

Suffering

All humans that have walked the earth have had some level of suffering or a burden to carry. Even Christians are not promised to have a life free of difficulties. How do we cope with the hard times? Should we help each other deal with suffering? Unfortunately, suffering is a part of human life. Let's look at what the Bible has to say about suffering and how to cope with it.

All have suffered

Job 1 “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In

all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” I don’t think any of us can imagine going through what Job did. However angry or sad he might have been, he managed to deal with a horrible situation without turning away from God. We can do that too. No matter how difficult our lives get, we can think of Job and never walk away from God. We are not promised an earthly reward if we follow God, but we are promised a heavenly reward if we are faithful Christians. In the bad times in our lives, in which we will no doubt deal with many human emotions, if we remember that being faithful Christians means that our eternal life will be wonderful, it will help us recall that suffering on the earth is just temporary.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 “I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.” Life is not always fair and it is not always predictable. Sometimes bad things just happen and it is not anyone’s fault. It can be difficult to suffer a loss and not have someone or something to blame but sometimes, “time and chance happeneth to them all,” as Solomon wrote. Everything in our lives does not always happen for a reason. Sometimes it just happens. That can be hard to accept, but perhaps that is a good time to pray to God to help us accept difficult things we cannot change and try to move on.

Matthew 5:45 “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” The sun warms all people and the rain falls on everyone. It makes no difference who you are. Sometimes good people suffer. Sometimes bad people prosper. A faithful Christian is not promised that only good things will happen to them in this life. A horrible person is not promised only bad things will happen to them in this life.

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” All people, no matter who they are, have sinned. We all need God to obtain salvation, no matter who we are. Thankfully, God is there waiting for all of us to come to Him, and He will save all that are obedient.

Romans 12:12 “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” We must all try to be patient with this life. All good things and bad things will pass. A Christian can pray to God for strength in the hard times, and know a better life is waiting in Heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:4 “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” We will have burdens to overcome in this life, no matter who we are. God never promised anyone, even Christians, that life would not have burdens.

Christians suffer

Mark 4:16-17 “And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.” Christians are not promised a life with no persecution or difficulties. In fact, facing and overcoming adversity, while certainly not pleasant, can make

someone into a stronger Christian. Unfortunately, suffering is a part of being human. Fortunately, a faithful Christian will not face any more suffering in Heaven.

Luke 6:26 “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” It is a good feeling to have other people like us. If we never get any ridicule or dislike from someone at some point and life is all constantly rosy, we need to reexamine our lives. Are we really living as a Christian should? Life certainly does not have to be filled with conflict, but if we never face adversity in our lives, we need to examine ourselves and be sure we are living the life of a Christian.

2 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.” The Apostle Paul clearly faced suffering and adversity many times in His life as a Christian. Like Paul, we can use suffering to check our lives and see if we have our priorities right. What better time than during adversity to make changes in our lives to be pleasing to God? Again, remember all Christians and non-Christians will face suffering, but the faithful Christian has God with them while everyone else does not.

2 Timothy 3:12 “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Sometimes living a Godly life will just draw persecution from others. Hopefully, your suffering and persecution will not be like all the difficulties faced by the Apostles. Difficulties are temporary but eternity in Heaven is forever. No suffering is pleasant, but for a faithful Christian, all these difficulties go away when this life is over.

James 1:2-4 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” While no one suffers through adversity with joy, it can be a time of great growth that leaves a Christian stronger than they were before.

1 Peter 4:14 “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” If a faithful Christian suffers because of their faith in Christ, they know that their light is not being hid, and that people can see it. Let that be a source and comfort through a time of suffering. (This does not mean Christians should be rude or obnoxious, or think they are better than others. Faithful Christians are humble and loving in the way they try and teach others about God.

Ephesians 4:15 “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”)

Christians can help those that suffer

Romans 12:15 “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” A Christian can reach out and try to help others that are suffering. This can range from being a kind and supportive friend to an opportunity to teach someone about Jesus. Be a source of strength to help someone that needs it.

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” A Christian should be an example of Christ-likeness to those they are around. Being kind and helpful, reaching out to

those in need. Sometimes, this can lead to an opportunity to lovingly teach someone about Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:26 “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” When we see our brothers and sisters in Christ suffering, a faithful Christian will try and ease what suffering they can. In better times, Christians can celebrate and rejoice with each other as well.

Galatians 6:2 “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” While we are all responsible for being obedient to God to obtain our own salvation, Christians should be there to help each other ease difficult times as best they can.

Christians attitude toward suffering

Psalms 55:22 “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Going through a time of suffering is never going to be a joyful time. A Christian that is suffering can try to remind themselves that God is with them. This does not mean to expect a miracle from God to help to ease your suffering. However, it does mean that God is with you, and even if things don't turn out well in this life, they will in eternity.

Matthew 5:44-45 “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” If someone is making you suffer by causing pain in your life, it is easy to want to give them that same suffering back. A Christian must try very hard to have a different attitude. It will not be easy. Don't let yourself become like the person that is making your life hard. Try hard to not give them evil back, but instead, show them a godly attitude, remembering sometimes life is hard even for a Christian that is faithful.

2 Corinthians 12:10 “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.” A Christian with the proper attitude might be able to turn a situation of suffering or difficulty into a chance to grow as a Christian.

Galatians 6:5 “For every man shall bear his own burden.” The attitude of being willing to take care of your own burdens, can be strengthening and uplifting. Help is a good and wonderful thing, but expecting someone to bear your burden entirely, or that they owe it to you to bear your burden for you, can lead to a very poor attitude.

Philippians 3:2-14 “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for

whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” A Christian attitude during suffering can be to focus on knowing that all suffering in this life is temporary, and if we strive to live as God wants us to, we are pressing forward to a heavenly home.

Philippians 4:6-7 “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Prayer and living as a faithful Christian can lead to a feeling of peace because your priorities are right with God. If your priorities are right with God, then you know your soul will live with God eternally, and worries here in this life will only be temporary. God is worthy of our trust, so trust Him.

Philippians 4:11-12 “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 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.” While this can be very challenging, a Christian should learn to have the attitude of contentment. Be content with what you have and where you are in life. Try and do better, but not to the point of being covetous or jealous of others.

James 1:12 “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Adversity that is faced and overcome can lead to a stronger Christian. A crown of life is the reward for the Christian that endures to the end.

James 5:11 “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” A Christian that is patient and endures will be in Heaven.

1 Peter 5:6-10 “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Understand that life will have suffering and challenges to be endured. A Christian must be extra guarded if they are facing things that they feel tempted to give in to that are sinful. However, A Christian that puts God first and is vigilant, will be exalted by God in the end.

Conclusion

We have seen that no one, not even Christians, are exempt from suffering in their lives at some point. However, it is very important to remember that this earthly life is not ever guaranteed to be fair, no matter what we suffer or how much we suffer, it is temporary. If we are obedient Christians, God is with us and when our time here on the earth is done, we can have a heavenly home where no one ever suffers again.