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SALVATION

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world - he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

SUFFERING

27 REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SUFFER

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1. Sin unto death

"If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is a sin that does not lead to death." [1 John 5:16,17](#).

In our study on why Christians suffer, we need to understand, first of all, that there are two main categories of suffering, **deserved suffering, and undeserved suffering**. If we have been involved in wrongdoing of one form or another, and that has brought suffering into our lives; either self-induced, or divine discipline, then that is deserved suffering. But, if we are not involved in any wrongdoing, and there is suffering in our lives, then that is undeserved suffering. Secondly, we need to understand that God does not want us to be involved in things that bring us deserved suffering, he wants us to avoid all forms of wrongdoing. But if we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one.

The first category of suffering that we will look at is the sin unto death. The passage doesn't tell us what it is, for it can entail various sins. Certainly, the sins involved in going back into the World System, or getting involved in the Babylonian Mother-Goddess cult, or in the various forms of occultism would bear heavily on all this. Especially with the idea of being caught up in these things, with no hope of the believer ever getting out of them. A believer who goes negative to the Word and the things of the Lord and persists in his stubbornness, negative volition, and remains under the control of his old sin nature and is entrapped in these things, is making himself a likely candidate for coming under the sin unto death.

The sin unto death can come in two ways: in a short time in the immediate future, or in a long time drawn out over many years. Either way, it entails a miserable life, and ends with a miserable, painful death. In this, one can be expected to be handed over to Satan and his demons, who will inflict much pain and suffering on the rebellious believer.

If it is **long-term sin unto death suffering**, where 10-20 years could easily be in view; it is for the purpose of **being a warning to other believers to not copy the example of this believer**. This believer has rejected the Word of God and his grace provisions; remained under the control of his flesh nature; he may have even gone willingly over into the things of the devil, with the result that he has gotten into one or more categories of sinning, and can't, or won't get out of them. So he is under the sentence of the sin unto death, but is not going to be taken out of this life immediately, but will be left around as a visible warning to other believers to not follow his example.

Short-term sin unto death entails the same things of sinning, going back into the World, getting involved in the things of the devil, etc., but this believer is taken out in a short time. His rebellion against the Lord, and his continuous bad choices have gotten him into many miserable self-destructive practices; and coupled with the knowledge that he will never get out of them, the Lord takes him out of this life prematurely. And even this is a gracious act on the part of God.

2. Self-induced misery

"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." 1 Peter 4:15,16. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Galatians 6:7.

This type of suffering evolves from the law of volitional accountability. God gives man free will and the freedom to choose, but man is responsible and accountable for his choices. Whatever a man sows, that he shall reap. Or to put it in other words, **"you made your bed now lie in it!"**. Freedom to choose means that you have the right to choose, but you must live with the consequences of your own decisions, whether good or bad.

Two men stand before their respective fields; the one plants seeds, the other doesn't. He goofs off and sleeps a lot; fun is what is important to him. When it's time for the harvest, the man who planted his seed harvests a great crop! But the other man has nothing. Both

men are living with the consequences of their decisions. The second man's suffering of poverty has been brought about by his own bad decisions. It is self-induced misery.

Two other men have their evening hours before them. The one man watches a little TV, plays with the kids, reads his Bible, and goes to bed at a decent hour. While the other man goes out to the bars drinking until 2am in the morning, and comes home drunk. When they both get up in the morning at 6am to go to work, the one man, who made the right decisions, gets up feeling refreshed. While the other man, who made the wrong decisions, gets up with a miserable hangover and suffers all day long. Both men live with the consequences of their decisions.

Self-induced misery is the suffering you bring into your own life, as the result of your own bad decisions. It isn't undeserved suffering; it isn't even discipline! You did it to yourself all by yourself, and you've got no one to blame but yourself! The allurements of the world, the urgings of the flesh, combined with negative volition, led the believer into certain acts that resulted in suffering.

So if you want to minimize the sufferings that you have in life, and there are plenty of them, the believer needs to analyze the decisions he makes in life to ensure that they are biblical. You may be tempted to go into debt for that new car, but remember, that after the thrill of it wears off in a couple of days, the suffering under those payments will go on for years.

3. Corrective discipline

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed." [Hebrews 12:10-13](#).

This category of suffering is the kind brought about by God when he has to deal with a problem Christian. God has ordained that we live in the filling of the Holy Spirit, in the new nature, by faith, according to his Word. And when we become enmeshed in the world system once again, or caught up in the activities of the sin nature, or the things of Satan, then **God introduces corrective discipline to straighten that believer out.**

It is referred to as: divine discipline, the Lord's discipline, the Lord's hand, the Lord's chastisement, the Lord's rebuke, the rod of the Lord, etc. It is called corrective discipline because **it is designed to correct a believer living in error, not to punish him for it.** The word for to **punish** in [Hebrews 12:6](#) is *mastizo*, to whip; it has the idea of getting a strapping. And the other word is *paideuo*, which means to discipline or to correct.

Corrective discipline **must be distinguished from self-induced misery**. Oftentimes, the believer will think that God is disciplining, or even punishing him, when he isn't. What he's experiencing is the suffering that comes about as the result of his bad choices. The

hangover in the morning, after the party the night before is not God punishing him, but the misery he brought on himself by choosing to over indulge.

And we can learn a lesson from our own self-induced misery, such as the man who got tired of having headaches and feeling lousy in the morning; so he stopped drinking, or drinking too much. He simply got tired of hitting his head against a brick wall. Whereas **corrective discipline is brought in by God himself specifically for the purpose of teaching us a lesson, to correct the problem**; which is to walk in righteousness. And when you combine corrective discipline, along with our own self-induced misery, it adds up to a very miserable state of affairs.

Corrective discipline is designed to stop old sin nature activity, and effect purity, righteousness, and holiness in the life of the believer. It comes from the love, holiness and justice of God; and is a part of the *"you will be holy, because I am holy"* concept. It is real, and it is unpleasant; and it's designed to be unpleasant! It's designed to accomplish God's purpose for us, which is to make us like Christ.

4. Warning discipline

"Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack. My slanderers pursue me all day long; many are attacking me in their pride. When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?" Psalms 56:1-4.

The men who were pursuing David existed because of the divine discipline of *Yahweh*. They were brought about by the Lord to correct a problem in David's life. David had neglected his walk of faith in the Word of God, and God was now bringing something about to rectify the situation. And we see this form of suffering worked, because David now is back to the place of trusting the Lord once again; to the place that he has his confidence once again in *Yahweh*.

Warning discipline is suffering that is brought about by the Lord on the believer, prior to getting into that area known as the sin unto death, to get that believer back to living in the spiritual dynamic of faith in the Word, under the filling of the Holy Spirit. It can be as simple as things going wrong for you.

A study of David's life in Psalms 56, (and other places), brings out the various things that David suffered, and all orchestrated by the Lord; all designed by the Lord to warn David to get back to living the life ordained for him by God. And remember, not all our sufferings are physical; some are emotional, mental, financial, etc.

Men hotly pursuing David; pressing their attack; slanders against him; attacks of arrogance; fear; loss of peace; plots to harm him; conspiracies against him; spying on him; plotting to take his life; emotional distress; tears; were all warning discipline from God- warning him to get back to the faith-rest life, where he walked by faith each day, each moment, trusting in *Yahweh* and his Word. The life of *epignosis*.

Warning discipline, or suffering takes place before the sin unto death for the purpose of the believer being able to avoid the sin unto death; not to mention to get that believer back to the place of maximum blessing, production and glorification of God. It comes in various forms, and usually keeps on intensifying, until the believer, hopefully, gets the message. It is a category of suffering all by itself, and is usually directed against the doctrinal believer, who has gotten away from: the Word, living by faith, grace, *epignosis*, and the plan of God.

This believer, more than likely, has gotten caught up in the carnal living of the flesh nature, the world system, or the things of the devil. It is not sent to punish him, and isn't self-induced misery, but sent to him by God to warn him about where he's at in his spiritual life, and to get him back on track, so that things don't get worse with him being removed prematurely from this life. The forms of suffering differ from believer to believer, but are exactly what that believer needs to get him straightened out. **And the believer needs to check it out to see if the reason why things are not going well for him is because he's under warning discipline.**

5. Suffering for repentance

"Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it- I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while- yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God had intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in this matter." 2 Corinthians 7:8-11.

This is one of the more incorrectly understood and bantered about concepts in Christianity today. All of it comes from a total lack of understanding of just about everything brought out in the passage. The believer's pride, their arrogance against authority, their ignorance of the Word and the concepts of grace, have caused them to totally misinterpret the passage. For a fuller understanding of the passage, one needs to order the study on "Christian Repentance".

First of all, the idea here of sorrow here is not the idea of associated with grief, such as in the losing of a loved one, or feeling sorry over something, but the grief or pain associated with personal suffering. Which, suffering, has been brought on by the Lord and is directed personally towards the believer **for the purpose of bringing that believer to the place of repentance, which is having a total change of mind towards: the Word, the local church, the Pastor-Teacher, filling of the Holy Spirit, plan of God, grace, *epignosis*, new man living, and everything else in the doctrinal system of God.**

It can, and does, involve every kind of suffering: loss of job; loss of health, loss of blessings; physical, emotional, mental pain, disappointments, failures, etc.; anything that is painful to the believer. **The goal of which is not to make the believer feel sorry for what he has done, and sit around and cry about it, but to effect a total change of**

mental attitude in the believer towards the Word of God, so that they will get back into the area of epignosis living. The word for **repentance** here is *metanoeo*, which means to have a change of mental attitude, while *metamelomai* means to feel sorry about something, or to regret it. Judas, who betrayed Christ, felt sorry about what he had done and it did not help him. **Regret** involves a guilty conscience and the emotions, but does nothing about a change of attitude towards the Word, which involves the will.

The **grief according to God** is designed for the true believer, who is saved and perhaps been under the Word for awhile, functioning as he should in the Christian life: grace, faith, truth, prayer, etc., but has gotten away from it, or perhaps never been exposed to it at all. And so this kind of suffering is designed by God to bring about a change of mental attitude in that believer to separate him from his own works, his own arrogance and rebellion, and bring him to the place where he finally sees his need of the Word and the things of Christ; he's had a change of mental attitude.

6. Momentum suffering

This is where the believer is already on the right track and heading in the right direction and to keep that momentum going God brings suffering into his life. He doesn't deserve it; he hasn't done anything wrong; it's only brought in to keep him on the right track. It provides the suffering to keep him in the Word and living by faith. It isn't deserved suffering; it's not for punishment; it isn't for correction, or for warning, but only for the purpose of keeping him going in the right direction.

Remember, that Christ suffered much in his life, and none of it was deserved. It served its purpose. And the Apostles suffered much in their lives, and most of it was undeserved. Suffering is used by God to perfect our faith and keep us moving forward in his will for our life. This area of suffering is primarily administered to the doctrinal-grace believer, who is squared away with the Lord and heading in the right direction; and it's designed to keep him in the Word.

7. Warning discipline - early detection

"The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails-given by one Shepherd." Ecclesiastes 12:11.

This is more of an early warning detection system for the believer who is on the right path: doctrine, grace, faith, etc., but as everything else in life, there are so many things in life that can, and do get us off the right path. In the devil's world we will be exposed to a variety of allurements, temptations, or distractions in the world system, from our flesh natures, or from the devil.

No believer is capable in his own strength and foresight to see through everything that might cross his path in life. There are too many things, cleverly disguised, that can and do get us off the path. **But early warning detection suffering is designed to let us know that we are getting off the track, and need to get back to the Word as quickly as we can. Often it's gentle and we can see it for what it is. A gentle reminder from the Lord to get back on track. And the believer who is walking close to the Lord will**

pick up on it right away. He's been through much discipline in his life from the Lord, and he's tired of it. He now wants to walk with the Lord and enjoy his blessings, Over a course of time, he has seen that the Lord generally follows a pattern.

At first his discipline is moderate, serving as a gentle reminder. If the believer heeds, it goes away. If he doesn't, then the intensity of the discipline goes up a few notches, and keeps going up until the believer finally comes around. If he still doesn't, then the final discipline stage is the sin unto death. So now what he does is try to correct any problem, as quick as he can, while the discipline is still gentle. He knows too well how severe God's discipline can be, and he wants to avoid that at all costs. **So these gentle reminders from the Lord serve as an early warning detection system for him.**

8. Court room agenda suffering

"One day the angels went to present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan also came with them. Yahweh said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered Yahweh, 'From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.' Then Yahweh said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.' 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the works of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.' Yahweh said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.'" Job 1:6-12. "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 brothers." Luke 22:31,32.

This could also be put as evidence testing or suffering, for the purpose of evidence in a legal matter between God and Satan in the courtroom of heaven. This is undeserved suffering all the way through; and deals with doctrinal believers who are maturing, or are mature. This is suffering that is brought directly against the believer by Satan for the purpose of destroying his faith; his walk with God; and his adhering to God's Word.

But God allows it for the purpose of proving a point; to settle some legal charge that Satan has made against God, as in the case with Job, where the innuendo was that *Yahweh* had bought Job's loyalty. The testing of Job was designed to prove that this wasn't true. The introduction of suffering entailed the removing of all Job's blessings, including his health, to see if the charge made by Satan was true. And we see that Satan was proved wrong for Job still remained loyal (love) to God.

This kind of suffering is very intense; it is from Satan; it can come in clusters; it has great impact on one's life; it is very objective, where how a believer feels is not an issue; where God allows Satan to do certain things, with limits; it is designed to find out what really is in the believer's heart; and it is a total testing of the believer's faith, and the doctrine that he has. The issue is not whether the believer passes the test, but to find out what is in his heart!

But it does have an end to it, though, and God does have certain provisions for the believer while he is going through it. And after it is over God will repair the damage, and will continue to bless the believer, even more than he had before. But it is a very difficult form of testing, and the believer will be prone to believe that God has abandoned him, or turned away from him.

9. No punitive suffering

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1.

The point of this is that there is no punitive category of suffering for the believer in Christ. The reason for this is because God punished Jesus Christ for our sins, and that would be double jeopardy to punish somebody else all over again for the same thing. Christ died for us, (*huper*), that is, he died on our behalf, for our sake. And not only for us, but for the sins of the whole world.

"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." 2 Corinthians 5:19. And the reason why God no longer counts men's sins against them is because he has finally, fully, and totally dealt with the judicial problem concerning sin. God dealt fully with the problem of sin on the cross, where he imputed all the sins of the world to Jesus Christ, while he was hanging on the cross; punishing him for our sins. He who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf. And once being considered as a sinner, as the result of this imputation, he was punished for our sins once - for all of them.

Even at the Judgment, the unbeliever will not be punished for this sins, for Christ has already been punished for them. He will be judged for his works. *"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books." "If anyone's name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Revelations 20:12,15.*

So whatever suffering a Christian may be experiencing, it is not because God is punishing him. It may be undeserved suffering; it may be self-induced misery; it may be corrective discipline. But his suffering is not sent to punish him. Even if he deserves it and it is from the hand of God; it would be for the purpose of correcting a problem, or some other reason. So, no one can say that God is punishing him for what he's doing that's wrong; for he has already punished his son for our wrongdoing. Once the believer can get this straightened out in his mind, then he can go on to find out the real reason for his suffering. And sometimes, he can't even do that; he will just have to trust the Lord.

10. Because you're a believer in Christ

"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him." Philippians 1:29.

One of the things that the Jews living in Christ's time had a problem with, and many today, is the concept of a suffering Messiah. They wanted a conquering hero, one who would enable them to shake off the yolk of Rome, and conquer the world; not a meek and humble Messiah who suffered.

And a similar idea influences many Christians today. They want the Christian life to be one of success, prosperity, well being, problem-free, conquering everything in sight; certainly not one of suffering. But suffering comes with the Christian life, whether we want it or not. As the passage says, it has been **granted** to us (*charizo*, a grace function, we don't deserve it), to not only believe on Christ, but to suffer for him. As the Lord told Ananias, *"I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."* Acts 9:16.

You see, suffering comes with the Christian life. And it is God's will that we not only suffer for Christ's sake, but that it's undeserved suffering. There is no merit in suffering, if we suffer because we have done wrong. As Peter said, "Don't be surprised at the fiery trial you are suffering." 1 Peter 4:12-19. It goes with the package. But we are to continue to trust God in the suffering, for he loves us and is using the suffering to accomplish his wonderful purpose for our lives, to mature us and make us like Christ, and to accomplish his eternal plan.

The concept of God's people suffering is found all through the Bible; Peter, the Apostle James, the Lord, the Apostle Paul, Job; *Asaph* in Psalms 73, who had a real problem with it for awhile, especially when he looked at the prosperity of the wicked, until he went to the house of God where the Word was taught, and then he understood it all.

11. Because of one's stand for Grace and The Word

"As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God." John 8:37. *"The son of the bondwoman persecutes the son of the free woman."* Galatians 4:29.

The Jews hated Christ and tried to kill him, because he spoke the truth to them. It all goes back to the nature of the flesh. Man, in his fallen condition, hates the truth of God and the grace of God. It is the sinful nature that hates these concepts. So, when a believer tries to stand for these things, he will face opposition and suffering.

Peter tells us that there is a *"suffering for righteousness sake"* alone. 1Peter 3:14. And the Apostle Paul was constantly hounded by men, who hated his stand for grace and the truth. They even hired assassins to murder him! And the believer today, if he identifies himself with the grace of God and his Word, will find himself suffering too. Sometimes socially; sometimes economically; sometimes vocationally; sometimes physically; and always from the devil. But there will be suffering because of one's stand for the Word.

In the case of the devil, Christians will suffer because he hates the principles of grace and truth alone. And because of the relationship believers have with Jesus Christ, whom he hates passionately.

Christians, who stand for these things, will suffer from the people of the world, who hate grace and truth. They hate the truth, because they love the lie. And they hate grace, because it stands in direct opposition to their works, their pride, their strengths, etc.. Man, because of his pride and desire to boast, directs his hostility towards the concepts of grace and truth, and if there is a believer connected to these concepts, then he will bear the brunt of it.

Christians, who stand for these things, can also suffer from the hands of **other Christians who are legalistic**. Legalists, who are bound up in their self-righteousness, pride, and works, also hate the concepts of grace and doctrine, while in the flesh; because it exposes their arrogance and takes away their opportunity for boasting.

Maligning, slandering, rejection, social ostracism, being the object of condescending snobbery, being bad-mouthed, loss of jobs or business opportunities, and many more things have been brought down on the believer who stands for God's grace and truth. It came upon the Lord, his apostles, and all others who stand with them.

We find this principle in life, in the churches, in religion, and in politics. People who are slaves in their mentality persecute those who are free.

12. Because we live in the devil's world

"We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one." 1 John 5:19.

The devil is the god of this age, the ruler of the world, and has been ever since the fall of Adam. A created being of tremendous power and evil brilliance; but still is no more than an angel, fallen in nature. In Revelation he is called the accuser, because he accuses the brethren before the throne of God night and day. In the Old Testament he is called the adversary, Satan, because he stands in direct opposition to, and is the enemy of the people of God. He is a liar, and a murderer, and has been since the beginning. He is cruel, evil, vicious, and hateful; and his acts towards the people of God are always horribly destructive. Job and his family are but one of many examples. He is violent, hateful and destructive; and would destroy everything that belongs to God, if allowed to. And whenever he comes against a believer, it always ends up in mental or physical suffering, and even self-destructive tendencies.

When he deceived and led into sin the first man and woman, he gained control of the earth, which had been given to Adam by God. Now, this extremely powerful and exceedingly wicked being is in control of the planet, as the god of this age and the ruler of this world. And here we are, smack dab in the middle of a planet controlled by him; in the middle of his terrain; people belonging to God, as a constant reminder to him of God's tactical victory over him on the cross. And not only that, God is blessing us right under his nose. Satan's rage is surely directed towards the people of God.

Compounding all this, is the fact that every time someone believes on Christ, Satan loses another one of his slaves. Secondly, is the fact that this saved person is another "little Christ", whom he hates. And if this believer goes on to maturity, then this will bring even

more glory to God, and pose an even greater threat against his plans here on earth. Seeing all this, is it little wonder that we would experience suffering of some sort, due to living in the devil's world? But God's grace is sufficient for that too.

13. Because of our bodies

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-" Romans 5:12.

The problem of suffering in connection with our bodies goes back to the curse put on Adam, when Adam sinned. For it was in the fall of the original couple, that sin, corruption and death entered into the world.

The term **corruption**, *phtheiro*, refers to the continual deteriorating condition of the body, which brings pain and suffering into our lives. It has nothing to do with, sin, discipline, correction, self-induced misery, evidence testing, or anything else. It's the aging process, which is really the decaying process; our bodies are decaying before our very eyes. We try to put it in a good light, by saying we're getting older, but actually our bodies are decaying. Sickness, diseases, infections are also found in here. We can minimize, or alleviate the aging process, by proper diet and exercise, but we can't stop it.

Paul understood this concept all too well when he said in 2 Corinthians 4:16, *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."* Paul understood the principle of corruption at work in our mortal bodies of clay that we inherited from Adam; and he knew that it had nothing to do with merited, or unmerited suffering, but was a source of suffering in a category all by itself. Our bodies are decaying everyday whether we sin or not, whether we're even believers or not; it's the condition of mortal flesh.

So often, when Christians suffer, they are prone to wonder, "Have I done something wrong?" Even Job racked his brain over that one. Failing to realize that our bodies are not only not perfect; and prone to accident and injury, but because of the curse connected with Adam, now are subject to the aging process, where they go into corruption. This is all linked to the corruptive element of sin in the body, a genetic matter, that affects every cell in our bodies. Because of this sin in the body, our bodies are subject to aging, disease, infection, falling apart, and with that comes pain and suffering, both physical and mental.

But Paul didn't get discouraged over that, (although we do at times), because he concentrated on Christ, the Word, his new nature, which would live on into eternity. He knew that **God had provided a spiritual provision, which would help us, and that is epignosis doctrine in the new man**. As Paul applied his faith to the promises of God, and the Word of God, spiritual energy was released into his new man which strengthened and renewed him. That's why he didn't lose heart.

14. Because people are sinful and hate Christ

"If the world hates you, (and it does), keep in mind that it hated me first." John 15:18.

A lot of our suffering comes about as the result of the sin nature that everyone possesses. Sin causes suffering. Meanness, hatefulness, envy, jealousy anger, bitterness, maligning, slandering, selfishness, arrogance, pride, the occult, lusts, greed, gossip, cursing, sins of the tongue, sexual immorality, drugs, idolatry, drunkenness, theft, factions, violence, murder, vandalism, etc., all exist because of sin; and they cause suffering!

Sin damages one: physically, emotionally, mentally; it damages one's reputation; one's finances; one's relations with others; personal property; the community and the nation. And our personal suffering not only comes from our own sins, but the sins of others also.

And even more so, when one considers that the world hates Christ and those who belong to Christ. Christ said, *"If the world hates you"*, the first class condition of if, and it does, *"it hated him first."* And the reason why the world hates Christians is because he has chosen them out of the world: because we belong to Christ.

This hatred translates itself into: attitudes, words and actions directed towards the believer in Christ. Often in the form of legalized persecution from governments. And this translates into suffering for Christians - undeserved suffering. A lot of the sufferings we experience in life are due imply to the fact that we are Christians - and the world hates believers! And note the word is hate, not dislike, or some other gentler word. So when you take the world's general attitude towards Christians and combine it with their old sin natures, you can see that much of our suffering is due to the people in the world. Even we ourselves have caused much suffering to others.

15. As the catalyst for growth

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed." Romans 8:18,19.

The concept of growth implies that there has to be a beginning; progress; and ultimately, a completion. It also implies that there has to be a goal, an ideal, that one is seeking to attain. And there usually is a model after which one patterns himself. Young men in sports, usually have some professional player as their model. Young people learning to play a musical instrument, often want to be like their teacher, or some famous player. For the Christian and his development there is growth, and a goal. He may not understand it, but when God saved him, it was with the view in mind of making him like Christ.

Growth entails change, where we are changed into something different. But how is this change to be brought about? In Romans 8 and Hebrews 5:8 we see that suffering, whether deserved or undeserved, is introduced as the catalyst for bringing this growth about. Growing in grace; growing in love; growing in the knowledge of the Lord; being perfected in faith; being perfected in love are all involved here.

I guess that it's suffering that brings us to the end of ourselves. When in suffering, we try to remedy, stop, or correct the situation. **And in suffering, when we find out we can't; when we have come to the end of human resources; it is there that we reach out to**

God in faith for him to help us. And it's there, as we are reaching out to God in our prayers, in faith, in his Word, that we begin to grow, to change. Not in an academic sort of way, but where there is true change on the inside, in the soul. And the sufferings, because they are so unpleasant, are the things that motivate us toward the things of growth and change: faith, the Word, the promises, local church, new nature living, etc..

16. For the purification of our faith

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade-kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 1:3-7.

In 1 Peter 1:6 we once again see the grief Christians experience as the result of the trials they are experiencing. Showing that suffering is a part of the Christian's experience here on earth. As he says in 1 Peter 4:12, *"Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which has come upon you, as though something strange were happening to you."* Suffering comes with being a believer in Christ.

But the fiery trial has a purpose and that's to bring our faith out. The trial is designed to make us turn to faith in God's Word. The example of the ore in the crucible brings this out. As the ore is crushed and put into a crucible, with fire under it, the fire melts the ore and the gold sinks to the bottom. And the ore, as dross, floats on the top where it can be skimmed off. **The purpose of the whole process is to get the gold that is in the ore.** The fiery ordeal is nothing more than the process used to do that.

And so it is with our faith. God knows that our faith is there, and the fiery ordeal of suffering is only the means that he uses to get that faith out. **In fact, one could look at this from another standpoint and see that sufferings only exist because there is faith there! And God knows it!** If there was no faith in Christ, it would be like there being no gold in the ore. And if there is no gold in the ore, why bother crushing it and running it through the refining process? If there was no faith in Christ, then there would be no suffering, for there would be no need for it. Therefore, because these sufferings do exist, and directed by the hand of God, it indicates that there is faith in Christ in that believer. God is simply using these sufferings to get at the faith that is already there and bring it to the surface; ultimately to perfect it.

17. To get our eyes off this world and on to the world to come

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

In Paul's letter of 1Thessalonians 4:13-18, where Paul discusses the return of Christ, the resurrection and the rapture; it's in the context of Christians suffering grief over the loss of their loved ones. Grief is a very powerful emotion, and causes tremendous suffering emotionally, psychologically and physically. The encouragement he has for them is the next life, and therefore to have them put their eyes on it and not this one so much.

Peter tells us to be looking towards the new heavens and new earth, *"But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."* 2 Peter 3:13. Abraham was looking for the heavenly country and city, *"People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. Instead they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one, Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."* Hebrews 11:14,16.

Moses suffered with the people of God, looking for the city to come. Hebrews 11:24. Then there is the record of all those in Hebrews 11:32-40, who suffered in this life, but were looking for the city to come.

And **Paul** talks about suffering in this life, but it did not cause him to lose heart. He knew that the pressures of this life, and the corrupting condition of these fleshly bodies were achieving an eternal glory that outweighed them all. And they caused him to look forward to what is eternal in the next life; not what's in this life.

If everything went well for the believer: no testings, no sickness, no pressure, no trials, no poverty, no setbacks, no failures, no disappointments, no grief, no suffering; nothing but money, success, material prosperity, etc., I imagine that in short order the believer's mind would be completely off the things of Christ and eternity; and he would become totally occupied with the things of the world. As it is, many Christians are already occupied with the world system, even in spite of any discipline they may be receiving. As we have seen with *Asaph* and the wicked in Psalms 73.

But, as it is, as one's plans are thwarted, his goals and ambitions escape him; he suffers setbacks and disappointments; he experiences real pain and suffering; by going through all these things his mind is taken off the things that are of no importance, and gradually put on the things of Christ and eternity.

18. To share in the sufferings of Christ

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Philippians 3:10. *"But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."* 1Peter 4:13.

First of all, *koinonia* meant to participate in, to share in, to have something in common. It also denoted the close union and brotherly bond between men. Oftentimes, this close union, or bond came about as the result of the two men having to go through the same things. And by these two men having to go through the same thing, or having the same experience, there developed a bond, or union between them.

This is quite common between men in the military, who bond together as a team in boot camp, and even more so as they get out in the field. And it reaches its greatest degree of closeness, if they were together in battle fighting for their lives. In fact, this is probably the best definition of the communion that exists between men. A bond that exists because the two men have had to stand shoulder to shoulder as they fought for their lives and each others lives in the face of battle.

In the early mystery religions, the participant's greatest desire was to share the same sufferings of their departed hero-god. It was through sharing in the same sufferings that he went through on earth, that they were able to know him.

Now Jesus suffered here on earth, and he suffered in many ways. By being plunged into his sufferings, we go through the same experience of suffering; and even the cross to a diminished degree. In so doing, a close union, a brotherly bond is developed in us between us and the Lord. We both have had the baptism of fire. We have shared the same experience, we have shared the same suffering; and so, we know what it's like. And a bond is developed, like soldiers in battle, that only those who have gone through it will be able to understand.

This is an especially significant matter, for it is only those believers, who have shared in the sufferings of Christ here on earth. It is only them that will have this type of closeness with the Lord throughout eternity!

19. National judgment

"This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: You said, 'Woe to me! Yahweh has added sorrow to my pain; I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.'" (Yahweh said), "Say this to him: This what Yahweh says: I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted, throughout the land. Should you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares Yahweh, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life." Jeremiah 45:2-5.

Whenever believers living in a nation go into apostasy, or that nation departs from the national structure of integrity, justice, etc., then God will judge that nation. Its judgment will go on for many years, with ever-increasing and intensifying phases of cursing. Environmental, agricultural, economical, social and moral cursing will be levied upon every aspect of that nation's society and people. To the place, that eventually, if the warnings of the Word are not heeded, will result in the destruction of that nation, which history has recorded so well.

We are not going to document all the varying aspects of national judgment, for that is a study in itself, but to show that Christians, to some degree, even doctrinal ones that are pleasing to the Lord, will suffer also; even though they do not deserve it.

In Psalms 44:1-26, we see Israel suffering defeat at the hands of their enemies; devoured like sheep; scattered among the nations; and suffering. Yet he says that they had not forgotten the Lord, nor been false to his covenant. Their hearts had not turned back, nor had their feet strayed.

Elijah prayed that it would not rain for 3 1/2 yrs. and it didn't. But this drought affected all the people, those who weren't walking with the Lord, and those who were; including Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. The drought caused their food supply to diminish, which affected them. Elijah suffered, but not to the same degree that the nation suffered. Besides, he appropriated the grace of God to help him endure.

Two doctrinal believers suffering, undeservedly, as the result of national discipline; yet God took care of them, and miraculously so. And that's the hope that the doctrinal believer has if God judges their nation. His discipline is not being brought down because of these believers, but because of the believers in apostasy, and he will provide the grace for the doctrinal believer to endure it. *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."* 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Jeremiah was another one who suffered because of national judgment. Not from the things that he suffered at the hands of the people, that too, but because of the judgment of God levied on the land. Among many things, he was denied one of the greatest blessings that we all take for granted, and that was to marry and have children. *"Then the word of Yahweh came to me: 'You must not marry and have sons or daughters in this place.'"* Jeremiah 16:1,2.

Eventually, Jeremiah had to see the tens of thousands of dead bodies litter the streets, men, women and children. He saw the invading army come in; the burning; the looting; the raping; and all the rest that goes with war. He experienced tremendous suffering in grief over the destruction of his beloved nation; as recorded in Lamentations. Then there was the suffering of physical discomfort: where to sleep; what to eat and drink; for the supply of basic needs would have been destroyed by the war. So Jeremiah suffered because of national judgment, even though it wasn't directed at him, or because of him.

Then there was Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch, who had also given up a normal life to serve *Yahweh* at Jeremiah's side. And after it was all over, there was nothing left for him, only sorrow, grief, suffering, pain, groaning, no rest; yet he was left with the knowledge that *Yahweh* would take care of him wherever he went.

So whenever there is national judgment, the righteous will suffer as well as the unrighteous, but not to the same degree. And whatever suffering they do experience, even if it's only discomfort and being inconvenienced; it will be undeserved. And, God will take care of them, provide all their needs, and even bless them during the judgment. In fact, he will greatly bless some doctrinal believers, so that they can help out other doctrinal believers. And of course, there is the knowledge that God will cause it all to work out for good; and there will still be the spiritual dynamics working for them of *epignosis* in the soul.

20. For further blessing

"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast." 1Peter 5:10.

Unknown to most Christians is the role that suffering plays in how God deals with them. They simply, and incorrectly conclude that when they are suffering it's because God is punishing them for something that they have done. But, as we have seen before, there is suffering connected with: correction, discipline, warning, self-induced, etc.. And now we have suffering connected to the promotion of a believer.

Under the category of blessing, we take in all related concepts: insight into wisdom, doctrine, prosperity, job advancements, marriage, promotion to the ministry, etc.. But what so many believers fail to see is that **before there is a promotion by God, there will also be humbling.**

The highest example of this is Jesus Christ, who humbled himself in obedience to God the Father and his plan; and experienced the greatest suffering known to man. But after his experience of suffering, God exalted, or promoted him to the highest position in the universe. The promotion followed the suffering, and it was all done by God the Father.

The Apostle Peter wanted to convey this to the young men under his ministry, where he told them to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, so that God would promote them in due time. Then he talked about the problems of suffering and worry in all this, and how the devil would try to destroy them, and how to handle him.

Basically the role that suffering plays in all this, although there are other factors involved, is to effectively check the believer's arrogance and pride, so that he won't become lifted up in his own thinking concerning himself, and say that his own hand had done this. The humbling of suffering makes him realize that he cannot do anything; that he is helpless; and that it was the strength of the Almighty God who pulled him through it.

21. To draw us closer to each other

"Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." 1Peter 5:9.

Just as sharing in the sufferings of Christ draws us closer to him; it also draws us closer to each other. So often, Christians feel like they're alone in the world and in their sufferings. Not realizing that other Christians are going through the same things.

When one does go through suffering and has had to utilize the grace provisions of God, leaning on his strength in his helplessness; it has a way of changing the heart, softening it, as well as humbling one's pride. With the result that when someone else goes through the same thing, your heart goes out to them in compassion. You have a closeness with them.

Peter encouraged us with the words, "*knowing that your brothers throughout the world are going through the same experiences of suffering*". Paul tells us that when we have suffered, and been comforted by God, we can encourage others who are going through the same sufferings; thus drawing us closer to each other.

Suffering breaks down that independent self-reliance that says, "I can handle these things myself"; or, "I can make it by myself"; or, "I don't need anyone's help". As so many of us have had. Until we are hit with something that we can't handle, and have had to go to God for help. Who does help us, and often uses other people in the process! Sometimes with just their prayer and encouragement.

The suffering doesn't make us rely on each other; it's not intended to do that. ("*Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends upon flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord*", [Jeremiah 17:5](#).) But to draw us closer to each other, in love, in compassion; caring for one another. It humbles us to make all of us realize that we're not the hot stuff that we thought we were; and that we need God for every single thing in life; and that we're all going through the same thing.

22. Satanic attacks

"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." [Ephesians 6:13](#)

This category would include: satanic attacks, demonic influence and demonic oppression. Matters of demonic possession and the sufferings of unbelievers are not dealt with in this study; for we are only dealing with Christian suffering.

We have already dealt with the undeserved suffering of Christians in the matter of Courtroom agenda suffering, where the believer is singled out to resolve a judicial matter that has been brought up in heaven. But this study looks at the sufferings that Christians experience at the hand of Satan or his demons. Sometimes it's deserved; sometimes it's not.

In [1Cor.5:1-5](#) we have a believer being handed over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit could be saved. This was done because of the nature of his sin, having sex with his father's wife. It was a serious situation, actually shocking; and it was dealt with in a serious manner, by being handed over to Satan. Deserved suffering.

In [2Cor.12:7-10](#), we see that a demon, a messenger sent from Satan, was assigned to Paul to buffet him, punch him; it was undeserved suffering and it was done for a reason.

First, to keep him from exalting himself, that is, to keep him from being lifted up with pride. Paul was a man of words and education. His past in Judaism was brilliant, and he had been exposed to the greatest wisdom on the earth. It would have been very easy for him to slip into some form of arrogance, as so many of the intelligentsia are prone to do. So a demon was assigned to him, to punch him, every time he started to get out of line and get in that area.

Second, whenever the demonic suffering occurred, it would force him to get back in the dynamics of the Christian life and rely on the grace provisions of God. Under this kind of pressure the believer realizes that he is up against something that he cannot handle in his own strength. So it separates the believer from his reliance on works.

Third, is along the same line. This category of suffering not only kept Paul humble, but relying on the grace of God every day. Paul would be prone to lean towards self-reliance, especially in light of his background of legalism, not only towards pride, but towards his own works. Demonic attacks kept Paul in the position that he was constantly having to depend upon Christ.

Then there is the suffering that comes to the believer because he goes negative to the Word. 2 Timothy 2:24-26. This believer becomes trapped by Satan to do his will, and it's not a pretty picture. This is deserved suffering, and he is suffering as the result of his bad choices. There will not only be the suffering of lost rewards, but it will affect him personally, and those associated with him in life.

Mental and emotional disorders, even insanity often come to the believer that rejects the Word of God; and are the direct result of the suffering brought on by demonic influence. 1 Samuel 16:14,15. Being delivered over to the Tormentors, Matthew 18:34,35, for refusing to forgive your brothers, is also in this idea.

Getting involved in the things of the occult, the things of Satan, as a believer, is a sure way of bringing demonic suffering into your life. This suffering is not only deserved, but it's self-induced as well and stupid! Galatians 5:19-21.

Loving the world system also brings you under satanic influence, with it's resultant misery and suffering. For the believer will not only suffer because of the demons in his life, but he will also suffer because of the Lord's hand against him. The entire context of James 4:4-10 shows this that's why the believer has to **both "submit to God"**, and **"resist the devil"** to get out of this miserable situation.

There is also the suffering caused by demons attacking those believers who are positive to the Word, and serving the Lord. **The greatest attacks of Satan are reserved for those who go for the word of God.** For it is the Word of God that poses the greatest threat to the kingdom of Satan, not people, nor religion. **So whenever Satan sees that a believer is going for grace, faith and truth, he will direct his attacks at that believer to not only discourage him, but destroy him! And he would, if God let him.**

23. Reliance on the grace of God

"For we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead."
2Corinthians 1:8,9.

Although it's been briefly mentioned under the other categories, it needs to be developed as a separate category of its own because of its importance.

Suffering teaches us to rely on God's grace and all his various, wonderful provisions. It also teaches us at the same time not to rely on ourselves, our own strengths, and our own works. And in the arena of suffering, that's one of the things that we do learn; and if we don't learn it, we'll be kept there until we do.

The key issue in all this is faith versus our own works. And it is usually when we come to the end of ourselves, that we reach out to God in faith and prayer. And it's not just faith versus works, **but grace versus works.** The grace of God versus what we can do in our own works.

We're not only saved by grace through faith, which excludes our works and boasting. But we're to live our lives by grace through faith; thereby, again, excluding our works and boasting. Ephesians 2:8,9. That's why we usually find ourselves in situations that are beyond our ability to handle, whether physically, spiritually, emotionally, financially, etc.. As the case was with the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:8,9, "*We were under great pressure (and suffering) far beyond our ability to endure*", with the result that they "*despaired of life*". Then he goes on to say, "*that this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but God*".

If we can handle something, then we will use our own strengths, resources and works in doing so. And thus, become self-reliant, instead of relying on God and his strength, resources and power. But who can handle anything that well! It's when we are hit with a variety of sufferings, with varying intensities, that we begin to see that we can't handle them! So we turn to God for help. Thus suffering accomplishes dependence on God's grace provisions.

24. Because of garbage in the soul

"Praise the Lord, O my soul: all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases." Psalms 103:1-3.

This area deals with the emotional problems, emotional disorders, severe hurts, rejections, scars in the soul, destroyed love relationships, and a host of other things that lie buried in the soul, that have not been dealt with.

Most people, when victims of abuse, or exposed to severe emotional trauma, instead of dealing with it, suppress or repress the event into the sub-conscious- "out of sight, out of mind". And there in the sub-conscious, where they are out of the realm of conscious thought, the individual does not have to think about it, nor does he have to continue living the hurt. Most people, because we are human, do not want to think about unpleasant, or hurtful things that have happened to us, nor do we want to deal with them. Most of us are not even capable of dealing with them. So we just sweep them out of sight into the sub-conscious.

But that doesn't mean that they have gone away! Nor does it mean that they won't hurt you anymore! For, even if they are buried, they still have an effect on one's life, one's thoughts, feelings, emotions, one's body, and one's relations with other people. Only we can't see what is going on, and what is causing it. With the result, that one can even have physical suffering due to a psychological problem. It's not a conscious concept; one is not consciously aware of the problem; he may even think that he has no problems at all! (Which is often the case). But he does. These are psychosomatic illnesses. The problem is physical, but it originates in the soul.

One easy proof of this is the man who has indigestion, ulcers, nervous stomach, etc.. Now his problem may be solely physical in nature, and sometimes it is. Maybe he eats too much; maybe he eats the wrong kind of foods. But he has another bad habit, and that is he worries all the time. He's fearful, insecure, he's afraid of just about everything, (but can't see it, and wouldn't admit to it anyway), and he just worries. He worries, because he's terribly insecure about life. And he's insecure, because he's been exposed to so many things in his childhood, that bred insecurity in him.

Now we know how insecurity is overcome, and that is through the process of growth in the Word, faith in the promises, and trusting in the Lord. In the process, a person may have to go back to root out the problem of his insecurity, to find out why he's so insecure and deal with it. Or at least take a look at it, so that he will understand it.

So here we see physical suffering that is caused by a psychological problem, and one that the person is usually totally unaware of. And, often is the case, when one deals with the psychological problem, the physical suffering goes away, or is greatly diminished so as to enhance the believer's quality of life.

Sometimes these psychological problems (garbage in the soul) manifest themselves in physical suffering, and sometimes they bleed directly into the mind and emotions. Remember these sufferings are usually what we have received at the hands of other people, (operation old sin nature activity); people that we liked, loved, trusted; people who hurt us, even though sometimes they didn't mean to. And not knowing what to do about our hurts, or how to handle them, we simply pushed them down into the subconscious to forget about them. But they didn't go away like we hoped they would. They surfaced later on life, usually triggered by some parallel event. Which, dynamics, we were also unaware of.

You see something; something is said; you do something; or see someone; or a certain time of the year comes around; or you're exposed to something, and all of a sudden your mood changes. You don't know why it has changed; you don't know what has caused it to change. But now you start to suffer: grief, fear, hurt, sadness, loneliness, insecurity; and every other undesirable thing starts to pour out into the soul; even anti-social behavior.

You might begin to get sick, tired, headaches, nausea; you go to bed early, aches and pains, are prone to flu and colds. What's going on? The problem is you really don't know! You may be able to explain away the physical sufferings; colds and flu are easy to explain in the winter, but not all the physical sufferings. Not the emotional suffering, nor anti-social behavior.

The truth is you don't consciously know what the problem is; what caused the problem; or even if you have a problem. And the reason why is because the problems have all been suppressed down into the sub-conscious where they lay buried, until something triggers them. Everybody who has lost a loved one, whether to death, or divorce is well aware of the various kinds of sufferings they experience around the holidays or their birthdays.

So the individual, totally unaware of what's going on, is subjected to physical, mental, or emotional suffering. The suffering may be physical, and seem to be purely physical at the beginning, until he discovers that it is related to some emotional problem that had lay buried in his sub-conscious for many years, that was triggered to the surface by some event. Or the suffering may be totally emotional in nature, which is related to some psychological trauma, that also lay buried in the soul; triggered by some event.

For example; the holiday season comes around, and the believer finds themselves depressed, discouraged, maybe even crying for no reason. And they can't understand it. Until they realize that they are grieving over the loss of their marriage, or a parent had died, or some similar concept. Or maybe they aren't depressed and crying, but that they feel sick, weak, tired, can't shake a cold, etc.. They are experiencing a physical problem that is really related to an emotional one.

This category of suffering is really difficult to deal with, because it seems so willy-nilly, so hard to pin down. It's very difficult to get at the bottom of it, to diagnose it and see it for what it is so that one can effect a healing change. What it is, is garbage in the soul that is connected to some emotional problem. Sometimes a believer can handle these problems himself, if he's under doctrinal teaching and had some background in it, other times, he needs to talk to somebody; a friend, a Pastor, etc., and sometimes he really needs to seek professional help to get at the bottom of it; especially if he's in an area that he's never been in before, and he has no relief from the problem. It depends on the severity of the situation and how it effects his soul, his functioning in life, and his relations with others.

Much of the garbage in our souls is the carry over from childhood, where we had many unmet needs: love, affection, companionship, acceptance, communication, bonding, etc., that should have been supplied to us by our parents, but for one reason or another, weren't! But God has promised to supply all our needs.

As we've seen by now, there are many reasons why a believer can suffer. What he needs to do in his own privacy, in his own priesthood, is diagnose his own case before the Lord to find out why he is suffering. And then affect the appropriate remedy. For each of the categories of suffering, except sin unto death, has a remedy for the suffering. You need to find out what is necessary to get the suffering removed, or if that's not the case, what grace provision you need to help you endure the suffering. In the case of self-induced misery, stop banging your own head against the wall.

If you have checked all the categories of suffering out, and prayed to God for wisdom, then it could be that the suffering one is experiencing is related to garbage in the soul. Physical and mental suffering related to scars of the heart. The solution to this problem

entails that the problems will have to be brought up to the conscious level of the mind where they can be seen, identified, diagnosed, and the proper solution established. There are three ways this is usually accomplished.

One, through the doctrinal study of the Word of God in the local church, under the pastor-teacher, and getting books on the subject, sometimes the believer is able to handle his own problems. **Two**, through intense prayer and soul-searching before the Lord, God will give you wisdom on it. James 1:5. Sometimes all that's needed is for God to show it to you, confess it to him, and it's gone. Other times the process is more lengthy and painful. **Three**, sometimes it's out of reach for the average believer and one would need a professional to help him get at the bottom of the problem, to bring it to the surface where it can be seen and dealt with. This is spiritual growth and it involves the healing process of the soul. You might need all three of the above to get through it, but remember that it is God who is the one doing it. He just chooses the instrument he wants to for the healing.

25. Because of the rigors of training

"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your forefathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you." Deuteronomy 8:2-5.

This category of suffering comes about as the result of the rigors of training in the Word, as the Lord prepares the believer for the life of service and blessing that he has for us in maturity. Every athlete knows that there is a certain amount of suffering that comes from his training process. He knows that he cannot be the best, or one of the best without it. Physical exhaustion, weariness, aches and pains, discomfort, sacrifice, being deprived of certain things all come with the territory. They are not there to punish the athlete, but are simply a part of what one has to go through to become a great athlete. 1 Corin. 9:24-27.

And we see this same principle at work with God's dealings with his people in the desert, where he humbled them, caused them to hunger, to teach them a spiritual lesson; actually, to train them for the spiritual life. This humbling was a very important part of their spiritual growth, for it was needed to rid them of their arrogance, or to effectively check it; and to teach them that their life in the Land of Promise, and all it's inherent blessings was going to be provided to them out of the grace of God and not their own works; even to protecting them from the enemy nations around them. He was also humbling them under the authority of the leadership that he had placed over them.

Another lesson that he was going to be teaching them was that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. In relation to physical things, he was teaching them that there is more to life than just food. As important as food is to us, there are more important things in life, and that is fellowshiping with God through his Word. By taking their food away from them he was

teaching them that God is the one who supplies their needs and that they would have to come to him for these things. Also, that they could do without these things because he was there with them.

But with the manna he was also teaching them the importance of the Word of God, the spiritual manna. They needed food to feed their bodies, **but they also needed spiritual food, the Word of God, to feed their souls.** And he had to train them by these measures to teach them how important to them this spiritual manna was. And as the physical manna from heaven, supplied to them by *Yahweh* in his grace, was the perfect food for their bodies, supplying their bodies with everything that they needed, so was the spiritual manna from God, the Word of God, the perfect food for their souls, supplying their souls every thing that they needed.

God was training them in the use of *epignosis* doctrine. As they ate the physical manna, where it was digested and converted into the physical energy that their bodies needed; so it was when they ate the spiritual manna, where it also was metabolized, by faith, converting it into the spiritual energy that their souls needed. In the physical manna, they would have to go out each day, except the Sabbath, gather it up, take it back to their tents where they would prepare it, and then eat it. Where the body would then metabolize it, converting it to physical energy. With the spiritual manna, they would have to go and avail themselves of the teaching of the Word of God, take it into their minds, (the mouth), understand it, (chew it), believe it, (swallow it), and then in the soul it would be automatically be converted into spiritual phenomenon or energy.

The Israelites did suffer! It was hot and dusty, they had been deprived of a normal life, they did not have many of the creature comforts of life, they did not have the food that they were accustomed to. There was suffering, but it was not sent to punish them! **It was part of their training to teach them the importance of: the Word of God in life, trusting in the Lord for their every need, and to effectively check their arrogance and pride.** Every day manna came to them supplied by God. This taught them that everyday God would provide them whatever it was that they needed.

Everyday Christ was with them in the desert, which taught them that everyday Christ would be with them in the land. Everyday that they ate the manna they were learning the lesson of eating the Word of God by faith. Every time they brought a bite of manna up to their mouth, they were to be thinking about taking the Word of God into their soul by faith. And everyday they woke up and were still in their same predicament, they were to realize that they did not have the control over their lives, as they thought they did; that God was in charge calling the shots; and that they were to humble themselves under his will; accepting it for their lives.

The constant exposure to suffering in its many forms was designed to make them see their need of constantly turning to God and his Word for strength and stability, with the end result that they would be spiritually prepared for the life of blessing that God had for them in the land. Too many Christians fail to understand this principle, as the Israelites failed. This life that God had for them could not be entered into in their present state. They thought they could waltz right into this life of blessing being the same people that they were in Egypt! **They didn't understand that they had to be spiritually changed**

to appropriate and enjoy the life of blessing that God had for them. Many Christians today fail to see the same principle. They think that they can just waltz right into the blessings of maturity, as they are in the flesh, fresh out of the world system. But they can't! There has to be a great change that takes place on the inside of them, as was to be with the Israelites. This takes doctrine, this takes faith, and this takes suffering.

26. Because of the work of the Gospel

"Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 2:10.

The apostle Paul went through tremendous suffering for the sake of reaching the unbeliever with the gospel, and the believer with the teaching of doctrine; all of it undeserved. 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. He was continually under pressure, and at one point he despaired of life. (This due to his lapse of not trusting in the Lord). Sometimes he used figures of speech to convey his toil in the ministry: one man plants, another waters, another reaps the harvest; one man lays the foundation of a building, another man builds upon it. What all these ideas, and others, convey is that there is labor and toil in the ministry; that there is pressure; and that there is suffering. Even Solomon wrote in Ecc.12:12b, *"Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body."*

External pressures, the weakness of the body, persecutions, satanic attacks, hostility, mental, verbal and physical attacks against the communicators of God's Word, being deprived of certain things all add up to undeserved suffering for those who minister the Word of God. But this does not go unnoticed concerning the Lord, who sees these things and will reward the believer in eternity for them. As he said, Everyone who has left houses or family for his sake will receive a hundredfold and eternal life. Matthew 19:29.

27. Promotion to glory

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Usually one will find suffering, to some degree, prior to one's promotion to glory; either for the believer being promoted, or the loved one's left behind. Usually both. Paul spent his final months in prison, with history recording that he was beheaded. Many others died martyrs deaths. And Christ himself died a most horrible death on the cross for us, before he was promoted to glory at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

Most believers will have to go through some form of suffering prior to their death, except for those who die suddenly without being aware of what has happened. But even in their cases, there is still the suffering of grief and loneliness for the loved ones they leave behind. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

This could fall under category 20, suffering for further blessing, but actually deserves a category all its own. This category is for those believers who have stayed with the Word and faith, who have served the Lord in their life, who have received all the good things in life that God had for them under his blessing package; and because they have gone through all his grace blessings here on earth that he has for them; he is now promoting them to heaven to receive all the grace blessings that he has in store for them there.

This is a special and unique form of suffering that we will have to go through, and thankfully it will not only be the last of its kind, but the last suffering that we will ever have to go through. For he will wipe every tear from their eyes, and no more death, mourning, crying or pain. Revelations 21:4. It will be a unique and special time for the believer and for the Lord, for the Lord will be very close to him, for, "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.*" Psalms 116:15. It will be a time of special grace, **which we call "dying grace"**. And this grace will not only be for the believer who is dying, but also for the loved ones he is leaving behind. It will be unique, because he or she alone will be the only one experiencing his or her own death. Even in the presence of loved ones, they are dying alone, because they are the one dying. But it's also special, because they will not really be alone, for the Lord will walk them through this "Valley of the Shadow of Death". Psalms 23:4.

Pastor Mike