

ATTITUDES TOWARD SUFFERING

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It is not so much the suffering itself that determines whether we can handle it; it is the attitude we take toward it. Because of the great amount of persecution and suffering endured by God's people over the centuries, the Bible gives a lot of advice on how to think about pain to deal with it effectively. Major portions of scripture that deal with suffering-pain-calamity-death are Job, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Peter. Cross references from these books lead to other shorter sections on this difficult subject.

I. ATTITUDES TOWARD SUFFERING

What attitudes can we take toward suffering that help us endure it faithfully?

- A. God is on my side in this experience: Romans 8:31-39.
- B. This suffering is an exercise in personal development: Hebrews 12:11.
- C. The experience is temporary: Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Hebrews 12:10a, 11a; 1 Peter 1:6; 5:10
- D. This experience will be for my own good: Psalm 119:71-72; Hebrews 12:10b.
- E. Since God is allowing this, I can bear it: 1 Corinthians 10:13.
- F. My suffering is probably light compared to what other people are enduring for Christ: 2 Corinthians 4:17; Hebrews 12:4.
- G. This trial is light compared to the reward for enduring it: Matthew 5:10-12; 16:21-27; Romans 8:18; Philippians 3:8; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 11:26.
- H. We expect suffering in a world like this one: Matthew 5:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12
- I. Coping successfully with this experience will remove a hindrance to other people's conversion: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11; 9:12.
- J. God is giving me an opportunity for personal growth: Hebrews 12:5-13.
- K. I am praising God by persevering in this situation: Job 1:8; 2:3; 1 Peter 1:6-7.
- L. I am not the only one that is going through this: 2 Corinthians 1:3-10; Philippians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; James 5:10-12; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:18; 4:1; 5:9.
- M. I am doing this for other Christians and for Christ: Matthew 16:21-23; 2 Corinthians 1:6; 4:11; 12:10; Philippians 1:29; 3:8; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 1:5.
- N. Christ is suffering with me: Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:10; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Hebrews 10:33; 1 Peter 3:4.
- O. I am going to take the same attitude toward suffering that Christ took toward it: Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Peter 4:1.
- P. In a way, I can be happy because persecution by evil people indicates my goodness: Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 7:52; 2 Corinthians 7:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:15; Hebrews 10:34; 1 Peter 4:12-14.
- Q. The alternative to suffering is worse than suffering: Matthew 16:24-27.

R. God will see to it that my persecutors receive appropriate reward for their behavior: Philippians 1:28; Revelation 13:10; 14:12

II. A MODEL FOR SUFFERING

What model for suffering does the Proverbial writer (**3:11-12**) and the writer of Hebrews (**12:5-10**) offer for God's followers to use as an attitude toward it? Are there any adjustments to the model?

A. The Basic Model: a parent's discipline (Hebrews **12:5-11**; Proverbs **3:11-12**)

1. Implied attitudes (Hebrews **12:5-12**)

- a. God cares (Hebrews **12:6**).
- b. Suffering profits me (Hebrews **12:10b**).
- c. Suffering is temporary (Hebrews **12:10a, 11a**).
- d. I am not the only one that is suffering (Hebrews **12:6**).
- e. Suffering gives me identity (Hebrews **12:7-8**).

Parents do not discipline the neighbor's kids. God's disciplining us marks us as sons, not illegitimate children.

2. Adjustments to the model (1 Corinthians **10:13**)

- a. Suffering is allowed rather than deliberate.
- b. The model must be used in general terms rather than specifically.
- c. This discipline experience is not limited to Christians.