

CrossRoads Baptist Church  
January 16, 2008 6:30 p.m.  
I Peter 3:17  
Will of God Series #6

### **The Will of God is for You to Suffer**

“The great falling-away from faith could be worst here in [America] because people are absolutely not prepared to face suffering or persecution—because we cannot imagine a gospel with the cross and the suffering in it. Yet the Bible teaches very strong about it. So as the Word of God says: ‘He who has ears, let him hear.’ ... These are warning signs. God is telling us [that] we need to prepare our lives. And preachers going around saying that revival is coming, and everything is OK, and all these things? I think that people are [being] set up for huge disaster and denying their faith when they face problems.” —K.P. Yohannan, founder of Gospel for Asia, on whether American Christians are ready to face the persecution increasingly found among fellow believers in other countries [onenewsnow.com, 12/31/07]

Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it."

Sam Storms writes that there are four ways to view trials:

1. Deny them. Deny they exist. These people are not optimistic; they are simply unrealistic or fear to admit them is to admit to some sin or weakness.
2. Despair because of them. They fall into some trial and immediately conclude that God hates them or has abandoned them.
3. Demonic origin. They believe all trials are from Satan.
4. Divinely ordained. They see them as divinely ordained and lovingly orchestrated opportunities for growth, the salvation of others and above all else, the glory of God.

So, let me make these statements about suffering.

1. All suffering is indirectly related to sin.

Had there never been sin, we would never be suffering any type of

pain or trials. And Jesus would have never had to suffer because there would have been no sin for which he had to pay a ransom.

2. But not all suffering is directly a result of sin.

This is certainly true with Job and Jesus. And from these two great examples we are led to believe that Satan can not do anything to one of God's people apart from either God's permission or his direct decree and then all of it is for God's glory and the believer's maturity.

3. Suffering is a part of our lives whether we do good or bad.

Matthew 5:45 "...for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

MacArthur sums this up by noting that a believer has two options. The first is to do right, even if it results in suffering. A believer is to accept suffering as a part of God's wise and sovereign plan for his or her life. The second option is to choose to do wrong, which will result in suffering. Both options are according to God's will. God wills a believer to suffer for doing right so that he receives spiritual strength and glorifies God, and God wills that a believer suffer divine chastisement for doing wrong. So do good and avoid bringing suffering upon yourself from doing wrong.

4. Choose to suffer for what is good.

Should will (thelo) is the optative mood in a 4th class conditional clause, which does not present a probability, but only a possibility in the Greek. It could be read as follows "if *perchance the will of God should so will,*" that is, for the Christian to suffer for doing good.

If God Who sees all, knows that it to be necessary for your good that you should suffer, it is better that you should suffer for doing well. The truth is that there are effects to be accomplished by affliction which can be realized in no other way; and some of the most wonderful effects on the soul of a Christian are the effect of trials.

Peter does not want his readers to think that he is saying they should seek situations in which they will experience suffering. To the contrary, believers should make certain that when they do suffer it is because they have been faithful to God rather than because they have done evil.

5. Suffering was used in the life of Jesus.

Hebrews 5:8 “He learned obedience by the things he suffered.” Obedience is not a one time test, but instead the result of many trials and temptations.

6. Suffering was used in the life of Paul.

II Corinthians 4:8-12

Afflicted, but not crushed...afflicted is a broad, all-encompassing term that includes physical, spiritual and psychological oppression. Notwithstanding the multitude of ways in which this was manifest, Paul never felt “crushed” or lost hope in God.

Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Philip Hughes translates it, “confused but not confounded.” Though often with no explanation or answer that would account for what he endured, he never felt as if there were none.

Persecuted, but not forsaken. Persecuted by men but never forsaken by God. Forsaken is the same word used by Jesus on the cross.

Struck down, but not destroyed. Barclay says, “knocked down, but not knocked out.”

Paul clearly states in II Corinthians 1:6 that suffering and trials can be for the good of others and will teach us to trust in God (I Corinthians 1:9-11).

7. Suffering prepares us for Heaven.

Romans 8:18 “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Thomas Watson reminds us of the "power" of suffering noting that...

Afflictions work for good, as they make way for glory.... Not that they merit glory, but they prepare for it. As ploughing prepares the earth for a crop, so afflictions prepare and make us [ready] for glory. The painter lays his gold upon dark colors, so God first lays the dark colors of affliction, and then He lays the golden color of glory. The vessel is first seasoned before wine is poured into it: the vessels of mercy are first seasoned with affliction, and then the wine of glory is poured in. Thus we see afflictions are not prejudicial, but beneficial, to the saints. (All Things for Good [reprint; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1986])

Missionary Karen Watson counted the cost of following Jesus. That's why she left a letter with her pastor before going to Iraq. She went to provide humanitarian relief in the name of Jesus — but she was gunned down in the country she came to serve.

The letter began, "You're only reading this if I died." It included gracious words to family and friends, and this simple summary of following Christ: "To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, his glory my reward." ("Missionary Slain in Iraq Mourned," *Los Angeles Times* (3-17-04); via Leadership email newsletter)