

# A Reason for Pain?

The Bible is full of promises and words of encouragement. Many comforting phrases bring balm to our souls in the most difficult times. These words of Jesus are recorded in John 16:33: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

The word *tribulation*, in the original Greek, means “to be pressed by oppression, affliction, or distress.” This verse, however, brings us face to face with the fact that, although suffering will certainly come our way, the Lord promises to comfort and sustain us.

Understanding that God has a purpose in whatever He allows His children to go through can help us to keep an optimistic outlook of faith when the trials come our way.

**1.** When we hear the words “pain” or “suffering,” we might associate them with serious illness, injury, or other physical trauma. Certainly that is often the type of pain a person faces, but the scope of circumstances that bring suffering into our lives goes far beyond that. In your own words, define *pain*, and give several examples of situations that could cause it.

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**2.** Some people find it difficult to accept the fact that a loving, omnipotent God allows pain and trouble to come into the lives of His children, but an honest examination of the Scriptures reveals this to be true. Yes, Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation:” but remember that He added, “be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Through our pain we can experience God’s process of refining the precious metal of Christian character. Romans 5:3,4 says that “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.”

The “pruning” that God does in the life of a Christian is vastly different from punishment. Elaborate on the difference.

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**3.** In our minds, we need to settle the fact that what we face isn’t a random occurrence without purpose or design. As Christians, God allows affliction to come upon us only for good. Job said of God, “He performeth the thing that is appointed for me” (Job 23:14). Paul wrote, “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). Acknowledging that God has allowed our trial will make it easier to bear. When we recognize that we are in this place by His will, we find rest in our spirit. We have chosen to trust in the overruling goodness, providence, and sovereignty of God, and He will not fail us.

We certainly don’t want any affliction we go through to be wasted time. In the first chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul elaborates on three reasons for affliction. First, read verses 4, 9, and 11 of that chapter, and note what God would want each of us to do with what we have learned. Then, look up

the following Scriptures. Beside each one, note something positive we might learn while going through an affliction.

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Psalm 34:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 119:71 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 3:11,12 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 43:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 48:10 \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:17 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 12:10 \_\_\_\_\_

**4.** Give a brief summary of the affliction of Job, and comment upon some of the “fruit” that resulted from his affliction.

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**5.** Sometimes God reaches down and changes circumstances supernaturally. Sometimes He does not. What determines whether God will perform a miracle? Is it all right to ask for one? Should we try to bolster our faith to reach out and claim the answer we desire? These questions may haunt the one who is hurting and sees no natural solution to his problem. How would you respond to someone who came to you with these questions? See Mark 14:36.

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**6.** God’s Word lets us know that it is not strange or unusual for Christians to go through trials. (See 1 Peter 4:12.) We know that God is committed to making something beautiful, valuable, and eternally lasting of our lives, and for this reason He allows the “fiery trial” to come our way. How can we cooperate with God in this refining process? Give Scriptures to support your answers.

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**7.** The devil never hesitates to attack when we are down. He watches for just such a time, knowing that our defenses may be weakened. When suffering comes into the lives of God’s children, Satan is quick to follow with accusations and fears—insinuating that God doesn’t really care about us. If we give in to complaining, self-pity, or bitterness, he has us exactly where he wants us. James 4:7 and Hebrews 10:25 give us some ways to deal effectively with the doubts, accusations, and fears that so often accompany suffering. Give other Scriptures that will comfort us when we are hurting.

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**8.** In 2 Corinthians 1:3, we find a beautiful description of God—one that offers special meaning to us in the time of trial. This Scripture refers to Him as “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.” The next verse says He comforts us in all our tribulation. What a wonderful message of hope in our dark hour! In Isaiah 53:4, we read, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” Notice that this verse has no limits. It doesn’t say He has borne some of our griefs and carried part of our sorrows. Our suffering is always shared by Christ. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Describe the office of Christ, as depicted in this passage, and explain how He ministers to us in our time of need.

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**Thought Provoker:** Who can know what it is like to stand at the bedside of a child and watch him draw his last breath? Who understands the pain of being forsaken by a trusted friend? Who can relate to facing a future radically rearranged by illness? Only someone who has gone through the circumstance. A card sent to one who was seriously ill contained these words:

“How can we ever hope to heal  
The wounds of others we do not feel?  
If our eyes are dry and we never weep,  
How can we know when the hurt is deep?  
For it’s only through suffering we recognize  
The sorrow that lies in another’s eyes.”

There are people all around us who are hurting, who have been wounded, victimized, and forsaken. One of the greatest challenges we can know in life is to be used by God to bring His healing to them. Are you willing to use your experience with pain to help someone else who is hurting?

## **Key Texts**

Job 23:14; Psalms 34:19; 119:71; Proverbs 3:11,12; Isaiah 43:2; 48:10; 53:4; Mark 14:36; John 15:2; 16:33; Romans 5:3,4; 8:17,28; 2 Corinthians 1:3,4,9,11; 12:10; Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:25; James 4:7; 1 Peter 4:12

## **Other Scriptures Used in This Study**

Job 1:8,22; Luke 22:42; Romans 14:8; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; James 5:10,11; 1 Peter 2:14; 4:13,14; 2 Peter 2:9; Revelation 12:10

## **Suggested Verse for Memorization**

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. — 2 Corinthians 4:17