



# How To Suffer Well

## 1 Peter 4:12-13

### 1. Expect Suffering (verse 12).

### 2. Embrace Suffering (verse 13).

Let's begin this morning by considering a letter written by Adoniram Judson, a missionary to Burma. He wrote it to the John Hasseltine, requesting the hand of his daughter, Nancy (who was called Ann), in marriage. To fully appreciate the letter, you need to know that Adoniram Judson had his heart set on bringing the gospel to the far east. In his day, it meant sailing off, never to return home again. He was looking for a wife to join him in ministry to a pagan land. Judson wrote, ....

I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death; Can you consent to all this, for the sake of Him who left His heavenly home and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with a crown of righteousness, brightened by the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair? [\[1\]](#)

When John Hasseltine received this letter, he discussed it with his daughter, and left the decision up to her. After much prayer and contemplation, Ann decided that she was willing to marry Adoniram Judson. Ann wrote the following to a friend discussing her decision, ...

I feel willing, and expect, if nothing in providence prevents, to spend my days in this world in heathen lands. ... I have come to the determination to give up all my comforts and enjoyments here, sacrifice my affection to relatives and friends, and go where God, in his providence, shall see fit to place me. [\[2\]](#)

Now, I want you to think about her life on the mission field. How would she respond to being away from her family? How would she respond to the loneliness of minimal Christian fellowship? How would she respond to the difficult living circumstances, such as the intense heat, curious natives, and poor sanitation? How would she respond to the dangers? How would she respond to the persecution that would arise? Certainly, these things would be difficult for her, but the letter that Adoniram Judson wrote and the anticipation of suffering would have helped to pave the way for her sufferings.

To be sure, she suffered greatly. The Judsons were on the mission field for two years before they heard anything from home, such was the slowness of the postal system in those days. When they finally arrived in Rangoon, they faced the 108-degree heat with cholera, malaria, dysentery, and a host of other physical difficulties. All three of her children died before they were three years old. After eight years of missionary work, Ann was so sick, that she sailed for home in an effort to be made well. She returned 2½ years later. Rangoon was a difficult place to live. There were constant robberies and murders that were committed.

When war broke out between England and Burma, all westerners were considered to be spies. So, Adoniram was imprisoned. Here is how John Piper described the situation:

Ann was pregnant, but walked the two miles daily to the palace to plead that Judson was not a spy and that they should have mercy. She got some relief for him so that he could come out into a court yard. But still the prisoners got vermin in their hair amid the rotting food, and had to be shaved bald. Almost a year later they were suddenly moved to a more distant village prison, gaunt, with hollow eyes, dressed in rags crippled from the torture. There the mosquitoes from the rice paddies almost drove them mad on their bloody feet. The daughter, Maria, had been born by now and Ann was almost as sick and thin as Adoniram, but still pursued him with her baby to take care of him as she could. Her milk dried up, and the jailer had mercy on them and actually let Judson take the baby each evening into the village and beg for women to nurse his baby. [\[3\]](#)

Eventually, Adoniram was released from prison. But, the toll it took on Ann was too much. Within a year, both Maria and Ann died. Nearly everything that Adoniram had mentioned to Ann's father had come true. I'm sure that in the midst of their suffering, both Adoniram and Ann reflected back upon the calling of God upon their lives to suffer for the sake of His name. And this helped to prepare them to suffer well.

In our text this morning, the apostle Peter is trying to help those scattered believers in Asia Minor to deal with the sufferings that is coming upon them. He is trying to teach them how to suffer well. Here's what Peter said, ...

1 Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

How can you and I suffer well? My first point is found in verse 12, ...

1. Expect Suffering (verse 12).

Look there at what Peter said in verse 12, "Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, **as though some strange thing were happening** to you." In other words, don't be surprised when you encounter various trials. Rather, you ought to expect suffering.

Just as Ann Hasseltine anticipated great suffering when she chose to marry Adoniram, so also ought a Christian anticipate suffering as well. Suffering is the call of every Christian. It isn't anything "strange" that ought to cause us concern. Rather, it's what we are called to experience. Christians will suffer!

When these scattered believers heard the gospel for the first time, certainly, they knew that suffering was coming. We don't know exactly the exact words that they were told by those who preached the gospel to them. But, I'm sure that it was consistent with the message that Peter preached. Here's a sampling of Peter's preaching.

Acts 3:17-19, 26

And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. ... For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one from your wicked ways.

Acts 5:29-32

We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.

This was no "easy believeism" gospel in which you merely say a prayer and all will be well with you. Rather, Peter and those in the early church called people to turn from their wicked ways to follow Christ and to obey God. I'm sure that this is the type of message that those in the early church heard and believed.

I'm sure that these early believers heard a message consistent with the words of Jesus, who said, ...

Mar, 8:34-38

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

Surely, this (or something like it) was what these people heard. Following Jesus will cost you your life. But, it will have its reward. You will gain your soul for eternity. This is the call of the gospel!

Not only did the early apostles preach a message of how following Christ would cost them their lives. But, those who heard the message were very familiar with the social climate of the day, which was hostile to Christianity. As you trace through the history of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts, you see suffering in many, many places. And these believers would have known of these things, the word would have gotten around about this "new religion" called Christianity.

They would have known that Peter and John had been put in jail because they were preaching the gospel. They would have known that later, they were imprisoned by the same people because they were doing the same thing: preaching the gospel (Acts 5:17-18). They would have heard about how they were flogged before being released (Acts 5:40). The scattered believers would have known about how Stephen had been stoned to death for preaching the gospel (Acts 7:54-8:3). News would have reached their ears of the martyrdom of James, who Herod had put to death by the sword (Acts 12:2).

They would have heard about some of the apostle Paul's persecutions during his missionary activities. They would have known of how many in Psidian Antioch "instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district" (Acts 13:50). They would have known that in Iconium, "An attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers to mistreat and to stone [Paul and Barnabas]" (Acts 14:5). They would have heard about how Paul was "stoned ... and dragged ... out of the city" and left for dead in Lystra (Acts 14:19). They would have known about how Paul had been run out of town when he preached at Thessalonica (Acts 17:13), Berea (Acts 17:13) and at Corinth (Acts 18:12-17). They would have heard of Paul's imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28), for he was probably there as this letter was written.

There may well have been many more things that these believers knew about the persecution of those in the early church, which were never recorded in the book of Acts. They may have known of the martyr of a Christian in the next town over. They may have heard about the woman who was kicked out of her home for embracing Christ. They may have heard the gossip from their friends of this "new religion," hearing about it in a negative light. They may have felt the political pressure against Christianity.

All that to say this: as these scattered believers heard the call to follow Christ, they didn't live in a Christian land where following Christ was an accepted practice, their faith wasn't against the grain of society (1 Peter 4:4). The cost of doing so was very clear to them. And yet, when the suffering came upon them, it would appear as if there was a measure of surprise in their lives.

In some degree, it is surprising when you do what is right and then are slandered as an evildoer (2:12). There is a measure of surprise when you suffer unjustly (2:19). It's shocking when you give a blessing to others and receive an insult in return (3:9). As Peter said in chapter 3, verse 13, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" This is a rhetorical question. The answer is, of course, "Nobody." When you prove to be zealous about doing good and helping and serving others, you might expect that nobody would harm you. And yet, it happens. In the next verse, Peter mentioned the possibility, "even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness" (3:14).

In our text this morning, Peter was working hard to remind them that suffering will come to all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:12). They ought not to be surprised when it comes. In many ways, **the best way not to be surprised is to be forewarned**. But, forewarning doesn't always help. Ann Judson was warned as well as anybody of the difficulties that she would face on the mission field. Yet, in the midst of great difficulty on a ship, Ann Judson wrote, ...

I find my nature shrinks from the idea of being shipwrecked and sunk amid the waves. This shows me how unlike I am to those holy martyrs, who rejoiced to meet death, even in the most horrid forms. [\[4\]](#)

Forewarning helps, but when going through the trial itself, **there is always a need to be reminded of your calling to suffer**. Really, that's the purpose of my message today. It's Peter's purpose as well. I want to remind you that you may well suffer for the cause of Christ. As a Christian, you have been called to suffer, so don't be surprised when suffering comes.

Shortly after Ann Judson's second child, Roger, had died, she was reminded of her call to suffer. She wrote, ...

Our hearts were bound up in this child; we felt he was our earthly all, our only source of innocent recreation in this heathen land. But God saw it was necessary to remind us of our error, and to strip us of our only little all. O may it not be in vain that he has done it. May we so improve it, that he will stay his hand and say, 'It is enough'." [\[5\]](#)

Peter wasn't the only one who reminded his disciples of suffering that comes upon all who follow Christ. Throughout the apostle Paul's ministry, he consistently reminded others of the call to suffer. When those in Thessalonica were facing some affliction, Paul reminded them that suffering was coming. He wrote, "When we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know" (1 Thess. 3:4). It didn't catch us by surprise. Paul did the same thing on his first missionary journey. He had established churches in Antioch, Lystra, and Iconium. On his return trip, he visited returned through these cities and visited the churches where he "encouraged the saints to continue in the faith, saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22).

Suffering is not a strange thing. So, don't be surprised when it comes. Instead, "Expect it!"

I love the way that Peter shows his pastoral heart in sharing these things. He doesn't say, "Hey guys, toughen up! It's not so bad. Why can't you handle these things." Rather, he demonstrates great compassion. First of all, he begins in verse 12, using the word, "Beloved." This is a term of endearment, which would have communicated a sympathy to his readers. It communicates a sharing in the suffering. It's not that Peter was sitting in his ivory tower and apart from these people, dictating cold letters of counsel. On the contrary, he was right there with them in the midst of their difficulty. He was feeling their pain as one of them.

Also, the way in which Peter identifies the trial indicates his acknowledgement of how painful and difficult their trials were. He calls it "the fiery ordeal among you." There is conjecture that Peter is talking about Nero's burning of Rome, which he accused the Christians of doing. But, I think that it's a stretch to say that these believers, who were hundreds of miles away from Rome were experiencing the backlash of that event. Rather, I believe that Peter's words are simply a poetic way of saying, "the difficult trial you are experiencing."

Peter didn't call them, "momentary, light afflictions," (as Paul did in 2 Cor. 4:17). Nor did he attempt to soften the severity of the trials in any way. Rather, he called them a "fiery ordeal," which indicates a severity to their trial. The NIV translates this phrase, "the painful trial." In these words, Peter is sympathizing with his listeners in the severity of the trial.

I believe that Peter chose to use the imagery of fire, as that which is often a purifying agent, as he had previously in chapter 1, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:6-7).

In the ancient world (and today as well), when they needed to purify gold or silver (or other precious metals), they would heat it up in a pot under a blazing fire. The impurities or the metal would float to the surface, where they could be creamed off the top. Overtime, as more and more was creamed off the top, the result would be a purified metal. Trials do the same thing in our lives as well. They have a way of purifying us. "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts" (Prov. 17:3). He refines our hearts by taking us through trials and difficulties. As the Psalmist says, "You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined" (Ps. 66:10). As the hymn

writer said, ...

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

Peter alludes to this purifying process in the middle of verse 12, "which comes upon you for your **testing**." Any suffering that comes upon you will come upon you to test you and to purify you. The thorn in Paul's flesh had a humbling effect on Paul, creating a dependence upon the Lord (2 Cor. 12:7). David's trials in the wilderness shepherding the sheep, gave him courage to stand against Goliath, because he had already fought off the lions and bears (1 Sam. 17:34).

God always refines His people through suffering. It's the way that He works. Noah was refined during the opposition he faced in building the ark (2 Pet. 2:5). Job was refined through his sufferings (James 5:11). Abraham was purified when God tested him, by asking him to offer up Isaac, his only son (Gen. 22:1-2). Joseph was refined through His long years of imprisonment (Gen. 39-41). Moses was refined during His long years in exile in Midian (Ex. 2). There is hardly a saint in all of the Bible whom God didn't refine through sufferings.

Peter is no exception. He knew of the purifying effect of a trial upon his life. Shortly before Jesus was arrested, He had a conversation with Peter, saying, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32).

Of course, you know what happened. Before the rooster crowed, Peter denied Jesus on three separate occasions (Luke 22:34). But, on the back end, Jesus restored Peter to ministry, telling him to "Tend My lambs. ... Shepherd My sheep. ... Tend My sheep" (John 21:15-17).

As a result of these things, Peter returned to ministry stronger than ever before. The book of Acts records Peter's preaching as bold as anybody's preaching. He preached with a confidence and an assurance that was recognized by all. When standing before the Sanhedrin Luke wrote, "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). The refining process in Peter's life was clear for all to see.

But, the testing in trials goes beyond merely refining and sanctifying believers. **Suffering also exposes those who are false.** Sadly, there are many who have heard the words of Christ and received them with joy, but have fallen away when the suffering comes.

Perhaps you remember the parable of the sower that Jesus told. He told of the seed that was cast upon four types of soils. There was the hard soil. There was the rocky soil. There was the shallow soil. And there was the good soil. Each of these soils represent different types of souls. Do you remember what took place when the seed fell upon the rocky soil? The seed immediately sprang up, but was scorched by the sun, because they had no root (Matt. 13:6). Jesus interpreted this parable by saying, "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away" (Matt. 13:20-21).

This is the sad reality of many who receive the gospel initially. Initially, it finds great joy in their heart. But, when the reality sits in, that faith in Jesus will bring hardship in this life, many will fall away. The suffering is the heat that applied to the pot of gold. Those who are false will rise to the surface and leave the pot. They will defect from the faith. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19).

Trials test our faith. As we experience trials and maintain our faith it merely demonstrates that our profession is true. The writer to the Hebrews articulated it this way, "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (Heb. 3:14). If we continue in our profession, it is an indication that we have become partakers of Christ. But if we don't hold fast until the end, it demonstrates that we never were partakers of Christ.

This is what Peter is trying to avoid. "You have received the word. Affliction and persecution are part of the deal. So, when it comes, don't be surprised. Remember, this is the call of every Christian." It will test your faith, and it will strengthen your faith. This leads nicely to my second point this morning. Not only should we expect suffering (verse 12). But, we should also, ...

## 2. Embrace Suffering (verse 13).

Do you want to suffer well? Embrace suffering. This comes in verses 13, "but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation."

I trust that you can see the words of joy and rejoicing in this verse. Initially, Peter says, "when you are suffering, **keep on rejoicing**." And then, Peter focuses upon the future and says that when His glory is ultimately revealed, you will "rejoice with exultation." The idea here is that you will have "exceeding joy" on that day (KJV, NKJV). You will be "overjoyed" (NIV). You will be "rejoicing with exultation" (NASB).

Do you see what's happening in this verse? You are sharing in the sufferings of Christ. It's suffering now. But, you are anticipating the glory in the future. It's glory later. It's "Suffer Now, Glory Later," which we have identified as the theme of this book.

But notice that it's not merely suffering now, as if all is doom and gloom today. Rather, Peter exhorts us to be rejoicing now in our suffering. In large part, this is because of the anticipation of the great joy coming in the future and the revelation of His glory.

There's no doubt that now is difficult. But, the assurance and anticipation of the future is so great and so glorious, that there is great joy now

even in your suffering. This is how it always works in God's economy. We have a future to look forward to. And thus, we can rejoice now, even when things are difficult.

This is how Peter argued in chapter 1, verse 6. After explaining how great our inheritance will be in heaven, Peter writes, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." The hope and expectation of the future inheritance yields joy in difficulties today.

In Hebrews 10, verse 34, we read of some people who "accepted joyfully the seizure of [their] property." How were they able to endure the government coming in and taking away their home because they were Christians? Only by looking to the reward. The writer to the Hebrews says that they knew that they had "a better possession and a lasting one" (Heb. 10:34). Their possession in the future was better than any of their possessions in the present. Their possessions in the future would last forever, unlike their possessions they owned in this life. Thus, they were able to be parted from their earthly possessions, knowing of their greater possession to come.

Notice how much joy we ought to have. Peter says, "**to the degree** that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing" (verse 13). Our joy should parallel our sufferings. When our sufferings increase, so also should our joy. In many ways, this is contrary to the way that we think. When suffering comes, we often drift toward sorrow and despair. And yet, Peter's word to us here is that we ought to increase our joy whenever our suffering increases.

I think that the key to this comes when you see the type of suffering that Peter is referring to here. He identifies it as "the sufferings of Christ". He is referring to that suffering which comes about because of your faith in Christ. When you suffer greatly for Christ, there often comes a great joy in your heart. This was evident in the lives of the apostles.

One of the greatest stories in the book of Acts comes in the fifth chapter of Acts, when the apostles had been flogged for proclaiming Christ. No doubt, their suffering was great. But, their joy was greater. Acts 5:41 tells us that the apostles "went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). I don't believe that it was an accident that Stephen's face looked like the face of an angel as he preached his message that got him killed for it (Acts 6:15). I believe that it was his great happiness and joy to share in the sufferings of Christ that caused his face to look so radiant.

But don't limit the "sufferings of Christ" to obvious persecutions that others bring upon you because of your faith in Christ. You can also suffer for Christ in choosing the path of service to others even when they don't appreciate your labor on their behalf. You can suffer for Christ in choosing the path of love, that doesn't take into account a wrong suffered. You can suffer for Christ by choosing the path of righteousness and thereby losing friends and the respect of people. When you experience all of these things, you are suffering for Christ.

So whatever it is that brings suffering into your life because of your faith, the exhortation from this verse is really quite simple. When suffering comes upon you, don't hate it or despise it or run away from it. Rather, embrace it. It ought to bring you great joy. Do what James says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials" (James 1:2). Do what Paul says, "We also exult in our tribulations" (Romans 5:3). Believe what Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

The only way that you will ever embrace your trials today is by trusting in the joy that will ultimately come to you on that final day. This is greatly illustrated by the life and death of Christopher Love. He was an English puritan, who arrested and imprisoned "by Oliver Cromwell's forces for alleged involvement with the Presbyterians of Scotland who were raising money for the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II." [\[7\]](#) Though Christopher Love denied the charge, he was convicted of treason and was eventually beheaded on Tower Hill, in London in 1651.

He was suffering for the sake of righteousness. But, it is amazing the way in which he and his wife embraced their suffering. Consider what Mary wrote to him as he was awaiting his execution. She wrote, ...

When the messenger of death comes to you, let him not seem dreadful to you, but look on him as a messenger that brings you tidings of eternal life. When you go up the scaffold, think (as you said to me) that it is but your fiery chariot to carry you up to your Father's house. And when you lay down your precious head to receive your Father's stroke, remember that you said to me: Though your head was severed from the body, yet in a moment your soul should be united to your Head, the Lord Jesus, in heaven. And though it may seem something bitter, that by the hands of men we are parted a little sooner than otherwise we might have been, yet let us consider that it is the decree and will of our Father, and it will not be long ere we shall enjoy one another in heaven again.

Let us comfort one another with these sayings. Be comforted, my dear heart. It is but a little stroke and you shall be there where the weary shall be at rest and where the wicked shall cease from troubling. Remember that you may eat your dinner with bitter herbs, yet you shall have a sweet supper with Christ that night. My dear, by what I write unto you, I do not hereby undertake to teach you; for these comforts I have received from the Lord by you. I will write no more, nor trouble you any further, but commit you into the arms of God with whom ere long you and I shall be.

Farewell, my dear. I shall never see your face more till we both behold the face of the Lord Jesus at that great day. [\[8\]](#)

The execution was delayed, so Mary did indeed have the chance to see her husband. On the night before he died, Christopher Love was able to speak with Mary. He told her, ...

Be not troubled to think what shall become of you and yours after my death, for be assured that my God, and the God of the widows and fatherless, will not forsake you, but will wonderfully provide for those and be comforted in this, that tho' men take your husband from you, they cannot take your God from you; and so do not think that you have lost your husband, but only parted with him for awhile, and in the meantime your Savior will be a husband to you and a father to your children. [9]

Then, they prayed and left each other for the last time on this earth. As he was standing on the scaffold, about to lose his head, the Sheriff gave him permission to pray. After his lengthy prayer, he thanked the sheriff and said, "I go from a block to the bosom of My Savior." [10] With that, he lost his head and entered into the joy of his rest.

Christopher Love embraced his suffering. Did you notice how often Christopher Love and his wife focused their hearts upon the glory to come? Oh, church family, if only we could only see the great blessing and benefit that our suffering would bring at the revelation of His glory, we would be able to embrace it as well. Too often, we resist and spurn and avoid suffering, thinking that it's bad for us. But, in actuality, the suffering that comes upon us is for our good. It refines us. It will eventually be the source of our everlasting joy!

As Elizabeth Elliot has said, "The serious and painful events, even the trivial disappointments, are God's purposeful arrangements for our fulfillment. They are, in fact (if we will accept them), our gateway to joy." [11] And so, I exhort you to embrace your suffering. See the good that it will do for you soul and embrace it.

I want to close with one last personal illustration. Suffering is a bit like spicy foods. I never used to like spicy foods. I would avoid them and not eat them, because I didn't like them. I didn't like the way that it burned the inside of my mouth. And I remember the day that we were talking about spicy foods where I used to work. I was explaining the way that I didn't much like the way that spicy foods mouth. And then, I remember that a co-worker replied to me. "Steve, it tastes that way in my mouth as well. I like that feeling in my mouth. That's why I like spicy foods." That little perspective changed my entire focus upon spicy foods. I have begun to learn to like the spicy feeling of pain in my mouth, as something that I'm supposed to like. (Now, I may not go for extremely spicy food. But, I have come to like spicy food.) What changed me? Someone gave me a good perspective on spicy foods.

I hope that my message today has helped you in some small measure regarding your perspective on suffering. When you see the fruit of it, you may actually come and to appreciate the purpose of your suffering. And rejoice when you are experiencing it.

How can you suffer well? Expect it and embrace it.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 22, 2008 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore*, p. 83.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[3] John Piper, "How Few There Are Who Die So Hard," ([http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1528\\_How\\_Few\\_There\\_Are\\_Who\\_Die\\_So\\_Hard/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1528_How_Few_There_Are_Who_Die_So_Hard/))

[4] *To the Golden Shore*, p. 158.

[5] *To the Golden Shore*, p. 193.

[6] John Rippon, *How Firm a Foundation*, 1787.

[7] Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, p. 398.

[8] Don Kistler, *A Spectacle Unto God: The life and death of Christopher Love*, p. 3.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 94

[10] *Meet the Puritans*, p. 399.

[11] See <http://www.backtothebible.org/index.php/Gateway-to-Joy/Purpose-in-Suffering.html>.