



## Suffering For Growth

Have you ever run a race? Maybe your family has a yearly tradition of running the local Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving. Or you have spent a season training for something like a 5k, half-marathon, or marathon. I ran a half-marathon once. During that one race, I thought to myself, "what am I doing?!". Hardship and experiencing hard things makes you question a lot. Difficulties in life have physical benefits. Medically and scientifically, you must have some form of resistance to grow. God uses hardships to grow too.

Paul reminds us, "we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Israel suffered for four hundred years. Generations had come and gone under the bondage of slavery. Their history is about enduring the hardships. Why would God have them experience these stories? Why does God have us experience these trials too? These are important questions that define the human experience. One of many answers is growth happens in challenging moments—the growth of character, growth of trust, growth of faith, and growth of belief. As Israel starts to be lead out to the wilderness, God needs to shape his people. God knows how to grow us into maturity. It's fascinating that Israel didn't get automatically lead to the promised land. God knew that they would see the struggle of the promised land and change their minds. So God leads them to the wilderness. Exodus 13.17-18 reads, "When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, 'Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.' But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle."

Here are some scriptures about hardships, suffering, pain, and growth. Know that the God who created the world in seven days knows you, knows what season you are in, and wants to do it with you.

*James 1:2-4*

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

*Romans 12:1-2*

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

*Romans 5:3-5*

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

*Romans 8:17-18*

and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.