

1. THE DENIAL OF SUFFERING

- In the world: a desire for 'success' can lead to a unhealthy focus on achievement, which can so easily end in failure
- In the church: a desire for 'success' can lead to a unhealthy focus on achievement, which can so easily end in guilt

2. THE REALITY OF SUFFERING

In scripture

- David (Psalm 13:1,2)
- Jesus (Matthew 26:38)
- Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7)

In life

- we experience it
- we inflict it
- we observe it

Suffering is universal (Job 5:7; 14:1)

3. THE CAUSES OF SUFFERING

Ultimate – the betrayal of God

- The Fall (Genesis 2, 3; Romans 5:12)
- disorder in creation (Romans 8:22)
- the deliberate work of the Evil One (Job 1, 2)

Secondary

physical pain	spiritual suffering	loss	emotional stress	old age
prospect of death	family troubles	satanic activity	sin (not always)	childlessness
injury	hatred	illness	natural disaster	poverty
hunger	pain	bereavement	anxiety	foolishness
great fear	hard labour	human cruelty	murder	theft
warfare	oppression	adultery	jealousy	accidents

Suffering can be aggravated by – memories / fears / resentment

4. THE HEART OF SUFFERING

A Suffering God (Hosea 11 / Isaiah 53, 54)

The Suffering of Jesus (Mark 8:31)

- the enmity of Satan (Luke 4:2)
- the hatred of the world (John 7:7)
- rejection by his own people (John 1:1)
- abandonment by his friends (Mark 14:50)
- emotional anguish (Mark 14:34,35)
- physical torment (Matthew 27:26-31)
- abandonment by God (Matthew 27:46)

and all for what ...? YOU!

The Suffering of God's people

- Jesus told us to expect it (Matthew 24:9)
- The Apostles embraced it (2 Corinthians 12:10; Philippians 3:10)
- OT and NT experience confirm it
- Suffering is profitable (Matthew 5:10-12)
 - it "fills up" the suffering of Jesus (Colossians 1:24)
 - it affirms our adoption (Hebrews 12:7)
 - it is the price of godliness (Hebrews 12:11)
 - it is a condition of service (2 Corinthians 4:10)
 - it develops trust (2 Corinthians 1:9)
 - it develops character (Romans 5:3-4)
 - it deepens fellowship (1 Corinthians 12:26)
 - it draws believers to the Lord (Philippians 3:8)
 - it prepares believers for glory (2 Corinthians 4:16 – 5:4)

5. THE RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

Unhelpful

- the automatic assumption "those who suffer must have sinned" (suffering is not always due to sin – John 9:2; but it can be – Romans 1:18)
- God is unjust (Ezekiel 18:25)
- resentment against God (Job 2:9-10)
- being terrified of God (Job 23:13-15)
- envying the wicked (Psalm 73:3)
- disillusionment (Psalm 73:13)
- hardness of heart (Revelation 16:9)

Constructive

- rejoicing (Acts 5:41; Romans 5:3; James 1:2)
- repentance (Luke 15:17-18)
- reverent submission (Job 1:21)
- trust in God (Daniel 3:17-18)
- reliance on the promises of God (Psalm 119:50)
- future hope (Romans 8:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:9)
- comforting one another (2 Corinthians 1:4-7; Galatians 6:2)
- worship (Acts 7:55; 16:25)

6. FINAL THOUGHTS ...

FACTS ~ FAITH ~ FEELING: Pray that your faith may look to the facts not to your feelings ...

if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **Romans 10:9**

THE WILL OF GOD WILL NEVER LEAD US WHERE THE GRACE OF GOD CANNOT REACH US

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me, ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. **Psalm 139:7-12**

Paul Langham, May 2019