

Why Christians Suffer

John 14:18-27

Hello friend, and welcome to *Hope for Today*. We are so glad you joined us. This program is produced by Heralds of Hope. We're an international Gospel media ministry. Each week our Bible teaching broadcasts circle the globe in English and 23 other languages. And why do we teach from the Bible? Because the Bible has the answers. It is the amazing Word of God.

Thank you for joining us today. The topic of today's teaching is a question most of us have wrestled with. It's a hard question but an important one. The question is, why do I suffer. Before we hear the teaching from Pastor J Mark, let's think about this question.

This question is common because if you are human, you have most likely suffered. We ask, Why me? What have I done to deserve this? If God is so strong and so good, why doesn't He do something? These questions are huge and very important. Personally, I believe the answers found in Christianity are the best answers to these hard questions.

However, I don't plan to answer these questions, but I want to point out a deeper question buried in each question. Smuggled in with every question about suffering there is the bigger question of purpose. Why am I here? Is this what I am supposed to experience? You see God created us, and He made us for much more than life on a sin cursed earth. When sufferings hit us something deep within us stirs. We know there must be more, surely this is not all that we were made for.

Romans 8 says "the whole creation has been groaning" and you and I also groan, waiting, longing for the redemption Christ will bring. Till he comes we will have to deal with disease, death, and suffering; however, we know this is not what we were made for. We long for the day when Jesus will make all things new, the curse will be reversed. Even death will be defeated. Imagine, nothing will die or be dead, Death will be no more.

What an exciting time that will be. So, when the suffering comes when it feels like life is too much. When big questions are going through your mind day and night. Remember God is still on the throne, His plan and purposes WILL happen. Sin and its consequences affect us now, but a time is coming when there will be no effects of sin. This truth helps us through our suffering and keeps us going when life is hard.

Thank you once again for joining us. Before we hear more from our Bible teacher let's ask God to guide our moments together. Lord thanks so much for the truth in your word. Thank you for the guidance of your Holy Spirit and we look to you for wisdom as we discuss the topic of your children suffering, speak

to us by your Holy Spirit and guide us. Thank you so much for the hope we have in Jesus Christ, hope for our current situation, and hope after this life. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now let's give our attention to Pastor J Mark Horst as he teaches us more about the question of why Christians suffer.

Do you have any hardships that really bother you? Are they puzzling to you? Are there days when you don't know why things happen as they do? Let me help you. I bring you hope based on God's word, the Bible. I believe the Bible is the only real foundation for hope. In it we can find the answers to our most puzzling questions. One of those questions is, why do good people suffer? Or WHY CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

The problem of suffering is common to mankind. Even people who do not believe in God have sufferings. We all face hardships, difficulties in life. I'm sure it has effected you. Sometimes Christians suffer greatly. I know there are places where that is happening. The conditions are far from favorable and we sometimes wonder what can we do? We raise the question, why? And sometimes we may be inclined to put the blame on God.

My friend, I want to share with you from John 15:18-27 where Jesus takes up this problem: why Christians suffer.

18 *If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

19 *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

20 *Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

21 *But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake because they know not him that sent me.*

22 *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their in.*

23 *He that hated me hated my Father also*

24 *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both my Father and me.*

25 *But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause.*

26 *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeded from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

27 *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

In this text Jesus gives us answers to the question of suffering by several decisive INSIGHTS.

He begins by comparing our suffering with His: **Suffering Compared.**

Suffering is not new. He suffered before us. He said, "Don't be surprised if you have problems because I have had problems before you have." It is not unusual, He said, to get this kind of response from the world. It is not really avoidable; you cannot avoid it. "What they did to me, they will do to you."

So, my friend, this matter of suffering is of long standing. Jesus said it should not be surprising to us if His followers suffer like He suffered. That is what people do not understand; they can't really follow; they don't know why, in some cases, that the sufferings come from others. But they do. So, in some ways, as He suffered, we suffer. He said, "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you."

You see, as Christians we are different from people who do not believe and follow Jesus. It is that way, my dear friend. It is important for us to remember that.

Then Jesus proceeds to further define: **Suffering Laid Bare.**

He said, in a very straightforward statement, the reason why people inflict suffering on the good is they do not know God. It's a very straightforward statement, but that's what He said, "They do not know Him who sent me." That's why they act like they do. His words had revealed their sin. Instead of changing them, they lashed out against Him.

Now let's put it back there in the setting where Jesus was talking. He came and told people what their problems were, and He told them how to solve those problems by coming to God and really following His words. Jesus' words left them with no covering. He said, "I did a work among them that nobody else ever did. And because I did this work among them, they now have no covering for their sin." Because they had no covering for their sin, they lashed out against Him.

From this statement of Jesus, I must conclude that it still works the same way. I say this very guardedly, my friend, but I believe Jesus is teaching us that persecutors of good are ignorant of God.

Jesus went on to assure the twelve of His provision **Suffering Shared.**

He says innocence is vindicated. He quotes from the Old Testament and says, "They hated me without a cause." I am sure it is very difficult for people today to accept: to be hated, to suffer without a reason is very oppressive. It hits us, without a cause.

But I want to comfort you because Jesus said, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, He shall testify of me, and you also shall bear witness." I like this word from Jesus because the word Comforter is such a blessed truth. When the Spirit of truth has come, He will be right there alongside of us. Church history is full of examples of great suffering by Christians who remained faithful in suffering for the Holy Spirit held them up and enabled them.

I want to comfort you with these words from Jesus, "The Comforter will come, and He will be right there beside you to sustain you and witness to you so you will be able to witness as well."

These insights do not remove suffering, but they tell us why. Unbelievers do not know God. That is why they inflict suffering. If they knew God, they would not inflict suffering. If you are undergoing suffering, be encouraged. Jesus knows your need, and He wants to help you in that need.

Remember, He suffered before we suffer. And I shall add, He suffers when we suffer. Praise the Lord for this great truth!

My friend, was this teaching helpful? If you'd like a copy, either in print or on an audio CD, just contact us and ask for it by the title. Or log onto our website heraldsofhope.org

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Now, I urge you to tune in next week as Pastor J. Mark continues our study from John's Gospel. You won't want to miss it. And until then, keep looking to Jesus. He'll give you hope for today!