

The Indispensible Role of Suffering In the Life of the Believer

(Acts 14:8-20)

Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside of the city, thinking he was dead.

Acts 14:19 (NIV)

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11-2 (NIV)

I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death's door time after time. I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather. And that's not the half of it.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 (MES)

And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I die every day—I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:30-31 (NIV)

1. **Suffering is primary _____ that you are a faithful disciple of Jesus.**

Then [Jesus] said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. Luke 9:23-24 (NIV)

See also John 15:20; Luke 10:3; Matthew 24:9; 2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 14:22

2. **Suffering forces us away from _____ and teaches us the _____ of God.**

I 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. 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NIV)

See also 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Romans 5:3-5; Hebrews 5:8

3. **Suffering is the most powerful _____ to the truth of the gospel.**

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. Colossians 1:24 (NIV)

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. 2 Corinthians 4:10-12 (NIV)