

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

Moses D Hillman,
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“And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness.”

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THE VALUE OF SUFFERING

By the late Rev. E. E. Shelhamer

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Psa. 119:71).

The apostle Peter in four short chapters uses the word “suffer” nine times. He reaches his climax when he says: “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (5:10).

Human nature shrinks from suffering. This is why, when Jesus spoke of going up to Jerusalem to die, Peter said, “Be it far from thee.” In other words, “Pity or spare thyself.” No marvel, then, that Jesus answered and said, “Get behind me, Satan!” Satan hates the cross, hence spoke through Peter in an attempt to frustrate the scheme of redemption.

Suffering has a tendency to make one more sympathetic. If not, it does the opposite—sour him.

Suffering weans us from the empty things of time and sense. We need it, yea, must have it, more or less, according to our warped disposition.

Some people would have missed a rich blessing here, and perhaps heaven hereafter, had it not been that they were called upon to take the pathway of suffering. Suffering may come from God, Satan, men or ourselves.

First, from God. He desires to fit us for service here and heaven in the end. But we are so coarse and carnal that He cannot do this, until we are first refined in the furnace of affliction. David said, “Before I was afflicted I went astray.” Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Unto you is given, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his sake.” It is given from God, who sends or permits it. Hence, we should profit by it. This suffering not only refines the saint but also convicts the sinner. Many have been led to Christ, not only through preaching but by beholding a suffering saint. I Daniel said, “Many shall be purified, and made white and tried.”

A baby boy dies. The parents are broken-hearted. How could a good God permit it? But they cannot look ahead and see that had the child lived he might have become a disappointment or worse. God in mercy did the best thing to draw them to Himself. We read, “Merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come” (Isa. 57:1).

Some people suffer because their hard dispositions require it. It is the only way they will ripen. Certain fruits and vegetables need

biting frosts to mellow them. There are people who are called to suffer, not so much because they especially need it, but because they can stand it. They have elasticity of soul and, like a fine grade of steel, can be pulled through the narrows. They might be called “extraordinary saints.” Thus they become an inspiration to weaklings. Paul was such an one. The Lord said of him, “He is a chosen vessel to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

Second, suffering may come from Satan. He is, next to God, almighty in wisdom and power. Thank God, he can go only so far, as he gets permission from above. Jesus said, “Ought not this woman whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosened on the Sabbath day?” Satan afflicted Job and would have killed him had God not stepped in. Paul said, “We would not have you ignorant, brethren, of our troubles which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.” No doubt this was the direct work of Satan, but God intervened. How constantly we need to be covered by the precious blood!

“When darkness intercepts the skies,
And sorrow’s waves around me roll,
And high the storms of trouble rise,
And half o’erwhelm my sinking soul:
My soul a sudden calm shall feel,
And hear a whisper, ‘Peace; be still.’”

“Though in affliction’s furnace tried,
Unhurt on snares and death I’ll tread;
Though sin assail and hell thrown wide
Pour all its flames upon my head,
Like Moses’ bush I’ll mount the higher,
And flourish unconsumed in fire.”

—Charles Wesley

Third, suffering may come from others. There is such a thing as mental crucifixion. Many a woman has died before her time because of opposition from her relatives. One may actually waste away, not from lack of good food, but from lack of kind words and true affection. Dying by inches for years is greater suffering than literal crucifixion. One may suffer in mind for days, because of an unkind letter. Notwithstanding this, we can so hide in God and die to cruel thrusts that in the end we may say with Paul, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.”

Fourth, suffering may come because of our own blunders. God can rule and overrule in

spite of men and devils; but it is hard for Him fully to correct what we have brought upon ourselves. It is hard to undo and forgive myself for what I might have averted, had I been more teachable and prayerful. One step out of divine order may require a thousand steps to recover this one. More than one man has crippled his usefulness by signing his name too soon, by going into business with the wrong party, by marrying into the wrong family, by joining the wrong church, or in other ways marring God’s first plan.

Yes, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

We may never know till the books are opened how much we owe to sorrow and suffering. Lord, teach us so to capitalize these unsolved problems that in the end we may be able to say, “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 lawful possessions and pleasures of this world, its literature and its culture, are unceasingly and insidiously seeking to undermine the influence of the better and abiding possession. This influence is greater than we know, because they are seen and near and ever active. Nothing can secure us against their power but a life of faith, a life in the Holiest, a life in the power of Christ, the Priest forever, who works all in the power of the endless life. Alone through Him who abideth continually can we abide continually, too, can we endure unto the end.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

God has still His hidden secrets, hidden from the wise and prudent. Do not fear them; be content to accept things that you cannot understand; wait patiently. Presently He will reveal to you the treasures of darkness, the riches of the glory of the mystery. Mystery is only the veil of God’s face. Do not be afraid to enter the cloud that is settling down on your life. God is in it. The other side is radiant with His glory. “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” When you seem loneliest and most forsaken, God is nigh. He is in the dark cloud. Plunge into the blackness of its darkness without flinching; under the shrouding curtain of His pavilion you will find God awaiting you.

—Selected.