

HOW DOES HEAVEN HELP OUR PERSPECTIVE ON SUFFERING?

1. God will lessen our suffering by virtue of the clear comparison of how long we must suffer in comparison with how long we will experience incomparable bliss in the presence of a perfect & loving God. This may be one of the implications of James 1:12 which says, *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”* Eternity dwarfs our suffering to insignificance! C.S. Lewis says, *“Scripture and tradition habitually put the joys of heaven into the scale against the sufferings of earth, and no solution of the problem of pain that does not do so can be called a Christian one.”*
2. God will also lessen our suffering by rewarding our actions and our virtue in this life. In the Bema Seat judgment of Christ we will be rewarded for our life here as Christians (2 Corinthians 5:10). The positive impact of our lives as ambassadors for Christ will be clearly seen as “gold, silver, precious stones” or “wood, hay & stubble”.
3. God will mitigate our suffering because our faith will result in praise from Jesus Christ when he returns. 1 Peter 1:6,7 says *“faith—of greater worth than gold, which perished even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus is revealed”*. This seems to be the clear idea of 1 Peter that there is an eternal pay-off for hanging onto our faith during trials.
4. God will grant us a place of honor for times when we have suffered for Him. Philippians 1:29: *“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.”* We’ve been given the blessing to suffer for His sake. Suffering for the heavenly kingdom of God—taking one for the spiritual kingdom of God is a tremendous honor!
5. Our personal love and closeness to Christ which we have cultivated throughout this life will be experienced at a depth, closeness and richness which we have no scale to measure. Our joy in Him; our love for Him; our feeling for Him; our faith in Him; our worship of Him will transcend anything that we might have experienced in this life. The very thought of those things are used to cultivate strength through suffering. He is worth it all! So many times of close praise and worship to the Lord Jesus will be magnified to the point beyond all present understanding—I can hardly wait!