

Christians that Suffer

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Opening Statements:

My objective in this teaching is to look at the opposite side of the faith message that is so prevalent in today's church and to look at the subject of Christian suffering. In doing so, I hope to add a measure of much needed biblical balance. There are many that teach; all Christians are the best and that it is God's will that we all be healed and walk in prosperity.

The cold hard facts are; that most are not healed and most never walk in financial freedom. To be sure there is truth to what they say but not the truth in its entirety. Many faith teachers would cast the blame upon the individual and declare that they are sick or in poverty because they are not using their faith but I beg to differ. Only God knows how many dear saints of God have continued to believe in Jesus and held on to their faith even though they were fed to lions, burned at the stake, or suffered a life time, at the hands of disease and hardship.

Does God heal? Does God abundantly bless? The scriptures declare that He does, experience declares that he does, but to be sure it is as He wills and not as we will. The scriptures say in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 the gifts are as He wills (healing is among these 9 gifts).

There is a faith message but much of what we hear is centered on materialism and a love for this world. Do you suppose that it has something to do with living in a nation that bows to materialism as god? Faith teachers believe that all we have to do is believe and quote the scriptures and we can have whatever our heart desires. Just when did God put us in a place of sovereignty? Brethren we are not sovereign over God's Word, He is.

It is God that determines the answers to our prayer and not we, by our scripture incantations and refusal to speak a negative remark. We should always seek God's will and counsel about everything we pray about. Is there a time to stand on God's word and believe Him for something? Most certainly, when God has given us an answer to prayer.

As already stated, my objective is to look at the opposite side of the faith message and to examine the subject of Christians who suffer, from the counsel of God's written word and from the cold hard facts of reality, my purpose is not to tear down but to add balance.

The faith message that has been presented; has left many Christians disappointed, and even bitter towards God; in their minds they have done everything right, they quoted the scriptures, they believed with all their might but to no avail.

WHY?

Some confessions of the heart

Who hasn't heard of a sad story of some person who allowed a child to die, by withholding vital medicine that could have saved their life? Why? The parents were believing God to heal. I would ask the question where was love? Notice the following scripture:

[1Corinthians 13:13](#) And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

I know a Christian man who believed God and confessed the scriptures for 5 long years for a healing in his ear. Often he would hear wild sounds in his ear and would rebuke Satan and command him to leave his ear as he quoted scriptures and gave God praise. At the end of the five years God spoke to the man and said, "go to the doctor" he did as he was instructed and seen an ear specialist.

The results were that his inner ear was eaten away with infection. As the Christian man spoke with the specialist, he asked the doctor "what do you suppose this noise is that I hear in my ear?" The doctor informed him that what he was hearing was his own heartbeat, as there is a large artery, which lies close to the inner ear. Upon hearing this, the man realized that it wasn't a demon in his ear, in fact he felt utterly stupid.

How many do you suppose have thrown away their glasses or their crutches only to have to replace them again as the penalty for foolishness?

Then there was the Christian man who believed God to heal his daughter's ear, after a period of time the Lord instructed the man to take his daughter to a doctor. The man made an appointment with a doctor in another city, on the way to see the doctor, the man asked God why He had not moved and healed his daughter. God began to speak to the man's heart and revealed some things to him.

[The man wanted God to heal his daughter because:](#)

He didn't want to spend the money.

He didn't want the hassles of going to see a doctor.

He didn't want to drive to another city.

What can we learn from this? Where was love?

Do you suppose the attitude and condition of one's heart has any thing to do with it?

Would it have done any good to continue to speak the scriptures and confess healing for his daughter?

Please observe:

Galatians 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Another man prayed and asked God to increase his finances. Upon releasing his prayer to God the man found the appropriate scriptures and made his daily confessions that God would meet all his needs according to His riches in glory in Christ. Once, while in a time of prayer at his church the Holy Spirit revealed the man's heart to a visiting Minister.

The man's desire for more finances was for the purpose to increase his cable vision channels, so that he could get a channel that carried x rated movies. Has God ceased to be God?

Notice the following scriptures:

James 4:1-4 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

2. Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

4. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?

Did his daily confessions do any good?

- My reason for speaking of these examples is to show that there is a lot more to this than just quoting a scriptural formula. Faith teachers never cover the subjects of the sins of un-forgiveness, lusts, love of this world, etc. There are many things that hinder our prayers and receiving from God.

Notice the following scriptures:

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

- The way I treat my wife can hinder my prayers.

Mark 11:24-26 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

25. And when ye stand praying, **forgive**, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses

26. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Faith teachers always quote **Mark11:24** Pray – Believe - Receive

They rarely mention the facts of Verses 25-26. The Lord Jesus made it very clear that un-forgiveness would hinder our prayers.

Consider:

Psalms 37:4. Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

What if I don't delight myself in the Lord? Will my positive confession work?

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

What if I could care less about the things of God?

Problems

- One of the problems of the faith message as it is taught in many circles is that it doesn't require commitment to God only a positive confession. There are many who seek God only for what he can give them; the faith message is in their minds, a means to the end.
- There are Christians who pick and choose the preachers that they want to listen to. They buy their tapes and read their books exclusively. In doing this they don't get a balanced message of God's word, from those in the pulpit.

Some other considerations:

Act 5:1-5 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, **2** And kept back *[part]* of the price, his wife also being privy *[to it]*, and brought a certain part, and laid *[it]* at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *[part]* of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. (see verses 8-10)

Ananias and Sapphira die after lying to God.

1Corinthians 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *[this]* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *[that]* bread, and drink of *[that]* cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many *[are]* **weak** and **sickly** among you, and many **sleep**.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

Paul says that the judgment of God on these Christians was physical death, sickness and weakness. God will judge sin no matter who it is.

[Whatever happened to personal responsibility?](#)

An example:

A very large over weight man closed his prayer of thanks giving over dinner with the following statement: "Lord please take all the calories out of this food so I don't gain any more weight and then proceeded to stuff himself".

Has common sense flown right out the window?

By now you may think that I am against faith teachers, not at all. There is truth in the message of faith BUT it's not so cut and dried as they teach.

In this teaching I hope to examine some of the reasons why Christians sometimes suffer, from various things in their lives.

Suffering

Suffering can come in many forms from physical persecution and sickness, to emotional torment. I have never met anyone that has not suffered to one degree or another and to be sure all will suffer something in their lifetime. As Christians we have no promise that excludes us but we do have God's promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Hebrews 11:5-6 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

6. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

God can and does use bad things for our good.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

- One thing that we all must remember is that God is conforming us to the image of His only begotten Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This work takes priority over all things in our lives.

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- The scriptures teach us that this is an on going work from glory to glory.

1 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Please notice the following scripture concerning the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 5:8-10 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

10. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

The question is asked:

Will God allow us to suffer at times?

The answer. Yes

1Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls [*to him*] in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

At times, some form of suffering works a greater good in our lives, or in the lives of others.

[As can be seen in the following:](#)

The Lord Jesus Christ

Hebrews 2:9-10 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

10. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Isaiah 53:4-6, 10 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Vs. 10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

In the will of God's plan, His Son would suffer in our behalf.

Do we not remember the words of our Lord and Savior right before His ordeal?

Matthew 26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, **O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.**

The Apostle Paul

1 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

- There are many opinions to Paul's thorn in the flesh but most will agree that it was something that God allowed him to suffer for his own spiritual good.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Notice Paul's wonderful attitude at God's answer.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

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- The Lord Jesus had already told Ananias that Paul would suffer much for His name's sake.

Acts 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Some of Paul's sufferings

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

What did Paul learn from all the things that he suffered?

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: **for I have learned**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Notice - that Paul was instructed to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer need.

Heroes of Faith

Hebrews 11:32- 40 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and [of] Barak, and [of] Samson, and [of] Jephthae; [of] David also, and Samuel, and [of] the prophets:

33 Who **through faith** subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36 And others had trial of [cruel] mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and [in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Through out scriptures Old Test. and New, we find men and women of God standing in faith; some were delivered, healed, set free and some died in faith.

Consider:

Act 12:1-10 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth [his] hands to vex certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

:4 And when he had apprehended him, he put [him] in prison, and delivered [him] to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church

unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *[him]*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *[his]* hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

James died, Peter was delivered. The scriptures says that God is no respecter of persons. do you suppose that God loved Peter more than James?

[There are things beyond our understanding.](#)

Notice:

[Isaiah 55:8](#) For my thoughts *[are]* not your thoughts, neither *[are]* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For *[as]* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

[Consider the suffering of Job](#)

At the end of Job's suffering; God healed and restored unto him everything that the devil stole.

BUT

There was something going on in the spirit realm that Job could not see or understand. Of the many things; Job was an example of a man of faith who trusted God no matter what.

Consider the early Christians

Many were fed to the lions, burned at the stake, persecuted unto death but they stood in faith giving glory unto God.

To be sure the faith message has been distorted and is out of balance.

BUT on the other hand

There are Christians that have placed God in their little box of Theology and say that God no longer heals deliver etc.

They present God Almighty as the God of the Bible and the Bible days but totally forget that God is the same yesterday and forever, that He changes not.

Does God Heal today? YES

Does God Deliver today? YES

They say that the gifts of the Holy Spirit went out with the early church. They don't realize that God gave the gifts for the benefit of Christians.

Question

Are we not Christians 2000 years latter?

Do we not have needs 2000 years latter?

[The problem is doubt and unbelief.](#)

The scriptures says that Jesus could do no mighty works in his home town because of the unbelief.

To sum it all up.

God Loves us but that doesn't mean that you or I can manipulate him. He is not at our beck and call to minister to our fleshly lusts and our every whim.

Please notice:

[1John 5:14](#) And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

[15](#) And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

The Bible says to pray for the sick James 5:

We pray, that is as far as we can go.

It is up to God to heal, according to his sovereign will for that individual.

Many don't like the word sovereign, it means that they are not in control.

E.L. Davis