

HEALING THROUGH HURTING

By

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HURTS WILL COME

This present world is a tough place in which to live, but it is the only place we have to live. Therefore, we must make the best of it. A part of the problem of living in this world is the hurts, which we experience, form time to time. The question is not will we have hurts, but how will we deal with them when they come.

We are admonished in the Bible to “*suffer as a Christian*” and we will have no cause to “*be ashamed*” (I Peter 4:16). That means there is a right way and a wrong way to deal with suffering in daily life. I propose to lead you in study of the subject “**Healing Through Hurting**” to help us know how to “suffer as a Christian” and thus to help people and glorify God even in our adversities.

Let us begin with emphasizing this truth: Hurts **will come!** The patriarch by the name of Job wrote, “*Man is born into trouble, as the sparks fly upward*” (Job 5:7. Again,

he wrote, “*Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble*” (Job 14:1). That is not just the pessimistic outlook of a discouraged or defeated man. Even Jesus agreed with that teaching, saying, “*...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

Against that background of introduction to our subject, let us read I Peter 2:18-20. “*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*” The apostle Peter, under divine inspiration, recognized the reality of suffering in the lives of the people of God.

Some Suffering comes because men are unequal in human society

An admonition recommending submission is addressed by the inspired apostle to some he calls “servants” the word was used to refer to those who rendered service to a family as lesser members of a household. The admonition was that such persons “be subject” to their masters. It is a call to active submission expressed in attitude and by prompt and full obedience to all commands. Those to whom such subjection was to be rendered are called “masters.” The Greek term (**despotai**) is the basis for our English word “despot.” It means one who has absolute ownership and total power over another. The picture is a society in which slavery of man to man was common. That was why some suffered. The structure of the social order made some men superior to other men, and the lesser ones suffered.

Some of the “masters” were “good” (meaning an inner goodness of nature) and “gentle” (meaning a mild disposition). Other of the “masters” were “forward” (meaning they were surly, unfair, averse, abusive and harsh). But the lifestyle of the Christian is to do what is right whether any other person does so or not.

The quiet spirit of a Christian slave may convict the evil spirit of an unsaved master. The very fact that one is a Christian might arouse opposition to him and abuse of him. It is unfair, but we live in an imperfect world.

There will never be true equality and justice among men until God reigns in perfect righteousness over this world. In the meanwhile, the Christian is to live with respect for the established authority in human society and with a deep respect for God. Here is the principle of Christian conduct as set out in Colossians 3:22-24: “*Servants, obey in all things your master according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*”

Some suffering comes because men are unjust

It is possible that *“a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”* The picture is very graphic in the Greek text as Peter wrote it. He pictures a person who is being beaten, buffeted with the fists of another person. The tragedy is that the person who is being beaten has done nothing wrong. He is suffering even though he is innocent. His suffering is *“wrongful suffering.”*

What is the natural human reaction when one has to suffer even though he is innocent. The natural reaction is to retaliate. When struck, he will strike back. When reviled with harsh words, he will speak harsh words in return. When made to suffer, he will threaten vengeance. That is the natural human reaction to unjust suffering, but it is not the Christian reaction.

The Bible says, *“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”* (Romans 8:9). Therefore, the Christian does not respond to unjust suffering like a non-Christian would respond.

The Christian response is an expression of the grace of God. (The term *“thankworthy”* in the King James Version- *“for this thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully”*) means *“a sign of grace.”* The Christian manifests the grace of God in his sufferings. He endures hurts without rebellion, sullenness of a vindictive spirit. He follows the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...by whose stripes ye were healed”* (I Peter 2:24).

Such a response to suffering is contrary to human nature. That is why it is a witness for Jesus Christ. Some of the greatest testimonies arise out of hurts. Watch for an opportunity to show your new life in Christ when you suffer.

Some suffering comes because we err

Yes, the truth is that we suffer in some instances because of our personal mistakes. God warns, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”* (Galatians 6:7,8).

There is no praise or good report due to one who endures suffering he brought upon himself by his own wrongdoing. Of course not. One simply gets what he deserves. But it is an altogether different thing when one who is innocent suffers and bears it patiently. That is an expression of grace.

Hurting must be borne with *“conscience toward God”* on the part of a Christian. *“Conscience toward God”* could mean *“with a good conscience in respect to God.”* I am inclined to think of a different interpretation, however.

To suffer with *“conscience toward God”* means to be conscious of God during the

trial. Know that God is fully aware of what is happening. Know that He is concerned about you in that situation. Know that He will undertake at the proper time to set things right. Know that it is not necessary for you to retaliate and try to punish the wrongdoer. Leave it to God. That kind of spirit is “acceptable with God” (verse 20). Trust God and do right. He will work it out.

HURTS CAN HELP US

Would it surprise you to know that God has planned that you have hurts in your life? Would it surprise you to know that God has decreed those hurts would work out to your good and to His glory?

It is true that God has ordained that our life here on earth will pass through times of stress and trial and that such times would work out good. Remember that “all sunshine in nature makes a desert.” The same is true in our lives.

Hurts can work out to our personal growth

I look back over my personal spiritual pilgrimage. The times of my greatest growth in grace have been when circumstances were flowing against me and I was shut up to God alone.

I am in a ministry where I must trust God to provide for us financially week by week. There was a time in my life when I would not have been able to trust His so without constant worry. But God brought me into a financial crisis some years ago which taught me a wonderful truth. God taught me that my source of livelihood was not the salary I drew from a church as pastor, or from a business investment, but that He alone was my source. I learned to trust Him then and that enables me to trust Him now. The time of that financial crisis was very painful for me, but now I thank God for leading me through it. It has worked out to my good and to His glory.

Do not rebel against the times of testing. Instead, *“greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (I Peter 1:6-8).

The athlete strengthens his muscles by using them. He lifts weights; he runs around the track; he struggles against his competitor in the game. It is by exercise of the muscles that the strength increases.

So must the Christian engage in any or every situation, which comes that he, may grow up to fuller maturity in Christ. We grow through our hurting. Praise God!

Hurts can give us opportunity to witness for Jesus Christ.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an

example, that we should follow in his steps” (I Peter 2:21).

The Christian is not called to suffer, for all people hurt in one way or another. The call is that the Christian suffers as a Christian. That is, the Christian is called to reflect the spirit of Christ when he suffers.

Let the Christian not count it a misfortune when he hurts. Let him rather rejoice that he has that opportunity to manifest the reality of Jesus Christ in his personal life. The apostle Paul wrote, *“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).* Paul looked upon that as an opportunity, which was *“given”* to Christians.

It is common that the innocent suffer because of the sins of the guilty. The innocent children of an alcoholic parent suffer for sins of which they are not guilty. The innocent victims of an unscrupulous businessman suffer because of his sins of greed and illicit business practices. Even Jesus Christ, *“who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth” (I Peter 2:22),* suffered *“the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (I Peter 3:18).*

We would never have known the grace of God if Jesus had not borne our sins in His own body on the cross. But what a witness to that grace He gave when he dies there. *“Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:4-6).* *What a testimony of grace.*

There is a testimony in hurting when the suffering is born with a spirit of love and submission. But anger, resentment, threats, retaliation, or rebellion is not a witness. When you suffer, suffer as a Christian. Then your testimony will be clear and strong for Jesus Christ.

Hurts born like a Christian should follow the example of Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught us three great things about the sufferings He endured. We must learn those three lessons.

Jesus suffered because He was the Christ. His being chosen of God, the only begotten Son of God did not exempt Him from suffering. Why should a Christian think that being a child of God will exempt him? He should not, because it does not. Jesus said that as Christ He should suffer just as the ancient prophets had foretold (Luke 24:44-47). The Christian might well suffer because he is a Christian just as Christ suffered because He was Christ.

Jesus suffered for the sake of others. He was guilty of no sin, much less on so serious as to merit His death by crucifixion. Yet, that was why He came to the world. *“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).* When the time of His crucifixion drew near,

and He knew it was at hand, He said, “*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour*” (I Peter 3:18), “*who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*” (I Peter 2:24).

Jesus’ sufferings set an example for those who follow Him. The Bible says “*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps*” (I Peter 2:21). That word “example” is a most interesting term. It is used to describe the method of instruction used in teaching children how to write in ancient times. The teacher would write a word at the top of the page and the child would try to reproduce the word in his own handwriting. The word the teacher wrote at the top was called the “example.” That is what Jesus has done. He set the example in His suffering to show us how to bear hardships. We are to copy Him. And how did He bear His trials? He “*did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth...when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*” (I Peter 2:22-24).

Jesus said, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord” (Matthew 10:24,25).

HURTS CAN HELP OTHERS

Jesus Christ has “*suffered for sins*” (I Peter 3:18). But it was not for His own sins that He suffered. He “*did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*” (I Peter 2:22). His suffering for sin was for sins, which He did not commit. He suffered because you and I had sinned.

That truth teaches us something very important. It teaches us that since the Lord Jesus has suffered in our stead and on our behalf, we should be willing to bear hardships on behalf of one another. “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*”

Peter Quotes Isaiah 53.

Those sufferings of Jesus were ordained. They were foretold by the prophet of God named Isaiah seven centuries before they were experienced by our Lord. It is quite evident that when Peter wrote his description of the sufferings of Jesus, he wrote with

Isaiah's description of it in mind. In fact, there are several direct quotations from Isaiah 53, which are used by Peter in I Peter 2:21-24. Let us examine them.

I Peter 2:22 reads, "*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*" That is a reference to Isaiah 53:9 which reads, "*He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*" Both passages are testifying to the same truth: there was no wrongdoing in Jesus Christ. He did not sin by action (*He "did no sin"*). He did not sin by attitude (He had no "*guile*" nor "*deceit*" in Him). When He suffered, He suffered as those absolutely sinless Ones. And yet He suffered willingly in behalf of those who were guilty.

I Peter 2:23 reads, "*When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*" That is an evident reference to Isaiah 53:7, which reads, "*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*" The emphasis in the text is that Jesus Christ did not speak to declare his innocence or to threaten vengeance. It is natural for a person who suffers unjustly to both declare his innocence and to threaten revenge. But not our Lord. He came into the world for the purpose of giving His life a ransom for men. He did not draw back when the time came for Him to suffer "*the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*" (I Peter 3:18).

I Peter 2:24 reads, "*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed,*" That is based upon the statement of the prophet Isaiah recorded in Isaiah 53:12,5: "*Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors...But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*"

There is such a world of grace in that statement that we cannot fathom it. It reminds me of the poet who wrote, "Oh, He's done so much for me; Oh, He's done so much for me. If I should try throughout eternity, I could never, never tell you what He's done for me." And so it is for you and me. We call it "grace" and "mercy" and "Love" because we know no other or better way to describe the miracle of God's moving to save sinners like us.

I Peter 2:25 reads, "*For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*" That is an allusion to the prophetic statement recorded in Isaiah 53:6, which reads, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" The emphasis of the text is that at the very time we were going astray, the Lord

laid our iniquity upon His only begotten Son. The Son of God bore our sin guilt as if it were His own, though He was totally innocent, and thus healing was effected for us.

Lessons from Peter's quotation of Isaiah 53.

There are five references to the prophetic picture of the crucifixion of Jesus (recorded in Isaiah 53) in the writings of the apostle Peter (I Peter 2:21-25). I think those references are there for several purposes.

First, the references of Peter to Isaiah 53 prove beyond any doubt that God gave a description of the crucifixion of Jesus at least seven centuries before it happened. Therefore, the crucifixion of Jesus was no accident. It was planned of God from the beginning. Jesus stood as a *"lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Revelation 13:8). *"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you"* (I Peter 1:20). The prophet Isaiah spoke of the suffering of Christ for sinners when he wrote chapter 53 of this book. Second, the references of Peter to Isaiah 53 teach that there is a vital unity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. What the Old Testament predicted, the New Testament fulfills. Someone has said, "The Old Testament is the New Testament enfolded; the New Testament is the Old Testament unfolded." The revelation is one; the message is one. Christian scriptures include both Old and New Testaments.

Third, the references of Peter to Isaiah 53 teach that we can continue the ministry of Jesus Christ by suffering in behalf of others as He suffered in our behalf. That does not mean we can effect atonement for sin by our suffering, Jesus offered the only sacrifice ever needed for sin. He suffered *"once for all...But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:10,12,14). But we can bring to others the benefits of His sacrifice as we give ourselves to serving them in His name, even when it entails hurting on our part. It is not when a Christian suffers that he bears witness to new life in Christ. It is when he *"suffers as a Christian"* that witness is borne (I Peter 4:16).

"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. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Peter 4:12-16).

HURTS CAN BE BORNE

The Christian is not immune from trouble. He will have hurts just as any person does. But in bearing his hurting in the spirit of Christ, he can grow personally and be a witness to others of the reality of new life in Jesus Christ.

How should a Christian react when he is made to suffer? How should he react when his suffering is unjust? How should he react when the one who is making him hurt is in the wrong? Jesus has set an example which answers each of those questions. You find the answers set out in I Peter 2:22-24, which speaks of Jesus' suffering in these words: *"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."*

That test sets out five guidelines which help the Christian bear injustices, wrongs, and hardships. Let us review those guidelines and apply them to our personal lives.

Do not sin when you suffer.

When Jesus suffered, he *"did no sin"* (verse 22). Reference is to deeds of wrongdoing. The wickedness of others did not stir up wicked deeds in our Lord. He stayed right even when others were wrong.

Unjust suffering can stir us up to feelings of anger and resentment. It can arouse plans and acts of vengeance. It can cause us to wish evil upon the person who brings the hardship upon us. It can, but it must not!

The wife whose husband is unreasonable must manifest the spirit of Christ under his unjust words and actions. The child whose parent is harsh must not disobey God in retaliation against the authority of the parent. The employee whose employer is wicked must not be wicked as a way to get even with him.

The principle is clear. Do not let the sins of others lead you into personal acts of sin. You can show the Christian spirit by refusing to be caught up in the sins of others.

Be open and transparent when you suffer.

The Lord Jesus had *"no guile found in his mouth"* when He suffered (verse 22). He did not pretend to join the enemy in order to curry their favor. He did not pretend agreement with them until He could get even with them. His words were always straight and true. His words were always straight and true. He spoke neither threats nor lies to make His suffering easier. Not at all. And neither must we.

A wife with a non-Christian husband who resents her commitment to Christ may be tempted to adopt his vocabulary and his lifestyle to make things easier on her. It must not be. Let her stand by the principles of right, regardless of what others may say or do. The Christian must do right even when all other people do wrong. The sins of

others are no excuse for the child of God to sin. On the contrary, it is at such a time that the Christian witness can shine the brightest.

Do not retaliate when you suffer.

Jesus set the example for us here also. *“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.”*(verse 23). His example is so contrary to human nature.

Unregenerate human nature follows this principle: *“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”* (Matthew 5:38). You hurt me and I will hurt you. You strike me and I will strike you. You speak evil to me and I will speak evil to you. But that is evidence of the unregenerate nature, not the nature of the child of God.

The child of God follows the principle, *“Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain”* (Matthew 5:39-41).

Retaliation is not appropriate for the Christian. Never! He is not to take personal actions to get even with anyone. He is to suffer as a Christian.

“Revile” is a hard word. It means harsh railing; it is rebuke plus bite. And Jesus endured it over and over, repeatedly, without retaliating. That is the example which He set for you and me.

We sometimes explain our failure in patience or forgiveness by saying a certain thing was “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” I ask the question, “Why was that camel so loaded that a straw could break his back?” Keep the spirit of forgiveness, do not harbor resentments, and you will never reach that point in your relationship with people around you.

Do not plan revenge when you suffer.

Jesus set the example in that “when he suffered, he threatened not” (verse 23). Do not let injustices arouse anger in you. Feel sympathy for the one who is in the wrong.

Suppose you were standing in a store looking at certain merchandise. Suddenly some one bumped into you with such force that you were thrust against the shelf and suffered some slight injury. Your first reaction may be anger at a person who was so careless. But suppose you turned about to see a white cane in the hand of the person who had bumped into you, indicating that person was blind. Your anger would fade quickly and you would feel sympathy instead. So let it be with any person who does you and injustice.

The person who would make you suffer must be suffering in his own spirit. He is miserable and so makes you miserable as a result. Feel sympathy for him. Do not plan ways to get revenge. The divine principle is expressed in Romans 12:19 *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

Leave it for God to settle when you suffer.

Jesus set the example again as He *“committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”* (verse 23). Turn the matter over to God. Let Him take charge of it. Leave it to Him to set things right. He always judges righteously and will see that right triumphs.

You cannot improve on that. Pray much about your sufferings, not in self pity but with sincere concern about the person who makes you suffer. God will work it out.

Bear it for others when you suffer.

Once again, we find no better example than Jesus to illustrate this principle. *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed”* (verse 24).

Read Isaiah 53, looking for the element of substitution: *“Surely He hath borne OUR grief, and carried OUR sorrows...But HE was wounded for OUR transgressions, He was bruised for OUR iniquities: the chastisement or OUR peace was upon Him; and with HIS stripes WE are healed. ALL WE like sheep have gone astray; WE have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on HIM the iniquity of US all: (verse 4-6).*

If you would bring healing to your marriage partner, to you parent or child, to your business associate, to your friend or neighbor, bear his sins like Jesus bore your sins. Do not sin in deed when you suffer. Do not sin in word when you suffer. Do not return evil for evil when you suffer. Do not plan revenge when you suffer. Leave it to God when you suffer. Bear you sufferings for the sake of the person to whom you bring healing. Then you will show yourself to be a Christian.

HURTS CAN HEAL

“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (I Peter 3:18). *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed, For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls”*(I Peter 2:24,25).

Those verses of Scripture set forth in three blessed statements the consequences of Jesus' death in behalf of sinners. Those three statements are: *“that He might bring us to God...by whose stripes ye were healed...now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”* They set out for us the benefits to be derived when the innocent suffer in behalf of the guilty.

You and I, as children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, can share in the blessed ministry of healing by bearing hurts as Jesus did. His sufferings procured atonement for sinners. Our sufferings will not effect atonement, but will enable people to see the

reality of Jesus Christ living in one's life and will be used by the Holy Spirit to bring people to an awareness of their personal need of Him. Yes, we can bless and help others if we bear our hurts aright and "*suffer as a Christian*" (I Peter 4:16).

Are you willing to bear blame, endure insults, accept harsh words without anger or threats, and otherwise manifest the spirit of Jesus when He suffered for sinners? If you are willing to do so, you can be a great witness for Him.

I know that is asking a lot of you. But it is not asking more than you can do. The question is not "How much I can bear?" The question is, "How much can I love?" The Holy Spirit caused the apostle Paul to write, "*Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind, charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth . . .*" (I Corinthians 13:4-8). Is that the kind of love you have? It is if you are a Christian, "*because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*" (Romans 5:5). So I say the question is not, "How much can you bear?" It is, "How much do you love?" If you love with the love of God which is in your heart, you can bear any hurt in order to bring your loved one to personal faith and commitment to Jesus Christ.

Your hurting can effect healing in the person you love. Believe it! Practice it! God has said it is so.

1. Hurts can work healing as the innocent suffer for the guilty.

Jesus was innocent when he "*bore our sins in his own body on the tree*" (verse 24). "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made of righteousness of God in him*" (II Corinthians 5:12). That is how the sufferings of the innocent Jesus have worked out to the healing of us guilty sinners.

Jesus' sufferings were penal. That is to say, they were in direct portion and in specific payment of the penalty due on our sin. His sufferings were more than an example of love, a testimony of commitment, an act of obedience. They were the judgment and punishment due on sinful rebellion against a holy God. That is why it is said that "*God made him to be sin for us.*" What he suffered was what we deserved to suffer. By His payment of our sin debt, we can be forgiven.

The Bible makes it quite clear that we have sinned: "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). That should have left us hopeless and helpless. But not so. We can be "*justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24). How can that be? Because in the sufferings of the innocent Jesus for the guilty sinner, God has made "*a propitiation through faith in his blood*" (Romans 3:25). Thus God can be just and yet justify the person who trusts Jesus (Romans 3:26). We can have forgiveness in spite of our sins. The innocent Jesus has suffered and died in behalf of guilty sinners.

As you and I bear the hurts brought on us today by unbelieving relatives, neighbors, friends or associates, we manifest the same spirit as Jesus. That is an excellent opportunity for us to show the Spirit of God living in us and to recommend Jesus to others. It is so natural for a person to defend himself when he is hurting (by attacking the one who causes the hurt) that to manifest the Spirit of God at such a time is one of the greatest testimonies we could give.

The Bible testifies of Jesus, *“by his stripes ye were healed.”* That word *“stripes”* means a bruise, scar, or cut left by a lash. It pictures one enduring a terrible beating, bearing it in behalf of another person. Someone has said of the sufferings of Jesus, *“The physician bore the pain and the patient received healing.”* Let it be so in your life. Bear sufferings in the manner a Christian should and you will bring healing to those who hurt you.

II. Hurts can work restoration of those who are wandering.

“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (I Peter 2:25).

It is common that spiritual Christians suffer as a result of wayward ones. The apostle Paul likened his pain for the erring Galatians believers to the travail of birth pains (Galatians 4:19). Some of you have experienced that with your loved ones.

Those who are *“as sheep going astray”*-with no guide, no guardian, and no goal -can be turned. By the influence and burned of the faithful they can be turned around, turned toward, and returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. They are not forever gone. Let love follow them, pursuing them with the kindness of a broken heart, and they can be reclaimed. Never give up hope.

I remember a Christian lady who prayed and wept over her wayward son. Once and again she asked Christian friends to pray for him. One day a friend said, *“Why don’t you give that boy up. You know he is gone.”* She replied. *“I cannot give him up; he is my son.”* And the lad was restored to a life of purity and dignity. Never, never, never give up.

Let the heart of love pursue the wayward, willing to endure any pain if only it will bring them back. Do not consider how much you can bear. Ask yourself how much you love.

Some of you who share these words are hurting today. Some of you are hurting because of the abuse of an unloving partner in marriage, some because of a rebellious son or daughter, some because of a contrary friend or neighbor, some because of wicked business associates, and others for other reasons. But bear your hurt as a Christian, in the spirit which Jesus manifested as He bore our sins, and you can be an influence in turning the sinner to the Savior.

Keep your spirit right. You cannot change the other person, but you can make yourself what you ought to be. As you show by example your willingness to be wronged rather

than to hurt another person, your testimony will shine. And by the stripes which your hurting brings to you, someone else can be healed.