

Believing and suffering

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Preacher: Mr Malcolm Macleod

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's leading and blessing, let us look again at the portion of scripture read. Paul's epistle to the Philippians, chapter 1, and the second last verse, verse 29.

Verse 29, for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

Thank you.

And just two points. First of all, our exemplar, and secondly, the imitation.

First, our only exemplar, and secondly, the imitation.

[1 : 36] The disciples on the Emmaus Road had had their say. They had poured out their grief in the ears of the stranger who had caught up with them.

You notice this, the stranger caught up with them. How often it happens that when we expect help from in front, help comes from behind.

They poured out their complaint to the stranger. He listened to them until they had had their say.

And then, he upbraided them in strong words. Words which were full of eternal love.

You remember, he called them fools. They were slow. They were slothful of heart to understand the thrust of the words of their own prophets.

[3 : 07] Others. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?

And he, in his instruction of these two, what a wondrous episode it was for them.

Their hearts were burning as he instructed them. He began to instruct them then with regard to the great mystery of his own death, the death which he had now accomplished.

And he discovered himself to them in all these scriptures as the suffering saviour.

They were walking on resurrection ground though they did not realize it.

[4 : 29] They were walking on resurrection ground with the resurrection. This is one of the great names of the Christ, the resurrection.

This was his answer to Martha in the midst of her grief. I am the resurrection and the life.

And yet they did not know him. He himself then.

He was engaging them in the depth of his love. And yet they did not know him.

He himself then. Must always be our example. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

[5 : 48] He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. We are so up to think that because he was God and because he could not cease to be God, we are up to think that it was easier for him to endure suffering and death.

This is a great mistake, a great error on our part. We must realize that because he is who he is, his sufferings were more, infinitely more, not less.

How great do you think his sufferings were? How great do you think they were?

And we must emphasize a point here. He could only suffer in our nature. God the Father cannot suffer.

God the Son as God cannot suffer. God the Holy Spirit cannot suffer.

[7 : 26] And this is a doctrine that the church has had to defend from the very beginning. And it must defend it still.

God is beyond suffering. That does not make him less. That makes him infinitely more. And he is beyond suffering.

How great then were his sufferings.

As great as this. That only God, the eternal God, can realize the greatness of these sufferings.

The human nature of our Lord was able to endure more than the human nature itself could realize.

[8 : 40] The great theologians make this point. They stress this point. He is beyond the Megali which I think he makes the truth love.

This is what gave it to us. And the wanted to earth. That man, ■ide. Otherwise, he is sincere. to endure more than the human nature itself could realize because he is who he is.

He drank the cup. He drank it to its uttermost dregs.

What was in that cup? What was in that cup? Damnation was in that cup.

And he drank it in love. He tasted eternal death in the dereliction.

[10 : 05] He tasted eternal death. The cup which my father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?

Our sufferings at the most can only be a taste of the cup of suffering.

When we think of the sufferings which beset the infant church.

And one commentator makes a very interesting point there. He says that the sufferings are expressed to us at their least.

We should always realize that these sufferings were as it were at the most for these infants, for these infants in the Christian faith, in the infant church.

[11 : 24] Pressed beyond measure or out of measure.

Pressed above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. This is Paul's estimate of the situation.

And then he goes on to say this. To say it in magnificent spiritual wise.

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves. That we should not trust in ourselves.

But in God which raises the dead. Are we learning to die daily? Are we learning to die daily?

[12 : 35] It would be most profitable for us to learn to die daily. Because we would learn resurrection power daily. That our faith that we should not trust in ourselves.

But in God which raises the dead. Are you feeling resurrection power here today?

God which raises the dead. Who delivered us from so great a death. God who delivered us from so great a death.

God which raises the dead. God who delivered us from so great a death. God in the past. And doth deliver us in the present. In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.

In that day of all days. God will deliver us from so great a death. But we must realize that even the extremes of the eternal life.

[13 : 43] The extremes of the suffering of the infant church were but a taste of the cup. When we compare them with the sufferings of the head of the church.

How did they endure? How can we endure? There are always those among us who are going through sharp trials.

And they will fail. Unless they keep constantly in mind whom they are following.

They are not following a Christ at ease, but the man of sorrows, the man who was acquainted with grief, the Christ of Golgotha, the crucified one.

Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.

[15 : 06] This is the only thing that can keep us from being weary and from fainting, that we consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.

How do we consider it? By being constantly at Calvary. That's the way.

Paul was always there. His life centered on the cross. I determined to know, not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

How do we endure? By meditating on this great act, this great fact, this almighty accomplishment. Paul was forever meditating on Christ at Calvary.

[16 : 33] This was the greatest accomplishment. Of almighty God.

Let's think of that. This was the greatest accomplishment.

And it was accomplished in our clay. Think of that. That the greatest accomplishment of almighty God was accomplished in our clay.

In the dust. In the dust. Out of which man is made. Why was Paul always there then?

Why should we always be there? Because Paul realized that looking at Calvary did something for him that nothing else could do.

[17 : 51] Calvary was accomplished for him. The very chief of sinners. The very chief of sinners. And Paul always carried these two.

And every good Christian must always carry them. His sinfulness and God's salvation. God's power to cleanse. Calvary was accomplished for him.

But Calvary was also accomplished in him. Calvary was accomplished for you. Calvary is also accomplished in you.

Paul and every Christian died in that death.

[18 : 57] Died in order to live the life eternal.

Which is the super abundant life. Paul looked at the crucified one.

In order that he might be not just a conqueror. That's not enough. A Christian must be more than a conqueror through him who loved him.

The imitation then. What ought we to ask of God for ourselves and for each other?

We should certainly cease to ask for easy things for ourselves and for those whom we really love.

[20 : 26] It is easy to ask for easy things. Instead of asking for easy things we should ask for conquering faith.

We should ask for the renewing of the strength of the inward man. Though our outward man perish. Yet our inward man is renewed day by day. This is spiritual growth. There is an outward perishing and an inward renewing.

Which is the opposite of perishing. And that is spiritual growth. It is a spiritual growth.

Bonyan brings before us a character called Little Faith.

[21 : 33] Bonyan lived in a very spiritual age. Or an age which had seen wondrous spirituality.

And what was wrong with little faith? All women first of all emphasized what was right with him.

He was a believer. There was no doubt at all about that. He came from the town of Sincere. What was wrong with him then?

With little faith? This was wrong with him. He had made no spiritual effort to have his faith strengthened.

Maybe others, possibly others had helped to spoil him spiritually. He had been too mollycoddled.

[22 : 49] Too protected. There are things from which we must be protected. But there are other things which we must face on the journey of life.

And little faith had not faced them. And he was beset in a place called Dead Man's Lane.

He was beset by three sturdy rogues.

Faint art. Mistrust. And guilt. And because he had not had his faith strengthened.

These three rogues robbed him. And left him limp and lifeless. And very much a complainer for the rest of his Christian way.

[24 : 10] He was a burden to himself. And a burden to others. And yet he was a real Christian.

That we would ask then for conquering faith.

There are fires. There are terrible fires of testing. Which we all have to go through. But the Lord himself has been proved to be in such fires.

And is it not interesting that it was a case of youth being tested. Youth. Spiritual youth.

Standing up for the things of God. And they proved that the Lord himself was in such fires for them.

As the Lord of freedom. When we go into spiritual fires. Some of our bonds must be loosed.

[25 : 31] Our bonds must be loosed. The Lord of freedom is there with us. The Lord who severs bonds.

Which are not conducive to usefulness. And besides there are floods. Terrible.

Awesome floods. Which the children of God have to go through. But the Lord sitteth upon the flood.

Not on some floods. But on every flood. The Lord sitteth. Yea the Lord sitteth. King forever.

On every flood. He is the king of the floods. The Lord will give strength unto his people.

[26 : 31] He will bless his people with peace. Amidst the fires and the floods. Paul realized his treasure.

This is part of our training. To realize our treasure. And this is our treasure.

God hath shined in our hearts. To give the lightening of the knowledge. Of the glory of God.

In the face of Jesus Christ. The treasure. Of the treasure. But Paul also realized. That this treasure.

Was deposited. In earthen vessels. And there is an almighty reason. For the treasure being deposited.

[27 : 35] In earthen vessels. and the almighty reason is this, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

There may be trouble on every side, but without distress. There may be perplexity on every side, but without despair.

There may be persecution on every side, but the Christian is not forsaken. He may be cast down, but he is not destroyed.

This is the kind of example spirituality sets before us. And we can ask Paul this, oh Paul, how could you endure so much?

You who were a sinner like yourselves, how could you be such an advanced Christian? And this is Paul's answer.

[28 : 51] It is all in terms of Jesus Christ. I bear his death always about with me in the body, so that the life of Christ might be made manifest in our mortal body.

He not only saw his master on the road in front of him, but he read his master in the deep sufferings of his own life.

Are you doing that? Are you reading your master in the deep sufferings of his own life? His own sufferings taught him about the sufferings of Christ.

That is the reality of Christian living. It is all in terms of Christ. Oh friends, it is not a shallow certainty which belongs to the people of God.

Shallowness does not belong to the reality of Christianity at all. And we have to thank God for the Psalms with their cries from the depths.

[30 : 20] A profundis. Shallowness gets us nowhere. What is shallow will not abide trouble and persecution.

What is shallow will not endure. And the Lord brings his people to a place and a point where they will not be surprised because of their battle wounds.

Their battle wounds will not surprise them. What will surprise them is any respite from these.

Bonyan sets before us in contrast to little faith.

He sets before us another character called Great Grace. Who came from the town of good confidence.

And if you saw this Great Grace, you would notice the scars. The spiritual scars of battle which he bore.

[31 : 40] The old Roman soldiers used to be proud to bear their breasts. To show the scars which they had suffered in fighting for their country.

Battle wounds should not surprise us then. The lack of them should. Christians must realize that they can only appreciate the wounds of their Lord.

As they experience these wounds. Curing all their own wounds. This is the way to experience the wounds of our Lord.

And to appreciate them. As we experience them curing our own wounds. So often our self-inflicted wounds.

We bear so many of these. Inflicted by ourselves. But his wounds can cure all our wounds.

[33 : 01] A hand came out from the tree of life. What kind of hand came out from the tree of life?

It was a nail-pierced hand. To heal the wounds of Christian.

After his encounter with Apollyon. A nail-pierced hand. From the tree of life.

The tree of life. The tree of life. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Sets before us. How the Lord. How the God.

Of the psalmist's righteousness. Dealt with his servant David. In his sore plight. And this throws further light.

[34 : 02] On the real suffering. Of the saints. Being a gift from God. This is what David said. Thou hast enlarged me.

When I was in distress. Thou hast enlarged me. When I was in distress. That means.

Thou madest wide room for me. When I was in streets. When I was in the narrow place. Thou madest wide room for me.

Oh that we would realize this. Preju. And ever increasing pressure. Results.

By God's grace. In God's enlargement. And what is enlargement? It's the very opposite of pressure.

[35 : 06] It means. Room. And plenty of room. In the street. In the most restricted place.

Paul and Silas. Amidst their confinement. And their pain. They were in a large room.

A place of enlargement. A place of enlargement. They sang praises to God. Largeness. And their pain.

And their pain. And their pain. And their pain. Largeness. Largeness. Is God's gift to us. Through pressure.

And stricture. And confinement. In the great tempest.

[36 : 04] That arose. That arose. On the lake of Galilee. The ship was covered. With the waves. In the mountains. But the Lord.

Was in the boat. But he was asleep. The only recorded. Description of him asleep.

Asleep. On a pillow. In the hindered part of the ship. We have no other record. Of our Lord. Being asleep. But this one.

Do we feel. The spiritual calm. And the spiritual quiet. Which flows. From these words. He was in the boat.

Asleep. This ship may be covered. With waves. Fears may plague our hearts.

[37 : 07] But. What does it matter. If he is asleep. In our boat. Where is your faith.

He sees no reason for fear. So why should we. Our eyes should be fixed. On him. Our eyes should not.

Be on the storm. Or on the waves. Our eyes should not. Be on the disquiet. But on the quiet. The Lord was asleep.

In the boat. He rests. In his love. In the midst of the church. The Lord God.

In the midst of thee. He is mighty. He will save. He will leap. For joy.

[38 : 11] How stupid. Our questionings. Cares thou not. This is a non-spiritual question.

To put to him. Cares thou not. Just as Martha's question. Was a stupid.

Spiritual question. Cares thou not. Who cares like him. And he said.

Unto the sea. Peace. Be still. These are the words of comfort.

That the Lord speaks. To the redeemed soul. Words. Out of Isaiah.

[39 : 08] In that day. Sing ye unto her. A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it.

I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it. I will keep it. Night and day. He who keeps Israel.

Neither slumbers. Nor sleeps. He maketh. The storm a calm. So that the waves thereof.

Are still. Then are they glad. Because they are quiet. So he bringeth them.

Unto. Their desired heaven. Oh. That men would praise the Lord. Amen.

[40 : 07] Let us pray. We bless thee.

O Lord. For spiritual stillness. For the kind of quiet.

For the kind of quiet. Which comes from thee. Into the hearts of thy children.

Children. We bless thee. For silences. Which are full of speech.

And full of salvation. Go before us this day. For Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 06] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.