

The Christian's Attitude Toward Suffering

2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Read 2 Corinthians 11:16-33 and pray that God would give you light.

1. Do you think Christians should think about and experience suffering differently from non-Christians? Why?
2. This passage (2 Corinthians 11:16-33) describes the kinds of suffering Paul faced. What kinds of sufferings did he endure?
3. In v.23 Paul says that he is more a servant of Christ than his opponents. Why would a servant of Christ suffer in this way? Take a look at John 15:19-21.
4. Also in v.23 Paul speaks of the times he has been in prison. On one occasion in Acts 16:25 Paul was in prison with Silas. Take a look at the passage in Acts. What was Paul doing while he was in prison? How could anyone have such a response to prison? There might be a clue in Acts 5:41.
5. Why does Paul call this "boasting" (vv.16-18)? It might help to read the first 15 verses of chapter 11.
6. Take a look at v.30. Why is Paul so eager to show his weaknesses? Is this something we should imitate?
7. Should Christians always accept suffering from the hands of men or are there times to stand up and say 'no'? Take a look at Paul's actions in Acts 22:22-29. What does this incident teach us about whether we should sometimes oppose suffering?
8. Say you know someone who is suffering in poverty right now. Should your response be "God works all things together for the good?" Perhaps take a look at James 2:15-17 and Paul's initiative in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15.
9. Is suffering mindless or does God have a purpose in it? Study the following passages and write down what God might be accomplishing in your life during your suffering: Romans 5:1-5; Hebrews 12:4-11; Romans 8:14-17; Romans 8:28-29. In what way might heaven be the answer to Christian suffering?
10. When Paul asked Jesus to remove a specific suffering from him (2 Corinthians 12:7b-8), Jesus responded "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (v.9). What does this mean? What might this mean for our daily lives?
11. How would you answer question 1 now?