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What You Need to Know About Pain: Part 3

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PAIN
(Part Three)

In Part One and Two we have overviewed the following:

- The origin of suffering
- Attempted answers concerning suffering
- Sources of suffering
- Reasons for and benefits of suffering

During the Third and Final Part we will summarize the last four topics:

- Desired reactions to suffering
- The divine call in regard to suffering
- The assurances in suffering
- The termination of suffering

REACTIONS TO SUFFERING

ONE—Expect Suffering

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:9-10).

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

TWO—Realize Others Suffer

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world"(1 Peter 5:8-9).

"*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10:13).

THREE—Don't Try to Understand All the Reasons for Your Suffering

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil" (Prov. 3:5-7).

FOUR—Commit Your Soul to God at the Very Beginning of Your Suffering

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

"I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about" (Psa. 3:5-6).

FIVE—Pray!

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psa. 50:15).

"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

SIX—Don't Despise It

"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord . . ." (Heb. 12:5).

At first glance, this seems to be strange advice. What is involved in "despising" God's chastisement? It simply means to count it as nothing. We use the word differently today. To despise something means to hate or abhor it. But the biblical term here refers to lightly dismissing something as unimportant. In this same chapter (Heb. 12:16), we are given the example of Esau who despised his birthright. The Bible is not saying he hated it so much that he couldn't stand it, but rather it was so unimportant and trivial that he eagerly traded it for a bowl of vegetable beef soup! All this is to say we are not to take God's chastening too lightly lest the intended lesson be not learned.

SEVEN—Don't Faint Because of It

"Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" (Heb. 12:5).

This, of course, is the other extreme form that of reaction number seven—it is just as bad to treat suffering too seriously as to regard it too lightly. The truth is, we sometimes overreact to God's chastisement. We pout, doubt, lie down and stay down when spanked by our heavenly Father.

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Prov. 24:10).

"And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"(Gal. 6:9).

EIGHT—Patiently Endure It in a Steadfast Way

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10).

"When ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20).

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12).

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3).

NINE—Thank God for It

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance" (Psa. 42:5).

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

TEN—Rejoice While in Your Suffering

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2).

"*Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy"*(James 5:11).

"And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:40-41).

ELEVEN—Don't Become a Self-Made Martyr

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12-14).

TWELVE—Don't Suffer Needlessly

"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20).

"For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Peter 3:17).

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:15-17).

THIRTEEN—Compare Your Present Suffering With the Coming Glory!

"*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Rom. 8:18).

THE CALL TO SUFFERING

Perhaps the most unknown, and certainly the most unusual, aspect of pain and discomfort is the fact that God Himself has called us to suffer. You note I did not say He merely permitted it, or reluctantly agreed to it, but in the counsels of eternity past actually issued a seven-fold call which included suffering. Let's briefly examine each of these divine calls from the Creator to His redeemed creatures.

FIRST, there is a call to salvation.

> *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified"* (Rom. 8:28-30).

SECOND, there is a call to sanctification.

> *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication"* (1 Thess. 4:3).
>
> *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"* (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

THIRD, there is a call to service.

> *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"*(Eph. 2:10).

FOURTH, there is the call to separation.

> *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

FIFTH, there is the call to sonship.

> *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not"* (1 John 3:1).

SIXTH, there is the call to subjection.
This subjection includes the following groups of individuals:

a. Children to their parents (Eph. 6:1)
b. Wives to their husbands (Eph. 5:22)
c. Employees to their employers (1 Peter 2:18)
d. Citizens to their country (1 Peter 2:13-14)
e. Believers to God (Rom. 12:1-2)

SEVENTH, there is a call to suffering.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (1 Peter 2:21).

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29).

THE ASSURANCES IN SUFFERING

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou are with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psa. 23:3-4).

Both Old Testament and New Testament believers experienced this blessed presence in their sufferings. Note:

Jacob: *"Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it now"* (Gen. 28:16).

Joseph: *"But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy"* (Gen. 39:21).

Moses: *"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"* (Exod. 33:14).

Paul: "*Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city"* (Acts 18:9-10).

"And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11).

THE TERMINATION OF SUFFERING

"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:24, 26, 53-55).

"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:1-4).

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