

Foundations 6d The Baptism of Suffering

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits”. **Hebrews 6:1-3**

“Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him (Jesus) with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.” But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They said to Him, “We are able.” So He said to them, “You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.” **Matthew 20:20-23**

Jesus spoke again saying “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” **Luke 12:50**

In both of the preceding Scripture passages, the Lord Jesus is referring to the “baptism of suffering” that He would endure as He was rejected, scourged, humiliated and crucified on a cross.

Taking up our cross to follow Jesus is a basic foundational doctrine of Christ.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

Matthew 16:24

Then He (Jesus) said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Luke 9:23

If we are to be successful in following the Lord, it must be understood that suffering is going to be a part of our walk. For the follower of Christ, God redeems our suffering and uses it for our good and His glory. Although our journey to maturity in Christ includes suffering, it is not all suffering. It is an exhilarating walk that yields eternal fruit.

Referring back to Foundational teaching #3 in this series, we remember that the goal of our faith is to be conformed into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). God wills that every believer grows to become “perfect in love” (1 John 2:5, 1 John 4:12,17). In order to “grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Eph. 4:15), some degree of suffering will be involved in the process.

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” **1 Peter 5:10**

Some of the reasons that we suffer

1) We may suffer due to our own poor decisions, our own sin and/or our lack of knowledge of God’s Word. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” **Galatians 6:7-8**

Even if we are reaping negative consequences due to our own errors, God is very merciful and gracious. He can redeem it all and greatly diminish, and sometimes completely remove the negative consequences when we cast ourselves upon His mercy. To whatever degree we suffer, God will use it for our good.

2) Persecution from men

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” **2 Timothy 3:12**

““For consider Him (Jesus) who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” **Hebrews 12:3**

3) Resisting sin

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. **Romans 13:14**

“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.” **Hebrews 12:4**

4) Demonic/satanic resistance

When we serve the Lord we will encounter demonic resistance as the apostle, Paul, did. “Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.” **1 Thes. 2:18**

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” **Ephesians 6:12**

5) Carrying the burden of the Lord.

Paul continually carried the burden of the Lord in his heart to fulfill his calling. Love for God compels us to do the same. “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” **2 Timothy 2:10**

“Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in

weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation” **2 Cor. 11:23-29**

6) Divine chastening –

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Hebrews 12:5-11

No matter what the source of our suffering is, God is able to use it for our good.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” **Romans 8:28-29**

God's great purpose for our lives is to form the character and nature of Jesus Christ in us. Persevering through various trials is part of the process by which Christ is formed in us. When we understand this, then we can rejoice, knowing that the trial will eventually pass, but we will be eternally changed into the image of Jesus. To the degree that we are conformed to Christ, to that degree we become carriers of His eternal glory.

Therefore. . . .

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” **2 Cor. 4:17-18**

Keeping our eyes on the Lord and His eternal purpose for our life, the suffering that we go through is working for us as we are transformed by the Spirit of God.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” **Colossians 3:1-4**

God is with us when we suffer

“For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say:

“The Lord *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Hebrews 13:5b-6

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all.” **Psalms 34:19**

“Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God.
I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” **Isaiah 41:10**

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” **1 Peter 4:12-13**

You “are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” **1 Peter 1:5-7**

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” **1 Peter 5:10**