trials in this life (Matthew 10:17-22, John 16:33)** – As chapter 10 of Matthew open, Jesus is sending out his disciple. The chapter is filled with many words of warning and preparation for what they would encounter at His followers. The chapter is filled with instruction on how to relate and react to a world that would be hostile at times to their message and life. Perhaps, some of Jesus most pointed and griping words appear in verses 17-22, where he speaks to the reality of the tests and trials that His followers would face:

“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” -Matthew 10:17-22

Again, in John 16:33, Jesus said, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” –John 16:33*

Realities for Believers:

- (1) **Believers “will be” restricted and restrained** – The phrase *“they will hand you over” (v.17)* is a technical word in the Greek that speaks of handing over a captured and chained prisoner. It speaks of those who would want to restrict or retrain someone they perceive as doing harm. Certainly in this world we can see how believer (Christians) are often restricted and restrained. The gospel message is often today being restricted and restrained
- (2) **Believers “will be” accused and maligned** – The phrase “you will be brought before” in verse 18 speaks of one who is charged with a crime standing before a judge. It is legal language that speak of being arraigned, but in this case it implies being wrongly charged, unjustly accused and maligned before others. Are Christian today ever falsely accused and maligned in this world? Absolutely! Christians, today, are routinely accused and maligned in both television and print media as being narrow-minded, and bigoted because of the stands they often take on a whole host of social issues. When a believer boldly states the Bible truth that Jesus is the only way! he or she is immediately labeled a narrow-minded, bigoted, and prejudiced against other religions. On a more personal note, if you are bold enough

to try to witness to a neighbor or friend... maybe even a family member, be ready to be accused or maligned with something along the line of, “You are not better than me! I know the things that you do, and your life is not better than my life.” The “evil one” like to stir up the world in order to malign and accuse Christians.

- (3) **Believers “will be” denied and spurned** - Verse 22 says, “*Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.*” These speak of close relations... trusted relations that are always supposed to love, support and protect us. The warning for believers here is that often those we trust and depend on the most will turn on us. We may find ourselves spurned by their love and their associations with us denied... perhaps much like Jesus was denied by Peter and spurned by the other disciples on the night he was arrested and taken to a cross. We may face the trial of rejected friendships, and even family kin in some cases for a totally committed faith.
- (4) **Believers “will be” hated** - Jesus said, in verse 22, “*All men will hate you because of me...*” Sounds harsh, but the reality is that, as the world so quickly turned on Jesus it will also turn on believers too. Remember that one day the crowd was shouting “Hosanah! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” and throwing coats and palm branches on the street in front of Jesus to celebrate His arrival and the next day they were shouting “Crucify! Crucify!”

Observation: *The point is that the reality for believers is that being Christian is not always popular and the message we preach even less. The “evil one” will bring about all sorts of trial and test to dissuade you from proclaiming the message of salvation both verbally and practically in the way you walk. If necessary he will bring the “firey trial” of persecution to silence you!*

2. **Peter experienced the reality of our tests and trials in this life (Luke 22:31-34)** - Perhaps one of the most vivid New Testament examples of what we are talking about, the reality of this testing and trial, can be seen in the life of Peter. In Luke 22, Jesus has just observed the Last Supper with his disciple and he about to be betrayed and taken to the cross, when an interesting conversation takes place between Jesus and the disciple, Peter in Luke 22:31-34:

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brother.” But he replied, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.’” –Luke 22:31-34

3 Helpful Truths for Believers:

- (1) **If Satan can sift a Peter, he can sift you... that’s humbling**
- (2) **If Jesus prayed for Peter, he prays for you... that’s strengthening**
- (3) **If Peter can fall and rise again, so can you... that’s encouraging**

II. THE REASON FOR PAIN AND SUFFERING IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

The reality is that happens in the life of a believer is amiss with God. Now, what do I mean by that? I mean, God sees, and know all! You are never out of the care of the God who

hold you in the palm of his hand. What Satan may mean for evil, God means for good in the life of believer. Remember Jesus prayer in John 17:15-19, *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”* Despite the tests and trial that come our way, God is “sanctifying” us... that is “setting us apart for His purposes. There is actually a “sanctifying” reason that can emerge in the face of the tests and trials, that the “evil one” may be about to destroy us. Let me give you to good ones:

2 Reasons Behind Tests and Trials:

- (1) **Our spiritual growth and maturity in the Christian walk** - *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” – James 1:2-4*
- (2) **Our heightened hope and deepened relationship with God** - *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” –Romans 5:1-5*

III. THE RESPONSE TO PAIN AND SUFFERING IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

Facing test and trials is never easy. We truly are “oft left to wonder why it should be thus all the day long!” And perhaps no one understood that better than the Apostle Peter. As we discovered earlier, Peter provided one of the most poignant (distressing) New Testament examples the reality of this testing and trial that we as believer often go through as Jesus warned him that “Satan wanted to sift him.” We know that that “sifting” took place in Peter’s denial of Christ. We too face the reality of being called to stand alone at those kind of dark and challenging moment in our life when the trials and struggles descend on us. How can we respond victoriously!

Years later a restored, and spiritually mature Peter... leader of the early church would write these words that might help us in 1 Peter 4:12-19, *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trials you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or a thief or another kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ So then, those*

who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." -1 Peter 4:12-19

A Healthy Christian Perspective and Worldview of Pain and Suffering:

- (1) **Don't be caught off guard or by surprise of times of pain and suffering** – It truly rains on the just and the unjust. Christians are not immune to the difficulties and distresses in this life... as a matter of fact Peter knew that we are guaranteed them.
- (2) **Learn to see that God can work in and through times of pain and suffering** – God can actually grow us more through the trials than through the more pleasant moments of this life. We seem to depend and look to Him more in those moments.
- (3) **Strive to stay faithful even in times of pain and suffering, because He has been and will continue to be faithful to you** – Listen, for a believer, when we look at what God has done on our behalf through Jesus Christ and the promises that are ours now and in the life to come, our trials and struggles in this life.. no matter how heavy they may seem right now... are worth it all! We could never pay Him back for all that He has done for us!

CONCLUSION

5 Scriptural Principles for a Healthy Christian Perspective on Christian Suffering:

The Christian will never have any pain or suffering. Listen, let's be honest... isn't that a great thought? It sure sounds great, and we may like to think on some level that this is how it should be, but it's also one other thing... WRONG! There are many places in Scripture that deal with the reality of pain and suffering... and the pain and suffering that we experience. Let's take a look at a few of these verses and passages of Scripture, and see if we can glean some great Scriptural principles that may give us a more realistic and healthier perspective on pain and suffering... our pain and suffering and particularly how we might gain ground in our faith walk even in the midst of the pain of suffering.

- (1) **We may experience suffering for doing what is right - Scriptural support - Philippians 1:29** – *"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him."* This passage refutes the faulty notion that all suffering is the result of personal sin. On the contrary, we may experience hardship for doing what is right, for carrying out God's desired will.
- (2) **Part of the Christians life includes suffering - Scriptural support - 2 Corinthians 4:8-10** – *"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carrying around our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."* Here we learn that part of the Christian life includes, affliction, perplexity, persecution, and near-knockout blow. Why? So that the *"life of Jesus... may be manifested in our body."* Do you know what a powerful witness that can be? These kinds of believers leave the world scratching their heads and wondering, "How do they do that... how do they endure that? How do they get through these seemingly impossible heartache and hardship with such joy, hope and peace? The answer, of course, is JESUS!
- (3) **We should not be surprised when suffering comes - Scriptural support - 1 Peter 4:12-16** – *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though*

something strange were happened to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name

These verses teach us not to be surprised when affliction (suffering) comes upon us. In fact, if we are suffering because we are Christians, then we should “rejoice,” as Peter says, realizing that we “blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests” on us. Our difficult, painful times can be evidence that we are being obedient to Christ and His commands. And since we live in a world where there are many people who are still in rebellion against God, it should not surprise us when we are victimized by them simply because we are citizens of God’s everlasting kingdom.

- (4) **Sometimes God uses suffering for the purpose of instructing us more fully in His ways and training us to follow Him more completely - Scriptural support - Psalm 119:67,71,75 –** *Psalm 119:67, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your Word.” Psalm 119:71, “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.” Psalm 119:75, “I know, O Lord, that Your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me.”* Many times God will use the tool of affliction for the purpose of instructing us more fully in His ways and training us to follow Him more completely. It’s difficult when God must make us to “lie down in green pastures” (Psalm 23:2a), but many times there is no better way for Him to gain our attention.
- (5) **Suffering should cause us to take a scrutinizing look at ourselves as we really are - Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 –** *“Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.”* Another purpose of adversity is evaluation. Suffering should cause us to take a scrutinizing look at ourselves as we really are. That’s the idea tied up in the use of the Hebrew word translated here as “consider.” Though a self-evaluation will not guarantee what route our future will take, it will help us to understand where we have been and what improvements we can make.