

7. How should believers respond in general to these various sources and kinds of suffering?

It would seem that as believers we need to do at least three things:

First, we need to trust in God's faithfulness as we commit ourselves into His sovereign, powerful, dependable hands.

Thank God, He will be faithful to His own Word! All of our doubts and apprehensions and anxieties and fears and weaknesses cannot shake, let alone move, the firm, solid rock of God's faithfulness. Job was able to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Second, we need to trust in God's love even in the midst of pain and suffering.

Thank God, He does not afflict or grieve the sons of men willingly (Lamentations 3:33).

Thank God that in all of our afflictions we know that He is afflicted because He loves us and has taken our care upon Himself. (Isaiah 63:9)

And thank God that no kind or degree or amount of suffering can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

Third, we need to pray constantly for God's purpose to be accomplished in our lives.

If this can best be done by deliverance from suffering, good. If this can best be done by the provision of grace to bear suffering, good. In either case, God's will is best for us.

It may be difficult to say this with any force or conviction when we are in the grip of pain, so we ought to say it now and say it often, so that when we are in the midst of suffering, it will echo and re-echo in our hearts!

May God grant us the grace to do these things (trust in God's faithfulness, trust in God's love, pray for God's purposes in our lives), and to be able to say with the hymnwriter:

Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
 Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
 Leave to Thy God to order and provide;
 In every change He faithful will remain.
 Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly Friend
 Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.