I. Preliminary considerations.
   A. This doctrine will focus on the believer and the divine viewpoint respecting his sufferings.
   B. The Christian faces the same sufferings or tests that are common to all men (1Cor.10:13).
   C. The difference is that the positive believer's sufferings and tests all work together for his good (Rom.8:28).
   D. While in the midst of them, the believer can have inner peace (Jn.16:33), and happiness (Jam.1:2).
   E. Some of the categories of suffering include:
      1. Persecution.
      2. Living grace testing.
      3. Health tests.
      4. Various dangers.
      5. Temptation.
   F. See Doctrine of Testing.

II. Suffering cannot separate us from God's plan (Rom.8:35-39). No common human problem (CHP) can remove us from God's plan, including death.

III. The sufferings of Jesus Christ (Isa.53:3,4):
   A. Were the subject of prophecy (Acts.3:18; 17:2,3; cp. Mt.16:21; Lk.24:26,46).
   B. Include His unique sufferings as related to bearing sins (Heb.2:9,10; 13:12).
   C. Include His resistance to all manner of temptation (Heb.2:18; 4:15).
   D. Include such things as:
      1. Rejection by His own people (Isa.53:3; cp. Jn.1:11).
      2. Could not tap into His deity for His own benefit (Phil.2:58).
      3. Betrayal by a close associate (Ps.41:9; cp. Mt.10:4).
      5. Accused by false witnesses (Ps.35:11; cp. Mt.26:59-61).
      7. Mocked (Ps.22:7,8; cp. Mt.27:31).
      8. Scourged (Mt.27:26).
     10. Crucified with thieves (Isa.53:12; cp. Mt.27:38).
     11. Rejected by His own family (Jn.7:5).
17. Suffered thirst, for which gall and vinegar were offered Him (Ps.69:21; cp. Mt.27:34; cp. Jn.19:28).
E. Christ is our supreme example under suffering (1Pet.2:21,23).

IV. Suffering is a regular part of the Christian's experience in the cosmos (Jn.16:33 "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world").
A. Jesus taught His disciples to expect it (Jn.15:17-20).
B. Paul briefed new converts on the eventuality of it (Acts.14:22 "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'").
C. There is both a variety and an abundance of CHPs for the believer in time (referred to as Phase 2 of the plan of God; Ps.34:19; 2Cor.1:5; 1Pet.1:6).
D. The Christian way of life also has various blessings that parallel our CHPs (Mk.10:28-31).
E. We will be persecuted for the truth (1Thess.1:6; 2Tim.3:12).

V. All suffering and testing are accompanied by comfort and encouragement from the Lord (2Cor.1:4-7).
A. The more you face sufferings that are undeserved, the more you can expect to be encouraged by God (2Cor.1:3).
B. But you must be in fellowship and looking for the many forms in which this comfort comes to you.
C. Obviously, complete deliverance from the test brings comfort, but God also comforts you while under the test itself (2Cor.1:8-11; 1Thess.3:6-8).

VI. Undeserved suffering is the category of suffering that brings blessing to the believer.
A. First Peter is the epistle of undeserved suffering, as seen in the expressions:
   3. Prove zealous for what is good (1Pet.3:13).
   5. Share the sufferings of Christ (1Pet.4:13).
   7. Suffer according to the will of God (1Pet.4:19).
B. The epistle deals with their persecutions by those from the outside (mainly verbal slander).
C. Such suffering finds favor with God (1Pet.2:19,20).
D. The believer is not to fear such attacks (1Pet.3:14,15).
E. He is not to be ashamed (1Pet.4:16).
F. Deserved suffering brings no blessing or cursing or divine discipline (1Pet.2:20; 3:17; cp. 4:15).
G. Believers are not to be surprised when negative volition persecutes and maligns them (1Pet.4:12; 1Jn.3:13).

VII. The mental attitude toward suffering that the adjusted believer is to possess.
A. Inner peace (Jn.16:33; Phil.4:6,7).
B. Inner happiness (2Cor.7:4; Jam.1:2; 1Pet.4:13).
C. Must be willing to do so (Rom.12:12; Phil.1:29; 2Tim.2:3,9).

VIII. Suffering produces the virtue of patience (Rom.5:3,4; Jam.1:2-4).
A. Suffering and surpassing grace blessing in eternity (SG3).
B. Suffering and the tests of the Christian way of life which we pass accumulate P3 reward (1Pet.1:3-7; Jam.1:12).
C. Those who remain positive under the various testings and sufferings associated with the body of death reap surpassing grace reward in P3 (2Cor.4:17,18).
D. Our present sufferings pale when compared to our P3 glory (Rom.8:18; 2Cor.4:17; 1Pet.5:10).
E. To the extent you are willing to acclimate to your allotted CHPs, you will inherit P3 reward (1Pet.4:13; cp. Rom.8:17).

IX. Some things to keep in mind.
A. The Lord knows your sufferings and will deliver you from them all (Ex.3:7; Ps.9:12; 35:10).
B. God will not put upon you tests you are not ready to handle (1Cor.10:13).
C. He will supply you with the grace to handle any test (Prov.3:34).
D. Failure to handle persecution and testing explains why some peel off from doctrine (Mt.13:20,21).
E. You will not face unique tests (1Pet.5:9; cp, 1Thess.2:14; 2Cor.1:7).
F. Suffering renders you worthy of God's kingdom (2Thess.1:5).
G. Your sufferings help complete the measure of suffering of the corporate body of Christ necessary before the Church's glorification (Col.1:24).
H. Avoid fear and soul fainting (Rom.8:15-17; Heb.10:32ff).