

FOCUS ON GOD AMID SUFFERING



We also glory in tribulations... (Romans 5:3)

Have you experienced times when it seems God is far away? Or when everything seemingly goes wrong for weeks or months on end? And it becomes really difficult to understand or feel that God is still present to hear your prayers?

Following are some thoughts from Scripture touching on the things we all experience when going through a difficult patch. You may consider praying through these the next week, asking the Holy Spirit to minister to you in your current situation.

1. God is in control

In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33b).

Life presents an extensive variety of hurts and heartaches. It is the effect of sin on humanity. But we know God is the Lord of heaven and earth. He makes all grace abound to you, whatever the circumstance—in life and death, in joy and sorrow, in pain and pleasure. Put your trust in Him.

Heavenly Father, help me to accept Your will. Thank you for the assurance that You are aware of my difficulties and hear my prayers. Help me to see Your power at work in times of difficulty. Show Yourself strong in my times of weakness. Thank you, that despite extreme hardships I will not be crushed, driven to despair, or be abandoned by You. (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

2. Cast your anxiety on God

... casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7).

This verse instructs us to be vigilant and watchful not to give in to the devil's schemes. In times of despair do not turn your back on your Father, but instead press into Him. Keep on calling. Keep on casting your cares on Him, no matter the circumstances – for the Lord *cares for you!*

Father, when I am faced with unspeakable distress; I choose to still worship You. You, O LORD, are my shield, my glory and the One who lifts my head (Psalm 3). Help me to trust You and hold on to You until the moment of breakthrough – knowing You always have a plan in mind. Help me grow in understanding to know You in a deeper and more meaningful way because of yielding to You in times of difficulty.

3. Joy in suffering

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4).

Suffering is part of God's sculpting work in our sanctification. Every person who desires to be a vessel of honour for the Lord must be sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work (2 Timothy 2:21). This may seem a mystery, but anyone looking back on a trial will agree how the Lord has formed Christ in them.

Father, continually sanctify me through the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit. Change and transform me into the very image of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

4. Fellowship with Christ

I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... (Philippians 3:8).

While we are waiting for the Lord's return and a Day when there will be no more pain and suffering, we can experience consolation now through daily fellowship with Jesus. The apostle Paul *counts all things loss*, because he regards fellowship with Jesus as more precious, more satisfying and sweeter than anything else.

Lord Jesus, my King, You satisfy the deepest longings of my heart. My heart yearns for Your presence more and more. O, that I may decrease so that Your image in me can increase. Thank you for the privilege to share in Your suffering and Your victory! You are worthy.

5. Come, all who are weary

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28).

We all experience weariness from time to time. Sometimes you can identify the cause and other times it is a combination of trauma, our frailties, or as the result of sin. Jesus knows and understands. He wants you to bring it to Him.

Compassionate Lord, I want to respond to Your invitation to cast my burdens on You. Sometimes it is so difficult to give it to You. Please help me in my weakness. Forgive me for trying to do things in my strength. Instead, I want to lean on You and allow You to bring me to the place of rest in You. I choose to abide in You.

6. Be anxious for nothing

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6).

Simply put, anxiety is distrusting God. All of us have experienced anxiety, but God is calling us to always put our trust in Him, over and over again. In every season the Lord teaches how to lean on Him more. In our frailty we can say like the Psalm writer, *Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.* (Psalm 56:3).

Trustworthy Father, I submit to You. Teach me how to be content in all circumstances, whether I experience abundance or lack. Teach me how to rule over anxieties in prayer and supplication with much thanksgiving. I long to be honest and true in my prayers and bring my deepfelt anxieties into the light of Your presence.

7. God's glory

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it. (John 11:4).

Jesus gave a similar answer concerning a man who was born blind (John 9:1-3). James 5:13 says, *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.* It might be extremely difficult to direct your prayers when you are suffering, but God encourages us to call upon Him in our day of trouble for He will deliver us and we shall praise Him (Psalm 50:15).

Father, where my suffering is intended to bring You glory, let it be so! Help me to recognise that the current suffering I am facing is no comparison to the glory that will be revealed in me. I wait for it with eager expectation (Romans 8:17–19).