

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GOD'S WILL AND SUFFERING

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this chapter you will be able to:

- Write the Key Verse from memory.
- Identify five reasons for suffering.
- Recognize that the will of God may entail suffering.
- Distinguish between suffering within and without of the will of God.
- List positive benefits of suffering within the will of God.

KEY VERSE:

**Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful creator.
(I Peter 4:19)**

INTRODUCTION

You heard the voice of God. You sought guidance, it was given, and you set off along the road of life which God seemed to indicate. But as a result of this decision you are experiencing problems which would not have arisen apart from this new path of "God's will" on which you travel.

Did you really hear the voice of God or have you made a mistake? Are these difficult experiences a sign from God that you are not living in His will? Does God permit suffering to come to someone who is living righteously within the will of God?

When Jesus was here on earth and spoke of the suffering He was to face on the cross, many of His followers deserted Him (John 6:55-66). They expected the Messiah to reign in power and glory. Instead, He spoke of suffering. They could not understand, so they turned away.

If you do not understand suffering as it relates to the will of God, then you too may turn from following Jesus when you face difficult circumstances. God did not create suffering. It originally entered the world through man's sin (Genesis 3). But God can take that which is intended for evil and use it for good to accomplish His purposes.

THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING

The Bible has much to say concerning suffering, problems, and afflictions. In summarizing its teaching, we discover five ways suffering can come into the life of a believer:

OTHERS AROUND YOU:

Suffering may come through others around you. Joseph is an example of this type of suffering. Through no fault of his own, Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, imprisoned falsely by Potiphar's wife, and forgotten by those he helped in prison.

But listen to his response. Joseph said. . .

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. . .so now it was not you that sent me hither but God. (Genesis 45:5,7)

CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE:

The second way suffering comes is through the circumstances of life. This is illustrated by the example of Naomi, recorded in the book of Ruth in the Bible, who experienced the death of her husband and sons.

Until Jesus returns and the final enemy of death is conquered, death is part of life. Death entered through the original sin of man and it is a natural circumstance which we all will face, because "it is appointed unto man once to die" (Hebrews 9:27).

YOUR MINISTRY:

The third reason for suffering is because of your ministry for the Lord. The New Testament speaks of suffering for His name's sake (Acts 9:16), in behalf of Christ, (Philippians 1:29) for the Kingdom of God (II Thessalonians 1:5), for the Gospel (II Timothy 1:11-12), for well-doing (I Peter 2:19-20; 3:17), for righteousness sake (I Peter 3:14), as a Christian (I Peter 4:15-16), and according to the will of God (I Peter 4:19).

The Apostle Paul is an example of suffering resulting from ministry. Some people view suffering as a sign of failure or lack of faith. If this is true, then the Apostle Paul had no faith and was the greatest failure in the history of the church.

Paul said that while in Asia he was so utterly crushed that he despaired of life itself (II Corinthians 1:8). He presents a different image than that of the cheerful evangelist who promises believers nothing but peace and prosperity. When Paul was first called of God to ministry he was told of "great things" he would suffer for the sake of the Lord (Acts 9:16).

Paul's response to suffering was to endure "the loss of all things to win some for Christ." He wrote to believers "to you it is given not only to believe, but to suffer for Him" (Philippians 1:29).

Paul was not alone in suffering for the ministry. The whole church suffered in New Testament times (Acts 8). Hebrews chapter 11 records the stories some of the cruel persecutions they endured. Many of these men and women of faith were delivered by the power of God. Prison doors were opened and they walked out. They were sentenced to death in fiery furnaces but emerged unaffected by the flames.

But some of these believers, who are also called men and women of faith, did not receive deliverance. They were imprisoned, afflicted, tormented, and even martyred because of their testimony of the Gospel (Hebrews 11:36-40). We focus on living faith but God also reveals His power in dying faith. This is a faith that stands true in the bad times, not just in good times when mighty deliverances are manifested.

DIRECT SATANIC ACTIVITY:

Suffering can also enter your life as a result of direct Satanic activity. This is evident in the story of Job. This book wrestles with the question, "Why do the righteous suffer?"

God's testimony of Job was that he was a righteous man (Job 1-2). Job did not suffer because he sinned, as his friends claimed. They believed if Job repented, his circumstances would change. These friends tried to make a universal application based on individual experience. It would be similar to saying that because God delivered Peter from prison He will do the same for you. This is not true. Many have been martyred in prison despite their great faith and sinless lives.

We must be careful when we view the suffering of others that we do not accuse them of sin, faithlessness, or unbelief. The Bible does teach that a sinful man reaps a bitter harvest because of sowing in fleshly corruption (Galatians 6:8). But sowing and reaping cannot be used to explain the suffering of the innocent.

Job did not suffer because of anything he did. He was a righteous man. This was God's testimony of Job, Job's testimony of himself, and his reputation before man. Behind the scenes in the spiritual world was the true cause of Job's suffering. There was a spiritual battle going on over the heart, mind, and allegiance of Job.

There is warfare going on in the spiritual world over you. That warfare is manifested in the difficult circumstances you experience in the natural world. An important truth evident in Job's suffering is that nothing can enter the life of a believer without the knowledge of God. God does not cause your suffering. It is inflicted by Satan, but its limits are set by God.

YOUR OWN SIN:

The fifth way suffering enters your life is because of your own sin. Jonah is an example of such suffering. In disobedience to God, Jonah headed the opposite direction from Ninevah where he was told to go and preach repentance. He experienced a terrible storm at sea and ended up in the belly of a great fish because of his own sin (Jonah 1-2).

Trouble should always be treated as a call to consider your ways and examine your heart before God. Like Jonah, you may be suffering because of your own sin. The Bible reveals that God chastises those who live in disobedience to His Word. Chastise means to discipline, reprove, and correct:

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:11)

God uses suffering to correct you and bring you back to His will for your life:

Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy Word. . .

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that THOU in faithfulness hast afflicted me. (Psalms 119:67,71,75)

THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS SUFFERING

But trouble is not necessarily a sign of being out of God's will. The Bible declares that "many are the afflictions of the righteous" (Psalms 34:19). When you suffer innocently and not because of your own sin, you should maintain a proper attitude towards suffering. The real test of your spirituality is how you respond in the day of distress:

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. (Proverbs 24:10)

The Bible describes the attitude you should have when you suffer as a believer within the will of God. You should not be ashamed:

If any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. . .(I Peter 4:16)

You should commit your soul (your suffering) to God, knowing He works all things for your good:

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator. (I Peter 4:19)

You should be happy when you suffer according to the will of God:

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)

Paul says you should be:

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

...being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it. . . (I Corinthians 4:12)

...in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses. . . (II Corinthians 6:4)

... be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. (II Timothy 1:8)

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. (I Thessalonians 3:3)

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (II Timothy 4:5)

You should not think it strange when you experience suffering:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partaker of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad with exceeding joy. (I Peter 4:12-13)

You are to endure hardness like a soldier:

Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 2:3)

Paul summarizes the proper attitude toward suffering in II Corinthians 4:9:

. . .though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. . . (II Corinthians 4:16-18)

Paul viewed suffering as a servant. He said it works for us when we keep our eyes on its eternal benefits instead of the problem.

POSITIVE BENEFITS OF SUFFERING

Here are some positive benefits of suffering according to God's will:

YOUR FAITH IS TESTED:

Everything in the spiritual world is based on faith. This is why the strength of your faith must be tested:

That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:7)

It is a trial of faith when you pray as Jesus did, for God to let the cup of bitterness pass, and yet it does not pass. Instead, you are forced to drink deeply of its suffering. But faith will learn that our prayers are not unanswered just because they are not answered the way we want.

YOU ARE ABLE TO COMFORT OTHERS:

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (II Corinthians 1:3-4)

When you share God's comfort with others you. . .

. . .lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:12-13)

YOU LEARN NOT TO TRUST YOUR OWN SELF:

Paul spoke of the purpose of his sufferings in Asia:

...In Asia we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life;

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead. (II Corinthians 1:8-9)

You will come to recognize that. . .

... we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Corinthians 4:7)

POSITIVE QUALITIES ARE DEVELOPED:

We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, (resulting in the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts). (Romans 5:3-4)

...after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (I Peter 5:10)

These qualities conform you to the image of Jesus, which is God's plan for you (Romans 8:28-29; Hebrews 2:10,18).

THE WORKS OF GOD ARE MANIFESTED:

When the disciples saw a man who had been blind from birth, they asked who was responsible for his condition. Was it the sin of his parents or of the man himself? Jesus answered:

Neither this man sinned nor His parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in Him. (John 9:3)

THE POWER OF GOD IS PERFECTED:

And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (II Corinthians 12:9)

THAT WHICH IS UNSTABLE IS REMOVED:

Suffering results in all that is unstable being shaken out of your life. You cease to depend on people, programs, or material things because these all fail in your time of need.

God permits this. . .

**. . .removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.
(Hebrews 12:26-27)**

During the storms of life, everything crumbles that is not built upon God and His Word (Psalm 119:89 and Matthew 7:24-27).

YOUR FOCUS IS CHANGED:

When you experience suffering you often focus your attention on cause and effect. You are concerned with what caused the difficult circumstances and the terrible effect it is having in your life. God wants to change your focus from the temporal to the eternal:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (II Corinthians 4:17-18)

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

**But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.
(I Peter 4:12-13)**

If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. . . (II Timothy 2:12)

THE OLD SELF-NATURE IS CHANGED:

God said of the nation of Moab:

**Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.
(Jeremiah 48:11)**

Because Moab had not experienced the troublesome pouring out and stirring similar to that necessary to develop good wine, the nation did not change. Because Moab was at ease and settled in prosperity the nation did not develop and mature spiritually. Therefore there was no change. His own scent remained in him.

Suffering rids you of the old self-nature. As you are stirred, troubled, and poured out, your spiritual scent changes from carnal to spiritual.

GOD PREPARES YOU FOR MINISTRY:

You want to be used by God. You desire to be more like Jesus and be a chosen vessel for His use. God answers your prayer through suffering:

Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. (Isaiah 48:10)

It is through affliction that you move beyond the calling as a child of God to become chosen of God. Affliction according to the will of God refines you for His use just as metals are refined in a furnace in the natural world.

YOU ARE PREPARED TO REIGN WITH CHRIST:

If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. . .(II Timothy 2:12)

SUFFERING BRINGS SPIRITUAL BLESSING:

Jesus said:

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)

YOU LEARN OBEDIENCE THROUGH SUFFERING:

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. . . (Hebrews 5:8)

SUFFERING TESTS THE WORD OF GOD WITHIN YOU:

The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. (Psalms 12:6)

SUFFERING HUMBLER YOU:

Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that He might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end. . . (Deuteronomy 8:15-16)

SUFFERING ENLARGES YOU:

This means you grow spiritually:

**Thou has enlarged me when I was under pressure.
(Psalms 4:1 Revised Standard Version)**

YOU COME TO KNOW GOD INTIMATELY:

You come to know God on a more intimate basis through suffering. Job, who suffered much, learned this truth and said. . .

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:5-6)

Some of us know God only second handedly. When you are experiencing the blessings of life, God is often a luxury instead of a necessity. But when you have a real need, God becomes a necessity. Job came to know God more intimately through suffering. Before he suffered, Job knew God through theology. Afterwards, he knew Him by experience.

Paul expressed a similar desire when he said:

**That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.
(Philippians 3:10)**

You can only come to know God in resurrection power through the intimate fellowship of suffering.

Throughout his trial, Job questioned God as to the cause of his suffering. It is not wrong to question God. Jesus knew the purpose for which He had come into the world was to die for the sins of all mankind. Yet in His hour of suffering He cried out, "My God, My God, WHY hast thou forsaken me?" It is what follows the questioning that is important. Jesus's next words were, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

Despite the questions, Job's response was. . .

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. . .(Job 13:15)

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. (Job 19:25-26)

After all the questioning is finished, the emphasis must change from "me" to "Thee." You must commit your suffering, with all its unanswered questions, into the hands of God.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5)

God may reveal some of the purposes in your suffering, but it is possible you will never fully understand it:

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing. . .(Proverbs 25:2)

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us. . . (Deuteronomy 29:29)

There are some secret things that belong only to the Lord. As Job, you may never understand all the purposes of your suffering:

Since the Lord is directing our steps, why try to understand everything that happens along the way? (Proverbs 20:24, The Living Bible)

When God finally talked with Job, He used several examples from nature which Job could not explain. God stressed that if Job could not understand what he saw in the natural world, he certainly could not understand that which he could not see in the spiritual world.

When Job faced God, it no longer mattered that he did not get an answer to his questions about suffering. He was no longer controlled and tormented by human reasoning. He replaced questions, not with answers, but with faith.

When you come to know God intimately through suffering, you see yourself as you really are. You no longer know God second-handedly. That face-to-face encounter with God does what arguments and discussions cannot do.

When Job stood before God, he had no new answers. He was given no new facts about his suffering. But he replaced questions with faith. Job had been in the direct presence of God, and that experience left no room for questions or doubts.

THE STORMS OF LIFE

Suffering is sometimes compared to a natural storm. When you suffer, you experience a storm spiritually speaking. This storm may affect you spiritually, mentally, physically, materially, or emotionally.

The Bible tells of a storm which the disciples of Jesus experienced. Read the story in your Bible in Mark 4:35-41. This storm was an attack of Satan. Jesus had told the disciples to go to the other side. Jesus was with them in the boat. Satan was trying to prevent them from reaching the shore because of the miraculous works that were to be done in the country of the Gadarenes (Mark 5). Jesus took authority over the storm. He rebuked the powers of the enemy. Calm returned to the sea and they continued their journey unhindered.

A storm of Satan is anything that tries to hinder you from fulfilling the will of God for your life. It is not suffering resulting from your disobedience. Neither is this kind of suffering according to the will of God. God does not want anything to hinder His plan for you. When you face this type of storm, exercise authority over the enemy. Jesus has given you power over every power of Satan.

There are two other stories of natural storms recorded in the Bible which illustrate suffering by chastisement for sin and suffering according to the will of God. Read the story of Jonah and the storm in Jonah chapter 1 and the story of Paul and the storm in Acts 27. Then study the following chart:

Jonah	Paul
Jonah put himself in the storm	Paul was in it through no fault of his own
He paid the fare to sail	He tried to prevent them from sailing
He was the cause of the storm	He was the remedy, not the cause
Jonah slept during the storm	Paul fasted and prayed
God's blessing was not with Jonah	God's blessing was with Paul
The crew was fearful	The crew was of good cheer
To be saved: Jonah must be cast out of the ship	To be saved: All must abide in the ship

There are differences between going through a storm of life within God's will and experiencing a storm out of the will of God. When you go through a storm out of the will of God, it is a situation which you create. For example, a believer who marries an unsaved person will experience trouble because they have violated a Scriptural principle.

When you cause a storm, it is because you violate God's will and are disobedient to His commands. Often you are not even aware of the seriousness of your situation. You sleep spiritually while the storm increases its fury around you. God's blessing is not on you, and those around you grow fearful. This storm is not an attack of Satan. It is chastisement from God who loves you and desires to bring you back into conformity to His will. You can confess promises of "power over the enemy" but it will not change the situation.

When you recognize a storm of suffering as one resulting from disobeying God's voice, there is only one remedy: Ask forgiveness from God!

But when you suffer according to the will of God, the situation is different. You suffer through no fault or sin of your own. You can be a remedy to the problems around you instead of a cause. Like Paul, you can assume spiritual leadership because God's blessing is on you. You can bring encouragement to others because you are a solution to the storm instead of the cause. You should not bail out of the ship or run from the trouble. You must abide in the "ship" of this type of suffering for it is the will of God.

SUFFERING IS TO BE EXPECTED

When you suffer according to the will of God, you should realize you are not alone:

...knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. (I Peter 5:9)

Storms of life are inevitable and uncontrollable, as illustrated by the parable of the two houses in Matthew 7:24-27. Storms will come to those who have built their lives upon God's Word as well as those who have not done so. The foundation of a man's life is what will determine the outcome of the storm.

Suffering is to be expected as part of the will of God:

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (II Timothy 3:12)

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. (Philippians 1:29)

...that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer. . . (II Thessalonians 1:5)

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass and ye know. (I Thessalonians 3:4)

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. (Matthew 24:9)

...they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my names sake. (Luke 21:12)

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. . . (John 15:20)

Part of the follow up plan in establishing early churches was to teach believers that they would experience suffering. This is missing in many churches today:

...They returned. . .confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

The call of Jesus to followers is one of denial and suffering:

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:38)

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

. . .Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. (Mark 8:34)

. . .come, take up the cross, and follow me. (Mark 10:21)

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23)

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:27)

WHEN THE BROOK RUNS DRY

There is an interesting Old Testament story of a man who experienced suffering within the will of God. That is the story of Elijah. Elijah experienced all types of suffering as he prophesied God's message of Israel. But the particular story we want to focus on is found in I Kings 17. Read this story in your Bible before continuing with the lesson.

When God first directed Elijah to the Brook Cherith, He provided for him miraculously. Ravens came to feed him, and the brook provided fresh water in a time when the nation was experiencing drought and famine. But eventually, the brook dried up. Why would God send Elijah to a brook He knew would dry up?

The will of God sometimes involves dry brooks. But when we experience such difficulties it does not mean we missed God's will. Elijah had not missed the will of God. The Lord led Elijah to Cherith. He enjoyed its waters. His needs were provided. He was blessed of God. But when it was time to move on, God allowed the brook to dry up. This got Elijah's attention.

Perhaps God has directed you to a "Brook Cherith" in life. You know you heard His voice of direction. He blessed you at your brook. Your needs were met and you rejoiced in God's blessings. But then the brook ran dry. Maybe you no longer experienced the flow of God's power. Perhaps people turned against you. Perhaps leadership above you dammed up the brook and stopped the flow. For whatever reason, your beautiful brook ran dry.

When the brook runs dry you can do one of two things:

1. You can sit on the bank spiritually speaking and complain about your fate. You can spend the rest of your life wondering why it happened and weeping over the dry creek bed. You can question the leading of God. Did He even bring you here in the first place? If He knew the brook was going to run dry, why would He have brought you here? Did you miss God's will? Or. . .
2. You can realize that as surely as God brought you to this brook, He is now ready to move you on to a new dimension of His will. He is gaining your attention through the dry brook.

If brooks never dried up. . .if God never let difficult times come. . .He would never get our attention. Like Elijah, we would settle right where we are and never move on to new things. We would never stray beyond the banks of security of our brook. Drying brooks lead to greater things. Before the experience at Cherith Elijah had ministered only to individuals. After this faith-building encounter, Elijah ministered to multitudes. He stood on Mt. Carmel and proclaimed before a nation of idolaters that God was the true and living God.

When you face drying brooks, your faith must not fail. You are on the banks of receiving new revelation from God. Do not question dry creek beds. Move on to the next dimension of God's plan.

SELF TEST

1. Write the Key Verse from memory.

2. What are five ways suffering may enter the life of a believer?

3. List three positive benefits of suffering according to the will of God.

4. List three of the positive attitudes the believer is to have when experiencing suffering:

5. Read the following statements. If the statement is True, write the letter T on the blank in front of it. If the statement is False, write the letter F on the blank in front of it.
- a. ____ It is never God's will for you to suffer.
 - b. ____ If you experience trouble it means you are out of the will of God.
 - c. ____ Paul was out of the will of God in the storm at sea which he experienced.
 - d. ____ When you suffer out of the will of God you are often the cause of your own problems because of disobedience.
 - e. ____ God chastises you because He loves you and desires to bring you back into conformity to His will.
 - f. ____ If Elijah had been in God's will by going to Brook Cherith, the brook never would have run dry.
 - g. ____ God sometimes uses trouble to get your attention because He wants to lead you in a new direction.
 - h. ____ The Bible teaches only sinners experience suffering.

(Answers to tests are provided at the conclusion of the final chapter in this manual.)

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Study the book of I Peter which focuses on the subject of suffering. Record what you learn about suffering from this epistle:

2. Study the following references about suffering:

HARDNESS:

II Timothy 2:3

TRIBULATION:

Acts 14:20; Romans 5:3; 12:12; I Thessalonians 3:4, II Thessalonians 1:4

PERSECUTION:

Matthew 5:10-12, 44; 13:21; Mark 4:17; Luke 11:49; 21:12; John 15:20; I Corinthians 4:12; II Corinthians 4:9; Acts 8:1; 11:19; 13:50; II Timothy 3:12; Romans 8:35; Galatians 6:12

SUFFERING:

I Peter 5:10; Philippians 1:29; 3:8; 4:12; II Corinthians 1:6; II Timothy 2:12; 3:12; Galatians 5:11; 6:12; Acts 9:16; I Thessalonians 3:4; II Thessalonians 1:5

AFFLICTION:

Psalms 34:19; 119:67,71,75; Matthew 24:9; Acts 20:23; II Corinthians 2:4; 4:17; 6:4; I Thessalonians 3:3; II Timothy 1:8; 3:11; 4:5; II Corinthians 1:6; James 5:10; Hebrews 10:32-33 and chapter 11