

# Biblical Basis for Suffering

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## SCCM Teaching

“Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory.” - William Barclay

### - Morocco Story

- So many have heard this... this was my first taste of “suffering”

### - China Story

- First time traveling by myself. Remember having the “you can marry someone” convo.
- Landing in china & having to transfer planes... I cried I as so scared
- Teach all week, get asked to give a word to their staff at their monthly staff meeting.
- Get a small word of encouragement, thinking its only a few people, most of which ive already seen.
- Show up, 30-40 people, 500+ years of ministry and missions.
- I feel soooo dumb and under qualified, am introduced as “International Bible teacher”
- I stand up, lose it. “I have no authority to give this. It is from the father directly.”
  - Matthew 19:29
    - *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.*

- I still fill this way as I stand here and teach.
  - Do first then teach... im not sure I have done much “Do’ing”
  
- **I can not teach where I have not gone, but I can (and am) going to facilitate a conversation around examples we see in scripture and early church history.**

**To start this... we are going to look into Peter & his 1st letter**

**(Do Peter test!)**

**- Who is Peter?**

- Originally named Simon, son of Jonah or John
- Peter was a fisherman in Bethsaida
- Brother to Andrew
- Possibly related to James & John (cousins) could of worked for their Dad Zebedee.
- He was married
  - mother-in-law was healed by Jesus at their home in Capernaum
- Called out to Jesus and walked on water
- The first disciple to grasp the incarnation of Jesus
- At the beginning of the Last Supper, Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Peter initially refused to let Jesus wash his feet, but when Jesus told him: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me", Peter replied: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head"
- When Jesus was arrested, Peter cut off the ear of a servant of the High Priest of Israel
  - Gospel of John also says that Malchus as the victim who was a servant of the High Priest of Israel... who had just been made “unclean”

- Sadly, his denial of Jesus 3x is often the fact most remembered.
- After Jesus' resurrection Peter is the one who jumps out of the boat to begin the process of restoration.
  - "Go grab the disciples, ESPECIALLY Peter.."
- After Pentecost, Peter preaches and establishes the beginning of the church... he had become the rock. 3-4000 people submit to Christ.
- Simon Peter was twice arraigned, with John, before the Sanhedrin and directly defied them
  - Regarding a healing & not to teach in the name of Jesus (We must obey God rather than man.)
- After receiving a vision from God that allowed for the eating of previously unclean animals, Peter takes a missionary journey to Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea, becoming instrumental in the decision to evangelize the Gentiles.
- During this time he meets the apostle Paul... travels with him and eventually even gets rebuked by him. Because Peter had fallen into the trap of fear of man.
  - He was eating with Gentiles when Jews came, he pulled back and separated himself.
- Peter, who was in Jerusalem, was put into prison by Agrippa I (A.D. 42-44), but was rescued by an angel.
  - Knocked on the door... but they didn't open it for him.. "You're out of your mind"
- Early Church tradition says that Peter probably died by crucifixion at the time of the Great Fires of Rome at the end of the 60's, possibly around 67 AD.
  - This took place three months after the disastrous fire that destroyed Rome for which the emperor (Nero) wished to blame the Christians.
  - In accordance with the apocryphal Acts of Peter, he was crucified head down.

- **Broken into 5 sections**

- **Greeting (1:1-2)**

- Peter is speaking to Gentiles (1:14, :18 & 4:3-4)
- Needs them to see they are also part of the family, uses terms found in the OT to describe Abraham & Israel
- Because of Jesus, we are all in the same family.

- **Song of Praise (1:3-12)**

- We are born into this new family through the resurrection of Jesus
- We get an inheritance that is:
  - Imperishable
  - undefiled
  - Unfading
  - Kept for us in heaven
  - Being guarded by God's power
- Because of this be happy.
- Because of this we are able to endure suffering, and it allows our faith to be tested and the "fat" to be cut off.
  - Suffering is a PURIFYING FIRE that can deepen our faith

- **A new family identity (1:13-2:10)**

- 2:9-10 are key to this.
- Because of this change of identity, they now can withstand suffering.
  - Identity mini session:
    - Highest calling - sons and daughters
    - Common calling - worship, give, serve, go, etc.
    - Specific calling - how you do the above.

- **Suffering as a witness to Jesus (2:11-4:11)**

- 2:17... yikes. Remember he is talking about Nero.
- 2:20-21 the contrast here is amazing.
- 3:7 How we deal with our wife effects our prayers.
- 3:15-17 so important for us. Our behavior again speaks volumes. Its what prompts other to ask about it.

- **Suffering & Future Hope (4:12-5:9)**

- This is all a matter of prospective.

## - Myths of Suffering (By Vanessa Jackson)\*

### • Christians Will Not Suffer

- consequences of sin is different “I milk many cows, but churn my own butter!”
  - Gen 2:16-17 = eating of the tree
  - Exo 15:26 = if you listen, no diseases
  - Deu 30:15-20 = Im putting before you two options
  - Romans 1:28 = God gave them up
  - Jeremiah 18 = potter & clay
- Jesus tells us we will:
  - Romans 8:22 = all creation groans
  - Gen 3:17 = Ground is cursed
  - Phil 1:21-29 = to believe in Him & suffer for him
  - 1 Pet 2:20-21 = this is gracious of the Lord
  - 1 Pet 4:12 = Dont be surprised
- This verse reminded me that expecting not to suffer was misguided & Ignorant.
  - I need to actual expect it, and count it as a blessing.
    - (1 Pet 4:14-16; James 1:2; Matt 5:10; Acts 5:41)

- **If God Loves Me, He'll Save Me**

- Story of H&N, Is God still GOD if my kids die?!

- God didn't save me from my pain that day.
- The Bible tells us He didn't save His son from suffering (Rom 8:32).
- He didn't save John the Baptist (Matt 14:10), Paul (2 Tim 4:6-8), or Peter (John 21:18-19) from suffering either, and I know He loved them very much.
- Therefore, just because He didn't save me from pain didn't mean He didn't love me. ***My pain got me asking God a lot of questions and searching for understanding.***

- **Suffering Steals My Joy**

- Joy is a fruit of the spirit, which doesn't leave you when you suffer or encounter hardship. It is always present and able to be called upon.
  - 1 John 3:18-24
- When things don't make sense to our hearts, and in grief and suffering there is much that does not,
  - "trusting in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding"(Prov 3:5) **is all we can do.**

- **Suffering Has No Meaning**

- **Mad at God over our student loans.**

- **"If I pay them, you wont talk to me any more."**
- Pain doesn't always make sense to us and that is okay.
- Pain isn't meaningless, it can teach us many things.
  - God is all that He is – omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, omni-benevolent, He is the master designer of reason, order and logic (1 Cor 14:33; Is 45:18). In fact, the Bible says that God uses suffering for our good, to conform us to the likeness of His Son. (Rom 8:28-29)

## - **Biblical Purposes for suffering**

- It increases our understanding of God's power. (Ps 68:19)
- Suffering refines, perfects, strengthens, and prepares us. (Ps 66:8-9; Heb 2:10)
- Suffering allows the life of Christ to grow in us. (2 Cor 4:7-11)
- Suffering makes us dependent on God. (2 Cor 12:9)
- It teaches humility. (2 Cor 12:7)
- Suffering gives us the mind of Christ. (Phil 2:1-11)
- It teaches that God is more concerned with character than comfort. (Rom 5:3-4; Heb 12:10-11)
- It teaches that the Christian life is not absence of pain, but Christlikeness. (2 Cor 4:8-10; Rom 8:28-29)
- At times, suffering is a correction from God for sin and rebellion. (Ps 107:17)
- Obedience and self-control are gained from suffering. (Heb 5:8; Ps 119:67; Rom 5:1-5; James 1:2-8; Phil 3:10)
- Voluntary suffering demonstrate the love of God. (2 Cor 8:1-2, 9)
- It's part of the battle:
  - Against sin (Heb 12:4-13)
  - Against evil men (Ps 27:12; 37:14-15)
- For the kingdom of God (2 Thess 1:5)
- For the Gospel (2 Tim 2:8-9)
- Against injustice (1 Pet 2:19)
- For the name of Christ (Acts 5:41; 1 Pet 4:14).
- How the righteous share in Christ's suffering. (2 Cor 1:5; 1 Pet 4:12-13)
- Endurance of suffering is promised reward. (2 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 2:12)
- Suffering creates community and allows use of spiritual gifts. (Phil 4:12-15)
- It binds Christians together for a common purpose. (Rev 1:9)



- Suffering produces discernment, wisdom, knowledge, and teaches us God's statutes. (Ps 119:66-67, 71)
- Through suffering God gathers our broken and contrite spirits. (Ps 51:16-17)
- Suffering disciplines our minds to focus our hope on Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 1:6, 13)
- Suffering humbles us so He can raise us up. (1 Pet 5:6-7)
- Suffering causes us to use our time wisely with a heart of wisdom. (Ps 90:7-12)
- It is sometimes necessary to win the loss. (2 Tim 2:8-10; 4:5-6)
- It creates endurance so we can comfort others when they hurt. (2 Cor 1:3-11)
- Suffering is small in comparison to the value of knowing Jesus. (Phil 3:8)
- Suffering builds truth in our innermost being. (Ps 51:6; 119:17)
- It builds a treasure up for us in the next life. (Ps 58:10-11)
- Suffering always comes with an amazing source of grace. (2 Tim 1:7-8; 4:16-18)
- It teaches us to give thanks always. (1 Thess 5:17; 2 Cor 1:11)
- Suffering increases faith. (Jer 29:11)
- Suffering allows manifestation of His care. (Ps 56:8)
- Suffering grows hope. (Job 13:14-15)

- Biblical Examples of Suffering and the Results of Suffering
  - **I think it's interesting to note that almost every person talked about in the Bible experienced some kind of suffering! What happened, how they responded, and how God ministered to them must be important for us know.**
  - Job
    - Job did nothing wrong and some of his suffering was the result of natural disasters and illness, things that today we would explain medically or with the weather channel.
      - I like this example because **God allowed it.** This particular story doesn't match the image we typically prefer when considering God. Who caused Job's trials? It was Satan, but at a deeper level God permitted it.
      - I believe that God gives us free will and does not meddle with this, but He does send things our way to test that free will.
      - I prefer the idea that He has His hand in my trials because if He didn't, my suffering would be evil unrestrained. **We cannot begin to fathom why God does what He does, only that we can know our suffering is not meaningless.** The entire book of Job is a story line of his movement closer to God, asking hard questions, responding vulnerably, and feeling every emotion. The book of Job ends with Job's praising God and submitting to His will in his life.
        - **WE MUST BE OK WITH NOT NOWING THE ANSWERS!!!!!!!**
  - David
    - The book of Psalms is filled with praise and lament. Some of what he suffered was not his fault and he could not be prevented, while other things he suffered were a consequence of sin. For example, after proving his worth by slaying the giant, David spent years fleeing Saul who was trying to kill him out of jealousy.
      - Psalms 77

- The prophets
  - The prophets also suffered. “Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.” (James 5:10)
- Moses suffered as he led the Israelites to the Promised Land, and when you consider all he suffered leading up to the point where God sent him back to Israel, the 80 year stretch is unbelievable!
- Jeremiah suffered. God warned him saying, “Behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you.” (Jer 1:17-19).
  - Jeremiah’s message was one many did not like, and as such, he was in danger.
    - They spoke against him and refused to listen (Jer 18:18)
    - they ridiculed him (Jer 20:7), put him in stocks (Jer 20:2),
    - chained (Jer 40:1),
    - left to die, though rescued (Jer 38:6-13).
    - In this case Jeremiah suffered because of the message God gave him to present.
      - “Blessed are those who suffer for my sake.” (Matt 5:10)
- Ezekiel suffered. His wife died and God told him to not mourn her death. He said, “Do not cry, make no mourning for the dead” (Ezekiel 24:17a) “Put on your shoes” (Ezek 24:17c) when mourners customarily went barefoot (2 Sam 15:30), “and cover not your lips” (Ezek 24:17d) though the covering of the lips was a sign of mourning and astonishment (Micah 3:7).
  - Ezekiel was not to take comfort offered by his community and was to go to work like normal. God explains in verse 24, that this will be a sign to the Jewish people of how they would react when Jerusalem is destroyed by Babylon. (Ezek 24:21)

- Ezekiel would suffer and the entire point of his suffering is so that he would be an example, to be watched and understood in a real tangible way.
  
- Jesus
  - Bas Uterwijk, Dutch artist, did something remarkable. He took a variety of artistic renditions of people who lived before the era of photography, including paintings, statues, icons, and whatever else happens to be available. He fed those to an artificial intelligence program to see what emerged out of the combination and commonalities among them. The results are very striking.
  - Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.” (1 Pet. 2.21)
    - He submitted to the Father’s plan for us (1 Pet. 2.21-23)
    - He endured (Heb. 12.2)
    - Joni Erikson Tada says, *“God permitted what He hates to accomplish what He loves...the core of His plan was to rescue us from our sin....The sorrow we taste will one day prove to be the best possible thing that could have happened.”* Jesus knew this. (Isaiah 53:3-11; 1 Peter 4:1-13; 3:18; 5:1)
  
- Stephen
  - Acts 7:54-60
  
- Paul
  - 2 Cor 11:16-33

## - Perpetua

- Perpetua was born in the year 182 into a prominent and wealthy family and was married to someone of equally high social standing.
- Neither her parents nor her husband were Christians (685).
- Perpetua's marriage began when she was very young, and she had given birth to a son one year before she was arrested.
- During Perpetua's time, Roman families, regardless of social standing, had to be very careful when under scrutiny by authority (686).
  - Families typically would outsource for council and backing in the event of a trial, much like today. For this reason, it was very important that Perpetua receive support from her family during her imprisonment. Because she was undergoing the transition into Christianity in secrecy from her husband and parents, however, Perpetua was not able to garner familial support once arrested. The woman's husband quickly abandoned her, her nursing child was taken away from her and she was ultimately unable to mend her relationship with her parents.
- Christians were known to be especially cautious when under scrutiny by authority figures. It was widely known through Carthage and in surrounding areas that the Christian faith did not permit making sacrifices to Roman political figures or Roman gods.
  - Therefore, when Perpetua was arrested, she was taken from her family and place in the home of a person of high standing where she would be watched and questioned.
    - This placement is similar to domestic custody and house arrest today. She was then transferred to prison, which she explained to be very dark and frightening.
- During her stay in this prison, Perpetua wrote a great deal in her diary about being comforted by other individuals imprisoned for similar causes: a public demonstration of faith.
  - She also wrote of being sustained by God's comfort, of having dreams and visions that would come to her in her prison cell, of being questioned by a procurator.

- More importantly, Perpetua wrote of her father visiting her in prison, urging her to deny her belief in the Christian faith that her charges might be dropped.
  - Perpetua adamantly refused her father's wishes.
- Below is an excerpt from Perpetua's diary including dialogue between her and her father regarding her religious beliefs:
  - *"While we were still with the persecutors, and my father, for the sake of his affection for me, was persisting in seeking to turn me away, and to cast me down from the faith: 'Father,' said I, 'do you see, let us say, this vessel lying here to be a little pitcher, or something else?' And he said, 'I see it to be so.' And I replied to him, 'Can it be called by any other name than what it is?' And he said, 'No.' 'Neither can I call myself anything else than what I am, a Christian.' Then my father, provoked at this saying, threw himself upon me, as if he would tear my eyes out. But he only distressed me, and went away overcome by the devil's arguments."*
- To avoid a brutal death, Perpetua was asked to deny her affiliation with Christianity and partake in a simple pagan tradition, such as scattering incense, to prove her willingness to heed to Rome's accepted forms of spiritual practices.
- Perpetua and her friends refused to deny their belief in the Christian faith, and were sentenced to death in an arena.
  - Animals including leopards, bears and mad heifers were brought in to publicly kill the prisoners, and masses of people poured into the Carthage arena to view the deaths.
  - Though a beast was meant to kill Perpetua, she sustained injury until she was attacked by a gladiator, his knife plunging into her neck.
    - It was said that Perpetua, then accepting of her death, helped guide the dagger inward, demonstrating courage and a love for God that far surpassed her own fear of death.
- All of Perpetua's friends who were arrested with her also died alongside her in the arena that day. All of the martyrs were buried in the Basilica Majorum in Carthage.
- These women involved, both Perpetua and Felicitas, were immediately canonized, or declared saints, after their deaths, gaining widespread popularity throughout the entire Christian Church.

- A feast of honor was given on March 7 that year in honor of the women's deaths and is still celebrated today!

- **Felicitas**