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July 29, 2001

Suffering, II

I started this message a couple of Sundays ago, and only got through the first point. And that point was from,

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

Today, I would like to pick up some more points about suffering.

As I read material from places like FRONT LINE FELLOWSHIP, I am almost ashamed to even mention suffering among American Christians. Because what we go through cannot hold a candle to what Christians go through in many other nations, especially those in Moslem nations, and in nations controlled by the UN.

Suffering can be defined as physical or emotional pain or distress. Suffering includes putting up with unpleasant people or circumstances. Suffering includes having to endure afflictions of all kinds, including health problems.

Let me give you some various reasons for suffering:

1)

Psalms 4:1 ¶ <<To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David.>> *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: **thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.** 7 **Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.***

There are actually two reasons here:

First, to ENLARGE US. *Enlarge* here means to cause us to grow, or widen:

Genesis 26:22 *And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made **room** <07337> for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.*

Exodus 34:24 *For I will cast out the nations before thee, and **enlarge** <07337> thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.*

Psalms 4:1 <<To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David.>> *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast **enlarged** <07337> me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*

Psalms 25:17 *The troubles of my heart are **enlarged** <07337>: O bring thou me out of my distresses.*

Isaiah 5:14 *Therefore hell hath **enlarged** <07337> herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.*

Isaiah 30:23 *Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in **large** <07337> pastures.*

Isaiah 57:8 *Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast **enlarged** <07337> thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it.*

Habakkuk 2:5 *Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who **enlargeth** <07337> his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:*

Do we want our spiritual lives enlarged?

Do we want our physical prosperity enlarged?

Do we want our ministry for the Lord enlarged?

According to Psalms 4:1, the Lord's enlargements come through distress, and such distress that we call out to

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God for His mercy.

We say, How can that be. It would seem that the more suffering and distress we must go through, the smaller our area of influence would be?

The distresses of life drive us to depend upon the Lord and His mercy and grace.

1 Cor. 10:13, Matthew 23:12, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5.

Notice how much different this is than in the current teaching as going around in *The Prayer of Zabez*. Here we see that the Lord uses distress to enlarge us.

Second,

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

Distress teaches us that we can have a genuine and deep joy in our hearts independent of our circumstances.

2.

James 12 ¶ *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

Distresses force us to grow up and to quit acting like a baby. I don't care to be around people who groan and complain when things don't go their way. I want so badly to tell them to grow up and quit acting like a baby.

3.

Psalms 119:71 ¶ *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*

Afflictions motivate us to study and rightly divide God's word.

Afflictions urge us to find out what God's word has to say, or they force us to find comfort in His word.

CAN SOMEONE TELL ME A VERSE YOU HAD TO MEMORIZE FOR A SPECIAL TIME?

4.

Job 23:10 *But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

1 Peter 1:6 ¶ *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*

To purify our life (as refined gold) and sift out all the chaff (unnecessary and unproductive things)

5.

Psalms 119:67 ¶ *Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.*

Afflictions cause us to see our sin and shortcomings and deal Scripturally with them

6. To strengthen our prayer life

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Isaiah 26:16 LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.

17 Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.

Is 26:16

7. To train and equip us to counsel others who are going through similar trials

2 Cor 1:4

8. To spread the good news of the Gospel to those we come in contact with

Phil 1:12-14

9. To change (focus or refocus) our priorities in life in view of eternity

Ps 90:12, Phil. 1:21