

The suffering we see, or personally experience, in this world can lead to numerous questions about God and our lives. In Colossians 1:24-25, Paul makes a statement that some have taken out of context, where they believe our sufferings are added to the work of Jesus; that is blatantly false. Jesus' work is complete, but that doesn't mean all suffering is removed from the world.

Reflect on some of the hardships you've experienced. How have they led to questions about God and/or deeper intimacy with Jesus?

How does Paul share in the sufferings of Jesus WITHOUT taking away from the cross?

In "apocalyptic" literature or movies, everything gets progressively worse; that idea is also present in the Old Testament. The Biblical hope points to the day when God makes all things new. There are promises throughout the Bible that all of our issues are going to come to a head when the Messiah shows up.

How does the reality of Jesus' suffering transform your own suffering?

Paul is rejoicing in his sufferings for the Colossians because he is able to use that to point to the "woes of the Messiah" and the day when Jesus makes all things new. This is not an attack on the cross; it is *eschatological*. It looks toward the end, the "already, not yet." That means that Jesus has come and ushered *in* the kingdom; He has already paid the price. He has made us new and righteous...but...outwardly we are still wasting away. There will be a day where ALL is redeemed and restored.

What do you most look forward to when you anticipate full restoration?

Why is Paul rejoicing for the Colossians' sake, that he is *able* to suffer?

Our sufferings point to Jesus in the midst of our hardship. When a man or woman of God rejoices in their sufferings, it becomes a testimony to the goodness of Christ. It confounds the world to the point where people take notice.

What current life circumstances can allow others a greater view of Jesus?

Eternity culminates with Jesus and an imperishable body will never again be weak or sick. We will dwell with Him and He will dwell with us. Jesus returns to call His people to Himself and to present us to God, holy and blameless before Him. Paul uses his sufferings to point to that good day, not detract from the cross.