

1 Thessalonians: Part 6

A Life of Faith

Chapter 2: The Blessing of Suffering

1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.

2 But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.

4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.

6 Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.

8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;

11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

13 For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the



word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

14 For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans,

15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men,

16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

17 But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.

18 Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.

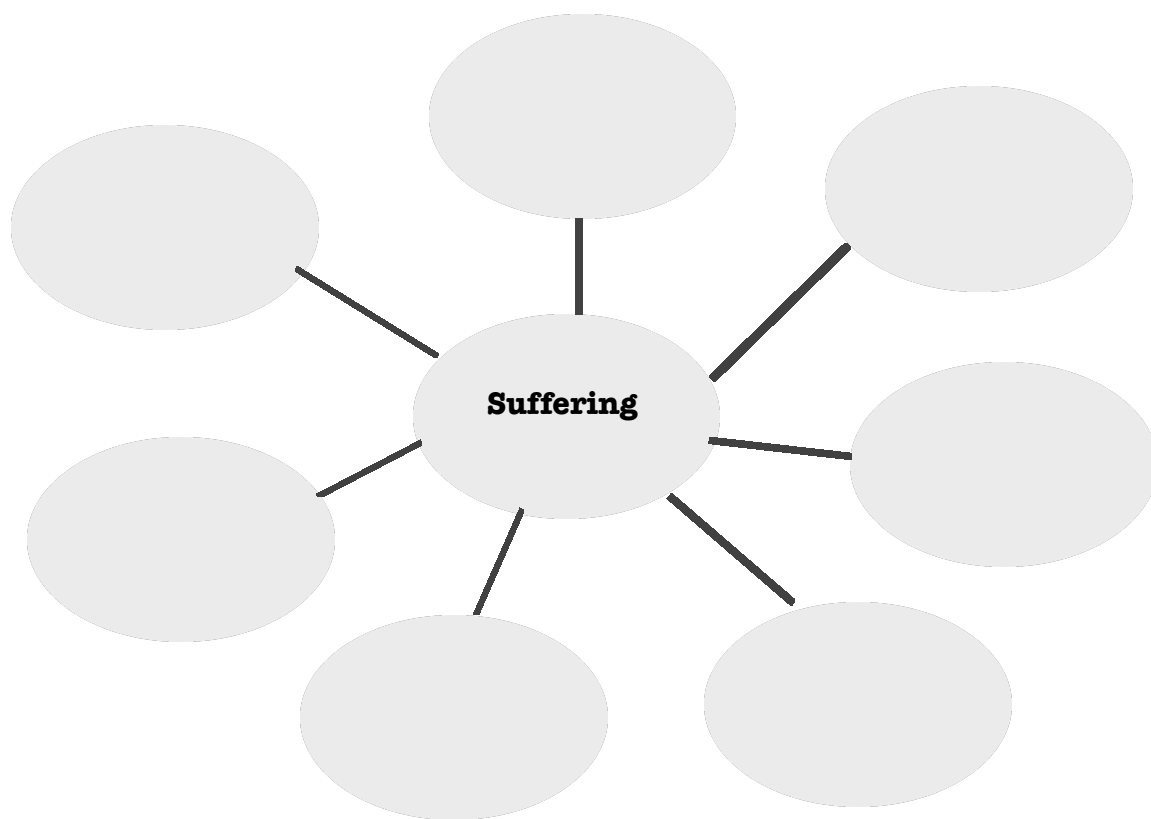
19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

20 For you are our glory and joy.



Hello, and welcome back for part 6 of A Life of Faith. I trust the book of 1 Thessalonians is becoming very familiar and dear to you. Please take a few moments to pray and ask God to make you sensitive to what He is going to teach you today from His Holy Word. When you have finished praying, please write your initials on the line _____.

I am a teacher. Sometimes to launch a lesson, I have my students complete a prereading activity in order to activate prior knowledge. Today let's start our Bible study with a prereading activity – a concept map. Concept maps (mind maps) help organize our thoughts, solidify concepts and chronicle our experiences.



Please read the instructions below and complete the concept map.

Instructions:

1. Think about the the concept of suffering.
2. What words and phrases come to mind when you think of suffering?
What other words and concepts are related to suffering?
3. Write related concepts in the empty spaces. Add more spaces, if needed.
4. Look over your map and make any changes or additions.
5. Please keep your concept map handy. You will reference your map at the end of our lesson today.



Please read 1 Thessalonians 2 on page 1. Take time to highlight, underline or circle words and phrases that attract your attention.

Our focus for today's lesson is the blessing of suffering. Please go through 1 Thessalonians 2 again, and put a teardrop above every reference to suffering, hardship and persecution.

Are you currently experiencing suffering, persecution or hardship?

What are some reasons we suffer?

Sometimes we suffer because of our sin. At other times the sin of others brings distress and pain to our souls. Illness, job loss or financial setbacks also cause pain. Christians often suffer because of our faith.

Suffering can come upon us suddenly, like a lightning bolt from the clear blue sky. One minute life is one way and the next minute, it will never be the same. Are we just hapless victims, trying to keep our heads down, hoping to survive difficult seasons or is there something more to suffering than meets the eye? At first, it may seem as if suffering and blessing have no point of commonality, but as we shall learn, suffering leads to blessing if we will only trust the Lord. Let's see what insights we gain by digging into the original language.

Go back at verse 2 and circle *suffering* and it's synonyms.

I circled three words: *suffering*, *spitefully treated*, and *conflict*. In the original Greek, *suffering* translates as *paschō* which means *to be affected, to feel, to suffer badly, to be in a bad plight*. This word refers to the suffering of Christ, suffering at the hands of men, suffering because of the evil one, and suffering of the whole body because of the deeds of one member.

Often we erroneously think that our choices only affect ourselves. I can quickly condemn the choices of others that have caused the church to suffer. Now I consider for the first time, have I ever caused the body of Christ to suffer because of my sin? Ouch.



Within the definition of *pascho* we find hope for our hardship; *paschō* also translates as, “of perils and **deliverance** from them” (emphasis mine). For every peril there is a deliverance. For your current trial and season of suffering, God has already planned your deliverance.

The words *spitefully treated* transliterates as *hybrizo*, which means *to treat outrageously, to treat wantonly, to speak shamefully of, to insult, injury*. Sometimes insults can be just as injurious as physical blows. While it is true we’ve heard words we’ll never forget, we don’t have to give away the victory. Take the hurtful words, and painful memories to God and ask Him to repurpose them for your good. God promises **all** things will work for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose. The Romans 8:28 recycling plan is the best in the world; good from evil, benefit from calamity, beauty from ashes.

Name a painful memory or hurtful situation God recycled for your good.

God even recycles painful situations resulting from our own sin. He’s that good.
Can you think of any other ways God can use suffering for good?

The Bible lists many benefits that arise from suffering. Please take the time to look up the following verses and list the blessings that are generated from suffering.

James 1:2-4:

Two benefits are listed in these verses: joy and wholeness. Suffering is not something that happens to us by the bidding of the Enemy. Suffering is a tool used by the hand of God to mold and form our character. Seasons of suffering can end in joy; not because our experience was joyful, but because the outcome of our experience accomplishes something necessary. As we become more Christlike we will become more spirit-filled and therefore joyous. James 1:2-4 proclaims some works of sanctification and transformation can only be completed through suffering. If we miss the suffering, we miss being made whole.



1 Peter 4:12-13:

As we journey with God through suffering, and if we continue to follow Him despite hardship and anguish, others will notice and God will be glorified through our suffering.

Philippians 1:12:

I love Philippians 1:12. The great benefit of our suffering can be the same as the great benefit of Christ's suffering—the spread of the Gospel. For some reason the winds of suffering and persecution widely scatter the seeds of the Gospel. Your suffering is not just about you; it's about spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:6-7:

Your suffering will not destroy you; quite the opposite is true. Through suffering your faith is being refined. Impurities and flaws are being removed and in the end your faith is made stronger. Your present suffering is a stepping stone to your next level of ministry and relationship with God the Father.

How can you use your present suffering to minister to others?

Please list one final blessing.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2:

While many people think that suffering may weaken their faith the opposite is true — suffering produces boldness.

So what do we do while we are experiencing suffering and persecution? Please study the **To Do List** on the next page.



	To Do List
●	1. Continue to rejoice.
	2. Continue to minister.
	3. Continue to follow.
●	4. Continue to look for Jesus.
	5. Continue to pray.
	6. Continue to give.
●	7.
	8.

Can you think of any other things you need to continue to do? Add them to the list above.

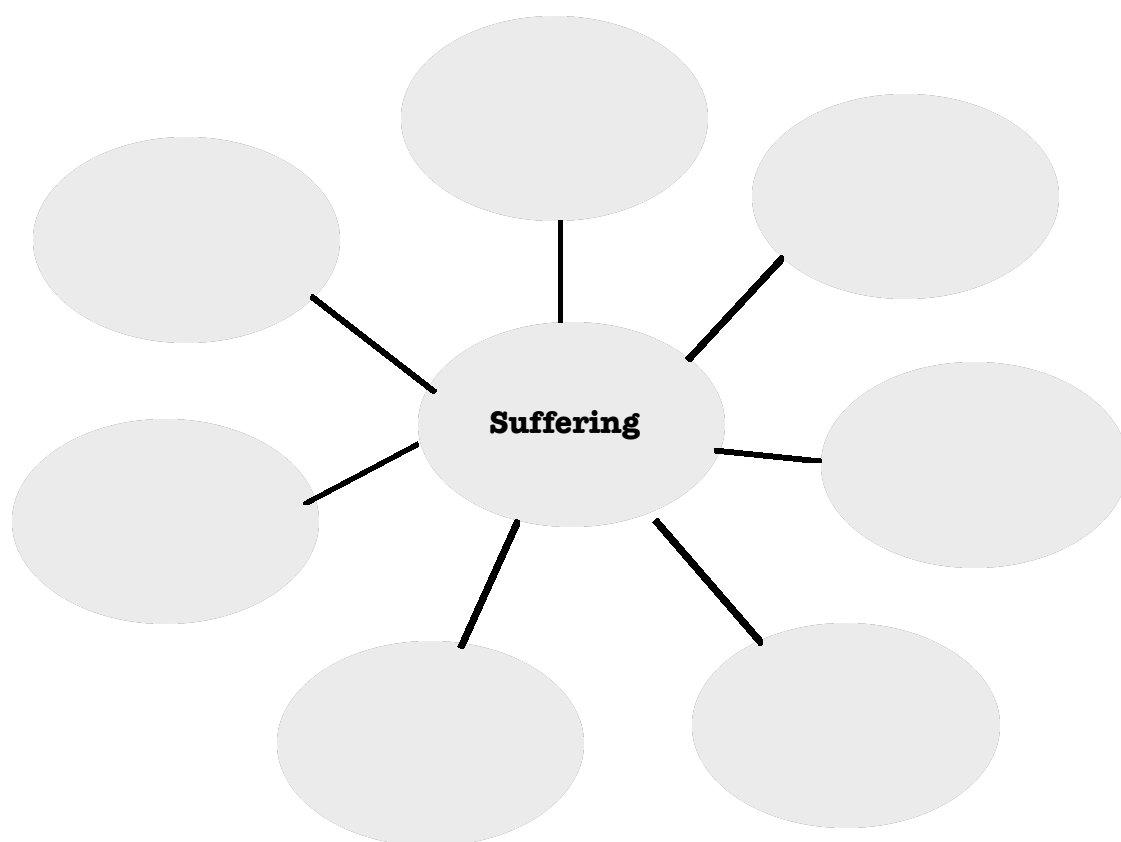
Please highlight or circle the item/s that speak to you the most.

Of the items you circled above, what steps do you take next?

One final piece of wisdom I learned from a *man of the cloth* many years ago. "When you're going through a hard time don't ask God, 'Why, but What?'"

What are You trying to teach me, Lord?

Now we are going to revisit the concept map you filled out at the beginning of this study. Keeping in mind all that you learned today about suffering, please go to the next page and fill out the map on suffering again. Be sure to include new concepts that come to your mind concerning suffering.



After you have finished your second concept map, please compare it to your first. I pray God has helped you to reframe how you view suffering and the role it plays in your life as a Christian. Please end your study time today by thanking God for what you have learned about suffering and how He uses suffering in your life.

God bless you.

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