

Module : **Foundation Doctrines of Christ**
Session : **Baptism into Suffering or Fire #3**
Focus : **Our Response and Attitude Toward Suffering #1**



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YouTube: <https://youtube.com/live/s6pS-tHVqBE>

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The Bible has clear guidelines concerning our attitude and response to suffering and trials. These are set forth for our good so that the Divine intention behind the suffering is fully accomplished. This teaching explains the first 7 of 16 principles that should regulate our mentality when we suffer. Be encouraged and be empowered to engage your next degree of suffering in a God-honouring fashion. This teaching will encourage you. Limited commentary is offered on some of the verses in this study because they are self-explanatory. Our response to suffering must honour God and not dishonor Him.

1. DO NOT BE ALARMED OR SURPRISED

1 Peter 4:12,13 Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the **fiery ordeal among you**, which comes upon you for **your testing, as though some strange thing** were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation

Your fiery ordeal must not surprise you and you must not deem it 'strange'. Suffering for Christ's sake or righteousness' sake is not a strange thing. It is to be expected. Thus, we should not be surprised, alarmed or taken aback when it does occur. Do not think it 'out of the ordinary'.

Be watchful as to your immediate responses at the onset of trials. Do not be startled, shocked, stunned, flabbergasted, bewildered or confused. We waste unnecessary time and focus on the wrong emotional response to suffering when we do this. You are going to have to go through the suffering anyway, so do not spend time unduly being astonished at the trial. Initially you might be slightly taken aback and this is acceptable as it is the natural human response. But while you are a natural person, you are God's son. You have a Divine element within your naturalness. While you live in this world, you are not of this world. So, even though there might be an initial 'shock', you must in the very next instance or breath, quickly adjust, recalibrate and re-centre - to having the mind of

Christ. Suffering is not alien to life in God's Kingdom. You need to, through repetition, practise this. It is a discipline. Do not be surprised and do not think it strange!

2. REALISE THE SHEER PRIVILEGE OF SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

Permitted suffering by God is not punishment but a privilege. "God is polishing us, and not punishing us". (Garreth Pillay)

Phil. 1:29 For **to you IT HAS BEEN GRANTED** for Christ's sake, not **only to BELIEVE in Him**, but also **to SUFFER for His sake**, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Note the words, "IT HAS BEEN GRANTED" - i.e., it has been predetermined by God. Belief in Christ, as well as suffering for Him, has been granted.

Phil1:29 (NLT) For you have been given not only the **privilege of trusting in Christ** but also the **privilege of suffering for him**.

Phil. 1:29 highlights two privileges for sons of God, viz. (a) To Trust or Believe in Him, and (b) To Suffer for Him. Embrace both as privileges. The next time someone probes you as to your state of mind whilst in the vortex of some significant ordeal, respond to them with, "What an awesome privilege to suffer for Christ". Bamboozle the devil!

Paul's first prophetic word received from God a few days after his BELIEF in Jesus related to the range and intensity of his SUFFERING for the sake of Christ.

Acts 9:16 for I will **show him how much he must suffer** for My name's sake.

The apostles were badly beaten for teaching and preaching Christ. After their release, they ...
(a) rejoiced and (b) **considered themselves WORTHY** to suffer for Christ.

Acts 5:40-42 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, **rejoicing that they had been considered WORTHY TO SUFFER shame for His name**. And every day, in the

temple and from house to house, **they kept right on teaching and preaching** Jesus as the Christ.

For the early apostles, It was considered a great honour to suffer for Christ.

Instead of stopping teaching as they were commanded by the Council at Jerusalem, they continued all the more. Never allow your trial to cause you to vacate Divine purpose. Doggedly pursue Divine purpose in spite of the severity of your trial.

The dignity and nobility with which we suffer makes us **worthy of God's Kingdom**. Instead of complaining, reckon yourself extremely privileged to have been elected by God to suffer for Christ.

Reckon yourself worthy to suffer as part of God's glorious and stately KINGDOM.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

- 3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your **faith is greatly enlarged**, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;
- 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your **perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure**.
- 5 This is a plain indication of **God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering**.

God's Kingdom is a most noble entity. It has dignity, nobility, regality, honour, stature, majesty, etc. To suffer for Christ's sake as a member of His Kingdom is to be considered an incalculable privilege.

3. REALISE AND ASSERT YOUR BLESSED STATE

Matthew 5:10,11,12

- 10 **"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 **"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say** all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
- 12 **Rejoice and be glad**, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The opposite of being blessed is to be cursed. You are not cursed when you suffer for righteousness sake. Rather, you are blessed. The word **blessed** ('makários' in the Greek) means '**possessing the favour of God, that state of being marked by fullness from God**'. Sufferings reveal or expose the ones who are blessed, i.e., those possessing favour from God or those marked by FULLNESS from God. Sufferings are not designed to 'diminish' you but to designate you as the one who is truly 'FULL' of God. They do not embarrass you but embellish you.

Part of the blessing on you in suffering is that the spirit of Glory and of God RESTS on you.

1 Pet. 4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, **you are blessed**, because the **Spirit of glory and of God rests on you**.

Glory refers to the exact representation of Christ - His person and power. The Holy Spirit of GLORY revealing Christ's person and power will REST on you! The word REST implies an abiding permanency. It is human proclivity to think that the Spirit lifts off us when we suffer. Nothing could be further from the truth. Especially in the time in which we suffer honourably for Christ, our blessed condition incorporates a heightened measure or degree to which the Spirit RESTS on us.

James 1:12 **Blessed** is a man who **perseveres under trial**; for once he has been **approved**, he will receive the **crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him**

4. BE SOBER / VIGILANT / OF SOUND MIND

1 Peter 5:8,9 Be of **sober spirit, be on the alert**. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But **resist him**, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the **same experiences of suffering** are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

Sober = néphō = To be sober-minded, watchful, circumspect

To be sober is not to be intoxicated or drunk where one's sensibilities are affected and you have **disorientation for time, place and persons**. Do not allow an intense trial to result in disorientation where you are unaware of the urgency or relevance of the (a) TIME; (b) PLACE (c) PERSONS. Maintain watchfulness and remain circumspect and honourable in all you suffer.

Alert = grēgoreúō = To watch, to refrain from sleep.

Sleep implies a lack of consciousness or where one is oblivious to the reality of an hour or time.

Resist the devil by your posture of humility and submission to God and principles of His Word.

James 4:6-8 But He gives a **greater grace**. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the **humble**.” **Submit** therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

You resist the devil through submission to God. Submission is an act of spiritual warfare. Submission evidences humility to which grace is attracted. Your submission to God is your resistance against the devil. God opposes the proud. Guard against the spirit of pride while you suffer. The nature of suffering is to produce humility – it humbles us – so be careful of pride. This pride can manifest variously. Some may refuse help when it is offered; some may never reach out for help. Some stubbornly hold onto a prideful or rebellious disposition where they exalt their inaccurate natural appraisal of their circumstance instead of following through on a biblical principle relative to the suffering. Some question God with, “Why this?”, “Why Me?”, “Why now?”, “Why so often?”. By this line of questioning, we subtly demonstrate a lack of faith in God’s ability to sustain us, provide for us, or bring about His intended good from a bad situation.

Note this phrase in 1 Peter 5:9b ... “**the same experiences of suffering** are being accomplished by **your brethren who are in the world**.” Peter highlights the point here that our sufferings are not entirely unique to us specifically. Many other people are suffering similarly as you in large respect. Do not make a “golden calf” out of your suffering. Do not make it an idol, that subverts your faith in and worship of God. Do not magnify your trials such that they erode your trust in God, but worse still, that they become so characteristic of your life where it, and not God, becomes the greatest and lasting impression of you by observers.

5. STAY STRONG IN FAITH IN GOD

A basic definition of **faith** is **BELIEF or TRUST in God**. To have 'faith' is to have an **UNSHAKEABLE BELIEF** in a thing, a truth, a person, etc. Although there is much more to the definition of faith, the basic premise that **to have faith in God is to BELIEVE HIM, trusting in His PERSON or NATURE, WORD, PURPOSES AND PROMISES.**

The Greek word for faith is '**pistis**'.

Faith = Pistis = Subjectively meaning firm persuasion, conviction, belief in the truth, veracity, reality or faithfulness.

The Greek word '**pistis**' is derived from another word, '**peitho**', which means '**to win over or persuade**'.

So, he who has faith is **WON OVER or PERSUADED** as regarding **something reckoned to be absolutely TRUE and FACTFUL about God, His person (nature), Word, purposes or promises.**

The person of faith becomes '**CONVINCED**' as to the veracity of what has been presented to him through the medium of 'hearing' with the inner ear of his spirit. To be 'persuaded' is to be 'convinced' or 'assured' concerning a matter and highlights the impossibility of being dissuaded from that conviction. You become '**assured of**' the matter. This then gives you great peace and 'assurance'. You **REST** in the certainty of the utter reliability of the truth under consideration.

In suffering, it is our FAITH that quenches satan's fiery darts.

Eph. 6:18 above all, taking the **shield of faith** with which, you will be able to **quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**

When you suffer, never dishonour God by vacating faith in Him. Your faith in God speaks to your opinion about God Himself. Never magnify your problem above God's capacity to solve it.

Jesus prayed that Peter's FAITH will not FAIL when satan sifts him in suffering.

Luke 21:31,32 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to **sift you like wheat**; but I have prayed for you, that **your faith may not fail**; and you, when once you have turned again, **strengthen your brothers.**"

Some trials violently toss us to and fro (as suggested by the Greek word for sift). During this process may your faith not be violently tossed and overthrown, Remain strong in the faith in God. Have unflinching faith!

Suffering is the context for faith to grow exceedingly.

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your **faith is greatly enlarged**, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;
4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your **perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure**.

6. DO NOT BE ASHAMED

Shame or embarrassment must not attend you when you suffer. Do not let your head hang down in discouragement and depression because of this. Do not let shameful words leave your mouth. You will have whatever you say. Life and death are in the power of your tongue.

Do not be ashamed of :

- The Lord
- Your Spiritual Leaders
- God's People
- Your Calling, Unique Assignment, or Vocation in Life
- The Suffering itself

1 Peter 4:16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, **he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name**.

2 Tim. 1:8 Therefore **do not be ashamed** of the **testimony of our Lord** or **of me His prisoner**, but join **with me in suffering** for **the gospel** according to the power of God,

2 Tim. 1:11-12 For which I was **appointed a preacher** and an **apostle and a teacher**. For this reason **I also suffer these things**, but **I am not ashamed**; for **I know whom I have believed** and **I am convinced that He is able to guard** what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

Heb 11:25 choosing rather to **suffer affliction with the people of God** than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin

7. PATIENTLY ENDURE FOR YOURSELF AND FOR OTHERS ALSO

Rom. 12:12 Rejoicing in hope, **persevering in tribulation**, devoted to prayer

Endure for the benefit also of others. Be 'other people' conscious.

2 Timothy 2:10 For this reason **I endure all things for the sake** of those who are chosen, so that **they also may obtain the salvation** which is in Christ Jesus *and with it* eternal glory.

After his sifting, Peter is commanded to STRENGTHEN his brothers! Do not think selfishly when you suffer. The purpose of your SIFTING is so that you might come into a more powerful capacity to STRENGTHEN others!

Luke 21:31,32 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to **sift you like wheat**; but I have prayed for you, that **your faith may not fail**; and you, when once you have turned again, **strengthen your brothers.**”

Jesus endured the shame and pain of the cross, because He focused on a SET JOY!

Hebrews 12:2,3 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him **endured the cross, despising the shame**, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For **consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself**, so that you will **not grow weary and lose heart.**

Look past the shame and pain of your suffering to the established or set joy at the end of the process. Jesus' set joy was the many sons that would be reconciled to God, His Father. Thus He endured great hostility from men. Using His example, the writer of the Hebrews exhorts us to not grow weary and lose heart!

Hebrews 10:32 But remember the former days, when, **after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings**

The Reward of Endurance: You Receive what is Promised!

Hebrews 10:36 For you have **need of endurance**, so that when you have **done the will of God**, you may **receive what was promised**.

FILL UP THAT WHICH IS LACKING IN THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST'S BODY

Col. 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. (NASB)

Col. 1:24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, (NKJV)

The NASB marginal rendering for "on behalf of" is ... "**representatively ... fill up**".

There is nothing lacking in Christ's afflictions. He suffered fully and completely. The lack is in our suffering representatively of Him. The body of Jesus, the man, was scourged beyond recognition and His suffering culminated in death on the cross. But now, His mystical body, the Church, too must suffer.

Paul further states that he, as an apostle, suffered on behalf of the church, Christ's body. Can it be that apostles suffer on behalf of the Body of Christ, and pay a price for their calling so that qualitative grace and life can flow to the saints? Yes! But not just apostles, ALL believers as well must suffer with the mindset that we are filling up the lack in the sufferings of the Body of Christ. This we do because we suffer also on behalf of others in the sense that we will come into a great position of grace and strength, so that we will be able to encourage and strengthen others who need it.

The final outcome of our suffering, amongst other things, must be to positively influence/save/strengthen people – similarly to how Christ's suffering on the cross ultimately did. Pauls' dying in his suffering process had the outcome of producing life in those who is meant to influence.

2 Cor 4:7-12 ⁷But we have **this treasure in earthen vessels**, so that the **surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves**; we are **afflicted** in every way, but **not crushed**; **perplexed**, but not **despairing**; **persecuted**, but **not forsaken**;

struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.

We comfort OTHERS with the same comfort that we, who suffer, receive from the Lord Himself.

2 Cor. 1:3-7

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Father of mercies and God of all comfort,**
- 4 who **comforts us in all our affliction** so that **we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction** with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- 5 For just as the **sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance,** so also our **comfort is abundant through Christ.**
- 6 But if **we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation;** or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, **which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;**
- 7 and our **hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.**

To be Continued

Great Grace and Abundant Peace be yours in Christ.

Suffer Well!

Randolph Barnwell

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