

The Way of the Lord

14. Your Relationship With Your Father (Part 5)

Last time we discussed how our Father uses *suffering* to produce righteousness and peace in each of His children. But there's another more paramount reason our heavenly Father uses suffering. It's to help you fully grasp how truly SOVEREIGN He is over everything. From our Father's vantage point, He's in *absolute control* over all the universe He created. *Nothing* happens outside His will.

We encourage you to look through a concordance and see how often our God is referred to as "Sovereign Lord" in the Bible. "Sovereign Lord" means that He's *the* supreme ruler. He has ultimate power over everything—even Satan. The sovereignty of your heavenly Father is the foundation to you cooperating with Him in His use of *suffering* to help you become more like Jesus. If you *don't* see your heavenly Father's sovereignty in the painful events around you, you'll be plagued by self-doubt and self-pity. You'll even find yourself blaming Father for your problems, and withdrawing from Him.

We know from the Bible that Satan had to get permission from God to test Job with suffering. In fact, you get the impression that *God* pointed Job out to Satan. (Job 1:8; 2:3) Trusting our Lord doesn't exempt you from trials! Jesus forewarned Peter of this: "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*" (Luke 22:32). Notice that Jesus *didn't* say that He'd pray the sifting wouldn't occur. Our Lord only assured Peter that He would pray that his *faith* wouldn't fail in the sifting.

Your heavenly Father wants to use what you've learned through your suffering to strengthen others like Peter did after His trial. Since Peter had himself suffered, he could assure those who love Jesus, "*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to SUFFER GRIEF in all kinds of trials*" (1 Peter 1:6). Peter didn't tell the anguishing followers of Jesus to pray that their trials would be snatched from them. On the contrary, he comforted them with God's *purpose* for their suffering: "*These have come so that your FAITH—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved GENUINE and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed*" (1 Peter 1:7). Father intended these trials to test the authenticity of their *trust*, and to bring praise, glory and honor when Jesus returns.

You need to wrap yourself around your Father's use of suffering in your life so you can have *His* perspective on it. Suffering works out qualities in you in a way nothing else can! "*We also REJOICE in our sufferings, because we know that SUFFERING produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope*" (Romans 5:3,4). Perseverance, character and hope. Your Father wants you to grow in these essential qualities. And, His way of instilling them in you is through suffering.

We know that suffering isn't easy. But this is where the emotional support of others in Christ is so needed: "*But encourage one another DAILY, as long as it is called TODAY, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness*" (Hebrews 3:13). What is the DECEIT of sin? It's your sin nature *misinterpreting* your Father's discipline. Your sin nature wants you to think God doesn't love you. Or, that you've failed Him so greatly that there's no hope. Or, that your sin is so great you can never be forgiven. That's why *each* of us needs to look around and see if *today* someone

needs our encouragement.

If you don't realize it already, your Father in heaven relies on His children to diligently look for those they can encourage *each day*. That's especially true if you've come through a period of suffering in your *own* life. You've experienced just how comforting our Father is when you've been through trials and troubles. And you can extend His compassion as His comforting vessel. *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all OUR troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the SUFFERINGS of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our COMFORT overflows"* (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

When you've gone through a trial that's changed your character, you're qualified to comfort and encourage someone else who's going through a similar situation. Not only will both of you appreciate the new character qualities of Jesus that your suffering has produced; you'll also realize that *nothing* is outside your Father's control.

You probably think that your Father's way of doing things is exactly opposite your own inclination. But that's why He tells us that HIS ways are not OUR ways (Isaiah 55:8,9). Our Father has quite a variety of means by which He disciplines you for your good.

•1. Parents and others in authority confront your stubborn willfulness and desire to sin so that you might respond righteously.

"Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death" (Proverbs 19:18).

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him" (Proverbs 19:18; 22:15).

•2. Your Father uses suffering to chastise you for sin so that you will repent, confess your sin, and receive forgiveness and purification.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

•3. Suffering may come to you to bring your Father glory.

"As Jesus went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life'" (John 9:1-3).

You may want to go back through this video to make sure you fully understand the important truths we've discussed here. Suffering is something the world tries to avoid. But for a follower of Jesus, suffering for Father's purposes is the way of the Lord.

For Further Study:

•Hebraic Article: *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*

•*Going to the High Places* Study Guide

•*Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 31. Do You Mirror Christ-likeness or the Judas Identity?

Each is a free download on our website: <restorationministries.org>