

The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES
with Pastor Greg Formey



The Surprising Truth About Suffering

Philippians 1:29

Sunday, September 11, 2016

"For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him." NLT

We have believed that suffering, hardships, pain, and trials were evil and to be avoided at all cost. But emerging from the Scriptures are truths about the subject that cannot be avoided. They must be embraced if we are to come into a more complete understanding of God, His promises, and how we should negotiate successfully through life.

What is surprising is that it is spoken of as a good thing provided to people who have faith. If it is indeed a gift from God, it follows that we should be expected to be thankful for it!

THE REALITY OF SUFFERING

Human nature longs for comfort and peace. We, by nature, will avoid suffering at any cost. I don't want to suffer and I don't know anyone else who does. However, suffering is a part of life. We live in a fallen world and we dwell in a world that is at war with God. Both spiritually and physically, creation is not as it was created to be. One day God will restore all things, but the road to eternity passes by many hardships.

Jesus made it crystal clear to His disciples in **John 16:33**, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

THE EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

James 5:10, 11

¹⁰For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹We give great honor to those who endure under suffering.

For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.

The Bible reminds us that Job and the prophets were all striking examples of suffering.

Hebrews 11:35-39

But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. 36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. 38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. 39 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised.

In addition, the twelve apostles were men who gave up everything for the sake of the cross.

They lost their property, their freedom, and their health. They were beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and murdered for proclaiming the gospel. The churches that were cared for by them were persecuted and plundered. They were repeatedly encouraged to endure and look ahead to God's promised favor and blessing.

Hebrews 12:1, 2

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down,

especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus,

the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

God, following this pattern, will also honor you if you will follow Jesus pattern.

Hebrews 12:3

Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.