

ECCLESIA CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST
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Bible Study Series



CASUALTIES OF WAR

KEY VERSE: Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.
(II Timothy 2:3)

INTRODUCTION

In every natural war, there are casualties of war; soldiers who are wounded in battle. Some recover from their injuries to return to the battlefield. Others become permanent casualties. The same is true of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. Christian soldiers are not immune to the attacks of Satan, nor are they exempt from the effects of suffering.

Many of us do not like to talk about suffering. We do not hear a great deal of preaching on this subject. We prefer to hear messages on victory and prosperity, and these things are good, as they are part of the revelation of God. But we avoid the subject of suffering because there are things about it that are hard to understand and difficult to explain. But the Bible is not just a book of promises concerning the abundant life. It is a record of suffering, both of the righteous and the unrighteous.

When Jesus was here on earth and spoke of the suffering He was to face on the cross, many of His followers deserted Him. (John 6:55-66) They had expected the Messiah to reign in power and glory. Instead, He spoke of suffering. They could not understand this, so they turned away from following Him. If you do not understand suffering, you too may turn from following Jesus when you

face difficult circumstances. You will become a casualty of the war instead of a conqueror.

This lesson concerns "**casualties of war**," those who have been wounded in battle. You will not only learn how to deal with suffering yourself, but how to minister to others experiencing difficulties.

THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING

God did not create suffering. It originally entered the world through the sin of man which was instigated by Satan (Genesis 3). When man yielded to Satan's temptation and sinned, suffering entered the world. Therefore, sin which resulted in all suffering can be traced to its originator, Satan. Although there are different reasons why suffering enters your life, all suffering can be traced back to this original source. But happily, in the life of a Christian soldier, God can take suffering, which Satan intends for evil, and turn it for good to accomplish His purposes. He can make a victim become a victor.

THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING

The Bible has much to say concerning suffering, problems, and afflictions. In summarizing its teaching, we discover five ways that suffering can come into the life of a believer. All suffering you face in life will come through one of these ways:

OTHERS AROUND YOU: Suffering and difficult circumstances of life may come through others around you. Joseph is an example of this type of suffering. Through no fault of his own, Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, was imprisoned falsely by Potiphar's wife, and was forgotten by those he helped in prison. But listen to his response. Joseph said...

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life...so now it was not you that sent me hither but God. (Genesis 45:5,7)

One-way suffering comes to the Christian soldier from others around him is by what the Bible calls an "evil report" or gossip. Much suffering comes because of what you say about others, and what they say about you. The tongue is the most powerful of weapons and can create many casualties of war by the words it speaks.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE: The second way suffering comes to you is through the circumstances of life. This is illustrated by the experiences of Naomi recorded in the book of Ruth in the Bible. She was bitter with sorrow because of the death of her husband and sons.

Until Jesus returns and the final enemy of death is conquered, death is part of life. Death entered through the original sin of man and it is a natural circumstance which we all will face, for "it is appointed unto man once to die" (Hebrews 9:27).

When Naomi experienced these difficult circumstances of life, she said, "No longer call me Naomi (which means blessed) but call me Mara." The name Mara means "bitter." Naomi was facing bitter waters.

YOUR MINISTRY: The third reason for suffering is because of your ministry for the Lord. The New Testament speaks of suffering for His name's sake (Acts 9:16), on behalf of Christ, (Philippians 1:29) for the Kingdom of God (II Thessalonians 1:5), for the Gospel (II Timothy 1:11-12), for well-doing (I Peter 2:19-20; 3:17), for righteousness sake (I Peter 3:14), as a Christian (I Peter 4:15-16), and according to the will of God (I Peter 4:19).

The Apostle Paul is an example of suffering resulting from ministry. Some people view suffering as a sign of failure or lack of faith. If this is true, then the Apostle Paul had no faith and was the greatest failure in the history of the church. Paul said that while in Asia he was so utterly crushed that he despaired of life itself (II Corinthians 1:8). He presents a different image than that of the cheerful evangelist who promises believers nothing but peace and prosperity.

When Paul was first called of God to ministry he was told of "great things" he would suffer for the sake of the Lord (Acts 9:16). Paul's response to suffering was to endure "the loss of all things to win some for Christ." He wrote to believers "to you it is given not only to believe, but to suffer for Him" (Philippians 1:29).

Paul was not alone in suffering for the ministry. The whole church suffered in New Testament times (Acts 8). Hebrews chapter 11 records the stories some of the cruel persecutions they endured. Many of these men and women of faith were delivered by the power of God. Prison doors were opened, and they

walked out. They were sentenced to death in fiery furnaces but emerged unaffected by the flames.

But some of these believers, who are also called men and women "of faith," did not receive such deliverances. They were imprisoned, afflicted, tormented, and even martyred because of their testimony of the Gospel (Hebrews 11:36-40). We focus on living faith, but God also reveals His power in dying faith. This is a faith that stands true in the bad times, not just in good times when mighty deliverances are manifested.

DIRECT SATANIC ACTIVITY: Suffering can also enter your life as a result of direct Satanic activity. This is evident in the story of Job. This book wrestles with the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?" God's testimony of Job was that he was a righteous man (Job 1-2). Job did not suffer because he had sinned, as his friends claimed. They believed if Job repented, his circumstances would change. These friends tried to make a universal application based on individual experience. It would be similar to saying that because God delivered Peter from prison, He will do the same for you. This is not true. Many have been martyred in prison despite their great faith and sinless lives.

We must be careful when we view the suffering of others that we do not accuse them of sin, faithlessness, or unbelief. The Bible does teach that a sinful man reaps a bitter harvest because of sowing in fleshly corruption (Galatians 6:8). But sowing and reaping cannot be used to explain the suffering of the innocent.

Job did not suffer because of anything he had done. Job was a righteous man. This was God's testimony of Job, Job's testimony of himself, and his reputation before man. Behind the scenes in the spiritual world was the true cause of Job's suffering. There was a spiritual battle going on over the heart, mind, and allegiance of Job.

There is a warfare going on in the spiritual world over you. That warfare is manifested in the difficult circumstances you experience in the natural world. An important truth evident in Job's suffering is that nothing can enter the life of a believer without the knowledge of God. God does not cause your suffering. It is inflicted by Satan, but its limits are set by God. God's power is greater

than that of Satan, and you will experience victory if you continue to trust Him.

YOUR OWN SIN: The fifth way suffering enters your life is because of your own sin. Jonah is an example of such suffering. In disobedience to God, Jonah headed the opposite direction from Nineveh where he had been commanded to go and preach repentance. He experienced a terrible storm at sea and ended up in the belly of a great fish because of his own sin (Jonah 1-2).

Trouble should always be treated as a call to consider your ways and examine your heart before God. You may be suffering because of your own sin. The Bible reveals that God chastises those who are living in disobedience to His Word. Chastise means to discipline, reprove, and correct:

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:11)

God uses suffering to correct you and bring you back to His will for your life:

Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy Word...It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes... I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that THOU in faithfulness hast afflicted me. (Psalms 119:67,71,75)

THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS SUFFERING

Trouble is not necessarily a sign of being out of God's will. The Bible declares that "many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalms 34:19). When you suffer innocently and not because of your own sin, you should maintain a proper attitude towards suffering. The real test of your spirituality is how you respond in the day of distress:

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. (Proverbs 24:10)

The Bible describes the attitude you should have when you suffer as a believer within the will of God. You should not be ashamed:

If any man suffers as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf... (I Peter 4:16)

You should commit your soul (your suffering) to God, knowing He works all things for your good:

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator. (I Peter 4:19)

You should be happy when you suffer according to the will of God:

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)

Paul says you should be:

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

...being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it... (I Corinthians 4:12)

...in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses... (II Corinthians 6:4)

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. (II Timothy 1:8)

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. (I Thessalonians 3:3)

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (II Timothy 4:5)

You should not think it strange when you experience suffering:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing partaker of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad with exceeding joy. (I Peter 4:12-13)

Paul summarizes the proper attitude toward suffering when he explains...

...though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal... (II Corinthians 4:16-18)

Paul viewed suffering as a servant...He said it "worketh for us".

POSITIVE BENEFITS OF SUFFERING

There are many positive benefits of suffering according to God's will. If you understand these, it will help you deal with your own suffering as well as minister to others who are "casualties of war":

YOUR FAITH IS TESTED:

Everything in the spiritual world is based on faith. This is why the strength of your faith must be tested:

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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:7)

It is a trial of faith when you pray as Jesus did, for God to let the cup of bitterness pass, and yet it does not pass. Instead, you are forced to drink deeply of its suffering. But faith will learn that our prayers are not unanswered just because they are not answered the way we want.

YOU ARE EQUIPPED TO COMFORT OTHERS:

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (II Corinthians 1:3-4)

When you share God's comfort with others you... ..

lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:12-13)

YOU LEARN NOT TO TRUST IN YOURSELF:

Paul spoke of the purpose of his sufferings in Asia: ...

In Asia we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life;

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead. (II Corinthians 1:8-9) You will come to recognize that... .. we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Corinthians 4:7)

YOU DEVELOP POSITIVE SPIRITUAL QUALITIES:

We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, (resulting in the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts). (Romans 5:3-4)

...after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (I Peter 5:10)

These qualities conform you to the image of Jesus, which is God's plan for you (Romans 8:28- 29; Hebrews 2:10,18).

THE WORKS OF GOD ARE MANIFESTED:

When the disciples saw a man who had been blind from birth, they asked who was responsible for his condition. Was it the sin of his parents or of the man himself? Jesus answered:

Neither this man sinned nor His parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in Him. (John 9:3)

THE POWER OF GOD IS PERFECTED:

And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (II Corinthians 12:9)

THAT WHICH IS UNSTABLE IS REMOVED: Suffering results in all that is unstable being shaken out of your life. You cease to depend on people, programs, or material things as these all fail in your time of need. God permits this... ..

removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. (Hebrews 12:26-27)

During the storms of life, everything crumbles that is not built upon God and His Word (Psalm 119:89 and Matthew 7:24-27).

YOUR FOCUS IS CHANGED: When you experience suffering you often focus your attention on cause and effect. You are concerned with what caused the difficult circumstances and the terrible effect it is having in your life. God wants to change your focus from struggling to understand the temporal situation to recognizing the benefits of the eternal:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (II Corinthians 4:17-18)

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (I Peter 4:12-13)

If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him... (II Timothy 2:12)

THE OLD SELF-NATURE IS CHANGED: God said of the nation of Moab:

Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore, his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. (Jeremiah 48:11)

Because Moab had not experienced the troublesome pouring out and stirring similar to that necessary to develop good wine, the nation did not change. Moab was at ease and settled in prosperity and because of this did not develop and mature properly spiritually. Therefore, there was no change. His "own scent" remained in him. Suffering rids you of the old self-nature. As you are stirred, troubled, and poured out, your spiritual scent changes from carnal to spiritual.

YOU ARE PREPARED FOR MINISTRY: You have asked to be used by God. You desire to be more like Jesus and prayed to be a chosen vessel for His use. The answer to your prayer may come through suffering:

Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. (Isaiah 48:10)

It is through affliction that you move beyond the calling as a child of God to become chosen of God. Affliction according to the will of God refines you for His use just as metals are refined in a furnace in the natural world. God actually prepares you to wage warfare against the enemy by suffering!

YOU ARE PREPARED TO REIGN WITH CHRIST:
If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him... (II Timothy 2:12)

YOU RECEIVE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS:

Jesus said:

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)

YOU LEARN OBEDIENCE: Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered... (Hebrews 5:8)

THE WORD OF GOD IS TESTED WITHIN YOU:

The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. (Psalms 12:6)

YOU ARE HUMBLED:

Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end... (Deuteronomy 8:15-16)

YOU ARE ENLARGED SPIRITUALLY: This means you grow spiritually.

Thou has enlarged me when I was under pressure. (Psalms 4:1 Revised Standard Version)

YOU COME TO KNOW GOD INTIMATELY: You come to know God on a more intimate basis through suffering. Job, who suffered much, learned this truth, and said...

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:5-6)

Some of us know God only second handedly. When you are experiencing the blessings of life, God is often a luxury instead of a necessity. But when you have a real need, God becomes a necessity. Job came to know God more intimately through suffering. Before he suffered, Job knew God through theology. Afterwards, he knew Him by experience. Paul expressed a similar desire when he said:

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death. (Philippians 3:10)

You can only come to know God in resurrection power through the intimate fellowship of suffering. Throughout his suffering, Job questioned God as to the cause of his suffering. It is not wrong to question God. Jesus knew the purpose for which He had come into the world was to die for the sins of all mankind. Yet in His hour of suffering, He cried out, "My God, My God, WHY hast thou forsaken me?" It is what follows the questioning that is important. Jesus's next words were, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Despite the questions, Job's response was...

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him... (Job 13:15)

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. (Job 19:25-26)

After all the questioning is finished, the emphasis must change from "me" to "Thee." You must commit your suffering, with all its unanswered questions, into the hands of God.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5)

God may reveal some of the purposes in your suffering, but it is possible you will never fully understand it:

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing... (Proverbs 25:2)

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us... (Deuteronomy 29:29)

There are some secret things that belong only to the Lord. As Job, you may never understand all the purposes of your suffering:

Since the Lord is directing our steps, why try to understand everything that happens along the way? (Proverbs 20:24 The Living Bible)

When God finally talked with Job, He used several examples from nature which Job could not explain. God stressed that if Job could not understand what he saw in the natural world, he certainly could not understand that which he could not see in the spiritual world.

When Job faces God, it no longer matters that he does not get an answer to his questions about suffering. He is in the direct presence of God, and that experience leaves no room for anything else. He is no longer controlled and tormented by human reasoning. He replaces questions, not with answers, but with faith.

When you come to know God intimately through suffering, you see yourself as you really are. You no longer know God second-handedly. That face-to-face encounter with God does what arguments and discussions cannot do.

When Job stood before God, he had no new answers. He was given no new facts about his suffering. But he replaced questions with faith. Job had been in the direct presence of God, and that experience left no room for questions or doubts.

THE STORMS OF LIFE

Suffering is sometimes compared to a natural storm. When you suffer, you experience a storm spiritually speaking. This "storm" may affect you spiritually, mentally, physically, materially, or emotionally.

The Bible tells of a storm which the disciples of Jesus experienced. Read the story in your Bible in Mark 4:35-41. Jesus told the disciples to go to the other side and He joined them in the boat. The storm was an attack of Satan who was trying to prevent them from reaching the shore because of the miraculous works that were to be done in Gadarea (see Mark chapter 5).

Immediately Jesus took authority over the storm. He rebuked the powers of the enemy. Calm returned to the sea and they continued their journey unhindered.

Difficulties of life can be compared to natural storms. A "storm" of Satan is anything that tries to hinder you from fulfilling the will of God for your life and being an effective Christian soldier. It is not suffering resulting from your own disobedience. Neither is this kind of suffering is "according to the will of God." God does not want anything to hinder His plan for you and your victory in spiritual warfare! When you face a storm caused by Satan, exercise authority over the enemy. Jesus has given you power over every power of Satan.

There are two other stories of natural storms recorded in the Bible which illustrate storms resulting from chastisement for sin and storms that occur "according to the will of God." Read the story of Jonah and the storm in Jonah chapter 1. Read the story of Paul and the storm in Acts 27.

Then study the following chart:

Jonah

Jonah put himself in the storm
He paid the fare
Jonah was the cause of the storm
Jonah slept during the storm
God's blessing was not with Jonah
The crew was fearful
To be saved: Jonah must be cast out

Paul

Paul was in the storm through no fault of his own...
He tried to prevent them from sailing
Paul was the remedy for the storm
Paul fasted and prayed in the storm
God's blessing was with Paul
The crew was told to be of good cheer
To be saved: All must abide in the ship

There are differences between going through a storm of life within God's will and experiencing a storm out of the will of God. When you go through a storm out of the will of God, it is a situation which you have created. For example, a believer who marries an unsaved person will experience trouble because they have violated a Scriptural principle. You are the cause of a storm that results from disobedience. You have violated God's will and His commands. Often you are not even aware of the seriousness of your situation. You sleep spiritually while the storm increases its fury around you.

In a storm caused by your own sin, you are fearful and those around you grow fearful. The storm is not an attack of Satan. It is chastisement from God. You can confess promises of "power over the enemy" but it will not change the situation. When you recognize a "storm" of suffering as one resulting from sin, there is only one remedy: Ask forgiveness from God!

But when you suffer according to the will of God, the situation is different. You suffer through no fault or sin of your own. You can be a remedy to the problems around you instead of a cause. Like Paul, you can assume spiritual leadership because God's blessing is on you. You can bring encouragement to others because you are a solution to the storm instead of the cause. You should not bail out of the ship or run from the trouble. You must abide in the "ship" of this type of suffering for it is the will of God.

THE SUFFERING SOLDIER

When you suffer according to the will of God, you should realize you are not alone. Many others in God's army are experiencing similar battles: ...

knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (I Peter 5:9)

"Storms" of life are inevitable and uncontrollable, as illustrated by the parable of the two houses in Matthew 7:24-27. Storms will come to those who have built their lives upon God's Word as well as those who have not. The foundation of a man's life is what will determine the outcome of the storm. Suffering is to be expected as part of the will of God:

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (II Timothy 3:12)

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29). ...

that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer... (II Thessalonians 1:5)

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass and ye know. (I Thessalonians 3:4)

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. (Matthew 24:9)

...they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. (Luke 21:12)

Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you... (John 15:20)

Now this does not mean that you make yourself suffer believing it would be pleasing to God. God is never pleased when people suffer. To purposefully make yourself suffer (an act called asceticism) is a sin. Many people try to do this to try to appease God's anger and/or make themselves appear holy or religious before men. But God is only appeased by the blood of Jesus Christ. God does, however, take the tragedy of suffering when it does touch your life and redeem it for good.

Part of the follow up plan in establishing early churches was to teach believers that they would experience suffering. This is missing in many churches today:

...They returned...confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

The call of Jesus to followers is one of denial and suffering:

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:38)

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

...Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. (Mark 8:34)

...come, take up the cross, and follow me. (Mark 10:21)

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23)

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:27)

Spiritual warfare is not a succession of great victories and celebrations of praise. As a soldier in God's army, you are called to endure suffering:

Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 2:3)

One of the principles of natural warfare also applies to the spiritual realm: "Do not stop fighting just because you are wounded!"

LIFE APPLICATION - TACTICAL MANEUVERS

1. Are you currently suffering? How? Review the five reasons for suffering given in this lesson.

- Others around you.
- Circumstances of life.
- Your ministry.
- Direct Satanic activity.
- Your own sin.

Which reason(s) might be behind your current suffering?

If you discover your suffering is through your own sin, you need to repent. If your suffering is caused by others, because of your ministry, through the circumstances of life, or by direct Satanic attack, what might be the purposes God has for allowing this?

2. Review the positive benefits of "suffering according to the will of God" listed below. Identify the ones you feel God is working to accomplish in your life, then begin to cooperate with the process.

- Your faith is tested.
- You are equipped to comfort others.
- You learn not to trust in self.
- You develop positive spiritual qualities.
- The works of God are manifested.
- The power of God is perfected.
- That which is unstable is removed.

- Your focus is changed.
- The old self-nature is changed.
- You are prepared for ministry.
- You are prepared to reign with Christ.
- You receive spiritual blessings.
- You learn obedience.
- The Word of God is tested within you.
- You are humbled.
- You are enlarged spiritually.
- You come to know God intimately.

3. In natural warfare, soldiers help one another in the battle. When one soldier is under attack, others come to help him. They fire their weapons at the enemy to provide cover for him so he can run to safety. Do you know of a wounded warrior, a casualty of war for whom you can provide such spiritual cover? Can you help someone in their battle with the enemy by praying for them and encouraging them?

4. Study the following references about suffering:

Hardness: II Timothy 2:3

Tribulation: Acts 14:20; Romans 5:3; 12:12; I Thessalonians 3:4, II Thessalonians 1:4

Persecution: Matthew 5:10-12, 44; 13:21; Mark 4:17; Luke 11:49; 21:12; John 15:20; I Corinthians 4:12; II Corinthians 4:9; Acts 8:1; 11:19; 13:50; II Timothy 3:12; Romans 8:35; Galatians 6:12

Suffering: I Peter 5:10; Philippians 1:29; 3:8; 4:12; II Corinthians 1:6; II Timothy 2:12; 3:12; Galatians 5:11; 6:12; Acts 9:16; I Thessalonians 3:4; II Thessalonians 1:5

Affliction: Psalms 34:19; 119:67, 71, 75; Matthew 24:9; Acts 20:23; II Corinthians 2:4; 4:17; 6:4; I Thessalonians 3:3; II Timothy 1:8; 3:11, 4:5; II Corinthians 1:6; James 5:10; Hebrews 10:32-33.314