

“THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST’S SUFFERING”

PHILIPPIANS 1:25-30; 3:8-11

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

Theme of Sermon: As Christians we are called to suffer with Jesus Christ. Through suffering, Jesus Christ defeated all of His and our enemies, and we are to stand firm in Him focused on His Gospel.

The opposition and suffering that Jesus experienced for believers, culminating in His death for sinners, is to be expected and embraced by all Christians because of their Holy Spiritual union with Him and because their citizenship is in heaven and not in this world.

Time is running out? Paul on death row...

Time may be running out for the Apostle Paul. He is on “death row” in chains for Jesus Christ and the Gospel is advancing, but his “salvation-deliverance” (1:19) may be death as a martyr for Jesus (we know that is indeed what happened).

...And the Apostle Paul sits imprisoned REJOICING!

REJOICING!!

How can Paul be rejoicing? He knows “God is able”...

^{ESV} 2 Timothy 1:11-12: ...For which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher,¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.

Paul was imprisoned for his impassioned and faithful testimony to the Risen-Ascended Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords- -the Great Cosmic Caesar of all caesars!

Paul had been faithful to His Lord in both His words and deeds, and this would eventually cost him his life. The first part of Philippians is focused on Paul and his imprisonment and more importantly the advance of the Gospel, but now Paul focuses on the church and how his example should be a reality in their lives too.

Hundreds of miles down the *Via Egnatia* from the Praetorium, the Roman prison at Caesar’s Palace where Paul was being held, and in his letter, he now turns his focus on the Philippians in 1:27-30. The Apostle Paul turns to teach and instruct the Philippians of how to endure the same suffering under great persecution.

How will the Church of Philippi endure the same suffering and conflict?

ESV Philippians 1:29-30: For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

On the eve of the hideous and horrendous anti-Christian Neronian persecutions of the AD mid-60s, the Philippians had to be prepared to suffer (Nero Caesar's persecutions).

What can we learn? This letter would have reached the Philippians just months before these Christians would experience the most severe persecutions of early Christianity under Nero's reign: Confessing Christians drenched in tar/pitch and burned on stakes, thrown to the lions, made sport of, as they suffered and were killed.

Prayerfully prepare.
Die daily to Jesus, live for Him.

The Philippian Church must understand that their faithfulness to Jesus was costly; it might and probably will cost them their very lives.

Isn't this an important truth of the Epistle to the Philippians?

True rejoicing and deep joy in the Christian life is extremely costly. Joy costs much- -it demands our full sacrifice of our lives to Jesus Christ, as we entrust ourselves to Him in whatever circumstance he calls us to!

The Philippians had deeply to understand from their hearts: "To live is Christ, to die is gain." The church at Philippi had to prepare to stand firm resisting fear of man, and expect suffering as part of their calling as Christians.

ESV Philippians 1:29-30: For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Two Things to focus on today:

- 1. Heavenly Citizenship in a Heavenly Colony**
- 2. Suffering in and with Jesus Christ**

1) Heavenly Citizenship in a Heavenly Colony

Believe: *Believers are citizens of heaven; our ultimate allegiance is to Christ and His Gospel. Do: Our citizenship must be evident in our lives*

*in words and deeds.. **Feel:** Rejoice! What Gospel hope we have that salvation and redemption has come to sinners like us, and granted us life, immorality and citizenship in God's "House"!*

We should remember that Philippi was a Roman colony, a "mini-Rome". If you lived in Philippi, then you had citizenship in Rome; you were culturally and religiously "Roman"; you lived and dressed as Romans; you believed as Romans.

If you lived in Philippi, you were on the "rolls of Rome" and live by Rome's rules and laws.

Paul wants the Philippians to know that although this once formed their identity, they are now to be focused on their identity at a Heavenly Colony in the Roman Colony of Philippi.

The Christians must understand FIRST (that is concerning priority) that their citizenship was in heaven; they were to live as those "worthy of the Gospel of Christ" (1:27) and this meant that in citizenship they were by grace to be "heavenly"; culturally they were to be "heavenly; they lived and dressed and believed as "heavenly citizens".

If you live in Jesus Christ, you are on the "rolls of Heaven" and live by Heaven's rules and laws.

ESV Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...

Why do I say this? In 1:27, the ESV translates: "**Live a life worthy of the Gospel...**" But the word used here [*politeu, esqe*] means **citizenship**. The more literal translation would be something like: "Live as citizens as those who have received the Gospel by grace."

Or, "Let your worthy citizenship show" or "Be the heavenly citizens that you are- -let this show in your life, in both your words and deeds".

"Behave as citizens of heaven in a manner worthy of the Gospel..."

The emphasis would be on the Philippians' citizenship as Citizens of Heaven. Before their faith in Jesus Christ, the Philippians prided themselves on being "Roman". They are to pride themselves now on being "Christian".

The Philippians' first identity is to be CHRIST: "To live is Christ..."

Theologian and biblical commentator J. A. Motyer writes: "The life *worthy of the Gospel* is an inescapable obligation: it is the essence of the homeland where the Lamb standing, as though it had been slain (Rev. 5:6), forms the focal point of life."

But this kind of allegiance would cost them dearly.

If they were to be faithful, they must learn to rejoice in their circumstances; they must learn that “To live is Christ, to die is death” or they would succumb to fear of man.

“No fear, but faithfulness.”

Paul taught the Philippians that they should not be frightened and/or intimidated by their unbelieving, persecuting opponents (1:28).

They should understand that it was a gift-privilege of God to suffer “in” and “with” and “for” Jesus Christ (1:29).

They must stand firm, as “one man” with “one singular focus and goal” for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1:27).

The Philippians had lived their entire lives proud of the fact that they lived as citizens of Rome; they lived their entire lives proud of the fact that they had lived as “one man” with “one singular focus and goal” of living for Caesar.

This had changed.

Their allegiance was now to Christ and to His Church.

How did they become citizens of Heaven? Through the Gospel of grace.

How did they become citizens through the Gospel of grace?

Through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ for their sins. Jesus bore their sins on the cross, and underwent death for believers- - at the hands of wicked men- -and they are to understand if they are saved by the suffering of Christ, they must also live a life of suffering in and with Christ.

What kind of suffering?

There are all kinds of sufferings in Jesus Christ. Today’s scripture passage calls for an understanding of a particular type of suffering: ***conflict and persecution because of faithfulness in word and deed to the Gospel of Jesus.***

The suffering Paul speaks of in 1:29-30 that he is experiencing and that they must endure as well is specifically a suffering for speaking and living the truth.

The Philippians allegiance was formerly to Rome and to the mighty Caesar, now their allegiance must be to Christ and His Gospel.

This is the kind of suffering Jesus spoke of:

ESV John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.... ***ESV John 16:1-3: 'I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.***

The allegiance would be costly.

Notice the language of conflict that the Apostle Paul uses in our passage: “Suffer for his sake” (1:29); “engaged” “conflict” (1:30); “opponents” “fear” “destruction: (1:28) etc.

As the Christians were experiencing conflict, they were not to fear- -they were not to be intimidated, but were to trust the LORD and His power.

Fear of man is more dangerous than dying as a martyr! “Falling away” should be more frightening to the Christian than giving up our lives in death for Jesus.

The Philippians’ standing firm as one person, united side-by-side for the Gospel was a sign of destruction for unbelievers. Only those who not only confess with words that they believe, but also show it in their deeds, will be faithful until the end.

But those who confess what they believe about Jesus Christ, and they show it in their laying down their lives for Him, this will be a sign of the unbelievers’ destruction!

Allegiance to Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords in both Words and Deeds

There are some Christians who have words without deeds, and some who have deeds without words, but those who have both words and deeds will be faithful, *and they will suffer conflict and persecution and suffering in and with Jesus Christ!*

We see this commitment in both word and deed in Revelation 12:11-

ESV Revelation 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

As God turned the cross of Christ from a sign of destruction into a sign of life and salvation; so for those who believe and understand by God’s Spirit, those who suffering in and with Christ, even unto death, will be a sign of destruction, but will be turned into a sign of life and salvation for those who believe!

ESV 1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

We, too, today as a congregation will suffer conflict and perhaps even persecution if we stand firm as one unified body, with one singular focus on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Where is our conflict and suffering?

Perhaps it's because we live in the West and at this time in history there is no government like Imperial Rome threatening our lives; this is true enough for the moment (I realize that as Christians at the beginning of the 21st century in the West that we don't live under an empire like ancient Rome; but the application for this passage would come in our witness to the world and to our culture, regardless of what kind of government we find ourselves under at the present time).

Perhaps there is another reason that Christians today avoid conflict and suffering that is more sinful. Perhaps the reason has to do with fearing man more than fearing God (see Phil. 1:15, 28; cf. 2 Tim. 1:7: "God has given us a spirit of fear, but of love, power and a sound mind).

I'm convinced that the Bible teaches us that if confessing Christians have words ***and*** deeds they will suffer in this world. This is what the Apostle Paul taught elsewhere:

ESV 2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...

Do we fear man more than we fear God? Could this be how we avoid conflict and suffering that should come?

The Philippians were being tempted to be fearful of man, to be intimidated (1:28a), but the Apostle Paul teaches them how to live without fear, but with great joy knowing to live is Christ, to die is gain!

We can fear man in this same way; we can do this as a corporate body of Christians, or as individuals in our workplace, our neighborhoods, our communities, our grocery stores, our town hall meetings, our visitations in unbelieving living rooms!

The threat may not be as great, but do we have conflict-persecution-suffering at all because of our Christian allegiance? (Note: These believers were suffering unto death; but we should have conflict; we don't have to look for conflict or try to provoke it, but we are to live for Christ and unbelievers are sinfully provoked by His teaching).

At KCPC, let us pray to learn “small baby-steps” of faithfulness to God resisting the fear of man and grow up to “mature adult-steps” of faithfulness to God resisting the fear of man.

But in preparation as a congregation for whatever God will send our way, and to work on a small level of faithfulness unified together will help us to stand firm if times get more difficult and our calling is unto death and martyrdom.

Perhaps why we don't see more conflict in our lives is Christians is either because we have *words without deeds* or *deeds without words*

At least three kinds of confessing Christians: 1) “Words without deeds” and 2) “Deeds without words” and 3) “Words and Deeds”

As a true citizen of heaven, you are to testify to it by both your words and your deeds.

Words without Deeds- Potential hypocrisy and worldliness; too lukewarm.

Too hypocritical and/or too worldly to be considered a threat by unbelievers.

You speak a lot about Christ, but your deeds don't follow. You are not a threat to unbelievers.

Your commitment to Christ begins and ends with your mouth, rather than your heart. You confess a lot about your faith in Jesus, and it brings you something good, but in your life you do not live in such a way that is perceived as threatening to an unbeliever.

You are just like other “religious folks”: You mean well, but you don't put your money (or your heart) where your mouth is!”

You “preach, but don't practice” and so you are just another sign to the unbelieving world that Christ is not real-authentic.

You wouldn't give your life for him; and the world knows it, too.

At Philippi there were those saying: “I believe” but why do I have to suffer? Some were apparently saying: “I believe in Jesus isn't that enough?” Paul responds clearly:

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake... (1:29)

We see this in the Sanhedrin of Jesus' day. They were those who confessed God, but they were allied with ultimately Rome and Herod; the “visible church” was still

confessing YHWH alone, but they were in reality tied to the power structure of their day.

Their words did not threaten the world around them; they were a protected Jewish sect.

Although the Sanhedrin confessed to hate Rome, when Jesus came, it allied itself to the world to kill Messiah because he called for not just words, but deeds.

Jesus said: “*Your lips honor me, but your hearts are far from me.*”

When the Sanhedrin as a body was called to ultimate allegiance to YHWH, they showed to whom their allegiance was to: the unbelieving world.

We see this tendency also in the Apostle Peter because of fear of man: From “I’ll follow you, Lord, even to death...” to → “I don’t know him!”

Later, the Apostle Paul had to rebuke Peter again (Gal. 2) because he feared man, rather than standing for the Gospel.

Deeds without Words- No Interpretation of Deeds

There are good and moral deeds done for Jesus, but there is no interpretation of *why you’re doing them*.

This is “mere morality” or “niceness”.

You give a cup cake to a neighbor; nice. You send a nice card to a neighbor; nice. But are your deeds interpreted? Are you wisely seeking to tell them why you’re doing your “nice” deeds?

Are you frightened to say that you’re doing things for Christ? Lots of mere religious people send cards and cupcakes, and are nice.

Do your cupcakes and cards ***threaten unbelievers***? Not that you seek to threaten- -but is your allegiance to Jesus showing? Do you hide your allegiance because of fear of what others might think.

This is having a political agenda for a “better tomorrow” and working for the better of society, but it is too bland, too vanilla of a morality to threaten unbelievers. This is mere “conservatism” but not Christianity; this is a focus on changing the culture, without as great a concern for living for the Gospel.

Do you avoid speaking, do you avoid interpreting what you’re doing because of fear of man? Because you will be set apart as a Christian?

There were/are “good religious folks” at Philippi and today who do real good and nice things, but don’t necessarily make it clear why and more importantly *WHO they are doing the deeds for.*

They are witnessing more to goodness and morality than the blood of Jesus Christ that saved them!

At Philippi, there were lots of good, religious folks. Roman religions (and Greek religions and all world religions) want “nice” people, moral people, virtuous people, healthy and happy children, no murdering, no stealing, etc.

What makes a Christian different is why he is doing what he is doing; and particularly who they are doing it for! JESUS.

It would have been easy at Philippi to avoid suffering that Paul is calling them to, saying that they would just blend in and do good things (syncretistically- -sinful religion has always caved into syncretism: a blend of Jesus’ religion and whatever else is already there).

BUT THEIR ALLEGIANCE IS NO LONGER TO CAESAR- -BUT TO CAESAR CHRISTUS- -AND HE THEY MUST SERVE, WORSHIP AND FOLLOW, even unto death if Jesus allows it.

This must be their mindset. This must be our mindset.

We see this tendency of deeds without words in the disciples who were following Jesus, but wouldn’t speak for fear of the Pharisees.

ESV John 12:42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue...

Those who suffer from either *Words without deeds* or *Deeds without words*, **both suffer from the same root sin: FEAR OF MAN.**

If fear of man is in your heart, you will not be able to stand firm in the day of evil and persecution. If you are hypocritical, worldly, and/or merely “nice” you will never be able to give your life for Christ.

You will compromise.

Fear of man is more dangerous than dying as a martyr!

ESV Philippians 1:28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

The word used here for “frightened” [πτυρο, menoι] is a picture of a stampede of horses, snorting away in fright because of fear of an approaching man.

We must have by God’s grace, as citizens of Heaven, as recipients of God’s grace in Jesus Christ, both **Words AND Deeds!**

Words AND Deeds

This confessing Christian says: “I believe in Jesus, but I know I must suffer with Him if I speak and live as I should.”

ESV Revelation 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

In whatever culture, whether a Christian is living in an anti-Christian state or a Christian state full of mere moralists, we will suffer conflict and persecution for Jesus if we speak and live as He has called us to do as Heavenly Citizens!

Jesus’ call to us, secured through His suffering for us is much more than **mere morality.**

Jesus’ call to us, secured through His suffering for us is much more than **mere “niceness”.**

Jesus’ call to us, secured through His suffering for us is much more than **mere conservatism in culture and politics.**

Jesus’ call to us, secured through His suffering for us is much more than **preaching but not practicing.**

Jesus’ call to us, secured through His suffering for us **IS TO SAY “TO LIVE IS CHRIST, TO DIE IS GAIN”- -CHRIST IS EVERYTHING TO US! AND WE MAKE THIS KNOWN CORPORATELY AND INDIVIDUALLY.**

We may die, but we know confidently and courageously in Jesus Christ, that we will live!! Amen.

Whether on the “cupcake and card” level or whether on the greater, more serious level of Neronic killing and conflict, we can be faithful because JESUS died for us.

What do we need as a congregation? We need unity in the Truth of the Gospel. We need to live foremost for Jesus Christ and His Gospel!

We need to be focused first on our allegiance to Jesus and His Gospel, and stand firm with each other in both word and deed.

Does this mean we aren't concerned about culture? No! It means we must seek a wise balance.

We need to be first of all unified in our mission for the Gospel. We need to be clear as a bell, both corporately and individually, that all we are doing is for the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The ONLY way to God! The one who died for sinners; the one who we must worship and serve and have allegiance to above and beyond any earthly concern or commitment as citizens here!

We are citizens of heaven!

If we stand firm together in the Gospel, making the Gospel known, and we live for the Gospel together against hypocrisy, worldliness, and mere “niceness” calling all folks to repentance and to Jesus alone for salvation, we will experience some conflict.

!!Again, we don't go provoking unnecessarily, and we don't go seeking it out!!

But in a fallen world, we must fear God alone—***and we must expect suffering***—and we must remember that our sinful hearts do not want to be as committed to our Heavenly Citizenship as we are called to be!

ESV Philippians 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel...

Paul begins the sentence with “ONLY” meaning that this is most important. This is also the first command to the Philippians (and to us today). Paul under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit wants us to understand that we are to live first as heavenly citizens.

“Standing Firm Together” as Citizens

We are to march as the church militant side-by-side together for the faith of the Gospel (1:27). We are to be “striving” [sunaqlou/ntej] which is to contend with as in the **gladiatorial arena**- -we're going to get dirty! But we're going to win the victory in Jesus.

Every party, every distinction of clan, color and agenda, every family name, every “rank and file” person at Philippi was to be united in Jesus Christ for the Lord's cause—the GOSPEL.

In our congregation, all of our diversity, all of our differences, all of our unique agendas are to be united as one spirit and one mind together in Jesus.

WE MUST MAKE THE GOSPEL KNOWN.

WE MUST MARCH TOGETHER SIDE-BY-SIDE TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IN OUR WORLD.

We need each other to accomplish this most important task. I don't think we all realize that until great suffering and persecution comes.

But we must prepare together.

Conflict and suffering brings to the surface of our hearts and behavior what is most important to us.

It is interesting that in God's great salvation plan he reveals his wisdom by showing that suffering brings unity to His people. He knows that at the root of many of our problems is that we fear man and are easily divided!

We see the roots of both the fear of man and the rivalry and selfish ambition that brings division in the Upper Room after Jesus' death 1) Hiding from the authorities... and 2) Envy and selfish ambition (which Paul will address next in Philippians 2): "Who's the greatest of us all?"

God unifies us through His wisdom in suffering together "side-by-side" in our "striving" for the Gospel:

If our citizenship teaches us that we are an ARMY OF ONE.

Our suffering teaches us that we are a FELLOWSHIP OF ONE.

We must understand suffering together as a congregation of Christians.

Rejoicing comes at great cost!

Are you ready for true joy?

2) Suffering in and with Jesus Christ

We can suffer if we understand what Christ has suffered to redeem us from the penalty and power of sin. We can suffer for Jesus if we know the sacrificial love he showed to us in laying down his life willingly so that we might know the Father's love and grace!

ESV Philippians 1:29-30: For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

The Apostle Paul says in verse 29 that suffering is to be understood as a “gift” [cari, zomai charis- “gift” as in “charismatic” or “gifted”] as something “granted” to Jesus’ disciples by God’s grace:

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake.”

Suffering for Christ is just as much a gift of grace as believing in Christ!

“God’s grace gives both the ability to believe in Christ and the ability to suffer for Christ. In believing and suffering, Christ is the Source and Center of Life.”

Ultimately, we either suffer in Christ and with Christ, or we suffer destruction with the world:

ESV Philippians 1:28 ...and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

As a congregation we need Christ-centered and Christ-focused lives that is both full of life (salvation for those who believe) and also full of death (condemnation and judgment for those who resist God’s purposes and persecute us for what we believe):

ESV 2 Corinthians 2:14-17: But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

For some when they see the cross, they see destruction and foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18ff).

For some when they see the cross, they see salvation, life and the wisdom of God.

For some when they see the suffering of Christians, they see needless conflict, destruction and foolishness- “COEXIST” they say.

For some when they see the suffering of Christians, they see salvation, life and the wisdom of God. ALLEGIANCE TO CHRIST ALONE.

Objections: “Suffering is hard!” “I just don’t think I could ever hope and pray like Paul in Philippians 3:10-11 to “share in Jesus’ sufferings”.”

Suffering “in Jesus” (in our union with Him, 1:29)

As heavenly citizens our suffering is in and with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

What a privilege to suffer with him!!

We are identified with Him not only in our salvation- -but also in our suffering that will lead to resurrection-eternal life (Phil. 3:10-11):

ESV Philippians 3:10-11: ...That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Can you pray a prayer like that?

Koinonia- “Fellowship of Christ’s Sufferings”

Suffering is “for Christ”- Suffering is meaningful

Thomas Charles: “God’s designs in afflictions are various; but all gracious, and for our good....What our short-sighted ignorance calls adversities or evils, are in reality and truth, well-designed and gracious blessings, and form a part of the means employed by God’s goodness and grace to prepare us for the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Suffering is “with Christ”- Suffering is because of relationship; there is sympathy, comfort, and compassion developed for others as it is received from Jesus.

Suffering develops humility and weakness in us, and builds our trust in God (2:4-11).

Suffering together as a congregation grows us together in Christ.

Paul wanted the Philippians (and us today) to be those who stand firm against all opposition, in one spirit and one mind, striving side-by-side as “one person” for the faith of the Gospel (read again 1:27).

Are we doing that?

Our ultimate allegiance as a congregation and as individuals who leave here to populate our different communities during the week, must be first to Christ and His Gospel.

Let us make Christ known in both our words and our deeds!

Let us avoid worldliness and hypocrisy ceasing to be a threat to the watching world.

Let us avoid mere morality and “niceness” ceasing to be anything more than just another religious person in the midst of a culture and a country that is full of religious people.

Our citizenship is ultimately in heaven.

“Suffer for Jesus”- Can you do that?

Can you pray that you want to “Know Jesus...and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death?” (Phil. 3:10).

Is that your prayer?

If not, why?

Are you afraid of what man might think of you? Are you frightened? Intimidated?

Do you seek to prepare yourself for greater suffering?

Look at Christ on the cross in His sufferings for you!

Let this sink deep into your hearts:

Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

That cry is the result of suffering.

That cry is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe!

Are you ashamed?

ESV Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Newton asked: “Did every any other sufferer experience in an equal degree the Day of God’s fierce anger?”

Jesus showed us in his death for us both WORD AND DEED!

Jesus didn’t merely speak with God’s authority and truth, but he laid down his life for his people. Jesus confronted words without deeds and

deeds without words, and called for something much deeper, God-like and radically Christ-centered and faithful.

Why did Christ suffer?

(This answers the question of why believers will suffer and should expect it):

- **Jesus said He was the only Way, Truth and the Life to the Father.**
- **Jesus said that He was God in the flesh.**
- **Jesus demanded allegiance to Himself alone.**
- **Jesus told all that He alone was the hope of mankind.**
- **Jesus taught that only through Him could a person be saved and rescued from destruction.**
- **Jesus taught that there was no “middle ground”; no “lukewarm”- one toward Him was either “hot or cold”. If one was lukewarm, he would spew you out of his holy mouth (Rev. 3:15-16).**
- **Jesus demands a believers’ soul, his life, his all.**
- **Jesus doesn’t settle for mere religious people or moralists.**
- **Jesus says that his disciples must be radically decided, dedicated and devoted to Him alone.**
- **Jesus was declared King of kings and Lord of lords!**
- **Jesus is the LORD of glory and all mankind will be judged by him.**

This caused Jesus to suffer...

...This caused Jesus to get himself killed (he laid down his life of course).

ESV Revelation 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Jesus died for us!

“In Jesus’ suffering on the cross, he lost his father’s love so we can have our father’s love in our suffering.” – Tim Keller

Let us live for Him- -even when we suffer.

Let us not fear.

Let us confidently and courageously make Christ known in word and deed.

Who are you living for?

Live for the One who died for you!

John Newton wrote: “The thought that Jesus our Lord suffered for believers, arms his people with the like mind. They look to him and are enlightened. By His cross they are crucified to the world, and the world to them. Believers no longer court the world’s favor, nor are afraid of its frown. They know what they must expect, if they will be his servants, by the treatment he met with, and they are content...It is the believers’ desire, neither to provoke the opposition of men, nor to dread it...Thus by our Lord’s stripes they are healed, and are comforted by having fellowship in His sufferings.”

His Suffering/Our Suffering

John Newton: “Did ever any other sufferer experience in an equal degree the day of God’s fierce anger? In the greatest of our sufferings, in those which bear the strongest marks of the Lord’s displeasure, there is always some mitigation, some mixture of mercy. At the worst, we have still reason to acknowledge that ‘he has not dealt with us after our sins, nor according to the full desert of our iniquities.’

If we are in pain, we do not feel every kind of pain at once, yet we can give no sufficient reason why we should not. If we are exercised by poverty and losses, yet something worth the keeping, and more than we can justly claim, is still left to us; at least our lives are spared, though forfeited by sin.

If we are in distress of soul, tossed with tempest and not comforted, we are not quite out of reach of hope. Even if sickness, pain, loss, and despair, should all overtake us in the same moment, all is still less than we deserve. Our proper desert is hell, an exclusion from God, and confinement with Satan and his angels, ‘where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.’

Every thing short of this is a mercy.

But Jesus, though he had no sin of his own, bore the sins of many. His sufferings were indeed temporary, limited in their duration, but otherwise extreme. Witness the effects, his heaviness unto death, his consternation, his bloody sweat, his eclipse upon the cross, when deprived of that presence of God, which was His only, and his exceeding joy. On these accounts, ‘No sorrow and suffering was like unto His sorrow and suffering!’.”

Citizens of Heaven are:

- Devoted to Christ and His Gospel before all things.
- United together in one mind and spirit, striving as one person against the world system regardless of their differences.
- United to Jesus in His suffering, and should expect and pray for it.
- “HOT for Jesus”- They are not lukewarm (“wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked”). They are forgiven, enviable, rich, able to see Christ’s grace and goodness, and they are clothed in Jesus’ glorious robe of righteousness!

CRB