

THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM SUFFERING

Eccl. 7: 2 – 3
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INTRODUCTION

1. We all suffer in the life.
2. No man is exempt from suffering:
 - a. All men must die – Heb. 9:27.
 - b. Jesus had to suffer – Acts 3:18; Heb. 5: 7 – 8; Isa. 53:3; Luke 24: 26, 46.
 - c. Paul suffered – 2 Cor. 12: 7 – 10.
 - d. All Christians suffer – I Pet. 4:16.
3. James has told Christians they will have their faith tested by trials – James 1: 2 – 4.
 - a. These trials work patience in our lives – James 1:3
4. If God had promised immunity from suffering to those who follow Him, men would serve Him out of SELF-INTEREST.
5. We need to understand that because of Satan we live in a world subjected to Pain and Suffering – John 8:44; I John 3: 8.
 - a. The woman of Luke 13 had an infirmity 18 years because of Satan – Luke 13: 11, 16.
 - b. Paul had a thorn in the flesh – it was from Satan – 2 Cor. 12:7.
 - c. In our sickness, let us direct our antagonism toward Satan, rather than toward God.
6. God does not bring these sufferings, but He can use them for our good when they do come.
7. When you look at an innocent baby you see sweetness, innocence, and purity – you do not see strength, courage and character.
8. These qualities (strength, courage, and character) are developed by studying and obeying God's word, and suffering and fighting the battles of life.
9. Let us study some of the things we learn from suffering.

I. WE LEARN OBEDIENCE

- a. Jesus learned obedience from the things which He suffered – Heb. 5: 7 – 9.
- b. Paul learned obedience by being given a “thorn in the flesh” – 2 Cor. 12: 7 – 10; Gal. 4: 13 – 14.
 - i. God permitted Satan to give him this “thorn”.
 - ii. It kept Paul humble and obedient.
- c. We also can learn obedience by suffering.

II. WE LEARN STEADFASTNESS

- a. We learn Steadfastness through the things we suffer.
 - i. James 1: 2, 4 – the word PATIENCE means: steadfastness, constancy, endurance.
 - ii. Rom. 5: 3 – 4

III. WE LEARN DEPENDENCE UPON GOD

- a. David said, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word”* – Psa. 119:67.
- b. The afflictions which come to us remind us of our frailty.
- c. They remind us that we shall surely die.
- d. In the hour of sickness, people RESOLVE to serve God.
- e. The OPPRESSED turn to the Lord for deliverance, which no man can, or will, give – *“The poor committeth himself unto thee: thou art the helper of the Fatherless”* –Psa. 10:14.
- f. Since our sufferings drive us to greater dependence upon God, we can be thankful that they came to us.

IV. WE LEARN TO PRAY

- a. Trouble is the school of prayer.
- b. Men turn to God in prayer in the midst of their affliction.
- c. David prayed in his time of distress and trouble – Psa. 18: 4 – 6; 86:7.
- d. Learning to pray is one lesson which one can learn from suffering.

V. SUFFERING REMINDS US OF OUR FRAILITY

- a. Psa. 39:4 – *“Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am”*.
- b. The illness of the body reminds us that one day we too shall die.
- c. I cannot escape the fact that I shall die.
- d. Suffering should serve as reminders of this fact.

VI. SUFFERING TRIES OUR FAITH

- a. James tells us this truth – James 1: 2 – 3.
- b. The Psalmist stated that *“The word of the Lord tried”* Joseph – Psa. 105:19.
- c. I Pet. 1: 6 – 7

VII. WE LEARN THAT GOD WILL BE WITH US IN TROUBLE

- a. We all need to recognize that God will be with us through the troubles of life.
- b. Psa. 91:15 *“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him.”*
- c. Heb. 13:5.

VIII. WE LEARN TO BE SYMPATHETIC

- a. The ability to be Sympathetic is a learned virtue – learned in the school of suffering.
- b. The suffering Saint learns to communicate a comfort to others which the one who has suffered cannot give.
- c. 2 Cor. 1: 3 – 4
- d. Who can better minister to a wife at the death of her husband than a widow who has experienced the same suffering?

IX. WE LEARN TO STUDY GOD’S WORD IN SUFFERING

- a. Psa. 119: 67, 71
- b. Many have to undergo suffering before they do any serious studying.

X. WE LEARN TO GLORIFY GOD IN SUFFERING

- a. The lips of Paul and Silas offered praise to God after they had been beaten and put in jail – Acts 16:25.
- b. A suffering life is a God-praising life.

XI. WE LEARN TO BE HUMBLE

- a. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was given to him to keep him humble – he said, "*Lest I should be exalted above measure*" – 2 Cor. 12:7.
- b. God wants us to be humble – I Pet. 5:5.

CONCLUSION

- I hope this lesson will help all of us to accept our lot in life.
- Remember—it is not what happens to you that counts, but HOW you react to what happens to you.
- I hope we will be better able to accept suffering and see its worth in our lives.
- Are you here and have never obeyed the gospel?

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