I thought my sufferings would end when I became a Christian?
Scripture: 1 Peter 4:13-14; Romans 8:18
Code: QA151

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God's Word provides us with two reasons that God's children continue to face suffering after salvation.

First, though delivered from the dominion of sin, **Christians still experience the effects of sin**. The reality of suffering endures in a world tainted by sin. Even believers experience pain, disease, aging, and death, and we often fall victim to accidents or sinful acts of others. Those things are the common lot of all, and they all have a connection to sin.

But there is a **second** reason believers suffer--**believers are one with Christ**. In that union, God gave us the privilege of participating in the same kind of suffering Jesus endured--suffering for doing what is right. Consider what Peter said:

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. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you (1 Peter 4:13-14; cf. Romans 8:18).

Suffering for righteousness sake is part of normal Christian living. Far from removing suffering, our salvation guarantees it. Scripture, in fact, tells us to expect trials: "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" (1 Peter 4:12).

Thankfully, along with the promise of suffering, God promises us His presence and a lasting reward. And because of those precious truths, you can respond with hope--that's a complete contrast to the despairing outlook that plagues the unbeliever.

Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Hebrews 13:5 reminds you that God will never desert you--"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (KJV; cf. Matthew 28:20). You can rest assured that God is as near in the darkest suffering as He is in the brightest days of blessing.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). The *New Living Translation* says it this way: "The unfailing love of the LORD never ends! Great is his faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each day." God's compassion never runs out or grows

old; it's unceasing and continually renewed. No matter what suffering you may be experiencing, that truth is unchanging.
First Corinthians 10:13 promises that "no temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it." You can endure because God has promised not to give you more than you can handle. He wants you to overcome and won't allow you to face any temptation that will crush you under its weight.

All believers are imperfect and need discipline and training from their heavenly Father. God faithfully provides every true child of His with the sort of chastening that produces holiness. Hebrews 12:6 says, "For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." That truth is not unique to the New Testament--Deuteronomy 8:5 says, "You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you."

How should you respond to God's chastening? With thankful submission that recognizes your loving heavenly Father is at work in you. Resolve not to despise or be discouraged by that work (Hebrews 12:5). God is pruning your life to make you more effective and fruitful. Jesus said, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

God knows what you need and can handle, and He brings trials to prove your faith and display it to those around you. He has graciously chosen you to stand as an example of the power of His grace. His grace is "sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). In a world without hope, without peace, fearing death, and living in complete emptiness, your perseverance in trials is testimony that God is alive and gloriously at work.

Persevering in the midst of intense suffering provides a testimony of true hope to a world without hope. No matter the intensity of the trial you are facing, you always have the hope of heaven to cheer you. As one who believes in God and trusts His Word, treasure the truth that suffering and death are not worthy of comparison with the wondrous glory of knowing Christ. Paul affirmed that when he wrote, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

So, if you are going through a trial, pray that your spiritual condition will be gloriously evident to all around as you exemplify true joy in it (James 1:2-4, 12).

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