

# **GRACE & TRUTH** MAGAZINE

- ***Suffering As A Christian***
- ***Refuge And Strength***
- ***Pardon Refused***

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# THE LORD JESUS SUFFERED FOR YOU

Everywhere we look, we see people suffering in some way. Suffering involves undergoing or enduring anything unpleasant; it does not have to be something major. As I type this article I feel a tinge of pain with every “i,” “k” and “;” for I have a paper cut at the tip of that particular finger. Walking through the neighborhood this morning I saw people who were suffering in far more significant ways. How are you suffering today?

The Lord Jesus suffered in many ways as He walked here. Ultimately, we look at what He experienced as He went to the cross and surrendered His life there for you and me. We are reminded of His prayers in the garden as He sweat, as it were, drops of blood. One friend betrayed Him while the others forsook Him and fled. Soldiers beat Him without mercy, then nailed His hands and feet to the cross. At the end of the three dark hours, we hear the Lord’s cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Mt. 27:46 KJV). He cried out again and breathed His last.

Hymn writer G. A. Lucas wrote:

Thy suffering love, Lord Jesus,  
Our hearts delight to trace;  
The love that sought and claimed us,  
In strong yet tender grace.

We think of Thy devotion,  
Thy blest obedience rare;  
Thy holy, deep emotion,  
Thy grief that none could share.

Thus to our hearts Thou speakest;  
Blest Lord, we hear Thy voice;  
We know its charm, its sweetness,  
And in Thy love rejoice.

We wait the consummation  
Of love’s own work divine,  
And now in adoration  
We joy that we are Thine.

Can you honestly say that you belong to Him? God’s offer of salvation through the person who suffered for you, the Lord Jesus Christ, remains open today; accept it while you may!

*Paul*

# A Place For Worship

by Stephen Campbell

*“The people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days ... Now the king [Solomon] went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place ... At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon.”*

—1 Kings 3:2,4-5 NKJV

First Kings 3 describes a pivotal moment in Israel’s worship of the LORD. More than four centuries earlier, before the people of Israel entered Canaan, Moses told them to anticipate a central location for worship. The portable tabernacle of the LORD had been the designated site for worship as the nation traveled across the desert, but in the Promised Land there would be a “place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide,” a place for sacrifices and rejoicing (Dt. 12:11-12). As Joshua and the people of Israel took possession of Canaan, the tabernacle was set up in Shiloh (Josh. 18:1), and there it remained during the long years of the judges.

However, Israel’s moral condition brought no honor to the LORD. Their identity as God’s people continually weakened until, during the time of the blind priest Eli and his immoral sons, the ark of God

– which normally rested in the holiest part of the tabernacle – came to be viewed as nothing more than a good luck charm. When enemies captured the ark, it was as if the glory of the LORD departed with it (1 Sam. 4). The traditions of worshiping at Shiloh dissolved.

As a result, the people began worshiping the LORD on mountaintops and high places, as our introductory verses describe. The great bronze altar and other parts of the tabernacle were moved to the mountains of Gibeon (1 Chr. 16:39, 21:29), and the people also built altars to the LORD elsewhere. For example, it is likely that the altar on Mt. Carmel which the prophet Elijah later repaired was one of these (1 Ki. 18:30). Although the high places were often associated with idol worship and other ungodly practices, that was not the case here. The people knew the LORD deserved their worship, so they sought Him where

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they could. Still, what had happened to Moses' statement about a central gathering place for the LORD's name? It seemed as if his words had fallen to the ground and would remain unfulfilled.

But God was at work. The ark of the LORD was returned to Israel, and King David ordered the construction of a new tent where it could be kept (1 Chr. 16:1). David later discerned that a spot in Jerusalem was to be the location for the house of the LORD (22:1), and he gathered a vast supply of materials for its construction. As yet, however, the building process for such a house had not begun. Hence, when Solomon began his reign, he visited the great high place at Gibeon. There, on the altar of burnt offering constructed nearly 500 years earlier, he offered a thousand sacrifices to the LORD.

This event was a turning point, for it was the last time

Solomon ever offered there. The LORD appeared that night to give the new king a blessing. Solomon asked for wisdom, and his humble desire was granted. The very next day Solomon returned to Jerusalem and offered sacrifices before the ark of God; and soon afterwards, temple construction began. God's wisdom, coupled with the discernment of Solomon's father David, led Solomon to abandon the high places and embrace the long-awaited revelation of a place where the LORD's name would reside.

It is still a valuable desire to bring our worship to the Lord. He is certainly worthy of every sacrifice of praise! Now, however, as the Lord Jesus Himself taught in John 4, our worship is not restricted to a specific location. Yet it is still important to seek the place where His name is honored, for in such a place He meets His people as they are gathered unto Him. **GT**

## Worshippers Found In Matthew

"Wise men from the East came ... to worship Him" (2:1-2).

"Behold, a leper came and worshiped Him" (8:2).

"A ruler came and worshiped Him" (9:18).

"Those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him" (14:33).

"A woman of Canaan ... came and worshiped Him" (15:21,25).

"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary ... came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him" (28:1,9).

"The eleven disciples ... when they saw Him, they worshiped Him" (28:16-17).

# SUFFERING AND THE CHRISTIAN

by Bill Kulkens

## Everyone Suffers

**I**t may be hard to believe at first, but *every* living thing suffers at some point. Suffering comes to us all because of Adam and Eve's original sin in the garden of Eden. God had warned them that "in the day" they ate of the forbidden tree, they would surely die (Gen. 2:17 NKJV). Death is separation, and that is exactly what happened.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's one command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, their relationship with God immediately changed from being *with* Him to being *separated from* Him. They suffered the loss of their fellowship with God. Also, the suffering of physical death came upon Adam and Eve. This has impacted all of creation, including you and me!

Because of sin, Adam and all who lived after him no longer had the benefit of harvesting food without a struggle (3:17-19). Work and toil is now necessary

to get bread, thus we are suffering the loss of ease which Adam enjoyed prior to his disobedience. Eve and all mothers experience the suffering of pain, which was not part of the original creation, in child bearing (v.16).

Adam and Eve also suffered a change in their relationship between each other as husband and wife. Eve's relationship towards Adam would now include struggles (v.16). Both Adam and Eve lost the harmony they enjoyed together and would face struggles with each other.

## Some Reasons We Suffer

Besides death and the other changes that came into the human family because of sin, we suffer for some other reasons:

- **Sowing And Reaping** – We suffer because of what we do. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man

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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” (Gal. 6:7-8).

• **Correction** – We suffer because we need to be corrected. In James 5:14-16 we read of a Christian experiencing illness as a result of not confessing and dealing with sin in his life.

• **Revealing Our Spiritual Condition** – We may suffer in a test allowed by God that we might know where we are in the Christian life. The LORD used the 40 years that the children of Israel spent in the desert to help them realize what was in their hearts (Dt. 8:2).

• **Learning** – We can suffer in order to learn something that we did not know before: to learn more obedience (Heb. 5:8), more endurance (Rom. 5:4), more feelings for others who suffer (2 Cor. 1:3-4), and more maturity (Jas. 1:4).

### The Example Of Job

It is helpful to look at a few examples in Scripture to see the lessons learned from suffering. Job is a very good example for us. At the beginning of Job’s story he had a happy life. He was a man of blameless character and upright. This man had a big family

with a wife and ten children. He had many possessions, including a large number of animals, a big house and many servants. Job “was the greatest of all the people of the East” (Job 1:3). Also, he was in good health.

Without Job’s knowing it, God was watching and blessing him. A challenge by Satan to God was made about Job, also without Job’s knowledge. Satan claimed that God’s blessings were the only reason that Job was a faithful man. This accuser continued to say that Job would be unfaithful if the blessings did not continue. Satan wanted to destroy Job’s faith in God. God allowed Satan to bring suffering into Job’s life to prove Job’s character, but He would only allow Satan to do this without taking Job’s life.

Satan caused Job to suddenly lose all of his blessings from God. Much of Job’s livestock was stolen, while enemies killed the rest. His servants were attacked and killed, and all of Job’s children died when a great wind tore apart the house where they were all eating and drinking. This all happened in a very short period of time. Of all that Job had possessed, there remained only four messengers who brought the sad news to him and his wife.

Job responded by accepting what happened. He said, “Naked

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I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (v.21).

Then Satan had one more form of suffering he wanted to challenge God with about Job. Satan harmed Job's health, causing painful skin boils to cover Job's entire body. Even this suffering did not cause Job to curse God.

Job learned many wonderful lessons as he suffered. He realized that God was watching over him every moment: "For now You number my steps" (14:16). Job appreciated God counting every step that he would take in his brief life here on earth. What a beautiful thought! We can say the same as believers in Christ. The Lord tells us in Matthew 10:30 that He has numbered every hair on our heads. This shows how much the Lord cares about us: He is interested in *every* detail of our lives!

Job grew in his understanding that one day he would see his Redeemer. He learned about the resurrection of his own body and said, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my

skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27).

We too have this blessed hope of one day seeing the Lord. The Lord Jesus has promised those of us who believe in Him that one day He will return and take us to be with Himself. Jesus said, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

Job was a praying man. He prayed for his own children at the beginning of the story. After suffering, he learned to pray for his friends (Job 42:10). He had learned the need to pray for even those who were not part of his family. Likewise, we should not only pray for our families but for others as well. In 1 Timothy 2:1 the apostle Paul wrote: "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men."

There are many more lessons we can learn from the life of Job. The ones mentioned are but a few. It is wonderful to learn that God restored all to Job that Satan had

**Job received back even more than he had had before the suffering. In the end, God blessed His faithful servant; He will bless us for being faithful too.**



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taken away. Job received back even more than he had had before the suffering. In the end, God blessed His faithful servant; He will bless us for being faithful too.

The sufferings we may experience by being faithful in this life are only for a short while. God will bless us in the end. We may not experience this blessing in our lifetime; however, we will be blessed after this life is over. Paul told the Corinthian believers that suffering was only for a moment, “therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For 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. 4:16-18). “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

### **The Apostle Paul**

Through the apostle Paul’s experiences we learn another very important reason why God allows suffering in the believer’s life. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-6 Paul described a man who went to the

third heaven and came back to earth again. Paul spoke of this person as if it were someone other than himself, but after he shared this experience we learn he was the person spoken about.

His experience would be something that could bring about pride in his heart. God, who is the only one concerned about our humility, would not allow Paul to become proud. Instead, God allowed a messenger from Satan to bring into Paul’s life some suffering. Paul described this suffering as “a thorn in the flesh” (v.7). Some believe it was a physical form of suffering that involved Paul’s vision (see Gal. 4:15, 6:11). Others consider the thorn in the flesh to be a false teacher who opposed Paul. However, Scripture does not clearly define the thorn in the flesh. Therefore each one of us can consider suffering that would humble us to be a thorn in the flesh that the Lord allows.

Paul prayed three times that this thorn in the flesh would be removed. God allows suffering to cause us to come to Him for help. Each time God answered Paul’s prayer by saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul learned to accept this suffering, which enabled him to remain humble, as God’s will for his life. He experienced the

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abundant grace that God supplied to match the suffering, empowering him to endure it.

There is a special lesson that we learn from Paul's experience. Unlike Job, God did not remove the suffering from Paul's life. We too may have the same experience. God may allow some form of suffering in our lives that will remain for a long time or, perhaps, for the rest of our lives. God wants us to come to Him in prayer, seek His perfect will, and rely upon His perfect timing. If God does not remove the suffering, He will supply the needed grace! This grace is sufficient because it comes from the Lord.

Paul understood that God's purpose was to keep him humble. This understanding also helped

Paul accept the trial and even boast in his infirmities to the glory of God. Paul wanted to experience even more of the power of Christ in his life, knowing that when he was weak in himself, he was strong in the Lord! We can look at sufferings in our own lives in the same way that Paul did.

### Conclusion

Suffering is a very big subject. We have only looked at a few examples. The supreme example for the believer is, of course, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some of His sufferings we cannot enter into, but the sufferings He experienced as a Man in this world filled with sin are left for us as an example. Study the Scriptures to learn more on this important subject. **GT**

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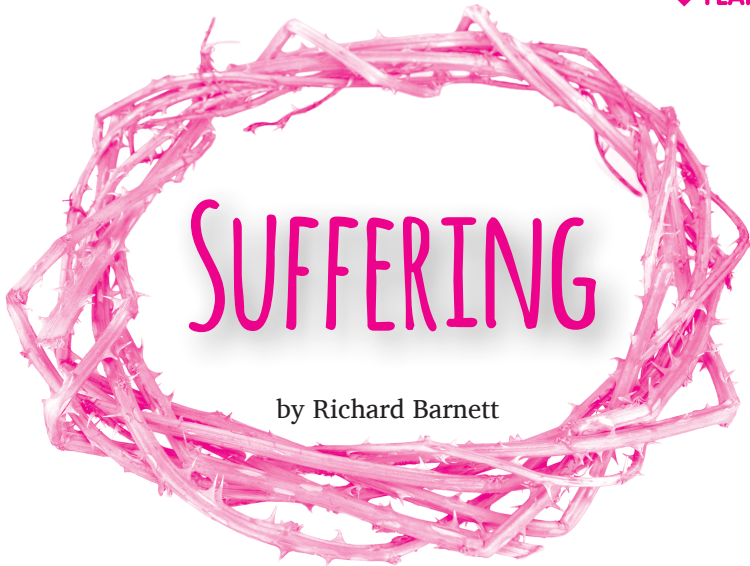
*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid up for faith in God's excellent word!  
What more can He say, than to you He has said -  
You who to the Saviour for refuge have fled?*

*If through fiery trials our pathway should lie,  
His grace all-sufficient shall be our supply;  
The flame shall not hurt us;  
His only design is the dross to consume and the gold to refine.*

*Fear not, He is with us; oh, be not dismayed!  
For He is our God, and will still be our aid;  
He'll strengthen us, help us, and cause us to stand,  
Upheld by His gracious omnipotent hand.*

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
He will not (He's said it) give up to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,  
He'll never - no, never - no, never forsake.*

*—Richard Keene (Died 1787)*



# SUFFERING

by Richard Barnett

**A**ll of us wish that we could live in a world without suffering, where, figuratively speaking, the sun was always shining; the sky was always blue; and there were no dark clouds. But the sad reality is that suffering is all around us and has become a part of our existence. Its effects are seen in natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes that have devastated countries like Haiti. Wars and conflicts in such places as Syria, Iraq and South Sudan have brought tremendous suffering, causing vast numbers of refugees to flee for safety, often with the loss of lives. Additionally, people suffer physically and emotionally through sickness, starvation, rejection, abandonment and bul-

lying. Many children suffer from alcoholic parents and through marriage breakups. The list could go on and on.

It is unfortunate that God is often blamed for all the grief and pain in the world. The Bible is God's handbook, even on suffering. Therefore, let's take a look at suffering from the biblical viewpoint.

## The Origin Of Suffering

At the beginning of time, God made Adam and his wife and placed them in an earthly paradise He had prepared: the garden of Eden. One definition of Eden is "delights." The garden was furnished with everything for which the heart and eye could wish: "Every tree that is pleasant to

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the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9 KJV). God, in His goodness and tender-loving care, assured man’s enjoyment, comfort and well-being. When God surveyed His work He pronounced everything “very good” (1:31). The finishing touch was the presence of God Himself with Adam and his wife, visiting in the cool of the day to have fellowship with them. I want to emphasize that they were living at this point in an ideal environment, where suffering did not exist and was therefore unknown in their experience.

God gave to Adam one command: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (2:16-17). Since God was man’s Creator, He had every right to demand obedience from Adam. Therefore He put him under the responsibility of obedience.

Most of us are familiar with the sad events that followed, as recorded in Genesis 3. Satan appeared on the scene in the form of a serpent – full of craft and deceit – and questioned Eve as to God’s command. This one who is a “liar” (Jn. 8:44) suggested God

was holding back something from them which would actually enhance their happiness, and that He was lying when He told them that they would die if they disobeyed. Adam’s wife believed Satan, took of the fruit of the tree and ate it. Offered some of the fruit by his wife, Adam also took of it and ate, willfully disobeying God. Observe in Genesis 3 the vast and sudden spiritual, moral and social change that took place because of that one act of disobedience:

1. Their eyes were opened (v.7), meaning there was now an awakened conscience.
2. They had become alienated from God, for they hid themselves (v.8).
3. They were afraid of God (v.10).
4. Adam blamed God: “The woman whom *Thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (v.12).
5. There would be enmity between the Seed of the woman – that Seed being Christ – and the serpent’s seed, or followers (v.15).
6. Christ would “crush” (JND) the serpent’s head but would Himself be bruised (v.15). This was the first prophetic announcement that Christ would suffer. Isaiah predicted that it would be on account of our sins: “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5 KJV). Peter confirmed what Isaiah had written: “For Christ

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also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18). This is what we mean when we say that He suffered vicariously – that is, He suffered *on our behalf* – in order to put sin away and reconcile us to God.

7. God said to the woman, “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow” (Gen. 3:16), which was something that they had not known before.

8. The ground was now cursed, causing Adam to labor and toil for the rest of his life (vv.17-19).

9. Death was pronounced upon mankind: “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (v.19).

All these changes are found as we read of man’s fall into sin, and therefore we can rightly conclude that *suffering is a result of the entrance of sin into the world.*

### **Expect Suffering**

For that reason, we must expect suffering. Job said that “man born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” and “yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 14:1, 5:7). Before Jesus went to the cross He told His

disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). After the Church was formed, Paul told the followers of Christ, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

Clearly suffering is a part of God’s ways with us – His children. Therefore we should not despair or be filled with a sense of hopelessness, even when things seem out of control, for

**The great thing to remember in our sufferings is that Christ is our sympathetic Great High Priest who is interceding for us in heaven.**

God is still the Omnipotent – the All Powerful – One who is for us and with us. In all our afflictions, He is afflicted (Isa. 63:9); He enters into our sufferings like no other. He is “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3).

Old Testament saints such as Job, Moses, Joseph and David provide examples of suffering. In Job’s case, he lost his children, possessions and health. Compounding his suffering, his wife suggested that he “curse God and die” (Job 2:9); but Job’s response proved his confidence in God’s wisdom and care. This greatly suffering man knew nothing of what was taking place behind the scenes, that Satan wanted to

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destroy his soul. Job, however, knew that God was in control of his life and circumstances, and he would trust Him unreservedly. The end result was that God blessed Job even more than at his beginning.

The great thing to remember in our sufferings is that Christ is our sympathetic Great High Priest who is interceding for us in heaven (Heb. 4:14-15), while the Holy Spirit is doing the same for us on earth (see Rom. 8:26,34). Furthermore, the love of God is a banner over us from which nothing can separate, for “who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vv.35-39).

### **The Value Of Suffering**

God in His perfect wisdom and His abundant mercy uses suffering as a tool to benefit us. He turns something bad into something good. The principle of suffering and its merits are seen even in nature:

- Bitter medicine must be administered to one who is sick, but when received it does its work and the sufferer is made well again.
- Wheat has to be ground into flour, made into dough and then placed into the oven before it becomes bread to feed the hungry.
- Gold must be melted by intense heat and the impurities skimmed off before it is made into beautiful jewelry to adorn the hands and necks of its wearers.

**“The Lord has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”**

In like manner God uses suffering to prune and cleanse us that we might become fruitful for His pleasure (Jn. 15:2). Such fruit as purity, love, patience, meekness and compassion are what God desires to see in us. In Genesis, Joseph suffered unjustly at the hands of his brothers and later through the lies of Potiphar’s wife, but in time God delivered and promoted him to a place of great prominence in Egypt. Out of his own experience he said, “The LORD has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction” (41:52). God used him as an instrument of blessing to many.

David was despised by his brothers and hated by King Saul, who attempted to take away his life. He lost sons and friends in

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tragic ways; he suffered and wept much. In Psalms, he poured out his inner feelings – and these are written for our “encouragement” (Rom. 15:4 JND). Did David gain from his sufferings? Listen to his testimony as he spoke of the faithfulness of God and the blessings that he obtained:

- “Trouble and anguish have taken hold upon me; yet Thy commandments are my delights” (Ps. 119:143 KJV).
- “I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (v.75).
- “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word” (v.67).
- “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies” (v.59).

I remember when I went through a very painful time of suffering. It compelled me to draw closer to the Lord, and to pray and search the Scriptures like I had never done before. With these resources I was mercifully sustained during that dark period in my life. I was also helped by many of my Christian brothers and sisters who prayed for and encouraged me. Did I enjoy suffering? I did not, and there were times when I wondered if God had forgotten me. I am convinced that Satan tried

to discourage me, but “the righteous cry and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles” (34:17). So speaking for myself, “This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles” (v.6).

Peter saw suffering as a trial of faith which will ultimately end when the Lord returns (1 Pet. 1:7). He looked at suffering in three ways:

1. “Suffering for righteousness sake” – to be scorned and persecuted for doing what is right (see Mt. 5:10-11);
2. “Reproach for the name of Christ” – not to be ashamed to own Him as our Lord and Savior even when someone might make fun of us, and to gather simply to His name in spite of what the majority does; and
3. “Suffering as a Christian” – to respond to insults and injury in a Christ-like manner and by the denial of self.

In all these things we become partakers of Christ’s sufferings “that, when His glory shall be revealed, we may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 3:14, 4:13-16). There is great consolation in the way Peter ended his first epistle: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make

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you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you” (5:10).

### The End Of Suffering

When the redemption of our bodies takes place, suffering will be one of those “things” that will pass away forever from us, and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Then will follow for the earth a period of trouble such as it has never seen before: the seven year tribulation period.

After this, the Church, previously caught up to heaven, will return with the Lord Jesus to reign with Him.

His reign will result in this groaning creation being brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:21). The prophet Isaiah wrote in glowing

terms of that age to come: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all

My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:6-9). “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing ... Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters

break out, and streams in the desert ... And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and

**“...they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”**

gladness, *and sorrow and sighing shall flee away*” (35:1-10). Isaiah 65 adds, “The voice of weeping shall be no more heard, nor the voice of crying” (v.19), and God will “create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (vv.16-17).

The first heaven and the first earth will pass away, and with them all that sin had brought in. They will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1) where only righ-



teousness will dwell. God will restore things far beyond what they were at the beginning, “and there shall be no more curse” (Rev. 22:3).

The end of it all, that for which we long and which has encouraged millions of suffering saints down through the centuries, is what we read in Revelation 21:4: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.”* God Himself drying our tears – just think of it!

### Conclusion

Paul, who suffered like no other New Testament saint (2 Cor. 11:23-33), wrote: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this pres-

ent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). That day of glory is coming soon when we will “bless the hand that guided, we’ll bless the heart that planned, when throned where glory dwelleth, in Immanuel’s land” (Anne Ross Cousin, 1824-1906).

Finally, I must give a word of caution to you if you are not saved. The sufferings you are experiencing now are just the beginning. They will last eternally and be intensified should you die in your sins. But by repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21), you will be saved now and for all eternity; and thus you too can look forward to an eternity of bliss with Christ our Savior. **GT**

## Two Men Contrasted (Lk. 16:19-31)

	The Rich Man	Lazarus
Before Death	A man rich by the world’s standards, who dressed in fine clothes and lived cheerfully in splendor every day in his gated home.	A poor man who had listened to the word of God shared through Moses and the prophets. He was covered in sores and laid at the rich man’s gate, longing to be fed with crumbs.
After Death	Was in a torment of flame in hades. Able to see Abraham and Lazarus afar off, this man was unable to have even a drop of water to cool his tongue or warn his brothers as to judgment for unbelief.	Was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom in heaven, and he was comforted there.



# Suffering As A Christian

by Martin Girard

In his first epistle, Peter took up the subject of suffering. He referred to the sufferings of Christ for us (1 Pet. 2:21), and what it means for someone to suffer as a Christian (4:16). Suffering can be experienced for a number of causes. Physical illness and infirmity can lead to pain. Somebody reading this magazine may well be confined to bed and undergoing suffering from which there seems to be no relief. Such experiences are not to be minimized or regarded as trivial, for they are not. But the purpose of this article is to focus on one specific form of suffering which Peter mentioned. He cautioned his readers not to suffer for a wrong reason: for murder, theft,

evil-doing, or even being a busy-body. Indeed, one ought to expect unpleasant consequences from engaging in such wrong things. Sin should make us ashamed. “Yet if any man *suffer as a Christian*, let him not be ashamed” (4:16 KJV, emphasis added). Rather, “let him glorify God” when such an experience arises.

Suffering as a Christian has continued in every generation since Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Before that time, in the Old Testament era, God’s believing people suffered at the hands of enemies as well. Today, all over the world, we can find examples of Christians suffering. In some countries where a militant and aggressive religion prevails, Christian believers experience brutal persecution. But in other places where Christians *are* free to meet openly for worship, we can also discover instances of persecution.

Examples could be given of Christians who have been taken to court for acting according to conscience and refusing to submit to humanistic laws. Faced with losing their job or having to pay a fine for failing to promote same-sex relationships, some believers have been made to “pay the price” for their biblical beliefs. While there is no merit in suffering for evil doing, one who has to suffer “for well doing” according

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to the will of God can bring glory to Him. In fact, Peter moved on immediately from this statement to consider how Christ suffered for our sins (3:17-18).

### Reasons For Persecution

Actually there may be *no* reasons for persecution! The writer of the longest psalm had many persecutors and enemies, but he declared, “Princes have persecuted me without a cause” (Ps. 119:157,161). There was no valid reason why they should persecute him. However, the next words spoken are revealing: “But my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word.” Perhaps this explains why he had been caused to suffer. Satan detects – and hates – any sign of faithfulness to the Word of God. Evidently the “princes” referred to were proud of their own authority and rejected the truth of God. The psalmist’s respect for God and His Word provoked their derision, ridicule, mockery and scorn.

In the New Testament we find a number of reasons why believers may suffer. The Lord Jesus pointed out to His disciples that if He experienced persecution, they could expect to face it too (Jn. 15:20). The way in which the Lord Jesus responded to opposition teaches us how we should respond. Actually, Peter told us that the way in which

Christ reacted provides us with an example we should follow (1 Pet. 2:21-23). Since He was hated without a cause it ought not to surprise us if we experience the same. Paul affirmed, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). A godly life therefore can provoke opposition. We may find we are persecuted “for righteousness’ sake” – in other words, for actually doing the right thing (Mt. 5:10)! Preaching the message of the cross, which is a “right” thing to do, can also arouse the hatred of men, for man in his pride finds the message offensive and prefers some kind of “works” in which he can glory. Paul referred to this in Galatians, where he made it very clear that some preferred to preach circumcision<sup>1</sup> in order to avoid the persecution associated with the cross (5:11, 6:12).

The message of the Bible is never popular. Jesus spoke of tribulation or persecution arising “because of the Word” (Mt. 13:21). There will always be the temptation to give people what they want to hear, but that will never do. Early believers who were beaten and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus “departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His

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name” (Acts 5:41). Their love for the Master lessened the pain. They remembered what He had suffered for them and gladly accepted the beating for His sake. Persecution, therefore, may come to us for the Lord’s sake, for faithfulness to the truth or for living a godly life.

### Something To Remember

Those who suffer in the cause of Christ must remember that there is a divine purpose in it. Although we may not be aware of that purpose now, one day we will understand. At the present time it is certainly true that “tribulation worketh patience” (Rom. 5:3). The trials we experience can be used by God to develop both patience and a spirit of perseverance in us. For this reason we must accept God’s wise and loving dealings with us and be “patient in tribulation” (12:12), like the Thessalonian believers (2 Th. 1:4). Paul actually took pleasure “in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (2 Cor. 12:10) for he knew that when he was conscious of human weakness he could draw upon the greater divine strength.

In Daniel 3 we have the account of three faithful men who were cast into a burning, fiery furnace because of their refusal to engage in idolatry. Nebuchad-

nezzar, the king of Babylon, was astounded to see not three but *four* men in that furnace, walking about freely and unharmed by the intense heat of the fire. The Lord Himself, who was with His children in their trial, brought them safely out. The record of their experience can encourage us greatly. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ, not even persecution (Rom. 8:35)! Paul, who suffered much, could write of being “persecuted, but not forsaken” (2 Cor. 4:9). Those who hurt the Lord’s people hurt Him too, as Saul discovered while on his way to arrest believers in Damascus (Acts 9:4-5). Any who face severe sufferings for Christ’s sake can discover a super-abundant consolation (2 Cor. 1:5). The experience of the three Israelites in the furnace confirms to us that “God is our refuge and strength, a *very present* help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1, emphasis added).

Some other facts ought not to be forgotten. The Lord will deliver the righteous from all their troubles as He delivered David (34:6,17). We ought not to forget that the death of a believer can be the means He uses to provide deliverance. Paul’s writings assure us that our present sufferings cannot compare with the glory that lies before us (Rom. 8:18). Although he suffered as an evil-do-

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er would, Paul's eye was on the future and he looked forward to reigning with Christ (2 Tim. 2:9,12). He knew, humanly speaking, that he deserved none of this grace because he was guilty of persecuting believers unto death (Acts 22:4) and, for this reason, was not fit to be called an apostle (1 Cor. 15:9). But in mercy the Lord saved him, and He can still do the same. Some of those who persecute God's children today may yet repent and humbly turn to Christ. If they refuse, then they will, of course, face His judgment.

### **Responding To Persecution**

I think when we experience persecution it is wise to pause and ask the Lord what He may be saying. On one occasion, at least, the disciples were told by the Lord Jesus to interpret persecution as a sign that they should move from the town where they were hated to another (Mt. 10:23). By contrast, Paul often simply endured suffering and stayed where he was (1 Cor. 4:12). Much wisdom is needed in order to know what the Lord wants us to do. There is certainly nothing wrong in praying for deliverance like David did: "O LORD my God, in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me" (Ps. 7:1). In desperate need Hezekiah turned to God and cried, "O

LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me" (Isa. 38:14). We are certainly invited to call upon Him in our need, for we read, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. 50:15). Troubles and suffering must not cause us to doubt. Rather, we need to maintain our trust in the Lord.

Something else, however, needs to be considered. Remember how the Lord Jesus prayed for His enemies as He was nailed to the cross. Instead of blaming them or pointing to their hatred, He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). How amazing! The Lord Jesus knew what they did not know. He had come to be the Sin-bearer, and in His sacrifice He was making provision for their forgiveness if only they would believe. His purpose for His people is that *they* should have the same spirit of compassion. "Love your enemies," He declared, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Mt. 5:44). The flesh within us would treat them as they have treated us, but the Saviour points us to a higher way. Romans 12:14 confirms this: "Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not." Notice how Paul repeated the exhortation just in case we

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have missed it the first time! “Yes, I mean it!” he, in a sense, declared. “Those who have cursed you are to be blessed, not cursed!”

Naturally, suffering is one of the last things we would choose. It is, however, a privilege! Paul rejoiced in it (Col. 1:24) and could speak of being “exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (2 Cor. 7:4). Of course, we must not go out of our way to seek persecution by provoking other people, but if it should come our way we must remember that we are in good company. The prophets of old suffered for their faithfulness. Think of the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:10-12: “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.”

**Endnote:**

1. Galatians contrasts circumcision, the law and efforts of the flesh with faith, grace and the Spirit’s work.

## **A Vast Subject**

The many verses quoted in this article have proved, without question, that this subject is vast. As followers of the Lord Jesus, who was rejected in this world, we should not expect popularity. Rather, we should expect the kind of treatment He received at the hands of men.

Our responsibility is to “relieve the oppressed” (Isa. 1:17). We ought not to make life more difficult for anyone by our unhelpful remarks. Job charged his three “friends” with persecuting him (Job 19:22) rather than comforting him.

In many countries today laws are being passed that flatly contradict God’s Word. By remaining faithful to God and to Scripture, those living in such countries may well find they are treading a pathway of suffering. May the Lord strengthen us for whatever lies ahead and give us the grace to remain faithful to Him. Let us also continue to support and pray for those who suffer for Him. **GT**

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**COMMANDED NOT TO SPEAK IN THE NAME OF JESUS,  
PETER SAID, “WHETHER IT BE RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF  
GOD TO HEarken UNTO YOU [THE COUNCIL] MORE  
THAN UNTO GOD, JUDGE YE.”  
READ ACTS 3-4 FOR THE WHOLE STORY!**

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# GOD'S FIRE

by Alan H. Crosby

There are three kinds of fire found in Scripture: natural, supernatural and figurative. Scripture does not distinguish them, for all fire belongs to the Lord – but supernatural fire is uniquely His.

## Natural Fire

Man used fire to worship God almost from the very beginning. Henry Soltau wrote in his book, *The Tabernacle – The Priesthood And The Offerings*: “Every sacrifice which had been presented to God from Abel downward, had been a burnt offering” (pp. 363-364). In Leviticus 1:9, according to a note in the *English Standard Version*, we see the burnt offering described as an “offering by fire” with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. In a physical sense many people would agree, for roasting meat smells good.

From the beginning man used fire to cook his food, warm himself and process his materials. In Genesis 4:22 we read: “Tubal-cain ... was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron” (ESV). Today, controlled combustion – fire or burning heat – is used to power our airplanes, ships, trains,

trucks and cars. It is also used to generate electricity. God certainly blessed us by giving us our knowledge of fire, including how to develop and use it!

## Supernatural Fire

Supernatural fire is quite different from natural fire in that it does not require fuel nor necessarily produce ash. Its appearance is a miracle created by God to accomplish very special results. For example, Asaph spoke of God’s “glorious deeds ... and wonders” (Ps. 78:4), including how “He led [His people] with a cloud, and all the night with a fiery light” (v.14). God also used that “pillar of fire” to throw Israel’s Egyptian pursuers into a panic to deliver His escaping people. The pursuers said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against [us]” (Ex. 14:24-25).

Earlier, God had used supernatural fire to call Moses to lead His people and create a nation for Himself. At that time the Israelites were Pharaoh’s slaves and were suffering because of their hard taskmasters. They cried to the LORD, and He answered them by using a supernatural fire in a desert bush.

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Scripture says, “The Angel of the LORD [presumably the pre-incarnate Son of God] appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush ... the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed” (3:2). When Moses turned aside to “see this great sight” (v.3), God called to him and persuaded him to serve as Israel’s leader.

Years later, at the time of Elijah, God used supernatural fire to establish that He, and not Baal, was truly God. Elijah said, “The God who answers by fire, He is God” (1 Ki. 18:24). Two altars were set up, and supernatural fire fell only on Elijah’s offering in answer to his prayer. “The fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench” (1 Ki. 18:38).

The Lord used supernatural fire to grow the Church on the day of Pentecost. The apostles “were all together in one place ... and divided tongues of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with

the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4; see 1 Cor. 12:10). “There were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven ... and they were bewildered because each one was hearing [the apostles] speak in his own language” (Acts 2:5-6). To the Church “there were added that day about three thousand souls” (v.41).

### Figurative Fire

God’s punishment of the unrepentant is likened to the pain of being burned in a lake of fire (Rev. 20:10,15), sometimes likened to the caldera of a volcano. Scripture compares the punishment to the burning of chaff “with unquenchable fire” (Mt. 3:12) and speaks of “a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27). Satan, a name that means “Adversary,” and his angels are spirits and therefore cannot suffer physical pain, but they will suffer the spiritual pain called “eternal fire,” prepared especially for them (Mt. 25:41).

Believers will have no sins for which to suffer in eternity – our Lord Jesus has already suffered for all of them on the cross. What is left for us to do is repent and accept the way of forgiveness He provided for us. However, present sins do have consequences





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– “whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). The Lord said, “Buy from Me gold refined by fire” (Rev. 3:18), speaking figuratively of our acceptance of the reproof and discipline that He metes out in love for us. “He disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness” (Heb. 12:10). “Like a refiner’s fire” (Mal. 3:2), He will purify us now as He will purify the sons of Levi in the future (v.3).

Christ also will judge our works by figurative fire. Paul described the work of growing the Church as constructing a building. The apostle wrote that he is, as it were, the master builder; Jesus Christ is the foundation, and we are God’s fellow-workers building upon it (1 Cor. 3:9-11). The quality of what we build will be evaluated. “Each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done” (v.13).

“If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (vv. 14-15). Paul likened the believer whose works are worthless, or all burned up, to a person who just escapes from a burning

building with his life but loses all his possessions in a fire.

We are exhorted: “Let each one take care how he builds” upon the foundation (v.10). We should make sure that what we build on that foundation beautifies the Church in the Lord’s eyes and will survive the fire of judgment.

However, if we build with combustibles like wood, hay and straw, they will burn up. We do this by seeking to add extra-scriptural interpretations, some of which we hold in pride and fiercely contest. Partitions we try to make by twisting or misinterpreting Scripture (see 1 Pet. 3:16) will also burn up. There are those who would seek to “stir up divisions,” or build partitions; whom after suitable warning we are to “have nothing to do with” (Ti. 3:10).

We are to build only what would glorify the Lord and, as it were, survive if the whole thing were set on fire. Paul prayed that in every work you do “the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him” (2 Th. 1:12). Let us not fear God’s fire. Instead, look forward to the manifestation, the revealing and display, of our works. There are works that we may not have highly valued as being gold, silver or precious stones, but then we may find out that they were, having withstood His fire! **GT**



The purpose of this column is to help you study the Bible on your own. Look up the Bible references and think about them before writing your answers. Do not send this study to us, as this is not a correspondence course.



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## Christ The Redeemer

“Redeem” means to buy back, purchase or ransom. A “redeemer” is one that sets free or delivers by paying a price. Let’s search the Scriptures with these thoughts in mind about redemption.

### Read 2 Samuel 7:22-24; Exodus 15:13, 12:1-13

1. What nation did God redeem for Himself? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. In the beginning of Exodus 12, we have how God redeemed Israel. What were they to take for a household? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. What would the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door post and lintel do for those in the house? \_\_\_\_\_
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### Read Isaiah 41:14-16, 44:6-8,24-28, 49:7

1. Who will help Israel? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. What can Israel’s Redeemer proclaim to His people? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Who formed Israel? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. “Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One ... princes also shall \_\_\_\_\_, because of the LORD who is faithful.”
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**Read 1 Corinthians 1:30-31**

1. Where have we been placed? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What has God made Christ for us? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Romans 3:21-26**

1. What have we all done? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How have we been justified? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Ephesians 1:6-7; Colossians 1:13-14**

1. In whom do we have redemption? \_\_\_\_\_
2. By what were we redeemed? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What did we receive? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Romans 8:20-23; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30**

1. What will be redeemed? \_\_\_\_\_
2. With whom were we sealed? \_\_\_\_\_
3. We were sealed by Him for the day of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Read Hebrews 9:11-15**

1. What kind of redemption did Christ obtain? \_\_\_\_\_
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**Read Galatians 3:10-14, 4:4-5**

1. What has Christ redeemed us from? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What do the redeemed receive? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read 1 Peter 1:17-21**

1. What has Christ redeemed us “from”? \_\_\_\_\_
2. By what were we redeemed? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Job 19:25-27**

1. What did Job know about his Redeemer? \_\_\_\_\_
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**Read Psalm 107:1-3**

1. What are the redeemed to do? \_\_\_\_\_
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In our next month's *Discover Column* look for more riches of Christ.

# Refuge And Strength

by Klaas Rot

“God is our refuge and strength,  
a help in distresses,  
very readily found.”  
—Psalm 46:1 JND

**P**rophetically this lovely psalm points to the time when the faithful remnant of Israel will be trapped in Jerusalem with the armies of the nations raging around Jerusalem in order to destroy them completely (see Zech. 12:2,12-14). When there is no way out the faithful Jew will look up and cry “God is our refuge and strength.”

This is our lesson today! Circumstances can be so pressing we do not see any hope for help from anyone. To the contrary, it often seems that everything is purposely designed to harm us. Yet there is One who is always there. Faith looks up and cries out, “God is our refuge!” There is always a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13) because our refuge is God. His ways with us cannot be explained, but faith accepts His providence in all circumstances. He is a

God of love, and He always has His eyes upon the righteous.

God is not only our refuge; our verse tells us that He is also our strength. At times believers give up because of lack of strength to continue in their walk of faith. Relief is sought in earthly and worldly pleasures. What sorrow there is in the world today because there is no strength, even to be true to one another. But for the believer, the same God who is our refuge is also our strength. Faith knows that His ways with us are perfect; our heavenly Father never makes mistakes. Should we not lay our weak hands in His all mighty hand and say with Him who was that perfect Man here on earth, “Yea, Father, for thus has it been well-pleasing in Thy sight” (Mt. 11:26). Accepting His will in our lives each day will have the result that we will also say, “God is my strength.” **GT**



# 1 Thessalonians

by Leslie M. Grant

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“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” —1 Thessalonians 2:13 NKJV

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**F**irst Thessalonians – the city name being Thessalonica, meaning “victory over that which is false” – is by date the first of Paul’s epistles. It is full of freshness, energy and warmth. Pastoral in its character, it is addressed “to the church of the Thessalonians,” thus exemplifying true shepherd care. This care was not only of individuals, but it was also toward the assembly of God. The local assembly, formed during a brief visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4) amid circumstances of bitter persecution, had become a model to the others because of their godly energy of faith in sounding out the Word of God (1 Th. 1:7-8). Faith, love and hope are beautifully seen throughout this book and the second epistle as well.

The coming of the Lord is a prominent subject. It is:

- Seen as deliverance from the coming wrath of tribulation (1:10),
- Connected with the joy of Paul seeing his own converts in the glory above (2:19),
- Has in view the confirming of saints blameless in holiness (3:13),
- A precious prospect to give present comfort to those in sorrow (4:15-18), and
- Seen as an ultimate total sanctification, or setting apart, of spirit, soul and body (5:23).

The above verse, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, shows the reason for the devoted energy of the Thessalonians. The Word of God was real to them. It was God who had spoken: they accepted that Word as such. It is by this that true results are produced. The book thus is most encouraging and stimulating! **GT**

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*This column is adapted from the book “The Bible, Its 66 Books In Brief.”  
It is available for purchase from: Believer’s Bookshelf USA ([www.bbusa.org](http://www.bbusa.org))  
and Believers Bookshelf Canada ([www.bbcan.org](http://www.bbcan.org)).*

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# Q&A

**Some people say they believed in the name of Jesus Christ one year, then several years later they were “newborn.” I thought believing and being born again went together. Please clarify this matter for me.**

People have struggled with this question down through the years. Many Christians – and even evangelists – use the terms “saved” and “born again” loosely, as though they are synonymous. While they overlap widely, the Bible does not use these two terms interchangeably.

The Lord Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus in John 3 told him that unless one is born again he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. He further indicated that Nicodemus, as a teacher in Israel, should have known this fact. Doubtless, He was alluding to Ezekiel 36:24-26.

In the Old Testament we first find God dealing with individuals and families, and beginning in Exodus also dealing with Israel as a nation. Gospel preaching and salvation of the individual as we know it today was not emphasized as much. Abraham believed God and God counted this to him as righteousness. God commended Job to Satan in Job 1 and 2, and

to his three friends in chapter 42. As the Lord pointed out in John 3, and as passages such as John 1:10-13, Romans 4, James 2 and many others make clear, salvation is always an individual matter. In the light of the New Testament we can say that many individuals mentioned in the Old Testament were born again. Obviously, the Holy Spirit had done a work in their hearts. It is plain from the accounts in Scripture that others, even though Israelites, definitely were not born again.

We see in the New Testament this emphasis on an individual’s need for salvation far more clearly. Today, since the Lord Jesus has died, risen and ascended, and the Holy Spirit has been given, salvation has become a blessing even greater and more glorious than simply being born again. When the Holy Spirit came He baptized the entire group of individual born again believers, who were all in one place in Jerusalem as the Lord had commanded them, into one

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body: the Church, or better said, the Assembly. This was something totally new and was accompanied by outward signs.

Individuals today enter into this blessing the moment they accept Christ as their Savior. Contrary to a false teaching that is extremely prevalent throughout the world today, no later “second blessing” or outward experience of any kind is needed. Sadly, many are not content to take God at His word, but insist that there must be some spectacular outward evidence (most commonly “speaking in tongues”) to prove that this blessing has been given. Their efforts to bring this about often have the practical result of salvation to them becoming a works-based religion, something for which they must strive.

Having trusted Christ, the believer today is also sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise according to Ephesians 1:13. This seal is the evidence that the believer belongs to the Lord and is the guarantee of the inheritance that he will soon receive. The believer is a child of God; he can call God “Abba Father” (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6 NKJV). He is dignified by being recognized as one of God’s sons – a mature individual no longer needing to be under the law as the rule for his life. The Spirit guides his walk and, indeed,

his life. He is the anointing who teaches believers all things and takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us. The Christian cannot be lost, for nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord. The Holy Spirit dwells in him and abides with him forever. Such assurances go far beyond anything that the believer in the Old Testament enjoyed or could claim for himself. All this is included in the great salvation we believers are given to enjoy today!

Coming back to the question we began with, certainly believing and being born again go together and have always gone together. To believe, actually, is a work of the Holy Spirit in the heart as well. The latter part of Romans 3 shows that in Old Testament times, before God’s Son came into the world and died on the cross for us, God exercised forbearance and justified all who believed His word. He did this in view of the work that Jesus Christ would accomplish on Calvary. Whether they knew little or much, it was faith in what God said that justified them. What Christ has done on Calvary is the only means by which anyone can be justified before God. After all, what would heaven be like if we could boast of any work of our own, even of our own believing

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– how soon, how steadfastly, how strongly, how anything else? “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Now that the Lord Jesus has glorified God by accomplishing the work given Him to do at Calvary, we must trust Him and the work He has done to be saved. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). And what a glorious thing salvation is today! How much more it includes than the earthly blessings given to godly people, who were doubtless born again but who lived before the great event told us in Acts 2.

Cornelius, a Roman centurion, in Acts 10:2 is described as “a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.” This is the description of one who has been born again by God’s grace. I have no doubt that if he had died at the beginning of Acts 10 we still would have been able to meet him in heaven one day. But Christ had died, and God wanted to bestow the same blessing on Cornelius and his household and friends as

He does on everyone who turns to Him today, in faith believing what His Son has done in giving Himself in death on the cross at Calvary. So Cornelius was told to send for Peter, “who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” (11:14). As Peter spoke of who Jesus was, what He had done and what He had commanded His followers to preach, “that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins ... the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word” (10:43-44). Now they were truly saved. Salvation in our present day involves receiving the Holy Spirit, and this, as we were reminded in Ephesians 1:13, happens when we believe. While it will likely take time and growth in the things of the Lord to learn, understand and enjoy the blessings involved in salvation in this day of grace, there is no time sequence involved in their reception.

The Holy Spirit does not normally speak of Himself or, we might say, call attention to Himself. His great purpose on earth is to glorify the Lord Jesus. Many who are not well taught in God’s Word do not realize this important truth. Often in their well-meaning ignorance they try to give great prominence to the Spirit. Sometimes they are not



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sure they are saved, or they may feel that somehow they must do something to stay saved if they profess to have been saved. Not being sure of their salvation, they do not grow spiritually. They may grieve or even quench the Spirit. If saved but living for the flesh or the world rather than growing spiritually and being led by the Spirit, they may well lose the assurance of being saved. Or, not knowing sound doctrine they may fall prey to unsound teachers and teachings, and then sometime later find the Spirit prodding them so that they decide to heed the voice of the Spirit and profess to be saved all over again. This can cause much confusion and unrest. In a word, they need help.

What God does is well done. His work is perfect. What He be-

gins He will complete to His glory and praise. Salvation needs no repetition or improvement, but we don't stand still in life. A Christian needs to grow spiritually. Where one has gotten far from the Lord in his manner of living, repentance and confession are in order – not a second salvation. The Lord desires to restore the wanderer. If you have deceived yourself and made a false profession, the Lord is willing to forgive this sin too and save you, but true salvation cannot be lost. Believing that salvation can be lost is really an insult to God brought about by not believing what He has said in His Word. Don't insult God by unbelief and reasoning, but thankfully accept what He says in His Word!

—Answered by Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar; because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” —1 John 5:9-13

# Why Did Jesus Come?

## – Part 2

by Shereen Ghobrial

### He Came To Fulfill The Law

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” —Matthew 5:17-18 *ESV*

#### Why Did We Have The Law?

**M**any people ask, “Why did God choose the nation of Israel, and why did they have such a special relationship with Jehovah in the Old Testament in spite of their being stiff-necked (Ex. 32:9)? Why were they given the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic law?”

The story of the nation of Israel started in Genesis 11-12 when God appeared to Abram in Ur, which is modern day Iraq. Abram, later named Abraham, was living in idolatry (Josh. 24:2). God “called” him to leave Ur and follow Him. The Bible teaches us that God’s calling is according to His grace (1 Cor. 1:26-29), and it

is not because anyone deserves it.

What was the purpose of the calling of Abraham and the special relationship Jehovah had with the nation of Israel? We can find this answer in Paul’s letter to the Galatians: “Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary” (3:19). The apostle continued, “So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith” (v.24). God gave the law to prove to men and women their failure and show to them their need for a Savior.

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An analogy we may understand is the way quality control is done in food processing or medicine factories. It is through “sampling”: taking a small sample from each production batch and testing it. The sample is a representation of the whole batch. In a similar way God took a sample – Israel – from the human race and provided all the factors for the success of the divine test:

- Ancestors who were great heroes of faith: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;
- God revealed Himself to Israel and spoke to them through Moses;
- The God-given perfect law to guide in high moral living and the building a godly society; and
- God directed them to build a tabernacle for Himself to dwell among the nation.

The apostle Paul listed more blessings and privileges for the nation of Israel in Romans 11.

What was the result of testing this sample of human kind? It was total failure that ended by crucifying the Son of God. The conclusion of this test was: Men and women are sinners, and they need the Savior.

### Was The Problem In The Law?

One may argue it is impossible to live at the level of moral standard demanded by the law, or that the

law has a flaw or is inadequate. But David said, “The law of the LORD is perfect” (Ps. 19:7). Paul confirmed that thought, saying, “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12). If we continue with the analogy of sample testing we can see that Jesus came as another sample and passed the test completely: He fulfilled the law. This proves the law is holy and perfect because there was a man, Jesus Christ, who was able to fulfill all the law.

### Jesus And The Temple

Through the ages, a common thought of man has been that God is far away and does not want to have any relationship with human-kind. The wise men of Babylon said, “The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, *whose dwelling is not with flesh*” (Dan. 2:11). However, the Bible teaches that God desires to live among His people and to establish a direct connection with them. This was first manifested in the garden of Eden, and then repeated in many other incidents, including the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem.

The main thought of the temple is God’s presence through the ark of the covenant. The tabernacle was holy because it was sanc-

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tified by Jehovah's presence. The temple was holy, too, because of Jehovah's presence. The walls, furniture and gold – even the sacrifices – were valued because of God's presence. This is the lesson the Lord Jesus was seeking to teach the Jews when He said: "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?" (Mt. 23:16-17).

When Solomon built a temple for Jehovah, the ark of the covenant was carried there and placed inside. The temple then, in a sense, became the new dwelling of Jehovah. The colorful gate and linen walls of the tabernacle lost their value because their true value had been found in the presence of God. Likewise, when Immanuel ("God with us," Mt. 1:23), the Lord Jesus, was present, He overshadowed the temple that was built by human hands. Jesus Christ is the true temple because "in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9).

The Jews did not understand because they focused on the material things – the stones, marble and gold (1 Chr. 29:2) – and missed the main purpose of the temple as

God's dwelling. Therefore when God came in the flesh they did not care about Him, for He took the form of a lowly person. Without understanding, they accused Him of talking offensively about the temple when He said "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn. 2:19; see Mt. 26:61, 27:40; Mk. 14:58, 15:29).

### **Jesus And The Sabbath**

One of the rules in the law is to rest on the Sabbath. This was strongly followed by Jews. The Old Testament was very clear about not carrying any belongings on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:9-11; Jer. 17:21-22,27). However, Jesus did miracles on the Sabbath a number of times. For example, when Jesus healed the paralyzed man by the pool in Bethesda, He said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk" (Jn. 5:8). The Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath because they considered His miracle to be work. Jesus answered, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (v.17).

The Lord Jesus was not breaking the law; rather, He was fulfilling the essence of it, which is love. He clearly summarized the law when He was asked about the greatest commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

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soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:37-39).

By following the law without love we could make a religion as the Pharisees had done. If we would follow love without any law we would create anarchy. When by faith we follow the law in showing our love to God and fellow humans, then we live like Jesus.

### **Jesus Was A Revolutionist**

At the time when Jesus walked on earth, there was a strong religious system in Israel. They had:

- A magnificent temple which was built by Herod,
- Many religious sects including the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes,
- Plenty of priests organized into scheduled divisions such as Zacharias in Luke 1:5.

On the other hand, Israel had experienced 400 years of silence, during which God did not give any new revelations or miracles. Other than a few individuals, the nation did not repent and they did not accept the Son of God when He came spreading the good news of the kingdom.

How can there be such a contradiction: a strong religious system without any power or influence on the hearts? People

forgot their main focus should be their relationship with Jehovah as their God. Instead, they focused on practices and rituals. The Bible, however, leads us to a relationship. In it we see several: Adam and God, Israel and Jehovah, and believers and Christ.

The Lord Jesus respected and fulfilled the law, but He attacked false religion. He was a revolutionary because He challenged and condemned the religious leaders of His time. He encouraged His disciples to listen to the teaching of those leaders because they taught the Law, but He discouraged following in their footsteps because they did not live what they taught (Mt 23:1-3).

### **Christian Or Religious?**

Are you a Christian or simply a religious person? You cannot be both! If you superficially follow rules, even the divine rules of Scripture, you can consider yourself a religious person. This would make you follow a group of people, a set of teachings or theological principles, and might even lead to practices and rituals that are not biblical.

On the other hand, the true Christian follows a person: Christ. The Christian reads the Bible because he wants to know more about Christ. The believer meets with other Christians be-

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cause they are the body of Christ on earth. He or she serves and spreads the good news of the gospel because of a deep desire for others to enjoy this great person, the Lord Jesus Christ, too.

Let us be careful, for our fallen human nature tends to admire any rituals that satisfy our conscience. If allowed to work in our lives, this could divert us away

from the person of Christ. “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). **GT**

*Look for Part 3 of this Series in next month's edition!*

**Endnote**

1. The Lord used the expression stiff-necked about the children of Israel to describe their stubbornness and disobedience (Ex. 32:9, 33:3,5, 34:9; Dt. 9:6,13, 10:16; 2 Chr. 30:8; Acts 7:51)



**I enjoyed the relevance of the topics** in the September 2017 *Grace & Truth Magazine* [“Dangers Of The Electronic Age”]. I cut out the verses on “Integrity” and pasted them in my journal.  
– Illinois, USA

**I write to sincerely appreciate your gift of love:** the *Grace & Truth Magazine*. Your articles are written in plain and simple language, always precise, informative and spiritually edifying.  
– Niger State, Nigeria

**I am personally edified by the wonderful topics you are presenting.** The June and July / August 2017 issues need to get in the hands of every child of God. The probing question “Are You An Idol Worshiper?” is really an eye-opener.  
– Abia State, Nigeria

**Thank you for sending me your magazines regularly.** They have been a blessing to my life and ministry.  
– Wakiso District, Uganda

**I was truly blessed by the articles** of the July / August 2017 magazine. Be assured, I am praying for every one of you and this literature ministry.  
– Benue State, Nigeria

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**NEXT MONTH: LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF TITUS**

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Paul Alberts  
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“Get me a pen and some paper,” requested the prisoner feverishly; and sitting down he wrote the governor an apology.

The governor read his letter, turned it over and wrote on the back, “No longer interested in this case.”

When the day arrived for the young man’s execution he was asked if he had anything to say before he died. “Yes,” he replied. “Tell young men everywhere that I am not dying for my crime; I am not dying because I am a murderer; I could have lived. Tell them I am dying because *I refused* to accept the governor’s pardon.”

My friend, if you are someday eternally lost it will not be simply because of your sins – no matter

how great and terrible they are. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, suffered, bled and died on the cross for your sins. Since He took your punishment, *God can forgive you!* If you end up in hell it will be because *you refused God’s pardon* based on the death of His Son Jesus Christ.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God ... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 3:18, 2:24 NKJV).

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 Jn. 1:7,9).

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn. 3:18).

The choice is yours! You can accept God’s pardon, escape eternal punishment for your sins and spend eternity with God in heaven. Or you can ignore and refuse God’s pardon and be eternally damned in hell.

Which will it be?

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