

"A Different Perspective of Suffering"

Suffer as defined by a Google search:

: to experience pain, illness, or injury

: to experience something unpleasant (such as defeat, loss, or damage)

: to become worse because of being badly affected by something

Suffer as defined by the Complete Word Study Bible Dictionary - To suffer, to be affected by something from without, to be acted upon, to undergo an experience.

Isaiah 41:10 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

"Peace" (he says do not fear), "company" (he says I am with you) "strength" (He says I will strengthen you), "help" (He says surely I will help you), "stability" (He says surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand).

Emphasize each word in that first sentence:

Do not fear, for I am with you

Do **not** fear, for I am with you

Do not **fear**, for I am with you

Do not fear, **for** I am with you

Do not fear, for **I** am with you

Do not fear, for I **am** with you

Do not fear, for I am **with** you

Do not fear, for I am with **you**

As a shepherd, David understood the meaning of broken bones. You see, when a lamb would stubbornly and rebelliously continue to wander away from the flock, the shepherd would break its legs and place the lamb on his shoulder where it would remain until its bones were healed. When the lamb could walk again, so bonded was he with the shepherd, he would never stray again.

Like sheep, we all go astray (Isaiah 53:6). Therefore, in His love, the Good Shepherd breaks a bone or two and carries me while I whine and cry and wonder what He's doing. But as the days and weeks and months go by, I find myself closer to Him than I had ever been previously, and all I can say is, 'Thank You, Lord.' (My apologies to whomever I picked this up)

"How does God want you and me to see suffering?"

Psalms 139:16 "Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."

Shipwrecked on the island of Malta, as Paul gathered sticks to build a fire to warm the drenched soldiers and prisoners, a snake fastened itself to Paul's hand. Recognizing it as a poisonous viper, the villagers thought Paul must have been a murderer to deserve such a fate. So they watched him and waited for him to swell up and die. But Scripture records that, although he was smitten by the same serpent which had killed others on the island, Paul shook it off. And then they thought he was a god (Acts 28).

When will people listen to what you have to say about Christ Jesus? When, although you've been smitten by the same serpents which smite them, you shake it off and go on. When your business goes bankrupt, when your health fails, when problems mount, unbelievers expect you to swell up or fall down, to no longer love God or walk with the Lord. But when, like Paul, you shake off the snake and keep going, keep praising, keep loving, the islanders take notice.

You and I get bit by the same things that bite someone else yet we respond differently. Others are watching. They may not say anything at the time but others are watching. And they may watch you for a long time.

"How does God want you and me to see suffering?" As a way to witness to others. Don't you say? ... Don't I say? ... "I sure wish I did a better job of witnessing". Well, here you go ... Wife leaves you, crops fail, car quits ... The same thing that bites everyone Yet, you respond differently.

Post-traumatic growth or PTG. A positive psychological change experienced as a result of adversity and other challenges in order to rise to a higher level of functioning. It is not about returning to the same life as it was previously experienced before a period of traumatic suffering; but rather it is about undergoing significant 'life-changing' psychological shifts in thinking and relating to the world, that contribute to a personal process of change, that is deeply meaningful.

"How God wants you (and me) to see suffering?"

Nehemiah 1:8-9 (NASB)

Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, **'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; 9 but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.'**

The word "but" is a conjunction used to describe something **contrasting**. (A conjunction would be words such as "and", "but", "as", "because")

The suffering ... the scattering due to unfaithfulness. The promise ... God, Himself, gathers and brings those who return to Him to a place He has chosen.

Psalms 119:22-24 (Expanded Bible) (reading the words in bold text)

22 **·Don't let me be insulted and hated** [Take away insult and contempt] **because I keep your ·rules** [decrees; testimonies]. 23 **Even if princes sit around and speak against me, I, your servant, will ·think** [meditate] **about your ·demands** [statutes; ordinances; requirements]. 24 **Your ·rules** [statutes; ordinances; requirements] **give me pleasure; they ·give me good advice** [are my advisors/counselors].

The suffering ... being insulted and hated. The promise ... the pleasure and good advice of God's statutes.

Jeremiah 23:1-3 (NASB)

1 **“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!”** declares the Lord. 2 **Therefore** thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, **I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,**” declares the Lord. 3 **“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock** out of all the countries **where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.**”

The word "therefore" is a conjunctive adverb. A conjunctive adverb is an adverb that connects two independent clauses. Conjunctive adverbs **show cause and effect, sequence, contrast, comparison, or other relationships.**

The word "then" is an adverb. Adverbs answer “how,” “when,” and “where”

The suffering ...toward the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the people of God.

Two promises here ...

One ... God is about to take care of the shepherds Himself,

Two ... He is going to bring His flock back to His pasture.

Randomly open your bible to any page. Begin reading. As soon as you see some form of suffering let me know. Describe to me "what the suffering is". Then, describe some form of "positive promise". I.e; peace, or, provision. Anything that results in the form of hope.

Verse Reference

Form of Suffering

Promise or Provision

Q: What do you think God wants you and me to see from this exercise regarding the suffering itself?

Q: What do you think God wants you and me to see from this exercise regarding the promises He provides?

Place the first name of those people that you perceive may be suffering. For the sake of privacy if you can't place a name leave the name blank. Indicate the pain or suffering that person may be going thru.

	First Name or None	Pain or Suffering	First Name or None	Pain or Suffering
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
Total				

1 Peter 1:7 (NASB) 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 1:7 (Expanded Bible) 7 **These troubles** [trials; testings] **come to prove that your faith is pure** [to test and prove the authenticity of your faith; a test that proves the genuineness of a valuable metal]. **This purity of faith** [or tested and proven authenticity] **is worth more** [more precious; more valuable] **than gold, which can be proved to be pure** [tested and proven authentic] **by fire** [Ps. 66:10; Prov. 17:3; 27:21; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:3] **but can** [or will] **be destroyed. But the purity** [tested and proven authenticity] **of your faith will bring you praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is shown to you** [at the revelation of Jesus Christ].

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. (1 Peter 2:20 NASB)

Charles Stanley said in one of his sermons, "Wouldn't it be a shame not to grow from my suffering?"

1 Peter 2:23 **People insulted** [abused; reviled] **Christ, but he did not insult** [abuse; revile] **them in return. Christ suffered, but he did not threaten. He let God, the One who judges rightly, take care of him** [He delivered/entrusted himself to the One who judges justly/rightly].

1 Peter 4:1 [Therefore] **Since Christ suffered while he was in his body** [flesh], **strengthen** [arm] **yourself with the same way of thinking Christ had** [intention; attitude; resolve]. [Because] **The person who has suffered in the body** [flesh] **is finished with sin** [or has broken from the power of sin].

"Lord, I am willing to receive what you give, to lack what you withhold, to relinquish what you take, to suffer what you inflict, to be what you require." (Ancient hymn)

(Daily Discipleship by Leroy Eims) *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial 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. – 1 Peter 4:12-13*

You know, a lot of strange and sometimes exciting things can happen to you when you're traveling. In Genesis 32, we find Jacob traveling back home, and he has an experience that is more than just exciting. Jacob is met by a host of angels. Then he receives word that his brother, Esau, is heading his way with four hundred men, and he assumes he's in for a battle, which causes him great fear and distress. But the most amazing thing of all happened while he was alone at night. He had a wrestling match with an angel, in which he prevailed, his life was preserved, and God blessed him.

In that encounter with God, his life was changed for all time. No longer would he be Jacob—the con man, liar, thief. He was now Israel, a prince who had power with God. But note something significant. He doesn't begin to beat his chest and flex his muscles and announce to one and all that he had wrestled with God and prevailed.

In deep humility and wonder he says, **"It is because I saw God face to face,** and yet my life was spared" (32:30). Immediately, he begins to show the marks of a new life. He is a different person.

Today you may be facing a similar encounter with God. It may have come through a sickness, a heartache, the loss of a job, or some other difficult circumstance. And it hurts. But **the very encounters we resist because of their pain are the ones that can lead us to a changed life and a deeper fellowship with the Lord.**

1 Peter 5:10-11 **And after you suffer for a short time [or a little], God, who gives all grace, will make everything right [restore you]. He will make you strong and support you and keep you from falling. He called you to share in his glory in Christ, a glory that will continue forever [into his eternal glory in Christ]. 11 All power is his [or To him be the power] forever and ever. Amen.**

When God answers a prayer, no matter how big or how small, I need to share it. Giving testimony is the way I give God all of the glory. When I share my testimony, I am loaning my faith to others. No one can argue my testimony. I can't have a testimony without a test.

S- search the scriptures for examples. Search for the pain **and** the promise.

U- understand where I am in this situation. Am I the one in the fire or is it friend or family?

F- face the situation. God has a reason for me to endure this.

F- find a positive. How will I emerge from this? Ie; stronger, deeper in faith
WITH the Lord? Confident!

E- extol it to others. How will others see me as a Christian in this?

1 Peter 4:11 (NASB) Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

R- remember what Christ did for me. No suffering that I am in could compare to what Jesus went thru for me. No suffering could compare with what God, the Father, went thru.

My prayer for you is that "in your suffering" you draw nearer to God, that your life is changed by His closeness to you "in your suffering" and that God is glorified by your reflection of Him "in your suffering". Amen

If you would like to email me my address is:
dan.c.newton@gmail.com