

Acts THE BIBLE WORD SERIES

A Brief Study of those Important Words found in the Bible that we need to understand, not just skip over.

SUFFERING

Let's begin this study by looking at several Bible verses and deciding what kind of suffering is out there,

Psalm 9:13 Have mercy on me, O LORD! Consider my trouble from those who hate, You Who lifts me from the gates of death.

Psalm 88:15 I have been afflicted and ready to die since my youth; I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught.

Proverbs 19:15 Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.

Proverbs 19:19 A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.

Let's assume there are three types of suffering: physical, emotional, spiritual.

- a. *Physical* = You are hurting in your body or tangible life in the flesh here on the earth.
- b. *Emotional* = You are being hurt in your inner being, your soul, your mind, your feelings.
- c. *Spiritual* = You are being hurt because of your relationship with God & of a life of righteousness.

What kind of suffering are in these verses?

- | | | | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Ps. 9:13 | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical? | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional? | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual? | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't tell. |
| 2. Ps. 88:15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical? | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional? | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual? | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't tell. |
| 3. Pr. 19:15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical? | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional? | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual? | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't tell. |
| 4. Pr. 19:19 | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical? | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional? | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual? | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't tell. |

Possible answer considerations:

- a. *"Trouble" could mean any kind of suffering; it could be physical distress; it could be very personal & emotional since the word "hate" is used.*
- b. *The words "terrors", "afflicted", " and "distraught" describe some struggles & agitation inside the person. The Psalm seems to be directed toward God, so there may be spiritual difficulties.*
- c. *"Laziness" and "hunger" indicate physical needs & that bring consequences (suffering).*
- d. *"Great wrath" describes the behavior & personality of a person (inner being - emotions) that leads to some suffering.*

- 5. Could suffering be caused by our own mistakes? Yes No
- 6. Could suffering be caused by instability in our lives? Yes No
- 7. Could suffering happen due to traumatic events in life? Yes No
- 8. Could suffering be caused by a hateful neighbor? Yes No
- 9. Could you suffer for doing a good thing? Yes No
- 10. Could you suffer for doing absolutely nothing wrong? Yes No

I can suffer due to "my pain, "my sickness", "my pending death", "my behavior (how I treat others), "my choices" (how I treat myself), "my faith" (how I treat God).

- 11. Is it safe to say that not all suffering in our lives is a consequence for something we did wrong? Yes No
 - 12. Could suffering just be a regular part of life? Yes No
 - 13. Why would God allow suffering in our lives? _____
-


THE DEFINITION OF "SUFFERING"

 **To experience something (painful or not)** (Possibly a normal happening in our life)

 **To suffer injury (physical or not)** (Possibly deliberate by someone or accidental)

 **To experience consequences** (Possibly cause by you)

 **To lift, to carry, to endure** (Holding up under pressure – like everyone else)

 **"Suffer" = Latin "Sufferre" = "sub" + "ferre" = "to bear it from under"**

 **"Suffer" = "To be able to carry it" (Greek & Hebrew)**

14. What is your opinion of these definitions of "suffering"?

15. List three things or circumstances that have caused you great suffering?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Can I be somewhat blunt here? Some of our sufferings are the consequences of the stupid things we have done or chosen? Would you agree? ___ Yes ___ No

If you & I have broken the law or hurt people in some way, we must pay for it. That could be prison, ruined lives, loneliness, great loss. You are definitely paying the price. You are suffering but it is a penalty for wrong-doing. ___ Yes ___ No

IF YOU ARE NOT A BELIEVER, THE SUFFERING FROM YOUR BAD DEED COULD BE ALLOWED BY A LOVING GOD TO GET YOUR ATTENTION. ___ Yes ___ No

IF YOU ARE A BELIEVER, THE SUFFERING COULD CAUSE TWO REACTIONS

- FROM YOU:**
- a. It could cause you to depend on God for your help.
 - b. It could cause to question what you really believe about God.

1. Have you experienced either one of these feelings? Explain.

Through times of pain & suffering, God could be changing us into what He wants us to be.

2. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:6. How could our suffering be a good thing?

3. Look at Mark 8:31. Who is the ultimate example for suffering? _____

4. Look at 1 Peter 3:17. What can be the will of God? _____

OK, LET'S FACE IT. OUR SUFFERING COULD BE OUR OWN FAULT.

Now, let's turn the corner.

CAN A CHRISTIAN SUFFER?

- a. *Yes, you could be suffering for mistakes & crimes from before you were a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. (CONSEQUENCES FROM THE PAST)*
- b. *Yes, you could be suffering for bad choices or sinful behavior while you have been a Christian - Yes it happens. (CONSEQUENCES FROM THE PRESENT)*
- c. *Yes, you could be suffering with the hard challenges of every day - whether you call it "suffering", "afflictions", "troubles", "pain", "trials", "needs", "disappointments" or whatever.*

5. Match the suffering with the verses.

- a. Acts 5:41 ___ You can suffer wrong by being assaulted by someone.
- b. Acts 7:24 ___ You can suffer when someone shames you for your faith.
- c. Acts 9:16 ___ You can suffer by standing up for the reputation of God.

6. Match the statements about suffering with the verses.

- a. 1 Peter 2:20 ___ Jesus suffered for us - to bring us to God.
- b. 1 Peter 2:21 ___ Our suffering is in agreement with God's righteousness.
- c. 1 Peter 2:23 ___ Our suffering is temporary; it leads us to maturity.
- d. 1 Peter 3:14 ___ You can experience suffering for doing good things.
- e. 1 Peter 3:15 ___ Suffering is actually following the example of Jesus.
- f. 1 Peter 3:18 ___ We can suffer simple because we are a Christian.
- g. 1 Peter 4:13 ___ Suffering is part of the will of God for us.
- h. 1 Peter 4:15 ___ Suffering includes being ridiculed & humiliated.
- i. 1 Peter 4:19 ___ We suffer because Christ suffered; we belong to Him.
- j. 1 Peter 5:10 ___ Suffering gives us chance to share the hope within us.

You might want to consider a future study in 1 Peter. He seems to have a lot to say about suffering & hard times.

7. What did Paul tell the Christians about "suffering" in the Corinthian church?

- a. 1 Cor. 4:12 _____

- b. 2 Cor. 1:5 _____

- c. 2 Cor. 1:6 _____

- d. 2 Cor. 1:7 _____

Sometimes, our sufferings are just down-right rude & nasty people treating us badly simply because of what we believe, follow, and live for. Jesus' suffering brought salvation to us. Because Christ IS IN US, we are going to get hassled. However, remember this, all our sufferings & troubles are surrounded by hope from God.

8. What did the writer of Hebrews share about suffering?
- a. Hebrews 11:25 ___ Moses chose suffering. ___Yes ___No
 - b. Hebrews 2:18 ___ When we suffer, we can comfort. ___Yes ___No
 - c. Hebrews 5:18 ___ When we suffer, we learn to obey. ___Yes ___No
 - d. Hebrews 2:9 ___ When we suffer, we could die. ___Yes ___No

The writer of Hebrews knew how important the suffering of Christ was for us. The Christian Jews he was addressing were definitely going through rough times.

9. What did Paul have to say to the Christians in Thessalonica about suffering?

- 1 Thessalonians 2:2 *But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.*
- 1 Thessalonians 2:14 *For you also suffered from your own countryman (Jews), who killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us*
- 1 Thessalonians 3:4 *For we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulations; it happened.*
- 2 Thess. 1:5-6 *That you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; God will handle the people who harass us; we will not need to do anything.*

- a. Is it possible that suffering could give us courage & boldness? ___Yes ___No
- b. Is it possible that people close to you could cause you suffering? ___Yes ___No
- c. It's a fact: troubles & tribulations are going to come to us. ___Yes ___No
- d. God will handle those who harass us in His right time. ___Yes ___No

10. What did Paul say to the Philippian Christians about suffering?

- a. Philippians 1:29 ___ Suffering tightens our relationship with Jesus.
- b. Philippians 3:8 ___ Suffering is a privilege.
- c. Philippians 3:10 ___ Suffering includes Christ's strength.
- d. Philippians 4:12-13 ___ Suffering is a big "gain" for us.

LET'S PAUSE FOR A MOMENT & EXAMINE SOME ADVICE ON HANDLING SUFFERING. (Think about these for your life.)

- a. *Suffering is going to happen; if it seems meaningless, does that mean it is? Does God do or allow anything that is **meaningless**?*
- b. *If we try to make any sense out of our suffering at the moment, our troubles will **make no sense**.*
- c. *When we fail to trust God in the middle of our sufferings, we will then **blame** Him rather than thank Him.*
- d. *When **pain** blinds us to the spiritual purpose of the suffering, allow God's Word & other believers help you see trust Him and continue getting through it.*
- e. *For the believer, suffering & troubles & trials do not end in **defeat**, but rather they end in victory.*

- Does God do anything that is meaningless?** ___Yes ___No
- If it doesn't make sense to us, does that mean God has no plan?** ___Yes ___No
- God is your friend. Is "blaming" Him the way you should handle this?** ___Yes ___No
- During "pain" we shut people out. Should you shut out God & friends?** ___Yes ___No
- Is there anywhere in the Bible where God is defeated?** ___Yes ___No

HERE'S OUR SEVEN-DAY ENCOURAGEMENT DEVOTIONAL:

DAY 1

Romans 5:3-5

But we also glory in tribulations (trials & struggles), knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; perseverance produces character; character produces hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

DAY 2

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time in my life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us.

DAY 3

1 Corinthians 12:26

And if one member (a person) of the body suffers, all the members suffer with him/her; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with him/her.

DAY 4

2 Cor. 11:23-28

I am a minister for Christ - in overwhelming labors, excessive whippings, in prisons often, close to death many times. From the Jews five times I received 39 whippings each, three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night & day I have been floating in the sea; journeying over and over; I faced danger in the sea, with robbers, with my own Jewish countrymen, with the ungodly gentiles, in danger in the cities, in danger in the wilderness, in danger in the sea (lots of sea dangers), in danger with false teachers; I've been exhausted & stretched, often with sleep, often hungry & thirsty, many times in fastings, and in cold & nakedness, plus all the other daily hassles & troubles ...

DAY 5

2 Tim. 2:11-13

If we die with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

DAY 6

2 Tim. 3:10-12

You have carefully followed my teaching, my manner of life, my purpose, my faith, my longsuffering, my love, my perseverance, my afflictions - what happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra - what persecutions I endured. AND OUT OF ALL OF THEM THE LORD DELIVERED ME. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

DAY 7

James 1:2-4

My brethren, consider it all joy when you fall into various trials (troubles, afflictions, sufferings, etc.), KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES PATIENCE. And let patience accomplish its complete & perfect purpose, SO THAT you may be complete & mature, lacking nothing.

NEVER FORGET THIS - "Of the persecutions I endured, God delivered me from all of them."

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Remember "**humility**". Don't get hung up on yourself. Suffering does not make you better than others.

Remember "**compassion**". If "suffering" means "an intense passion (experience) within you, then helping someone else with their passion is called "compassion" (do it with them).