

# Christian Norms

## Suffering

### Why? (Causes)

#### 1. We live in a broken world.

- a. *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. Romans 8:18-2.*

#### 2. Sin.

- a. Our own battle with sin.
  - i. *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. Galatians 5:17*
- b. The results of our own sin.
  - i. *For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 1 Peter 3:17*
- c. The effects of other people's sin.
  - i. *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:12*

#### 3. The World rejects God and His ways.

- a. For our faith.
  - i. *Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. John 15:20.*
  - ii. *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 2 Timothy 3:12.*

- b. For pursuing holiness
  - i. ...live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. <sup>3</sup> For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. <sup>4</sup> With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you. 1 Peter 4:2-4

#### **4. Satan and his forces**

- a. *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

#### **5. God's loving discipline.**

- a. *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:7-11*

## Suffering—Why? (God's Purposes)

### 1. To sanctify us.

- a. *...that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:10-11*
- b. *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Romans 5:3-5*

### 2. To test our faith.

- a. *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:6-7*

### 3. To expose our idols.

- a. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. 1 John 5:21*
- b. *“Suffering is a gift because suffering is God’s way of helping us keep a loose gift on the world...The enemy of joy is not suffering, it is idolatry.”  
--Matt Papa, “Look and Live”*

### 4. To increase our joy.

- a. *A lot of us have the notion that our pain and trials are sort of dulling our joy—that they are really slowly killing us and our passion. Actually, the opposite is quite true. It is our prosperity that is killing us. Numbing us. Blinding us. Prosperity is harder than pain because prosperity blinds us to our real need: a clearer sight of God. It distracts us from what will bring us real joy: seeing His face.” –Matt Papa*
- b. *You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11*

### 5. To be a witness to the world.

- a. *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...1 Peter 3:14-15*

## Suffering—How?

### 1. Don't be surprised by it.

- a. *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:12-13.*

### 2. Lament Biblically (adapted from *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy* by Mark Vroegop)

- a. Turn
- b. Complain
- c. Ask
- d. Trust

### 3. Apply the Gospel (from the "Glory and Suffering" chapter in *Look and Live*)

- a. What could be.
  - i. *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23*
  - ii. *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24*
- b. What is. *See Appendix.*
- c. What will be.
  - i. *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. 2 Cor. 4:17-18*

### 4. Pursue God's Purposes in it.

- a. See Above

### 5. Suffer in Community

- a. *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 1 Cor. 12:26.*
- b. *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*

## **Because of Jesus and what He has done...**

I am established, anointed, and sealed by God (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

I have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of the beloved Son (Colossians 1:13).

I am loved by God, who gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

My old self has died, and my life now is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3-4).

I am God's chosen one, holy and beloved (Colossians 3:12).

I am forgiven (Colossians 1:14).

I am set free (Galatians 5:1).

I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

I was predestined for adoption through Christ (Ephesians 1:5).

I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:5).

I have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

I am a fellow citizen with the saints, and a member of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19).

I have received mercy, and the grace of Christ overflowed for me (1 Timothy 1:14).

I have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28-29).

I get to share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3).

I have been granted by God's divine power all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

I am known by God (1 Corinthians 8:3).

I am called a son of God, and so I am (1 John 3:1).

I am born of God, and therefore I overcome the world (1 John 5:4).

I am adopted by God, and by the Spirit of His Son my heart cries, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:6).

I am no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God (Galatians 4:7).

I am released from the law to serve in the new life of the Spirit (Romans 7:6).

I am not condemned because I am in Christ (Romans 8:1).

Who shall bring a charge against me? I am God's elect (Romans 8:31).

I am more than a conqueror through Christ (Romans 8:37).

I will never be separated from the love of God in Jesus Christ my Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

I am confident that He who began a good work in me will bring it to completion (Philippians 1:6).

--Look and Live (206-207)