

## The Book of Ephesians

### Ephesians 6:18-22

#### Session 85: Notetaker

Sufferings of Christ	Related to Declaring the doctrines of the Mystery of Christ	2 Cor. 1:5 Persecution	Doctrine edify/comfort  Reward
Suffering for Wrongdoing	Related to sins against God and men	2 Tim. 2:9 Correction	No edify No comfort No reward
Suffering for Righteousness	Related to the world's hatred for, and opposition to, godly living	2 Tim. 3:12 Persecution	Doctrine edify/comfort  Reward
Sufferings of this Present Time	Related to the consequences of living in a fallen world	Rom. 8:18 Disease/ Climate	Doctrine edify/comfort  Glory
Suffering of Consequences	Related to carelessness, inattention, ignorance, impulse	Life lesson: Correction experience, skill, learn	No edify No comfort No reward

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## Opening Prayer

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Heavenly Father,

We are grateful for the opportunity to assemble together to study your word. As we are looking at the sufferings of Christ, I pray we will understand the doctrine that gives us comfort in the midst of those sufferings. We realize that through these sufferings, we have an opportunity to be edified unto godliness, and put the power of grace on display. Our prayer is to be like our apostle, strengthened by the doctrine to patiently endure our sufferings to your glory. And now Father, we focus our attention on your word, and with eager hearts we look forward to being transformed, by having our minds renewed with the truth. Amen.

## The Book of Ephesians

### Ephesians 6:18-22

#### Session 85: The Sufferings of Christ

In today's session, I want to clarify a couple of issues pertaining to our sufferings. Let's do this by talking through the chart on your Notetaker.

I have delineated five kinds of sufferings on the chart. I know we normally talk about two or three kinds, but I want to be a little more specific today, so we don't confuse the sufferings.

#### The Sufferings of Christ

The first kind of sufferings is the sufferings of Christ (SoC). These are the sufferings which come to us in phases 2 and 3 of the policy of evil and these attacks are related to our making known the Mystery of Christ (MoC) and the doctrines which are a part of it. This is Satan's way of silencing us with regard to the mystery program, this present dispensation of grace, and the doctrines that work to produce our sanctification; conforming us to the image of Christ.

The book of 2 Corinthians is all about the SoC.

2 Corinthians 1:5 For as **the sufferings of Christ abound in us**, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

Those sufferings surely did abound in Paul for he was always making known the doctrines which comprised the mystery of Christ. These sufferings are a form of persecution for which there is doctrine that is meant to comfort Paul in the midst of these sufferings, and further edify him. The SoC are only for believers in Jesus Christ. The lost world will not encounter these kinds of sufferings.

There is a general policy of evil (PoE) at work in the world against every believer. What I mean by that is that the course of this world which Satan has generated contains built-in attacks and oppositions to being a believer in Jesus Christ. These are not necessarily directed against any particular individual, but are applicable to all those who consider themselves to be Christians and seek to live their faith.

On the other hand, the sufferings of Christ are more individualized and they sit on top of that general policy of evil. While there might be an overall dislike of those who hold to their faith, the sufferings of Christ are designed to stop the propagation of the message of the Mystery.

There is reward the responding to the SoC out of the doctrine. The patient endurance of those sufferings is what our heavenly Father is looking for, not out of our flesh, but by the doctrine working in us to produce patience and hope in the midst of those sufferings so that we do not despair and stop our message.

One last thing about the SoC; they certainly do manifest in physical ways of persecution, which may include bodily harm, but not necessarily so. Some attacks are verbal to discourage, or to discredit us. But, the SoC are not being manifested in physical sicknesses or diseases. What I mean is, Satan is not giving anyone cancer, or heart disease to attack them. When I had a stroke in 2017, that was not Satan attacking me; that was due to my diet and lifestyle. Satan is not attacking Christians by giving them any kind of disease.

Having you fall off a ladder and injure yourself so that you are no longer mobile is not how Satan seeks to slow you down. Satan is not having his devils push you down, or trip you, to injure or intimidate you into silence. These kinds of sufferings are not the sufferings of Christ.

### **Suffering for Wrongdoing**

The next kind of suffering in our chart are those things we suffer for our own wrongdoing. These sufferings are the natural and built-in consequences of our actions when we sin against God, or our fellow man. For example, if we steal from someone, there may be consequences of suffering of some kind. If we violate God's moral law, there will be a different kind of suffering, some of which we will not so easily identify as a consequence of our sin, but it will be there. These sufferings are not just for believers in Jesus Christ, but even the lost world suffers in various ways for doing wrong.

These sufferings, in this dispensation of grace (DoG), are not God's chastisement for our sinful behavior. Again, this is a dispensation of grace and God is not

imputing the consequences of men's sins to them as a punishment in this life. However, there are "natural consequences" that may come about because of our sinful behavior. For example, a person can destroy their marriage, alienate their family and friends, lose their business, suffer penalties and fines, be incarcerated, suffer financial loss, and even suffer the death penalty, all as a result of being a part of a society which governs itself by laws.

When we suffer for wrongdoing, it may be emotionally, it may be financially, it may be personally, or a number of other ways, but the point is this: there is no doctrine to alleviate these sufferings. Why not? Because these sufferings are meant to punish us and correct our future actions by making our suffering worse than whatever "supposed benefit" we got from our wrongdoing.

God is not giving us doctrine to patiently endure suffering for wrongdoing, because He means for us to feel the full brunt of those consequences. Obviously, there is no doctrine, no comfort, and no reward at the judgment seat of Christ for sufferings which result from our wrongdoing.

2 Timothy 2:9 Wherein **I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds;** but the word of God is not bound.

Paul was not an evil doer, but he was being treated like one; that is his point, evil doers wind up in prison. Most of the others who were in prison were most likely suffering because they were evil doers and they deserved it. Take a look at the exhortation which Peter gives to the believing remnant of Israel concerning this kind of suffering.

1 Peter 3:17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

Peter is stating the obvious, but this serves as a perfect segue into our next kind of suffering; suffering for righteousness, or as Peter said it, "for well doing."

### **Suffering for Righteousness**

This kind of suffering is directly related to our godly living. What I mean by that is this: when we begin to think in accordance with the doctrine written by Paul, and

our conduct and behavior are changed to reflect that godly thinking, the world will not tolerate that. There may come a time when we will be faced with a decision; we will be pressured not to be righteous and if we do that which is right, we will suffer in some way. In fact, Paul says that if we live godly, we will suffer persecution.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and **all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**

Why is this? Because godliness stands out in stark contrast against everything else. Godliness shows ungodliness for what it is to God, repugnant. Godliness exposes evil as wrong, and immorality as a bankrupt lifestyle which is opposed to God. Godliness exposes deceit and fraud for what they are.

But not only does godliness shine a light on evil, sin and unrighteousness, but it also exposes the attempts of the flesh to produce its own righteousness apart from God. Godliness shows the wisdom of this world as inadequate and unacceptable to God. Righteousness apart from God is self-righteousness, and God rejects it as a cheap counterfeit.

While I have made this a separate suffering on the chart, we could put our sufferings for righteousness as part of the sufferings of Christ. The reason I split them up is because the SoC are mainly connected to our godly thinking (our doctrine and message), but sufferings can also be connected to our behavior; (persecution which results from our godly living).

When I talk about “behavior,” I am not referring to our actions in making known the Mystery or proclaiming the gospel of grace, or teaching the dispensational change, or any of the doctrines that pertain to this present dispensation of grace. In other words, I am not talking about our actions in proclaiming the message, I am talking about behavior that refuses to do evil, and insists on doing righteousness instead.

If we suffer for well doing, then there is someone who either wanted us to do evil, or did not want us to act righteously. So, in a sense these are the sufferings of Christ; but as they relate to our conduct.

There may well be times in which we suffer for refusing to do evil, and when that happens, God is not obligated to stop our suffering. That is not what He is doing in this dispensation of grace. Just as we covered back in Ephesians 5, just because God has placed the man at the head of the home, it does not mean that his wife is obligated before God to do everything he says.

If he asks her to sin, she should refuse. If he asks her to commit a moral wrong, she ought to disobey that request. If he asks her to do that which is a violation of her conscience, God does not expect her to do it, as according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 8, for that would be causing her to “sin against Christ” (verse 12).

These same things are true in all the divine institutions. An employer should never ask an employee to do something illegal, to do something immoral, or to violate his conscience by some act. He should never ask an employee to misrepresent the truth or the company he works for, no matter how much money can be made. An employee is under no obligation to be dishonest, but is actually accountable to God if he is.

The government is under the same restrictions. For example, if the government does what it did back in Daniel’s day, where it made a law that no one could pray to the true and living God, we can gladly refuse to obey that law because it violates the written law of God, which is a higher law.

Daniel 6:6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. <sup>7</sup> All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. <sup>9</sup> Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. <sup>10</sup> Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

God did not view this disobedience as rebellion in the heart of Daniel, for the Old Testament scriptures called for this very thing to happen, for them to pray facing Jerusalem when they were out of the land. Daniel was simply obeying what had already been written in the Law of Moses (Leviticus 26) and written again in the time of Solomon (1 Kings 8).

Leviticus 26:32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. <sup>33</sup> And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

Leviticus 26:40 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; <sup>41</sup> And *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: <sup>42</sup> Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Now, look at it again as Solomon makes his prayer of dedication of the temple.

1 Kings 8:22 And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: <sup>23</sup> And he said, LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:

1 Kings 8:30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, **when they shall pray toward this place**: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.

1 Kings 8:46 If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, **so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy**, far or near; <sup>47</sup> Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried

captives, and repent, and **make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives**, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness;<sup>48</sup> And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, **and pray unto thee toward their land**, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name:<sup>49</sup> **Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause,**<sup>50</sup> And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:<sup>51</sup> For they *be* thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron:<sup>52</sup> That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee.

All through the courses of punishment, they were told to pray just like Daniel is doing here. So, when the king of Babylon made a law that no one can pray to any God or man except the king, Daniel can disobey that law because it was in direct violation of what was written in God's law.

Another example is found in Daniel 3.

Daniel 3:3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.<sup>4</sup> Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,<sup>5</sup> *That* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:<sup>6</sup> And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery

furnace.<sup>7</sup> Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

This would have been a form of idolatry which the Hebrew people knew they were forbidden to participate in, even if it was the law of the land.

Exodus 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.<sup>4</sup> Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:<sup>5</sup> Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...

What they were being told to do was in direct violation of things written in Law of Moses. In Daniel 3, there were three Hebrews who refused to commit idolatry and here is their answer to the king when he learned of their refusal and threatened to put them in the fiery furnace.

Daniel 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter.<sup>17</sup> If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king.<sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Because God was very much intervening in the physical circumstances of life back in Israel's program, these men fully expected that God would deliver them, as per verse 17. But, according to verse 18, they also recognized that God may not deliver them; "But if not..." Either way, they were willing to suffer for righteousness sake.

The same principle would apply in this dispensation of grace. If some law of the land asks us to violate that which is written in the scripture to us; if it asks us to commit moral wrong; if it asks us to sin against God by either commission or omission; if it asks us to sin against our fellow man; if it asks us to violate our own conscience, then we can confidently disobey those laws and commands knowing that we are not rebelling against God by doing so.

But, just because we suffer for righteousness sake, does not mean that God will intervene in the circumstances of our suffering. He will, however, intervene by means of the doctrine, in our inner man to give us a peace that passeth understanding. He will intervene to strengthen our inner man so that we are able to endure the sufferings.

2 Timothy 2:8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:<sup>9</sup> Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.<sup>10</sup> **Therefore I endure** all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.<sup>11</sup> *It is* a faithful saying: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*:<sup>12</sup> **If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:**

Since Paul's suffering is connected to "his gospel," these are the sufferings of Christ. Paul endures all of these sufferings for the sake of the saints. If you are studying 2 Corinthians with us on Tuesdays this will "ring a bell" of remembrance with you, as the third way in which Paul disproved the accusations against him, by examining His goal in the decisions he made, and his ultimate goal with those he ministered to.

Paul's goal in changing his travel plans was not for his convenience or for his profit. Every decision, every change of plan, had the spiritual good of the Corinthians in mind, with the ultimate goal of rejoicing in them in the day of the Lord Jesus. In this passage, Paul states his goal in terms of the reward; that they will obtain salvation with eternal glory, with a view to reigning with Christ in the heavenly places.

Just as Paul would have this reward for his endurance of the SoC, we also have this promise. It may be that when we refuse evil and choose good that we will suffer in this world, but that temporary suffering will result in eternal glory.

Even with a reward in view, God does not just leave us to suffer without any help. There is doctrine which is designed to comfort us when we do suffer for righteousness. Our suffering provides an opportunity to put the power of grace on display, thereby edifying us in the process.

There is more that could be said about this, but I think you get the idea. So, let's move to the next form of suffering.

### **Sufferings of this Present Time**

We are already familiar with the sufferings of this present time (SoPT). These are the sufferings which come from living in a fallen world. These can include the fact that our bodies are subject to sickness and disease. The SoPT happen to saved people and lost people with no distinction.

As an example of what it means to live in a fallen world, after the fall of Adam, simply existing in the world became more difficult. When sin entered the world, it was no longer easy to find food to eat. It became real work to grow a crop. As was said back in Genesis, now we have our food by the sweat of our brow, and we will work to have it either by working a job to buy our food, or by the labor to produce it in the field. Even then, it will be difficult, for weeds, thorns and thistles will spring up. Insects will eat it, sometimes by the swarm. The sun will scorch it. Drought and flood can kill a crop or wash it away. The wind can whip it to nothing. Man's sin had an effect on the whole world.

Weather not only affects our food, but it can kill us as well. Too much sun and you will suffer. Too little sun and you will suffer in other ways. This world, after the fall, became hostile. You can freeze to death in the winter and suffer heat stroke in the summer. When we suffer in these ways, we are suffering the sufferings of this present time.

And speaking of weather, hurricanes and tornadoes are also part of living in a fallen world. Contrary to popular belief, God is not orchestrating tornadoes to punish America for her sins. Hurricanes are not a signal of God's wrath, it is a sign that this world has fallen away from God, and these are the consequences.

The next thing to notice is that not everyone suffers the SoPT to the same degree. For example, birth defects are part of living in a fallen world. Some children come into the world with physical problems. God is not punishing these children. I know that we talk about God "putting us together" and "choosing our parts," and things like that, but if you think that God is choosing this child to have cancer, or another

to come into the world without all his members, or another to have a hole in his heart, or any other problem which children encounter, you are wrong. These things are happening for reasons that are not always apparent to us, but they do happen in a fallen, imperfect, sin-cursed world. And God allows these things because this world is a product of our will, our choices, and our desires, and every time we see these tragedies, we should think, this is what happens when we live apart from God.

I should also say that God is not punishing the parents for their sins when they have a child with some kind of problem. While it is true that some conditions are brought on by the neglectful way a mother may abuse her own body, and by extension, also damage her unborn baby's body, God is not the one who is prescribing the damage to the child, and He is not using the child to exact his vengeance on the parents because of some sin. We are living in a dispensation of grace where God is not imputing men's sins unto them.

We could go on with many examples of the sufferings of this present time, but I think we have established the idea of what this kind of suffering is. But, what we do need to talk about is the "glory" aspect which can come from these sufferings.

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be that we suffer with *him***, that we may be also glorified together. <sup>18</sup> For I reckon that **the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared with the glory*** which shall be revealed in us.

The question that is debated is this: Is there a reward for the sufferings of this present time like there is for the sufferings of Christ? The answer is "yes" and "no." We will not receive the same reward for the sufferings of this present time as we can by the sufferings of Christ because the sufferings of this present time are not attacks by the policy of evil to silence us or to corrupt the truth. Obviously, there is no reward for a lost person for sufferings associated with living in a fallen world, but neither will the saints "reign with Christ" because they suffered from living in a fallen world.

But, as Paul wrote in Romans 8:18, if you are saved, the sufferings of this present time can result in a "glory" which shall be revealed in us. So, there is a difference

between the “glory” and the “reward.” The reward of the inheritance is one thing, and an eternal weight of glory is another. And what is the glory referring to?

In the case of Romans 8:18, the glory that can be produced in us by the sufferings of this present time is “Christ in you.” In other words, by learning to respond to the sufferings of this present time in a godly manner, by utilizing the doctrine, even in these sufferings, we can have the peace of God so that we are not overwhelmed by our circumstances. We can still have our inner man strengthened so that even when our outward man perishes, our inward man can be renewed day by day. We can still endure the sufferings of this present time to the glory of our heavenly Father. We can still have the power of grace working in us, producing the character of God’s Son in us. If you think about it, that is kind of a reward in and of itself, although it is not the same thing as “reigning with Christ.”

Therefore, on our chart, instead of reward, we have glory. We also have edify and comfort, because the doctrine still works to preserve our inner man no matter if our suffering is from living in a fallen world, or from the Adversary.

### **Suffering of Consequences**

The last suffering on our chart is the suffering of consequences. This is not the same thing as suffering for wrongdoing, but rather suffering due to carelessness, inattention, ignorance, or impulse. God is not causing these sufferings to teach us a lesson. Satan is not causing these to silence us. These are not part of living in a fallen world.

Sometimes we are doing these to ourselves, albeit, unintentionally. Other times, it is the carelessness, inattention, neglect, or ignorance of others which causes us to suffer. When you get rear-ended at a red light because the guy behind you was texting instead of watching his driving, you may have whiplash due to his negligence.

For these sufferings, we are supposed to learn to pay attention, learn how to do things so they do not result in suffering, and learn not to act on impulse. In other words, these are life lessons. There is no reward for these sufferings and there is

no glory for going through them. These sufferings are not transforming our inner man to be like Christ. Many people have corrected these things so they do not suffer them again, but they are not godly in the least. This is learning how to navigate living your life without causing yourself unnecessary and avoidable problems. The suffering of consequences are not conforming us to the image of God's Son and they are not how edification takes place.

We took the time to go through this lesson today to make the point that not every suffering is a suffering of Christ. I hope we can see that when we are talking about the attacks of the Adversary, our armor is protecting us against those three phases of the policy of evil. When Paul is talking about the sufferings of Christ, we know exactly what he is talking about, so we don't confuse the different kinds of sufferings.

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If you are reading / watching this session, did you know you can join us live on Zoom? We publish session notes and note-takers which allow you to interact with the lesson. You can request these resources or inquire on how to join us live on Sundays or Tuesdays by contacting us by phone at (888) 605-3202, or email [staff@mbiworldwide.org](mailto:staff@mbiworldwide.org).

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If you are not sure about where you will spend eternity, we care about you and we want you to have eternal life. Scan the QR code below to watch a short video that will explain how you can have salvation through Jesus Christ.



**The Most Important Decision**

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## **Closing Prayer**

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Heavenly Father,

It is my prayer that by the lesson today we have a clear understanding of the various kinds of sufferings, and what to expect with each of them. I pray we will identify them as they take place in our lives and we will respond appropriately to each of them in a godly manner. I love this assembly, and I am so grateful for the work that is being done in us. May we have Your attitude toward our sufferings and a response to them that manifests the life of Your Son being lived in us.  
Amen.