

# Why Do Christians Suffer?

## 1- ALL CHRISTIANS MUST SUFFER, according to *Hebrews 12:5-12*:

“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.’ (**Proverbs 3:11,12**)

**Endure hardship as discipline;** God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? **If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. **No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.** Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

## 2- WHY? TO PROVE YOUR FAITH GENUINE, according to *I Peter 1:3-7*:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade --- kept in Heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, **though now for a little while you may have suffered grief in all kinds of trials. 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. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**”

### A. Our suffering and trials develop our faith, according to *James 1:2-4*:

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that **the testing of your faith develops perseverance (patient endurance).** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

## 3- CHRISTIANS ARE “CALLED” TO SUFFER, according to *I Peter 2:19-23*:

“For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? **But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called,** because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.

‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.’ (**Isaiah 53:9**)

*When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.”*

- A. **So, I Peter 4:12-19 says:** *“Do not be surprised at the painful trials you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.”*
- B. **Just remember, Jesus said the world will hate and persecute you, according to John 15:18-21:** *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I have spoken to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master’ (John 13:16). If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. They will treat you this way because of My Name (CHRISTian).”*
- C. **But, Jesus also said vengeance was His (not ours), and it was up to Him to repay (not us), according to Romans 12:17-21:** *“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord (Deuteronomy 32:35). On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head’ (Proverbs 25:21,22). Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

**4- BUT, HOW LONG WILL GOD LET ME SUFFER? I Peter 5:6-10:** *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all you anxiety (worries) on Him because He cares for you.*

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

*And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong firm and steadfast.”*

- A. **But, Jesus didn’t restore all my Christian loved ones. SOME OF THEM DIED! James 1:12:** *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trials, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.”*

**(1) If God allowed your loved ones to die, their test on this Earth was over. And, if they passed (and God will give them every chance, because He doesn’t want anyone to fail according to**

***II Peter 3:9***), they were finally given their immortal heavenly body, that will never again suffer, and allowed to live in a Paradise called Heaven forever --- WHICH IS THE GOAL OF EVERY CHRISTIAN!

**5- But, when the trials and sufferings come, MOST YOUNG CHRISTIANS WILL HAVE A HARD TIME RESISTING SATAN LONG ENOUGH TO PASS THEIR TEST. Most will want to quit and give up, as Jesus warned us in *Matthew 13:20-21*:**

*“What was sown on rocky places is the man who hears the Word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root (young Christian), he lasts only a short time. When trouble and persecution comes because of the Word, he quickly falls away.”*

**A. That’s why Paul tells us older Christians to help the younger ones get through their trials and suffering** by sharing with them our own experiences of when we suffered the same kind of trials that they are presently going through, so they will have hope, support and encouragement. **It is up to us to make sure the younger ones don’t have to fight Satan alone!**

**B. All your years of suffering, grief and trials could be the foundation of your greatest ministry. ARE YOU USING IT WITH THE YOUNG CHRISTIANS GOD KEEPS SENDING YOU? *II Corinthians 1:3-7*:**  
*“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. **If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.** And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you will share in our comfort.”*

**C. This is why Paul shared his sufferings with us in *II Corinthians 11:23-29*:**  
*“Are they (false apostles) servants of Christ? I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the Churches. **Who is weak, and I do not feel weak (want to quit)? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn***

*(tempted to quit living the Christian life and just get even with all his enemies)?”*

**D. But, did Paul suffer this much just so he could help younger Christians pass their test? GOD TOLD PAUL HIS SUFFERINGS WOULD MAKE HIM STRONGER SO HE COULD PASS HIS OWN, according to *II Corinthians 12:1-10*: “I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man **who fourteen years ago was caught up to Heaven** (this was the same time he was stoned and left for dead in *Acts 14:19*). Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know --- God knows. And I know that this man...was caught up to Paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say.**

*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, **there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness (the Greek word here is ‘asthenes,’ meaning, ‘physical weakness, without strength, sick, feeble, diseased, impotent, used of any bodily debility.’)**’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest in me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. **For when I am weak (suffer), then I am strong.**”*

**(1) My thorn in the flesh is passing kidney stones** (I’ve been passing them for the past 30 years). I measure pain from 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest level of pain, and 10 being the greatest level of pain). I have noticed that when passing kidney stones: once I get to a level 6 in pain, I begin to give God more attention, and pray to Him more earnestly; and with each pain level increase, my attention and earnestness to God also increases! I have also noticed that the closer I got to a pain level of 10, the closer I got to God.

**6- SINCE ADAM AND EVE, GOD NEVER INTENDED FOR US TO LIVE HERE ON EARTH FOREVER. OUR TIME HERE WAS ONLY MEANT TO BE TEMPORARY...OUR MORTAL BODIES WERE MADE TO DIE. ONCE WE PASS THE TEST OF OUR FAITH, WE ARE GIVEN AN IMMORTAL BODY THAT CAN NEVER AGAIN SUFFER, AND GO TO HEAVEN...WHERE GOD INTENDED FOR US TO BE...FOREVER!**

**A. *II Corinthians 4:6-18*: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. **So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.***

*It is written: 'I believed; therefore I have spoken' (Psalm 116:10). With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

***(4:16) Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.***

***(5:1) Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. (4) For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (eternal). (5) Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.***

***(6) Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. (7) We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.***

***Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men."***

- (1) The earthly body was made to be a temporary "tent" (II Corinthians 5:1), that we live in on this earth while we are being "tested" (James 1:12), to "prove our faith genuine" (I Peter 1:3-9). As we go through our individual tests on this earth, our bodies begin to "waste away" (4:16). Our test ends when this temporary earthly body stops functioning. At that moment, our spirit can finally leave it; and, if we passed our test, we can now leave to be "at home with the Lord" (5:7), in our heavenly body that will live forever in Heaven (5:4).**

(2) **Chapter 5:5-7 says the Holy Spirit guarantees us a place in Heaven. So, DO YOU HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?** The first 3,000 people to become Christians were told in *Acts 2:38*: “*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, AND YOU WILL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.*”

**7- In II Timothy 4:6-8, PAUL’S LAST WORDS WERE:** “*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering (his temporary earthly body had “wasted away” to the point that it no longer functioned properly), and the time has come for my departure (his earthly body was ready to shut down, so he would have to leave it to go to his heavenly body). *I have fought the good fight (his test was almost over), I have finished the race (read *I Corinthians 9:24-27* below), and I have kept the faith (his test proved his faith genuine). *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness (read *James 1:12* below), which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Day --- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*”**

**A. I Corinthians 9:24-27:** “*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified from the prize.*”

**B. DON’T GIVE UP, AND BE “DISQUALIFIED”...PASS YOUR “TEST!”**  
*James 1:12: “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.”*