

The Discipline of Suffering

by George Kulp

Suffering is a discipline that can bring about growth and maturity, and it can help us to develop a stronger faith and trust in God.

Scripture: John 17:19, Romans 5:3, Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Philippians 1:29, Hebrews 5:8, Hebrews 12:11, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Peter 4:13

Topics: "Suffering And Growth", "Trusting God"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the discipline of suffering and the mysteries of God's dealings with us, emphasizing the need to trust in God's love and purpose even when we question 'Why?'. He illustrates how suffering can lead to growth and transformation, just like how a plowed field yields a harvest or a block of marble becomes a masterpiece through the chisel. Kulp highlights the example of Jesus, who endured suffering and rejection for our sakes, teaching us obedience through His own trials and tribulations.

Transcript

John 17:19 -- "For their sakes."

Know a blue-eyed, curly-headed little fellow, about two years of age, who can talk quite glibly, and if you will tell him to do something he will at once say, "Why?" If you tell him you are going down to the city he will say, "Why?" If you propose to do something, he will say, "Why?" His mother and some other folks have gotten so accustomed to hearing that boy say Why, that when they see him at the window they naturally think, "Why?" He stands as an interrogation point, and that is the way we stand before many of the dealings of God with us. There are some things which we would most intensely like to know. There are some things we seek to understand and, standing before them, we ask, "Why?" And God leaves us to the teachings of the past, and to the blessed Holy Spirit, to draw the inferences, and learn the lesson, and get the discipline. And I say to you, there is a discipline in suffering.

When the ground is broken up by the plow, and the harrow is run over it, then the farmer goes along with a big heavy roller, and crushes it still further, and then the drag goes over it again. Suppose the ground should ask the question, Why? All it has to do is to wait and, bye and bye, the seed that is sown in that crushed, powdered ground will spring up. The rain will fall upon it; the sunshine will nourish it, and there will be waving fields of grain. And beyond that there will be the threshing, then the granary, then the flour mill, then the white bread on the table, then the men and women growing from the sustenance derived

from it. Wait awhile, and you can get the answer. Angelo went into a quarry, and saw an immense block of marble. He had it removed to his studio. He took the hammer, and the chisel, and began to shape it, here and there; he kept on working year after year, and after awhile, we find an answer to the *Why?* There was an angel in the stone, but it took the discipline of the hammer and the chisel to bring it out.

Some years ago I was at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and by the courtesy of a friend I was admitted to the Steel Works. I remember the process by which those cannon, and the armour for the battleships was turned off. First, the ore is taken out of the ground, and there it lays, a big pile on the ground. Then they take it over to the furnace, and it comes out pig-iron in fiery molten matter. Then they take it to the Bessemer and, after the fiery testings, it comes out in ingots of steel. Then the ingot is put under a former, and an immense hammer weighing tons is dropped on it and it is beaten into half its former size. But it is of finer fiber and is ready to become armour for battleships, and when placed there, we know *WHY* the testings and fiery trials. We get the answer by waiting.

So we stand before the mysteries of life and ask ourselves the question, *Why?* Listen there is a discipline in suffering. Please remember when you take your Bible and read it, the "Son of God was made perfect through sufferings." It declares here in the Word, that here, in this world, He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." Only as I stand before the Word of God can I understand the mysteries that come into our lives. Reason fails me; rationalism, explains nothing to the satisfaction of my soul. But I look back over the past, and I see the Second Person in the Godhead -- the Jehovah -- step out of the Council chambers of eternity and declare, "Lo, I come ... to do thy will, O God." As I see Him, I remember that the evangelical prophet had said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Love was the explanation of it all.

Wait a moment! Let us go back and look at a picture in the Old Testament, away back in the early ages of the race. I see an old man about to die. He was surrounded by idolaters, and his righteous soul was vexed by their idolatrous practices. He has one boy -- the seed of the promises. He calls his old and faithful servant to his side, and tells him to put his hand under his thigh, and makes him swear that he will not take a wife for his son from the daughters of the land, but that he will go back to his own country and take a wife for him from his own kindred. The servant promises him concerning the matter, and departs, with . camels and presents of gold and silver, for the far country. He trusts God and commits the end of his coming to Him. A girl comes out with her water pot on her head, and he makes known his errand. She invites him to her father's house. She has never seen the man, but God has sent that man. And while he was on the way, God was talking to that girl, hundreds of miles away, and preparing her for the message, so when the question was asked her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" she says, "I will go." And love was the explanation of it all.

Down in the city of Philadelphia a woman lay dying. Her husband was a drunkard. He seldom came home without being under the influence of liquor. As the wife lay there dying, the daughter stood by her side. The mother said, "Mary, never leave your father; be faithful to him. I do believe the day will come when God will save him." The mother died; the father kept on with his cups. When he would come home with the filth and mire on him, Mary was true to her promise to her mother. She would wash him and place him in bed; she loved and cared for him. He would say to her sometimes, when he had sober hours, "Mary, how can you do this?" And the answer invariably was, "Father, because I love you." For years she stayed and ministered to that drunken father, until at last he yielded to the ministrations of love and, led by the Holy Spirit to the God of his sainted wife, he was saved. But that daughter went down to death, her health wrecked by her devotion to her father. She was a most devoted Christian character, made "perfect

through sufferings." Love was the explanation.

Down in the South, there was a man in prison. He was guilty of using money belonging to the banks with which he was connected. He was arrested, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to the penitentiary. He had once owned millions of dollars, lived in palatial style, moved in the first circles of society, but now he is sent off to prison. But, hear it, there was one person who never forsook him, and that was the wife of his younger manhood. She went from one influential person to another, trying to secure for him' a pardon. While others turned against him, she stayed by. He was in prison, clad in the striped garments of a convict, but she never failed him. At last she secured the pardon, and he was a free man. Love explained it all.

So, I can give a reason for all the mysteries connected with the atonement. I can tell you why the Son of God left Heaven, I can tell you' why He suffered. It was because He loved you and me. He did it all for our sakes. Let us examine the life of Christ. I see Him stand in the carpenter shop; I see Him down at Nazareth, subject to His parents. I see Him pushing the plane, driving the nail; I see Him handling the saw. I see Him with hands that are callused and rough, and I want to know the explanation. He was the Son of God. The tallest archangels bowed in His presence. He left it all -- all the glory He had with the Father -- and came and worked in a carpenter shop. The explanation is: for our sakes. He loved us so. Thirty years . in subjection to His parents; thirty years down there in the carpenter shop, getting disciplined for future service. Thirty years to get ready for three years of service that ends on the Cross. Why? According to the Word it was for our sakes. I see Him as He goes to the Jordan; I see Him in the wilderness, forty days and forty nights in the wilderness to be tested and tried. The first Adam was placed in a garden, midst perfect surroundings, with but one law, that of perfect obedience. He sold out. The second Adam we find not in perfect surroundings, not in a garden, but in a wilderness, on a mountain top, the roaring of the lion, the growling of the wolf, the enemy to test and tempt; and He bore it all, and came forth more than conqueror, for our sakes, to be an example unto us. Spurgeon says the devil does not have to take us up to a high mountain and show us all the kingdoms of the world; all he has to do with us is to take us to our back doorsteps, and many will not withstand the temptation.

God help us to get the lesson here for us! Back of His purity, back of His integrity, back of His Christhood, was the discipline of suffering. A great many would serve God, if they could go to Heaven on flowery beds of ease with the applause of the multitude. God wants some folks who will reproduce Jesus Christ in the Twentieth, Century. God wants some folks who will hold still in the furnace. God wants some folks who will hold still in the lions' den, and exemplify His Son. We are to reproduce Him. I want you to get the thought that everything that Jesus met in His life we will meet in ours, and He is our example in order to teach us that we are to learn obedience through suffering.

Another thought right here: He was rejected of men. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. His own brethren did not believe on Him. One evening at George Street Mission there was a woman at the altar, and all at once she stopped praying and said, "Well, if I do get sanctified, no one will have any confidence in me." God bless you! We want the will of God whether anyone has confidence in us or not. That is not the question. The one supreme question is, "Will we go with God?"

For our sakes the Son of God came into the world. For our sakes He was rejected of men. For our sakes He withstood that awful testing in the wilderness. His own brethren did not believe on Him but for our sakes He kept right on. Tradition reads that Jesus was at the carpenter shop one day, and the sun was shining through the window. He stood there with His arms outstretched, and Mary His mother, looking

upon the wall beyond Him saw the shadow of the cross. And, shuddering at the thought, she quietly kept it in her heart. The shadow of the cross was on His pathway from the cradle to Calvary. Jesus says in the Word, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Everything that Jesus met you will meet, if you are going with Him. The carnal mind crucified Jesus, and it will crucify you. This world is no friend to Him, and it is none to you. He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." Thank God, we do not have to seek the friendship with the world. I like that hymn: "Friendship with Jesus, Fellowship Divine.

And I surely like that interpretation of the Psalmist which says (read the margin) "the friendship of the Lord is with them that fear him." Why? Because I am traveling the way that He took, and what He met, you and I are to meet. The world, the flesh, and the devil, the gods that the worldling meets and worships, are no friends to grace; and, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fellowship of the Spirit, and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, we are now more than conquerors.

Let us go a little farther and note the discipline of His everyday life. Now, mark you, Jesus as a Man needed the discipline that came through suffering. God's Word says "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." He was made "perfect through sufferings." It behooved Him to be made in all points like His brethren, that He might know how to succor us when we are tempted. He did not go outside the Word of God. He did not go outside the will of God. The enemy said, "Turn these stones into bread." And He said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He would not make bread to satisfy His own hunger. He could have done it. But when five thousand people were hungry, He made bread enough to satisfy them all. He never could have done it, if He had made bread for Himself. He knew the pangs of hunger; they came to Him on the mount where He was tested, and He knew how to sympathize with hungry folks. He would make no bread for Himself, but He would for others.

???of prayer. As a man He needed to pray, but He never forgot His mission in His own needs. He went up into that mountain to pray, and stayed there all night long. But out there on the Sea of Galilee, rowing mightily to get to land, were the disciples, and the winds were all contrary. Jesus had been up there in the mountain praying, getting ready for tomorrow's sorrow and battle, but He knew all about the little craft on the stormy sea, and the gloom around them.. And He came walking on the sea, stepped on the little bark, and said, "Peace be still." He needed to spend all night in prayer, but He never forgot the disciples in that storm. And in the midst of the storms that come to us, day by day, remember that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father praying for us. Again and again He has come to our little bark and said, "Peace be still." Do you know anything about it? I see Him again, in the hinder part of the ship, and He is asleep. As a man He needed to sleep. For your sake, down there sleeping. But while He is there getting His needed rest as a man, the prince of the power of the air is busy, and the waters of the sea are storm swept. The disciples are alarmed and cry out, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" To be sure He cares! And He rose up and rebuked the storm, and again said, "Peace be still," and there was a great calm. The Christ was indeed on board, and there never yet was a storm that He could not still. There never was a devil let loose that He could not defeat. Hallelujah! The discipline of suffering will be such a blessing to you that you will thank God for storm's. There is nothing like water for making a rainbow. We have been through some storms that we would almost be willing to go through again to see how our God can quiet storms. Why did He go through that storm on Galilee? For us, for our sakes, to teach us that all we have to do when storms come is just to let HIM manage them. He has never failed. He has dried our tears, filled our mouths with laughter, and spread a table for us in the presence of our enemies. I am glad that He taught us there is a

discipline in suffering. I am glad that He went through it for us, for our sakes. Love brought Him down our poor souls to redeem. Do you know what will take us through? Love for Him.

Another thought here. In the garden He sweat great drops of blood. I often think of Him going to the garden with Peter, James and John. They went part of the way, and then sat down, and were soon asleep. But He went a stone's throw farther than all the rest. There all alone I see Him before the Father. I see the cup pressed to His lips. I see Him drink the very dregs, and I hear Him say, "All right, Father, even as thou wilt." He is suffering now in agony of soul, and HE did it all for us, for our sakes.

"Yes, Father, I separated myself, I left the courts of Heaven, I left the worship of the angels, I left the music of the choirs of the skies, I left the atmosphere of the city, and came down here, taking on myself their nature, for their sakes. Father, the birds we made have nests, and the foxes have holes, but I have nothing but love, Love." He goes down into the garden, and bears your burden and mine. He does it for us. Say, was that all? No; the angels came and ministered unto Him.

When did the angels come before? Back there on the mountain, amid the growling of the beasts, after He had resisted the enemy, the angels came. When did they come to Him in the garden? After He had sweat great drops of blood. When will they come to us? When we have stood, when we have had the discipline of suffering. Oh, just to have Him come when other folks leave you, when people sneer, when the iron is driven into your soul, when your heart is heavy, When your cheeks are wet with tears, when the darkness settles down upon you -- to have Him come and minister unto you.

He will come. Angels ministered to Him, but He will come Himself and minister unto you. Do you know, my beloved ones, what it means to have Him. come when other folks have left, to have Him whisper to you that you are not alone and never will be, for He has come to stay. Shall we go up to a hill lone and gray, in a land far away, and look on the three crosses? You and I are interested in that middle cross. You remember that when He was twelve years old that He said to His mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

His whole life was a journey to the cross. I see Him struggling up that hill beneath a cross. I see Him nailed thereon. I hear Him cry, "It is finished." The race is run. The battles are fought. He bows His head and gives up the ghost. We go down to His tomb, but the angels say, "He is not here: for he is risen. Hallelujah! There are many folks who do not understand us, but you can afford to be misunderstood. God will vindicate you. Some folks say that you will not be vindicated in this life.

Well, you and I know of one man God did vindicate. There was Job. He lost everything but His trust in God. His three friends came to him and said, "Job, if you had not done something you would never have been in this plight. All this has come on you because you are a sinner. But Job held on, took another step out in the dark, and shouted so loud and long that it still reverberates along the centuries, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." But after awhile God said to those three wise men, "You did not talk of me as my friend Job did. Now you had better get him to pray for you, that your sins may be forgiven." That was vindication. And more than that, Job had twice as much religion as he had before, and twice as many cattle. Do you want twice as much as you had before? Are you willing to go the way that Job did to get it? Are you willing to be ostracized, have betrayal, rejection?

Some folks would say because Job was sick that he was backslidden. But Job knew better, and, best of all, God knew. We learn obedience by the things we suffer. What return have you made? How do you manifest your love? I like that hymn: "I gave my life for thee, My precious blood I shed, That thou might'st ransomed be, And quickened from the dead. I gave my life for thee, What hast thou given for Me?"

What has your love led you to do? Has it led you to sacrifice for God? Do you wonder that you have been called upon to suffer? It is discipline that is necessary for you. You will get through it, bye and bye; God will not let you there one moment longer than it takes Him to see Himself in you. Some one is watching you, and it may be that for their sakes you are permitted to be tested. Do you want Bible for that? "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." We are surrounded by an innumerable company of witnesses, who are watching us. Remember, that if you suffer with Him, you shall reign with Him also.

Down in a hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, there stood an old man and his wife. On a cot lies their only son, dying a soldier's death. When that boy came into their lives they said, "Now we have a boy of our own." And as he grew in years they would say, "He will be the prop of our old age," and the mother would stoop down and kiss him. Then the war came. He enlisted, was wounded in action, and came down to death's door. They wired for the parents, and when they came they saw he was soon to pass over. As they stood there, the old father said, "Mother, take my hand and say it with me, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'" The mother accompanied him that far, and her voice quivered and stopped. The old man grasped the hand a little tighter, and said, "Come, mother, say it with me." She took another look at the boy and said, "Father, I will. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'" Grace triumphed. Oh, there is a discipline in suffering, but glory to the Name of Christ; He will call us through no darker rooms than He went through before.

A boy was carrying a lot of boxes, and someone thought he had too large a load, and said to him, "Is not that load too heavy for a boy like you?" But the little fellow said, "My Father knows how much I can carry." He knows how much you can carry, and He will take the heaviest end of it.

If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.

"Bye and bye when the morning comes,

When all the saints of God are gathered home,

We will tell the story how we overcome,

And we'll understand it better bye and bye."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-kulp/the-discipline-of-suffering/>

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