

Why Suffering? (Go to Meeting)

Steve Durham—November 5, 2021

Hello, everyone! I wanted to say, especially, after talking to Ken Glore and he wanted to, as well as myself—and I'm sure Hiedi and other people—want to say thank you very much for the cards, e-mails, condolences, and especially your prayers. They were heartfelt and I can still feel the comfort and the encouragement from you and the prayers that go up to the Throne of God. ***He sits on a throne of comfort and mercy!***

We all certainly experienced that. Ken lost his wife Peggy Oct. 5th, my wife Terry died on the 21st and John, Hiedi's husband also.

In CBCG alone, not counting all the other Churches of God, wherever they may be, we started a prayer list in 2019 in reference to the suffering hitting close to home for me. When something happens to you it much more raw and sensitive. You read the Scriptures and they mean a lot, and more than what they did before.

I was looking at the prayer list and we have sent out a total of 1,150 requests for prayer since March of 2019 to date. That's about 37 a month. Those represent a lot of suffering, and it's just amazing the:

- accidents
- dog fights
- lost jobs
- financial issues
- difficulties in life

Not to mention health issues! A lot of them are health issues because we're getting older. ***It represents a lot of suffering!***

One other item I noticed when adding it up. I won't read it all, but there were 44 deaths out of the 1,150 for one reason or another. I'm not claiming that they're all Covid or anything like that. I'm just saying that since March 2019, 44 deaths! That may not seem like a lot, but it's a pretty good number.

The subject of suffering not only affects that individual—many of the suffered before they died—and it ripples out, the 'ripple affect.' You have the immediate family, extended family and friends in the Church who are praying. All around the world each one of those does that. You can see the effect that suffering has on the Church of God.

The world is something else. They don't have the hope that we have. It's just a fact that we understand the resurrection and what happens, and we have a hope, and we understand it pretty well.

But there re a lot of things we don't understand, and I'm going to talk about a couple of those that I think we don't have a real good handle on. It might be impossible to do, knowing God's mind exactly when you say, 'Thy will be done'!

We go to God and pray for something, we have something specific on our mind: 'heal my wife' and you pray earnestly. I'm thinking that's what I'm asking God to do. But then I say, 'Your will be done.' I understand, and I trust in God. But it became pretty evident as we went on that maybe what I'm asking isn't what God's wants. It's not His answer.

So, you have the entire world praying for this, and we should do that! That's what we want; we want that loved one to stay with us. But what does God want?

Should we say first, instead of praying for the person, pray:

Thy will be done in all matters. Whatever Your Sovereign will is, God, I want to be on board with that. I want to know what that is. And whatever that is I pray that be done. I yield to you, I obey you, I submit to whatever that will is, because You are a loving God! You know more than I do, obviously, of what should be done. Because You're the Workman and we're the workmanship. You're the Potter.

You find the clay, put the clay together, you develop it in a certain way, each one is different and you put it on the wheel and turn it and mix it with the right water—the Holy Spirit—in there. You get that clay just right, getting the bubbles out of it and spin it, mold it and design it into a beautiful vase.

Then you refine it, paint it and decorate it. Each one is different, but they're done perfectly. The shape is perfect, the painting is perfect, and that takes a while to do that.

Then it is glazed and the final firing that makes that pottery, that vase, complete. It's done! It's finished!

You wouldn't keep working on it once you have it finished, would you? That's what God is trying to do, finish that and He's working on it so that once it's done it goes on the shelf. ***It has function, beauty and a purpose!***

When the grain is finished in the field, you don't leave it out in the field. You harvest it and put it in storage waiting to be used.

God knows that, and I could go on and on why I believe—in retrospect—the last ten months pointed to that. There are so many things that happened.

I have had a different understanding, or a difference experience of asking God's will in matters. Also some things about prayer and anointing and some other things. It's been quite a lesson for me.

The subject of suffering has been on my mind, and the question is:

- Why suffering?
- What is its purpose for us in the Church today?
- What is its purpose? *It has to have a purpose!*

I think this—and it's true—that when we sin we cause an effect. We have to pay the penalty, so we suffer. But that's our own doing.

- What about suffering when you haven't sinned?
- Is that possible?
- Can you suffer without sin?
- Is it possible in the subject of suffering, to suffer without sin?

We're going to look at that. We're going to look at Christ's life, and He certainly was without sin! Did He suffer? *Absolutely!* Why?

That was something also that came to mind and I heard a couple of sermons that were excellent in addition to the study that I doing. They're all Scriptures and they're all there in the Bible. Some ideas came out that really hit me; so, I'm going to share some of that with you.

I'd like to focus on that today. Not the sin part and suffering for whatever we do when we make mistakes and such. I'm talking about:

- What is the purpose that God has in Christian's life for suffering?
- What is that purpose?

On our journey—Terry's and mine—through life there was some suffering. I had a lot of suffering, and Terry vicariously went through a lot of it.

What was that purpose? *Ultimately to become like Christ! To become perfect! The perfection of the saints!*

So, there's a very important purpose for suffering, and I just told you what it is. It helps us to

make sense of the pain and suffering around us. We see it everywhere, and it seems like it's beginning to multiply. Things are starting to 'gear up' and multiply.

Christ told His disciples in the Olivet Prophecy (Matt. 24), when they asked Him what was the sign of His coming and completion of the age. Jesus didn't answer them, He said, '**Be on guard!**'

Suffering can knock you off guard. When you have a punch in the gut it knocks the wind out of you. He says, 'Be on guard so that no one deceives you.'

1-Peter 5:8^[transcriber's correction]: "Be sober! Be vigilant! For your adversary *the* devil..."

That is not of God, and if its not of God what is it? *A tool that Satan uses on the human race to cause us anguish, pain and suffering!* God uses it for a good thing.

"...is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour. **Whom resist, steadfast in the faith...** [that's what we have to do] ...knowing *that* the same afflictions... [sufferings] ...**are being fulfilled among your brethren** who *are in the world*" (vs 8-9)—*and that's in the Church all around the world, all of you!*

You are suffering and we are family and we are a part of that. It affects each and every one, the ripples go out.

Matthew 24:7^[transcriber's correction]: "...and there shall be famines and **pestilences** and earthquakes in *different* places"

In the history of man ***there has never been a time***—there have been earthquakes, pestilences, false prophets, famine and all of that on the earth—***when all the events picture and come to a close and culmination of a one-world ruling government and a one-world religion!*** It's all coming together.

- ***Watch!***
- ***Be vigilant!***
- ***Be careful!***
- ***Be sober!***
- ***Be diligent!***

Covid is certainly a pestilence! If anything is, Covid is! I don't think it's going away for a while. We've had it for a couple of years now, so we have to gear ourselves up! Get our think correct and change our paradigm. We have to get into this pan-confinement Christ is talking about.

I may be completely wrong, I stand corrected if I am, but it's my thinking that:

Verse 8: “Now, all these *things are the beginning of sorrows.*”

The Greek word for *sorrow* is ‘odin’ and it references the pain of childbirth—birth pangs, anguish, dire calamities—preceding the advent or the coming of Jesus Christ.

So, you have the beginning, and then you have all of this in between and then you have Christ’s coming. Is that picking up? *I don’t know, you answer that question!* Three are certain things to look for, but for the “...beginning of sorrows” there is no marker other than pestilence and some other things.

Christ says that it’s going to get worse. But He says, ‘Do not worry! Do not fear!’ Fear knocks us off the foundation. Satan gets a handle on it:

- worry
- fear
- doubt

You get hit with doubt when you lose your mate!

Immediately, that first day... I got a handle on it, I reeled I in, I got on my knees and prayed:

Look, I see what’s happening here, don’t let me do that!

So, we have to be cautious, be careful, wise, sober and vigilant, especially with this Covid thing coming at us.

Guess what, it’s here; it’s knocking on the door! It’s here and it’s not going away! It’s not a respecter of persons. Just because you’re in the Church and you’ve been in the Church for 50 years—whatever—you’re not exempt! There are some things you can do. God protects us!

Let’s look at this. We know Psa. 91 and all the Scriptures—they are true and real, and God does protect us and cares for us—but there are some things we are supposed to do when you’re asking for healing:

When you on the roof and you’re working and the ladder falls, and you say, ‘God, I need to jump off the roof, please protect me.’ You jump and you break your leg! Did God protect? or Did He just turn His back?

Think about when Christ was tempted and Satan took him to the pinnacle and said:

Throw Yourself off, the angels will catch You. God is not going to let you dash your foot against a rock.

What did Christ say to Satan?

Do not tempt God! You’re tempting God, and that’s not His plan, not how He thinks, don’t do that!

- be careful
- be sober
- be wise
- be cautious

when you’re on the roof! Same thing with Covid! Be careful!

Let’s just talk about some of these things; I hope you don’t get upset with me, but I’ve been thinking about it.

There are *quarantine laws in the Old Testament*, and they’re there for a reason. They are a principle, a pattern for us to look at and do to show:

- love to our fellow man
- love to the camp of Israel
- love to spiritual Israel
- love to those we interact with

So, if you’re going to Church services and you don’t feel well, your temperature is a little high, maybe you have a little cough, a headache or your stomach is not settled... Wouldn’t it be wise and loving—and the thing to do out of love—to just skip that week?

- I think it would be
- I think that would be a wise thing to do
- I think God would bless you for that

The alternative of that is you want to go and visit, and somebody catches it and their immune system isn’t so good.

- What have you done?
- What is the result of that?

So, you have to be careful and love one another!

I’m not getting on anybody, I’m just making an observation that maybe we need to reel in some of the cavalier ways that we’ve done in the past and start to be careful. Just think of one another and care for one another.

Navigate around these difficult times, recreate our thinking. Get rid of the past associations and the way we thought. Don’t be afraid. Put God first! Always put Him first! He knows, trust in Him! That’s what He’s wanting us to do is trust in Him.

I guarantee you that I’ve come to trust in Him a lot more. I’ve watched Him work in this, I’ve watched His hand in it. Instead of running me off, it’s drawn me closer, which suffering will do!

You either get mad at God and get angry, or you draw close to Him, seek Him, look for Him because you need Him! If you don’t suffer, you

don't necessarily think you need Him. If you're not hungry. But if you're starving then you might need Him.

We have to start facing the days that are coming and maybe re-engineer our thinking and sit down and think about Covid and other things that are coming. It's a dark cloud that's over the world and it's knocking on the door.

Put into practice the responsibility of loving one another and minimize the suffering; maximize the love for our neighbor and our family. I'm sorry, but that's what I've come out of this with.

Two years ago I used to be a little cavalier in my attitude, and it's changed quite a bit! Review and put into practice the principle that we find in Deut. 23 and Lev. 13. Read those and think about them.

2-Peter 3:11: "Since all these things are going to be destroyed, what kind of *persons* ought you to be in Holy conduct and Godliness?"

Verse 14: "For this reason, beloved, since you are anticipating these things, be diligent, so that you may be found by Him in peace... [Christ gives us that peace] ...spotless and blameless." *Become you, therefore, perfect! The righteousness of Christ!*

Part of being diligent is not letting suffering knock us off our foundation. Don't get upset at the loss, mad and angry at God. Don't get into the doldrums and a pity-party, or lose the direction that you have been going and go backward. Stay on the course that you started and keep navigating toward keeping the keel and sails into the wind. God is the strength and the power behind that through the Holy Spirit! Tap into that and don't let Satan get his attack on you, the wiles of him.

Sorrow and suffering through the death of a loved one makes us rethink our journey. What my re-thinking was that ***I need to kick it into gear more!*** We were on the right path, I just need to keep going down that path:

- stronger
- more dedicated
- trust in God
- loving God
- thanking Him for His answers

When we ask Him for healing, guess what? We think He didn't answer us!

In my case Terry died! Well, my thought was that He didn't answer, didn't hear! ***Yes, He did!*** The timing was different. She will be healed in a spirit body! The old body, the flesh body, is no good anymore. It's gone and done away with; dust to dust, ashes to ashes.

But that spirit goes back to God waiting to be put into a spirit body, which is a healed body: *no pain, sorrow, tears ever again!* WOW! Tall about healing! Did God answer that prayer? *Absolutely, 100%!*

Again, re-thinking the will of God! Immediately, we think we want something and we want it a certain way, and subliminally we're trying to make God do something! We should ask:

Whatever it is ***You want, God,*** help me! I don't know what it is, help me!

Then keep your eyes opened! Ask Him what you can do physically while He's making His decision, or being worked out.

- What can I do?
- Can I get the beam out of my ear?
- What do I need to do?

So, sorrow and suffering brings us closer to God! It encourages us to seek God while He may be found! There's going to come a time when He's not.

This Scripture was given at the funeral of Terry, and I appreciate it. I think it's a good one; it addresses the times of suffering:

Ecclesiastes 7:1: "**A good name is better than precious ointment...** [Terry certainly had a good name. If you didn't know her, you sorely missed a very unusual person] ...**and the day of death than the day of one's birth.** *It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting... [Why?] ...for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart"* (vs 1-2).

In other words, you're going to think! I'm alive! How much time do I have? That could be me; I better get going here! It's going to be a 'kick in the pants,' an encouragement to get going, to seek God and keep going straight! ***Or if you haven't been going straight, to get going straight!***

Verse 3: "Sorrow *is* better than laughter..."

These are difficult Scriptures, especially when you're deep in the sorrow of the loss of a loved one.

"...for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (v 3). *Seems to be an oxymoron, humanly!*

God looks at suffering differently than we do. It's a positive, a joy, fulfilling the purpose that He has for us, in creating and developing that Holy righteous character through suffering trials and difficulties. It's a positive thing!

Paul was able to understand that, and he said that. I really didn't have a whole lot of

understanding... It's grown a little bit, but it stopped at one point when I couldn't understand why Paul would say that. I knew it technically and academically, but never got it emotionally.

Verse 4: "The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools *is* in the house of pleasure."

Suffering helps us to become perfect! ***The perfection of the saints!***

- How do we do that?
- How is that done?
- How does God do that in us?

We achieve this perfection through suffering, as we will see in some Scriptures. Christ tells us in the Beatitudes:

Matthew 5:10: Blessed *are* those who have been **persecuted for the sake of righteousness**, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." *That's coming at you because you are in Christ!*

Verse 48: "Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect."

I always thought—and it is true—that that happens at that the resurrection. Well, there are some Scriptures that are really interesting, and we will see that perfection in this life, in this flesh, can happen! Ultimately, perfection is at the resurrection. Actually, God sees it at death, because you've made it.

We're going encounter the word *perfect* through this message. The Greek meaning opens up understanding to these Scriptures as we go along!

The Greek work for *perfect* is 'teleos'—*brought to its end, finished, completeness, that which is perfect, the consummate human integrity and virtue*—Christ is the only One Who has come to that point—*a full grown adult of full age and mature.*

Suffering is part and parcel of our calling; it's one of the reasons why we were called, *to suffer!* It's no 'rose garden'; no picnic.' We're called to suffer in Christ, just as He did. It's one of the reasons we are called to *become perfect like Christ!* Christ was without sin, yet, He suffered *for us!*

1-Peter 2:21: "For to this you were called because **Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example**, that you should follow in His footsteps"—*in suffering!*

Verse 22: Who committed no sin... [no reason for suffering] ...neither was guile found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; *when suffering*, He threatened not, but committed *Himself* to Him Who judges

righteously" (vs 22-23).

- to the Father
- He trusted in the Father
- He did the will of the Father
- He did nothing of His own
- He did everything the Father told Him
- He put His entire trust in the Father

Part and parcel with suffering! Isa. 53 talks about the suffering of Christ.

Our goal is perfection and to be like Christ! To suffer as Christ did!

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers... [Why?] ...**for the perfecting**... [the 'teleos,' the finishing, completing, ending] ...**of the saints**, for *the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ*" (vs 11-12).

The building up, the finishing, putting the glaze on, firing it and putting that vase on a shelf, whatever the use of it is. What purpose you have for it, it's finished, it's done! ***God has a purpose for us!***

Each one is individually different. He has a timing; He knows exactly what you need to suffer in, what trials you need to go through, to take the edges off, to fashion that piece of pottery. Christ knows when to fire it, and nobody is going to tell Him not to if that's His decision. That is the most important thing on His agenda!

- to bring many sons to glory in His Family
- to bring about the creation of Holy righteous character in each one whom He has called

Why be perfect? *It's our goal!* Brought to an end to finished. Terry was finished and brought to an end. I'll just tell you that the last day before they put the vent in that night, actually it was the second night. The night before we were able to have a two hour talk and she was coherent and had a really good discussion.

But the night before that, she said, 'Where is everybody?' It was about 11 o'clock, I told her I couldn't come in. 'Where are you?' *Nobody is here, everybody left me! There's no one here, I'm all alone! I'm going to die! I'm all alone!* She hung up.

When she said that I thought Christ said, 'Father, why have You forsaken Me. Why have You left Me?' I'm all alone.'

See how she drew together in that understanding, that empathy, that sympathy. Christ understood when she said that. That was the firing, the finishing of the pottery. I think about those

things, and I see the end of that journey, and it's a positive thing.

Verse 13: "Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man..."—'teleos'—*perfect, finished, complete*. I thought that happened at the resurrection.

"...unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ" (v 13).

Why do we suffer? *To become perfect, or perfected, completed, finished, ended!* Christ also said that ***it is finished***—same word, 'teleos.' He was complete, finished in that part of His journey. He was brought to an end (John 19:30).

One last thing I prayed before Terry died, when the monitor went to zero, I asked God to receive her spirit. We have that hope! We know that that spirit goes to God. There no use for the body anymore. It doesn't matter about the physical body. I don't think that God actually has to find all the parts to put it back together, because He's not going to worry about that. He has a spiritual body for her.

The Greek 'teleos' is to finish; the same base or root word in John that Christ said. God has intended for us—the Christians that He has called, those in His Family, the elect—to be perfected in Christ:

- to develop Holy righteous character
- to become sons and daughters of God eternally in His Family forever

That's the goal! We do that by being perfected through suffering! We are in this together with one another in Christ.

Terry had to finally finish that race, and she finished her final trial with 'flying colors.' I was there, but she had to do it on her own. All of you were there, too, in your prayers.

Philippians 3:10: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection... [and I would say, 'the hope'] ...**and the fellowship of His sufferings**... [being with Him through suffering; it is finished] ...being conformed to His death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead; not as though I have already received..." (vs 10-12). *Paul said, 'I've got some things I need to work on.'*

"...or have already been perfected... [I haven't; not yet] ...but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained; but **this one thing I do—forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are ahead**" (vs

12-13). *That's what we have to do!*

Verse 14: "I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. So then, **let as many as be perfect**... [complete, finished] ...**be of this mind**. And if *in* anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to you" (vs 13-15).

- What did Paul mean by that?
- Can we be perfected in this physical life?

To some degree, we can; in some areas!

Genesis 22:12: "And He [the Lord God] said [to Abraham], 'Do not lay your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him, **for now I know that you fear God**, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'"

- How did God know that?
- Was Abraham's character being set in that area?
- Was he being perfected in that area?

Just a thought! It's possible to become perfect in some things in this life, as we strive to follow Christ! We know that the ultimate perfection comes at our death and resurrection.

Hebrews 11:39: "But these all, *though* they had received a good report through faith, did not obtain the promise."

All those who went before, just like Terry, John, Peggy, Dolores, etc., etc., have not obtained the promise. It hasn't happened, yet.

Colossians 4:12: "Epaphras, a servant of Christ who *is* from among you, salutes you. He is always striving for you in *his* prayers, **that you may stand perfect and complete**... ['teleos': ended, finished, stand—present tense] ...**in all the will of God**."

Paul is saying that it's possible in this life to stand perfect; it would seem that he does.

Colossians 1:27^[transcriber's correction]: "To whom God did will to make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Whom we preach, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, **so that we may present every man perfect**... [complete, finished] ...**in Christ Jesus**" (vs 27-28).

Eph. 4—what is the purpose of the teachers and preachers? *To complete, to finish, to end in Christ!*

1-Corinthians 2:6: "Now we speak wisdom among the *spiritually* mature... ['teleos'—spiritually finished, spiritually ended; complete, perfect]

...however, *it is* not *the* wisdom of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nothing.”

Suffering also helps us to learn obedience. If I have gotten this wrong, please understand I understand what our ultimate perfection is.

As we overcome things, we should have it done and not let it pop up again. We should move on to the next thing, and on and on. In that sense we have become completed or perfect. That’s what the Scriptures say and it indicates that it is current in that small area of character development.

We’re also suffering to help us learn obedience, as Christ did.

Hebrews 5:8: “Although He was a Son, *yet, He learned obedience from the things that He suffered.*”

Suffering draws us to God and makes us humble and contrite. We want to do what He wants us to do because we love Him. We are learning obedience through the things that we suffer, just as Christ did. Just as Christ was becoming perfect, we are to become perfect.

Verse 9: “And having been perfected, He became *the* Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him,”

Why did Christ have to learn obedience. Look at John 1:1; **He was God!** But the whole point before the foundation of the world was that Christ would come to the earth as the Messiah, God in the flesh. He had some things to learn. He wanted to learn what it was like to overcome the temptations and the sin and not give into it. But He also wanted to have empathy as High Priest to know what our sufferings are all about.

So, He became a man and learned obedience to overcome sin! That’s how—through the Holy Spirit and obedience to God—you overcome sin. You can’t do it on your own. God’s Holy Spirit does it. He had to stay obedient during these sufferings and submit to the will of God.

There are many Scriptures that talk about that He did not do anything on His own, He did the will of the Father; He came to do the will of God! Submit to that and it’s the same thing we have to do.

He became a more understanding High Priest through suffering and overcoming sin. Now He sits at the right hand of God, the Holy of Holies is open and He’s the High Priest, the Intercessor, the Mediator and Advocate. Why? *Because He understands!* He went through for us what we go through.

He knows how difficult it is for human

beings to stay obedient and to overcome. The carnal nature is strong in us. He learned, as a human, how difficult it is to obey. As He did, He became a perfect High Priest and perfect in all things.

Just as Christ learned that, we have to learn that—through suffering—to be obedient to God, as well. We learn to be perfect just as Christ did. We have to suffer together with Him so that we may be glorified with Him. We have to.

Romans 8:18: “For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God” (vs 18-19).

There’s going to be a restitution of all things. I believe that suffering, pain, sorrow, tears are gone. What we have today in this world, Satan’s world, won’t be!

Verse 32: “He Who did not spare even His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not also grant us all things together with Him?”

Look what we have to look forward to! That’s our hope and what we have waiting for us.

Verse 33: “Who shall bring an accusation against *the* elect of God?... [they can do it, but it won’t stick] ...God *is the One* Who justifies.”

I have called on this Scripture many times and put it in God’s hands, and then go on do my thing, and God justifies it. It’s amazing how this Scriptures comes to life in our lives.

Verse 34: “Who *is* the one that condemns? *It is* Christ Who died, but rather, Who is raised again, Who is even *now* at *the* right hand of God, *and* Who is also making intercession for us.”

He understands what we’re going through, through the suffering!

Verse 35: “What shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?... [add pestilence] ...Accordingly, it is written, ‘For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are reckoned as sheep for *the* slaughter.’ **But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us**” (vs 35-37). *We win!*

Verse 38: “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**” (vs 38-39).

- How exciting that is!
- How wonderful that is!

Remember that God is our Sovereign God! He is in charge! Put it in His hands and trust Him! He takes care of it and loves you, all of us now and all that have gone before. This is His special project and very important to Him. He looks at the suffering, and He knows. It didn't catch Him by surprise. He knew exactly what was going on for those ten months. He knew and orchestrated everything so exact and profoundly that there's no way I can say it didn't happen and it was coincidence.

There were so many things that led up to that, that God was getting her ready, and me ready.

It's exciting to know the hope of the resurrection, the future. The fact that she's made it in the analogy of the potter, that's she's glazed and fired, and the job that God has for her to do. We all have in preparation for us, an office, that God is preparing us to fit into. We each fit that individually.

The trials that we go through are individual, and God knows them. They are there for a reason. The suffering that you go through are your suffering, but we as a fellowship are part of that. We feel, we pray, we intercede on your behalf and comfort one another. We bear one another's burdens and have each other's back. We're family and we're all in this together.

The suffering affects everyone! But they are your personal sufferings. They're for your design and development, your Holy righteous character development. To become who you are in the Family of God. Who you will be and who you are.

Those are my thoughts on the suffering that personally been sensitive to in the last few weeks. It's been amazing! I've learned a lot. I'm going to miss Terry with my whole heart; there's no way physically that I can explain that to you. But those of you who have gone through it...

I thought I was the only one, and I looked around and said, 'Wait a minute, you're very selfish here, look at all the other people who have lost a loved one. Yet, you think you're the only one!'

So, that kind of helped me get out of the doldrums and the pity-party. This, too, will pass and we will go on. We will never forget them. We love them and there's a hole in our heart that never will be replaced.

But my enthusiasm and comfort is to know that path and journey continues for me and I will meet them at the end and we'll be all together: Terry, her mom and dad, all those who have gone

before.

We're all in this together, and the suffering is for the perfection of the saints. God has us and knows what we go through. He's behind us and helping us. He's leading us along the way. He doesn't want any to perish.

Remember that God is our sovereign God! He's in charge! Put in His hands and trust Him!

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Peter 5:8-9
- 2) Matthew 24:7-8
- 3) 2 Peter 3:11, 14
- 4) Ecclesiastes 7:1-4
- 5) Matthew 5:10, 48
- 6) 1 Peter 2:21-23
- 7) Ephesians 4:11-13
- 8) Philippians 3:10-15
- 9) Genesis 22:12
- 10) Hebrews 11:39
- 11) Colossians 4:12
- 12) Colossians 1:27-28
- 13) 1 Corinthians 2:6
- 14) Hebrews 5:8-9
- 15) Romans 8:18-19, 32-39

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Psalm 91
- Deuteronomy 23
- Leviticus 13
- Isaiah 53
- John 19:30; 1:1

SD:bo
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