



REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS?

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We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials (sufferings in other Bible versions), for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Romans 5:3-5 (NLT)

I know. This doesn't sound like the most cheerful topic. Who wants to spend an early morning hearing about suffering? However, if you look at the scripture above, you will see that suffering has a lot of good attached to it. Much good can come out of those times when we struggle. Suffering produces endurance, character, and hope, each of these three qualities leading to the next.

There's a reason why the Bible has so much to say about suffering. It's unavoidable in mankind's lives and we need to learn how to cope with it.

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Through Christ's suffering we were saved. We were made whole. And it's such a comfort when we are going through depression, anxiety, or other emotional pain to realize that Jesus knows all about it and is with us in it. Jesus understands suffering better than anyone. We are not alone.

When we have suffered we will better understand our friends when they suffer. We will be better able to show compassion, better able to be there for them in a meaningful way.

So you see, our trials are not altogether bad. In fact, the Bible says that "we can rejoice" in them. At one time I argued against that in a huge way. But today I agree.

Not only does Jesus know our pain, but when we have suffered much, we come to know His pain as well. John Piper said that you get to know Christ better when you know His pain. "Through suffering you go deeper in your relationship with Him."

What I'm finding most encouraging lately is the knowledge that God can use our pain. There is purpose in suffering. The qualities produced when we suffer can help transform us into the likeness of Christ. Through radical acceptance of the pain, accepting it for what it is, and giving it to Jesus, He will help us carry it.

Considering all this, we should be encouraged. Our suffering is not for nothing. When we bring it to Jesus we can grow to be more like the kind of people God can use.

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