

## **Marching Forward in the Holy Spirit Choosing to Live in the Spirit While Suffering**

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Suffering is a fact of life. We can praise God that our suffering isn't relentless. He gives us times of joy, and peace, and times of much needed rest. Yet in the midst of suffering it is easy to lose our focus on spiritual things. It is common to focus on our pain. Our pain is real, and our Father understands this. However, He calls us to look beyond our flesh and into His spiritual principals to best handle our seasons of suffering.

**•What does I Peter 4:19 (NIV) say regarding suffering?** “So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”

This verse tells us there is a kind of suffering that is more than a consequence to our poor decision-making skills. There is a kind of suffering that is “according to God’s will.” Suffering according to God’s will can be puzzling, especially as we remain in our flesh and look at our circumstances through our own eyes rather than the eyes of God.

**•Read Matthew 16:22, 23. How is this an example of someone living in the flesh?**

Jesus calls His friend Peter, “Satan.” He further explains that his mind is not on God, rather his concerns are merely human. Throughout Peter’s on the job training, he will learn on several occasions the difference between living for the flesh and living in the Holy Spirit.

**•How might Peter have responded with the mind of God while living in the Spirit?**

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**Is suffering God’s will?**

**•How is Jesus’ cry “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,” and then his suffering and brutal death while hanging on the cross at Calvary, the ultimate example of “suffering according to God’s will?” (Luke 23:46)**

**•Why would Jesus pray these words found in Luke 22:42, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”**

He was human, He felt pain and knew suffering, and knew that the worst was still to come. Yet in His flesh, He taught us to live and pray in His Spirit. He continued, “Yet not my will, but yours be done.”

**•What form of suffering are you or someone you love currently under?**

**•Rather than thinking and praying in the power of your flesh, how might you commit yourself and your loved ones to our faithful Creator and His will for all areas of your life?**

**Romans 8:6** “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. “

**•What do we do with the fact that suffering is a part of our earthly life?**

If we answer honestly, many of us fight the fact of suffering. In our day and culture being an overcomer of our flesh is honored. In many ways this is a biblical concept. **Romans 8:37** tells us plainly that we are more than conquerors! Many Christians stop there in the reading and their understanding of that verse. Their mindset is determined to conquer whatever suffering they are currently oppressed by. The outcome is a huge disappointment because like Peter, they are thinking in the realm of the flesh.

This verse properly quoted concludes with; “ *...through him* who loved us.” It is not our own flesh or human will that makes us more than conquerors; it is the willingness to set our human nature aside and live according to God’s will and *through His Holy Spirit*.

Here is the choice we have, death to our flesh which is our own stubborn will and earthly desires or life and peace from our faithful Creator? The choice for many seems like an easy one! Life and peace of course! We all want that. However, living this out requires another kind of suffering. It is the suffering of our souls. The war within. The fight that Paul talks about in **Romans 7: 21- 8:8**, this is not an easy road to travel. Not even for Paul. He wrestles with his flesh to the point of calling himself “wretched man that I am!”

Ultimately, we know that Paul chooses life in Christ and we are blessed to read of his struggle. In a strange way this should bring us peace seeing that even St. Paul, understands our “stressed out feelings of suffering” thoroughly. Jesus suffered, Paul suffered, you and I and our loved ones do experience suffering according to God’s will.

**•Why would making the choice to surrender to God’s Holy Spirit rather than to commit ourselves to our own natural abilities, be the righteous and wisest choice?**

Because through reading the scriptures we know that if we keep our spiritual eyes on Jesus, there is always a miracle on its way! Yes, Jesus suffered and died on the cross. However, three days after that horrible suffering was over, Jesus introduced us to new life in a way that we could never have imagined, nor had the hope of entering into. With Jesus there is always something more, and better awaiting those of us who will choose to commit ourselves to him and continue to do good, even in our suffering.

Marching forward then, in the power of His Holy Spirit has no exceptions; especially in suffering. God's word clearly directs us to do this.

**Galatians 5:16** "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh"

**Galatians 5:24-25** "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

We are absolutely called to march forward in the power of the Holy Spirit leaving the attitudes of our flesh behind. Notice in **verse 24** the word "crucified" is used here. The same word used in conjunction with the death of Jesus. He was crucified. He suffered. His flesh died, yet His Spirit lived on, and then was reunited with His Flesh at the resurrection!

**Luke 24: 6-7** "He is not here; He is risen!"

His Spirit did not die. We are meant to live in the same victory as Christ did in His resurrection! Because of what He suffered for us, we are to live out life and peace now and throughout eternity.

**•What does that look like here and now, while we live on earth?**

**Galatians 5:22-23** gives us our answer. Life in the Spirit of Christ conducts itself in demonstrating love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

**•Under the influence provided to us through the power of the Holy Spirit, what are some ways we can *march forward* demonstrating His love?**

Suggestions:

- We can have a face of joy when others see our place of suffering and expect to see a face that matches our predicaments.
- We can have amazing self-control in the throes of extreme temptation. What an admirable thing to see and an inspiration in our day and age of instant gratification!
- With the Spirit of Christ, we can demonstrate amazing patience with people and struggles that boggle the fleshly mind!
- Most importantly we can pray in the power of the Holy Spirit! Marching forward boldly into places our flesh could never take us! In the Holy Spirit there are no limitations to where we can go nor to whom we pray for! We can tear down strongholds in heavenly places and through the power of Jesus set lives free!

## **Part II**

### **2 Corinthians 10**

Read it! And get excited! It is a chapter of unleashing the Spirit who lives in you! This chapter explains the power of the Holy Spirit and the weakness of our flesh. It makes me want to “fight, fight, fight for what is right, right, righteous!” I think of the Rocky movies. My husband loves them. And I want to be such a fighter in the spiritual realm. Against all odds, and against what seems to the eyes to be a losing battle, in the Spirit of God is a place of great victory! I do caution you! Take a good look at Rocky. To the eyes, his flesh was in bad shape. Had you not known the full story you could easily assume he was the loser of every fight. Yet we do know the story, it was the unseen strength of his will and his spirit that brought him forward into victory.

How much more will we see and have victory when our aim is not to only overcome a battle of the literal flesh, but to have power to demolish strongholds by the direction and through the power of The Holy One we serve! Please do realize this is not a place of ease. It is a place of battle.

**2 Corinthians 10:5** “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

The examples of living in the power of the Holy Spirit are endless, and holy, and exciting! March forward in the Holy Spirit and Live! Live a life that is literally beyond your ability in your flesh. Keep your spiritual eyes on Jesus and see, there is always a miracle on its way!

(Additional study verses: **John 11:1-44.**)