

“How God Strengthens Us Through Suffering”

Greg Wendschlag

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Bible-First Lifestyle reading: 2 Chron. 25-36; Obadiah; 2 Cor. 1-3; Ps. 106-112

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us, as you help us with your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.” 2 Cor. 1:3-11

Suffering happens!

- You will **suffer**.
- Suffering comes from making **bad decisions**.
- Suffering comes from **other people’s** bad decisions.
- Suffering comes from living in a **fallen world**.

Common reactions to suffering

- **Complaining** leads to anger leads to bitterness.
- Fear leads to **worry** leads to anxiety
- Blaming leads to hopelessness leads to **depression**

4 Steps to Growing in Strength through Suffering

1. Acknowledge and **praise** God for His comfort.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles...”

- God is not a bystander. He is actively working.
- God is the Father of compassion – He is merciful
- God is the God of comfort – He is working to strengthen us

Take away: Praise God for His mercy and comfort before, during and after you receive it.

2. Recognize God will use your suffering for the **benefit of others**.

“So that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows...”

- Sometimes the hardships are yours alone but you can use them to help others later.
- Sometimes the hardships are yours alone and you encourage others in the midst.
- Sometimes the hardships are for others solely.

Take away: There is always a greater good to come out of every hardship.

3. Learn to **rely on** God and **pray** effectively.

“We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us, as you help us with your prayers.

- Reliance upon God produces patient endurance.
- Reliance upon God requires humble submission.
- Prayer is the great power not the last resort.

Take away: Learn to pray, “God, I cannot endure this on my own. I need you. I trust you. I will wait for you.”

4. God will receive **greater glory** by the praises of those who have helped you or been comforted by you.

“Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.”

- Don't be bashful to ask others to pray with you.
- Give value to others by asking for their prayer support.
- Seeking God with others opens the door for God to comfort you.

Take away: Allow others to experience the joy of answered prayer in your life.