

A large cemetery with rows of white crosses under a blue sky. The crosses are arranged in neat, parallel rows that recede into the distance, creating a strong sense of perspective. The sky is clear and blue, and the ground is green grass. The overall scene is peaceful and solemn.

With Christ
We are perfected
Through suffering

that I may know Him
the power of His resurrection
and the fellowship of His sufferings,
being conformed to His death;
in order that I may attain to
the resurrection from the dead.

Phil 3:10

We are perfected through suffering

Suffering is the tester of faith. Suffering can build faith or expose weakness. Untested faith is a mirage. Adam failed the test of faith.

All the suffering that occurs in the relationships of men on earth was caused by Adam's rebellion. Sin brings suffering and the judgment of God into all personal relationships. Suffering and blinding darkness was the unseen pathway Adam chose for all humanity when he defied God.

We have violent crime, financial hardship, endless wars, and the continuing threat of even greater wars and suffering looming over us like a dark cloud. Because man lives without true knowledge of God the vilest depravity of human abuse has become a daily occurrence. Maiming and death through accidents is a constant reminder we are not in control of life.

At the time God judged Adam the whole natural world was cursed as a result of Adam's sin, so the perfection of creation was also

corrupted. Where there was once peace and harmony in creation, we now have catastrophes. Man suffers from the extremes of nature, drought, flood, fire, earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions. Mankind was doomed to depravity and death through sin.

The number of illnesses and diseases that can bring disability and death are encyclopaedic, and while God's grace has enabled medical advances, mankind in most part lives with the unspoken fear, they are next.

The more the world struggles to control all things, the more it realises there is something it cannot prevent, death. The strange thing is, while the world claims to have everything under control, it is harvesting the lives of vulnerable people who have the least ability to determine their path in life.

God provides our security

However, God in His mercy compassion and grace has provided His Son to bring peace once again. It was necessary that the Son of God would suffer the consequences of sin for

all mankind, so that all can be saved by faith through the grace of God.

Those who look to Jesus Christ alone for life have received a living hope of glory with Him in heaven. *'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'*

1 Pet 1:3

This hope for life in Christ will not disappoint even though the world may fall apart around our ears. Confidently we can proclaim: *'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.'*

2 Cor 4:8-10

Jesus was made perfect as our example

God made Jesus Christ, the founder of our salvation, “*perfect through suffering*”? (Heb 2:10) “*He learned obedience through what He suffered?*” (Heb 5:8) Jesus was “*made perfect*” through His suffering.

Heb 5:9

As the creator of all things, with all power and the control of nature, He denied Himself the protection of this power and instead identified Himself with us in His earthly life. He *'was tempted in every way that we are.'* Heb 4:15

As our representative perfect man, the Lord Jesus would not use His power to save Himself from suffering. Instead of avoiding suffering as we would do, He shared in our weakness as human beings, and like a lamb allowed Himself to be led to the slaughter.

He provided the perfect sacrifice in our place when He offering Himself to gain our forgiveness of sins and salvation so that we might share in His glory. In His suffering He put His trust in God, giving us the perfect example as the first born Brother of salvation, so that we can put our trust in Him.

He was made the perfect sacrifice to be our perfect High Priest, and we are made perfect to be His royal priesthood *'For in Him you have been made complete.'* Col 2:10

'But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus,

because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.'

Heb 2:9-10

Because He suffered even unto death He was crowned with glory, and He became the only means of the salvation of all men. *"Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross. Therefore, also, God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name."*

Phil 2:8-9

Mankind's sorrow was the divinely chosen highway to heavenly joys for the Lord our God. Gethsemane was His only gateway to Paradise. The cross was the ladder He needed to climb to gain His crown. He was made perfect through suffering for our security with God.

By His suffering and exaltation we can have confidence He will also exalt us in due course despite the suffering we may have to endure in this life.

When Jesus Christ suffered crucifixion in our place, He had a future of intense heavenly glory in the presence of God awaiting Him. The people of God in Christ, who suffer with Him also have a future glory awaiting them which no man can take away. 2 Cor 3:18

'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.' 1 Pet 4:12-13

We are quick to hold up the suffering of our Lord as commendable, but we often want to hide any idea of sharing His suffering in identifying with Him, because we desire smooth waters and a warm bed. But suffer we must if we are to be like Him.

'Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.' 1 Peter 4:1-2

God disciplines us through suffering

'It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?' Heb 12:7

Where it says, "*for discipline*" the original Greek word for discipline has the primary meaning of "training" as in the way a father trains his children to reflect His values and good character. God is: *'Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.'* Titus 2:12

We are undergoing training in righteousness in the darkness of the world so that we become mature in faith as we grow in the light of Christ. We experience God's education in holiness through hardship and affliction because they are inescapable realities in earthly life. In His suffering Christ is our example. As the followers of Christ we take up our cross and suffer with Him to the glory of God. *'He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."*

Luke 9:23

As our beloved Christ humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, we are called to follow His example and humble ourselves under God. *'If children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.'*

Rom 8:17-18

We follow Christ by accepting the same attitude to life as He demonstrated. *'Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'* Phil 2:5-8

As we are confronted with painful experiences we need to learn not to react as we would if we were still in the world without the life of God; we need to learn through experience to deny the old life we once lived and have the

attitude of Christ and put on the love of Christ who now lives in us. Gal 2:20

This discipline in righteousness requires we keep our attention on God while we are pressed to examine what we need to put off as unsuitable for the kingdom of God. *'Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely.'* Heb 12:2

Every negative reaction and resistance to the discipline of God must be laid aside. Instead we are to put on love towards others in the way demonstrated by Christ. Obedience is the way of Jesus. *'Although he was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.'* Heb 5:8-9

Godly training is a marathon

Therefore God has planned that our endurance in the face of suffering will make our complete training possible. Without enduring all things the Lord allows to rub down our rough edges we cannot finish the race set before us. And since it is God who is doing this work in us on our behalf we humble

ourselves: *'for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing.'*

Phil 2:13-14

'He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.'

Heb 12:10-11

Holiness doesn't quickly come after bible study; or some weekly church attendance; we need endurance over the long haul as we face affliction. *'For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.'*

Heb 10:36

Endurance is only possible when we look to Jesus Christ and don't fall away. Always: *'looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.'*

Heb 12:2

God calls on all His people to endure evil and to suffer for doing good in order to prove their faith and commitment. During these times it is

important for us to remember the words of the apostle Peter, who said that *'even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed'*

1 Peter 3:14

'Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

2 Cor 4:16-18

We endure all things for the hope set before us, so we trust God regardless of the circumstances. *'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.'*

Rom 8:28-29

God promises fellowship when we suffer

Life in Christ was never promised to be a party. It was always going to be in fellowship with His suffering. (Phil 3:10) Jesus made this

clear when He said: "*In this world you will have trouble.*" (John 15:20) "*I will never leave you.*"
Matt 28:20

Suffering for God's people is not a new thing. The people of faith throughout history have suffered for believing God's promise. '*Others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised.*' Heb 11:36-39

In Christ we have received something others could never have; we have the added strength of the Spirit of promise. Also, while we would suffer with Him, Jesus would also assist us since He is our High Priest who has overcome the world. "*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*"
John 16:33

The writer of Hebrews challenges us: *'You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.* (Heb 12:4) James says: *'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.'*
James 1:2-4

For strength and guidance we look to Jesus, *"the pioneer and perfecter of faith."* (Heb12:2) Looking to Him we will not be crushed by suffering but will come through with our faith intact, *"tested by fire"* so that it *"may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*
1 Peter 1:7

The faithful believer does not question God's goodness in bad times; rather, they know difficult trials prove that we are truly the children of God *"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him."*
James 1:12

God also uses suffering to help take our eyes off this world and turn them to the greater

reality above, Jesus Christ on His throne. And what a throne: *'and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal.'*

Rev 4:2-3, 5-6

God has a big picture we need to see

Our Father wants us to see the big picture. With Christ on His throne He is always in control. The innocent will continue to suffer in this world, but this world and all that is in it will pass away; the kingdom of God is eternal. Jesus said, *"My kingdom is not of this world."* (John 18:36) All those who follow Christ are encouraged not to see the things of this life, good or bad, as the end of the story. Even the sufferings we endure, as terrible as they can be, *"are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."*

Rom 8:18

Our heavenly Father assures us that *“all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Rom 8:28) Even the suffering of the innocent is part of the *“all things”* that God is using to achieve His purposes for everyone. His perfect plan is for us to be like Christ.

Rom 8:29

God's love makes the difference

One thing that makes everything endurable is the love of God. By faith, when everything is telling us otherwise, we have the assurance we are in Christ and His love abiding in us allows us to endure our training in righteousness. *“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”*

John 15:10-11

We have His love because we have the Spirit of God. (Rom 5:5) His indwelling Spirit means we are bound together with God and God to us. It is the Spirit of God that makes God's

love our own, and He brings it to life in us without limit or measure.

In fact, nothing can take God's love from us. *But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 8:37-39

Whatever our Father chooses we experience, He gives us the power to accept it with grace.

God is our divine helper

God cannot be separated from His love. God's loving presence is our guarantee of triumph. Our Lord and saviour has promised He and the Father will come and live in us. He promised the Holy Spirit of God who would be in us and He Himself would come to us in person.

John 14:16-18

The Lord Jesus has given us who follow Him something the saints of the Old Testament could only dream about. He has not only

saved us, He has given us Himself in unity with the Father and the Spirit. In this unity God requires we be fully trained in righteousness so we share in His holiness and glory. This training follows a similar path that Christ walked. He doesn't send us off to some distant boarding school; He inhabits our being so that we have all we need to finish the race.

The indwelling Father and Son in believers is so important Jesus made a number of references to the fact of their divine presence so that we can at least be able to accept it by faith so that the Spirit of God can show us the reality of their presence. John 14:25

Look how many personal references Jesus makes about how we should consider our unity with God. *"You will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."* (John 14:20) *"We will come to him and make Our abode with him."* (John 14:23) *"I will come to you."* (John 14:28) *"Even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us."* (John 17:21) *"I in them and You in Me."* (John 17:23) *"I will never leave you."* Matt 28:20

Do we have weak hands and feeble knees?

When troubles and trials beat on our door, do we fall apart or do we give thanks to God because He is at work for our heavenly good? Or do we hear Jesus say: *“Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?”* Matt 8:26

We are to live by faith and put our hope in God. Hope can only be exercised in the midst of apparent hopelessness. We can rejoice in hope knowing we will not be disappointed. This hope is possible because we experience God's love in full measure as God lives in us so we can know His fullness. *'That you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.'* Eph 3:19

The fullness of the love of God is not just a nice feeling. God says His love is here to compel us to obey Him. *'For the love of Christ controls us.'* (2 Cor 5:14) *"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."* Ezek 36:27

We can abide in the power of God because we cannot separate God from His love. If we have God's love, we have God. God lives in

God who glorifies us through suffering. His will is for us to be raised from one degree of glory to another by overcoming sin and the world. *'Consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.'* Rom 8:18

Our inability to have victory over the flesh and the world and remain in peace when the battle rages is not due to a lack of available power. We have Christ, *'In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.'* Col 2:9

Our lack of success is due to the sinful obstructions that entangle and cling to us because we have too much of our desires invested in the world, (Heb 12:1) with the result we forget the blessings of God in Christ, and we are then unable to be strengthened with power from above. Instead *'consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.'* Heb 12:3-4

It's not so much the particular drama, great or small that we find ourselves living out, but

whether we live by faith in trusting in God as we look forward to our heavenly rewards. No forward vision means we crumble under the impression of darkness that overwhelms the earthly minded. Remember, if we are really in Christ we have possession of all the goodness of God, and the Holy Spirit will hold nothing back from those who will allow Him to lead them into all truth.

God has shown us we have been born again with the divine nature. (2 Pet 1:4) He has shown us we are no longer of this world. No wonder we don't fit in. Furthermore, because we are in Christ we have received the Spirit to be our indwelling trainer and comforter, we have God. Not only do we have the Spirit, we also have the Father and the Son. Our training takes place in their presence by the power of the Spirit of God. We were never meant to struggle alone.

No one who has trusted in Christ is left to live as an orphan. (John 14:18) Those who belong to Christ are taken as possessions of God by Christ.

1 John 4:4

The Father and the Son love us so much they are committed to remaining in us throughout the time of our testing so they can constantly encourage us with their love, strength and power. This is the truth of walking by Faith and not by sight. This is how we walk with God. This is the only way to walk in peace.

The worldly minded proclaim man can make his own peace if he would just follow the right formula; but there is no peace on earth or in heaven without the finished work of Jesus Christ. Peace is not the absence of struggle, it is found in the presence of God in Christ in the midst of strife. Faith uses struggle to secure our peace in things we cannot see. Without apparent hopelessness in struggle there wouldn't be any motivation to find the source of eternal hope from God.

When we received Christ we become one with God, the Father, Son and Spirit. The Son of God has shared with us the glory the Father gave Him so that we can know through suffering we are included in the unity of the life of and glory of the heavenly family of God. *"The glory which You have given Me I have*

given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one."
John 17:22

The Lord Jesus wants us to see His glory. *"I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me."*
John 17:24

We have a divine mission in suffering

His glory has been revealed to us. If our greatest desire is not to see the glory of Christ in the midst of suffering, and want to worship Him and make His glory known to the world and manifest in our lives; we are living for ourselves and drifting away without a safe anchor in Christ. (Heb 6:19-20) Then suffering will have the same effect it has on unbelievers, there will be no peace and the hope of being perfected in holiness will have been extinguished. If we forget our Father and His only Son live in us by the Spirit, our training in righteousness will be lacking power and purpose; we will have weak hand and feeble knees. Their divine presence is for our power, purpose and our perseverance. Faith believes all of what God has said, if we only believe in part, we only know in part,

and we deprive ourselves of the fullness of His blessings.

If we have weak hands and weak knees we are in danger of drifting away, (Heb 2:1) because we are relying on our own strength and understanding. If we believe Him we will not be fearful or afraid. (John 14:27) God is always in control and He is always working for our good so that in struggle we can be like Christ through the process of metamorphosis; transformation. To gain the full benefits of training in the way of Christ we need to have the attitudes and the mind of Christ to gain the fullness of His love.

We can only be at peace in the hands of God if we believe what He has written for our understanding. When we walk by faith and not by sight we will not fall apart under trial, we will hold firm to the one who lives in us so we can be like Him. We will look to Him who sits on the throne and calls us to finish the race so we can sit with Him. Rev 3:21

Jesus Christ has given us His life and shared His glory with us. *'To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this*

mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.' Col 1:27

Christ in us is the hope of glory

Unlike the unbeliever who suffers alone in the world with no way out of their misery or chance of eternal hope; we who belong to Christ are blessed with the presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Therefore Christ's glorious mission is also ours; one life and one purpose in God.

Those who pass the enduring test of faith through suffering with Christ will go from one degree of glory to another, and one day they will see Christ Jesus, and see themselves as Christ sees them clothed in His glory.

By His grace alone Christ draws us out of the dark depravity of the world and secures us in the light of the knowledge of the presence of God, without which we would be just as blind and deaf as the rest, who think they don't need what they can't see; that is what they don't want to see. For the prince of the world has blinded their eyes to the truth of the glory of God in Christ.

Since taking up our cross daily is our only path to glory, it is anathema to those who support humanities suffering through their own selfishness. The cross of suffering is the way to be like Christ. Christ in us is the hope of glory. As a result, without suffering with Christ there is no hope in God.

'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. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.'

1 Peter 5:8-11

There is much in the world to give people concern and produce anxiety. If our attention is on the world of darkness we fail our training. The dark world cannot give security, security is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. But *"The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You."*

Isa 26:3

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

Compiled by
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