

A Share in the Sufferings of Christ

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In 2 Corinthians 4:6 Paul wrote that God made His light shine in our hearts when He called us to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. And in the verses following he wrote:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Corinthians 4:7-11)

Paul taught that we will possess the treasure of our faith in “earthen vessels”. Earthen vessels are fragile and weak vessels, which is why Paul used this metaphor to describe our lives lived in God's service. The “surpassing greatness of the power” by which we will live our lives and serve God is His, and not our own.

Paul also taught that as believers we should expect, and we will in fact experience, what it is like to be “afflicted in every way”, “perplexed”, “persecuted”, and “struck down”, always carrying around in our body “the dying of Jesus”. These experiences will be allowed to touch our lives by our sovereign God and Father because of the principle that we have studied previously. This principle can be summarized by Paul’s teaching in Romans 8 where he revealed that we are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Romans 8:17).

Though the Scriptures reveal to us that we will endure these sufferings as part of God’s plan for our lives, we are promised that we will not be crushed, and we will not be left in despair. We will not be forsaken, and we will not be destroyed. And as Paul taught, even though we will carry around in our bodies the “dying of Jesus”, and we are during the course of our lives “constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake”, the result of these “deaths” will be that the “life of Jesus” will be manifested in our lives, and spiritual fruit will be born to the glory of God.

It is through these “deaths”, or this share in the sufferings of Christ, that God has ordained we will receive a share in the eternal glory of His Son. Knowing that this principle will be at work in the life of every believer, we may wonder how Jesus’ sufferings might be manifested in our own lives.

Persecutions

The first things that come to mind as we consider the sufferings of Christ are the persecutions He suffered from the Jews, and the crucifixion He suffered at the hands of the Romans due to the insistence of the Jews. His sufferings and death were all according to the pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God the Father (Acts 2:23), whereby His only begotten Son would give Himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of His people (Matthew 1:21, John 10:11, 14-15). This message was vehemently rejected and opposed by many of the Pharisees and scribes, who were the religious leaders among the Jews of that day.

God has called some of His people to suffer persecution to the point of physical death because of opposition to the Gospel of Christ. The martyrs will certainly be numbered among those who receive the greatest reward in Heaven, having shared in the sufferings of Christ to the extent that it cost them their lives.

Most of us however will suffer persecution to much lesser degrees because we are Christians. Perhaps this persecution will take the form of mocking, ridicule, rejection, or various conflicts where an unbeliever is involved. Being rejected simply because we are believers will prove to be a common experience for us. Even subconsciously some unbelievers will not be fully aware themselves why they dislike us, but they know that they do indeed dislike us, and maybe they will even detest and despise us. This subconscious disdain is a manifestation of the spiritual enmity that exists between believers and those of the world. Others will fully realize why they dislike us when we refuse to approve of or participate with them in things that the word of God calls sin (1 Peter 4:4).

Experiencing persecution to some degree is certainly one aspect of Jesus' sufferings that we as believers will all experience, as Paul taught us when he wrote to Timothy: "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12).

Insights from Isaiah 53

In addition to persecutions, there are also other aspects of the sufferings of Christ recorded in the Scriptures. A verse by verse study of Isaiah 53 gives us further insight into some of the things that Jesus suffered during His life on earth. As we consider each of these aspects of His sufferings, we might also think about how these sufferings may have been, or could yet be, experienced in our lives in some measure as God's people. Beginning in verse two we read:

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. (Isaiah 53:2)

The words "like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground" could speak of one who comes to faith in Christ, who is born from the dry ground of very humble beginnings where many of the opportunities and benefits available to others are kept out of reach for them, according to the plan of God for their lives. Some believers will experience this aspect of Christ's sufferings.

The words "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" are clear and easily

understood. There was no impressive quality in Jesus' physical appearance and looking at Him people saw nothing of what the world considers to be attractive or desirable.

Many of us may feel about ourselves that God has made us to be unattractive, with nothing in our appearance that others would find desirable. If this is the case with us, then God has ordained that we would suffer in this way, and through this experience we share in this aspect of the sufferings of Christ. From Isaiah 53:2 we see that Jesus knew what it was like to experience this kind of suffering.

In the next verse we read:

He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isaiah 53:3)

Once again, the meaning of the text is clear. Jesus was despised and rejected by men. Some of this rejection could have come from what we read in verse 2, which speaks of Him having nothing in His appearance that we should be attracted to Him. Those of us considered by the world to be unattractive are often rejected, and we will know what it is like to be "one from whom men hide their face", or one from whom others turn away. Jesus' ultimate rejection was the rejection that He suffered for His message that He is the Son of God, and that no one can come to God the Father except by Him (John 14:6).

Finally in verse three, the words "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" speak volumes about how the Scriptures in both the Old and the New Testaments characterize the life of Jesus Christ. As we have seen from the Scriptures, God has ordained that all believers must follow Jesus in His death, experiencing reflections of His sufferings in our own lives, in order that we may also share in His glory. Therefore we also will experience in some measure, as God determines for each of us, what it is like to be a man or woman of sorrows, who is acquainted with grief.

Continuing in Isaiah 53 we read:

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:4)

Have you, Christian, ever given of yourself, your time, or your financial resources to help someone else who was going through hard times which brought great sorrow into their lives? If so, you have sacrificed something of yourself in order to help carry someone else's sorrows, and in doing so you experience in some measure a share in Jesus' sufferings and sacrifice for the benefit of others.

Notice also in the last part of verse 4 the words "yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted". Many times, when people see others going through great suffering or difficulty in their lives, they may consider that those enduring the difficulty are actually being stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted for some sin in their lives.

Let us be careful not make the same mistake that Job's three friends made when they judged Job's troubles to be the result of sin in his life. They had no idea what the cause of Job's sufferings was about, and neither did Job. In the final analysis, Job was shown to have a greater understanding of the ways of God than his friends when God rebuked his friends, saying that they had not spoken of Him what is right as His servant Job had done (Job 42:7-9).

If we see a fellow believer suffering some wrenching trial or difficulty, let us not be hasty in judging their situation to be the result of sin in their lives. Without question, sin always results in God's discipline in the life a believer (Hebrews 12:5-13), and in some cases there may be a clear connection between sin in one's life and their present troubles. However, where there is no clear connection to some known sin, it could very well be that what they are enduring is a share in the sufferings of Christ, as God has ordained for them.

Continuing in Isaiah 53 we read:

But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him. (Isaiah 53:5-6)

Have you, Christian, ever born the consequences of someone else's wrongdoing? If so, this reflection of the sufferings of Christ is shared in your life, even though in so much smaller measure than the sufferings He endured. It could then be said of you that you were crushed for someone else's iniquity, and that the punishment that brought them well-being was placed upon you.

Continuing further we read:

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.
By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?
His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. (Isaiah 53:7-9)

In verse 7 we see that Jesus took the suffering that His Father had ordained for Him, suffering for the transgressions of others, silently and without complaint. This is a virtue that few of us will ever possess. Most of us complain bitterly when undeserved suffering enters our lives. Even when we fail to take it silently and without complaint as Jesus did, we still share in His sufferings when we experience undeserved suffering because of the wrongdoing of others.

In verse 8 we see that Jesus was falsely accused and judged harshly. When we are falsely accused and judged harshly by others, we experience a share in this aspect of His sufferings, even if only in a very small measure when compared to the sufferings He endured.

The latter part of verse 8 speaks of Jesus saying: "And as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of My people". God has ordained that those martyred for the cause of Christ will share in this aspect of His sufferings.

It is also interesting to note in verse 8 the phrase, “And as for His generation”, which speaks of Jesus’ descendants. Jesus never married and had children. It is a great sorrow in the lives of some believers that God keeps marriage out of reach for them. Others marry but never have the children they long for. This aspect of Christ’s suffering is shared in the lives of those believers who desire a godly marriage and children. However, God, according to His own plan and purpose for their lives withholds these things, choosing rather to lead them in other paths.

Verse 9 again speaks of the unjust treatment that Jesus received, being assigned a grave “with wicked men”. Crucifixion was the punishment given to guilty criminals of that time, and not treatment deserved by the blameless Son of God. Even with all of our faults and shortcomings, when we endure unjust accusation and undeserved suffering, we experience in some measure a share in the sufferings of Christ.

In the following verse we read:

But the Lord was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

In Isaiah 53:10 we see that it was God’s will to “crush” His Son, “putting Him to grief”. When we consider Isaiah 53:10, together with the teaching of John 12:24-26 and Romans 8:17, we can see that it is also God’s will to “crush” us and to “put us to grief”, in some measure, however small when compared to Jesus’ grief and sufferings, bringing about in our lives a share in His sufferings, which God has ordained will be the necessary path to a share in Jesus’ eternal glory.

Concluding this passage from Isaiah 53 we read:

As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.
Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,

And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:11-12)

These verses speak of the sacrifice that Jesus made of Himself, the sinless Lamb of God who laid down His life for the sins of “many” (verse 12), so that they would be found acceptable in the sight of God. Certainly our death will justify no one in the sight of God, but reflections of Christ’s sufferings experienced in our lives are for us as believers a share in His sufferings, even if only in some small measure.

In verse 11 we read: “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied”. This Scripture reveals to us that Jesus was satisfied when He saw what was accomplished through the sufferings He endured according to His Father’s will; He was satisfied with the “many” who were given to Him by His Father.

As we consider our share in Christ’s sufferings according to our Father’s will for our lives, we can recall from Paul’s teaching that now during this present time we know and we understand only in part, but the day is coming when we will know and understand fully what God was accomplishing through the sufferings that we endured (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12). In that day, we too will be satisfied, and we will be overjoyed as we share in the glory of our Lord for eternity (1 Peter 4:13).

A Share in the Sufferings of Christ – Part 2

Isaiah 53 gave us insights into the life of the “Man of Sorrows”, and we considered some of the ways in which a share in His sufferings might be manifested in our own lives. There are also other Scriptures that speak of the sufferings Jesus endured.

In John 13:18-30, Jesus told His disciples that one of them was going to betray Him. In verse 18 He said: “I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me’” (See also Psalm 41:9).

Jesus was referring to the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, who took thirty pieces of silver to guide a group of Roman soldiers and representatives from the chief priests and Pharisees to Gethsemane where He often met with His disciples, in order to arrest Him. The arrest is recounted later in John 18:1-11. This betrayal set in motion the events that would lead to His crucifixion.

When we as believers suffer a betrayal of trust, we experience a share in some measure in this aspect of the sufferings of Christ. The betrayal that Jesus suffered would cost Him His life. Even when we suffer a betrayal that costs us only money or reputation, then in some small way we have shared in this aspect of Jesus’ sufferings. Therefore, the suffering of a betrayal and the consequences of that betrayal is yet another way in which a believer might experience a share in Christ’s sufferings.

Mark 14:32-36 recounts Jesus’ agony at Gethsemane just before His arrest. In this passage Jesus said to Peter, James and John: “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.” (Mark 14:34).

Overwhelming sorrow, even sorrow to the point of death, is another aspect of the sufferings of Christ that a believer may also experience at times. This is sorrow so intense that it brings one to the point that he would rather his life be ended than to continue to bear the weight of his suffering.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, the Apostle Paul revealed that while he was in the province of Asia, he was under pressure that far beyond his ability to endure, and so much so that he despaired even of life itself and having to live on to face such troubles. Through this experience Paul was shown a principle that he in turn would pass on to all of God’s people: We are not to rely on our own strength to face the troubles of this life, but instead we are to rely upon God, who is able even to raise the dead.

All believers should be aware that there may be times in our lives when we too will experience overwhelming sorrow, sorrow so profound that we would rather not live any longer than to have to bear the weight of our suffering. In these times we experience some share in the overwhelming sorrow that Jesus

experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane. Paul also shared in this aspect of Christ's suffering in his experience in the province of Asia.

When considering the sufferings of Christ as recounted in the Scriptures, we must not overlook the physical suffering and pain that Jesus endured. After Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified, He was first flogged by the Roman guards. These floggings were so severe that some died just from this beating alone. After that, a crown of thorns was made and pushed down onto His head so that He bled from it also. During all of this He also endured mocking and jeers from the Roman soldiers.

Jesus was then forced to carry His own cross to Calvary where He was to be crucified. Because of the beating He had endured and because of the weight of His cross, He was not able to carry it the whole way. Someone else, Simon of Cyrene, was pressed into service to carry His cross the rest of the way. When Jesus finally arrived at Calvary, He was nailed to the cross instead of being tied to it as others were.

The means of death from hanging on a cross was a slow death from asphyxiation, where the lungs filled with water over a period of hours. When Jesus had been hanging there on the cross for some time, a Roman soldier thrust a spear into His side, and both blood and water ran out. Crucifixion was both a physically painful and a humiliating, degrading way to die.

As believers, suffering affliction or pain in our physical bodies is yet one more way in which we may share in Christ's sufferings. The Apostle Peter wrote: "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1-2).

As Jesus was arrested at Gethsemane, we see another way in which He suffered. In Mark 14:48-50 we read that Jesus was confronted by a crowd of Roman soldiers and representatives sent by the Pharisees and chief priests who had come to apprehend Him. At this time, we see from the Scripture that His disciples "all left Him and fled." (Mark 14:50).

In this passage we see that Jesus suffered abandonment by those who were closest to Him, those who should have been the ones who stood by Him in His time of distress. In the Gospel of John, just before Jesus was arrested, He told his

disciples that they would soon desert Him saying: “Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” (John 16:32). Those closest to Him, those whom He had appointed Apostles, those who had been with Him since the early part of His ministry, those whom He now called friends (John 15:15), forsook Him and left Him to whatever fate was to come next for Him.

Jesus’ experience of abandonment was much deeper than any we will experience. From the cross He cried out in a loud voice: “...My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34, Psalm 22:1). It is impossible for us to contemplate the depth of abandonment that Jesus experienced as He hung on the cross bearing the punishment due for our sins.

For those of us who believe on His name, we have the promise of God: “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5, Deuteronomy 31:6). Even with this promise, in the depths of our sorrow and feelings of desperation when we experience abandonment by those closest to us, those we hoped would be there for us in our time in distress, we too may feel like we have been abandoned even by God. But because of God’s promise we know that He will never leave us or forsake us.

In the depths of our abandonment we are not alone, as Jesus Himself knew, because our Father is with us (John 6:32). When we experience abandonment by those closest to us, we experience a share in this aspect of the sufferings of Christ.

Further Instruction from the Apostles Peter and Paul

Peter wrote to believers: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that *you share the sufferings of Christ*, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.” (1 Peter 4:12-13, emphasis added). And so Peter also revealed to us that a share in the sufferings of Christ is to be expected in our lives, and something about which we should not be surprised.

As he continued in verse 15, Peter also said that if we suffer, it should not be for wrongdoing, or that which the Bible calls sin. Suffering for wrongdoing is not suffering according to the will of God (1 Peter 4:19). It is abundantly clear

throughout the Bible that it is God's will for His people that we should live a life separated from sin.

If however we do find ourselves at a time and place in life where we are suffering as a consequence of our own sin, we can take comfort from Paul's teaching in Romans 8:28, where he revealed that *all things* which God allows to touch our lives as His people will be made to work together for our eternal good. And *all things* include God's painful disciplines, which serve to separate us from our sins. Even in the midst of these disciplines and the losses which often accompany them, God will continue to work in the lives of every believer to bring forth fruit with eternal value.

Regardless of whatever failings may have come before in our lives, let us resolve to repent of our sins and leave them in our past. Let us obey God by doing as Paul exhorted us in Philippians 3:13-14: let us forget what is behind us, and let us diligently strive toward what lies ahead. Let us press on toward the finish line of the race that is our life on this earth, so that we may win the prize of a share in Christ's eternal glory.

At the end of this passage in 1 Peter 4:12-19, the apostle exhorted us again when he wrote: "Therefore, those also who *suffer according to the will of God* shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." (1 Peter 4:19, emphasis added). Just as we have seen from other passages of Scripture, Peter also revealed to us that a share in the sufferings of Christ is God's will for each of His people, and he exhorts us to entrust our souls to our loving and faithful God as we share in the sufferings of His Son, obediently continuing to do what is right.

This suffering "according to the will of God" that Peter mentioned is the "death" of the grain of wheat that Jesus spoke about in John 12:24. These sufferings are for us our "Gethsemanes" and our "Calvaries". They are the places in life where we are called upon to submit to God's will when it is a hard and painful thing, when we know that all things are possible with Him, and that He could remove our burden if He chose to do so. Such sufferings are for us a share in the cup or the baptism of Jesus' suffering, which as He taught in Mark 10:35-40, is necessary for a share in His eternal glory and a place of honor in the kingdom of God.

In Summary

In John 12:24-26, Jesus compared His life and the lives of all of those who would follow Him to a grain of wheat, which must fall to the ground and “die” in order to bear fruit. Just as Jesus laid down His will and His life in order to do His Father’s will, so also all of us who serve Him must follow Him in this way, sharing in His sufferings as we “die” to our own will and what we would choose for ourselves in life, and we accept God’s will and the life that He has ordained for us.

Paul also taught us clearly in Romans 8:17 that we as the children of God must share in the sufferings of Christ, in order that we may also share in His glory. The Scriptures reveal to us that God has ordained it will be through our sharing in the sufferings of His Son Jesus Christ that spiritual fruit will be born, which will bring about for us a share in Christ’s eternal glory.

And as we can also see from the Scriptures, the sufferings that Jesus endured took many forms. In Isaiah 52:14 we learn that “His appearance was marred more than any man”. He was disfigured, and “many were astonished” at Him.

Continuing in Isaiah 53 we learn that Jesus had “no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.”. He was despised and rejected by others. Men had no esteem for Him; they hid their faces from Him. He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”.

Though He was “crushed for our iniquities”, we wrongly considered Him as one who was stricken and afflicted by God because of His own sin. He bore the punishment due for our wrongdoing, and “by His scourging we are healed”. He was “oppressed and afflicted”, and He unjustly suffered a death due to the wicked, though He had done no wrong.

We learn in Isaiah 53:10 that it was God’s will to “crush” His Son and cause Him to suffer these things. When we consider Isaiah 53:10, together with the teaching from John 12:24-26, Mark 10:35-40, and Romans 8:17, we can see that it is also God’s will to crush us and cause us to suffer, in some measure, bringing about in our lives a share in the sufferings of His Son in order that we may also share in His eternal glory.

From other passages in the Bible we learn of still more ways in which Jesus suffered. In Matthew 8:20, we see that Jesus had no place to lay His head; He had no home of His own. He was also betrayed by one who was close to Him. He

suffered overwhelming sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane as He submitted Himself to His Father's will for His life. He suffered exhaustion, and He was unable to bear the weight of His cross the whole way to Calvary. He suffered great pain in His physical body as he was scourged and then crucified according to God's will, though He had done nothing to deserve it. He suffered abandonment by His closest friends during the time of the greatest trial in His life. And as He hung on Calvary's cross, He suffered the desolation of feeling that He had been abandoned even by His Father God (Matthew 27:46).

As we consider the many ways in which Jesus suffered during His life on earth, we may be able to see reflections of His sufferings in our own lives. Maybe we have or we will at some point experience being "despised and rejected" by others, through no fault or wrongdoing of our own. Maybe we will suffer the consequences of a betrayal. Maybe we also, as Jesus did, will suffer abandonment by those who are closest to us during a time of great trial in our life. Maybe we have, or we will at some point in our lives, suffer any other aspect of His sufferings as we have seen revealed in the Scriptures.

With these things in mind, some of us may notice that the particular sufferings we are enduring are not among those mentioned in the Bible as something that Jesus suffered. As we consider the troubles, hardships and afflictions that our sovereign God has allowed to affect our own lives, we should understand that the sufferings we endure as we walk in obedience to God, *whatever form these sufferings may take*, are for us a share in the sufferings of the "Man of Sorrows", who was Himself familiar with grief (Isaiah 53:3).

As we have seen from the Scriptures before, everything that God allows to touch our lives as His people, even the hard and painful things, will be made to work together for our eternal good and glory together with His Son. And once again, this is exactly why Paul taught that our sufferings in this present life are "producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

The Christian life is not a matter of having enough "faith" to "believe" God for the things that we want out of life, as some would say. Instead, the mindset and understanding that we should have regarding our Christian faith is reflected in Paul's exhortation: "*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus*, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with

God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, ***He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***” (Philippians 2:5-8, emphasis added).

Jesus Christ is our example of what the Christian life is all about. He took the form of a bondservant, and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. As those who have come to faith in Christ, we also are to consider ourselves as bondservants of God, obediently serving Him in the place and the capacity that He has ordained for each of us individually.

God our Father calls upon us to submit ourselves to His will for our lives, as Jesus did. We are called upon to humble ourselves and become obedient to the point of death, taking up our cross daily to follow Jesus (Luke 9:23-24). This death involves our death to that which the Bible calls sin, and it also involves our being willing to “die to” anything that God may choose to take from us or withhold from us as part of His will for our lives.

We are called upon to die to that which we would choose for ourselves, and as obedient servants, we are to accept the assignments and place of service in life that God has ordained for us. This obedient acceptance of God’s will for our lives is the way that we carry around in our body “the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”, as Paul taught us in 2 Corinthians 4:7-11.

Even though these “deaths”, or this share in the sufferings of Christ, is God’s will for each of His people, we are not left without comfort. Once again, we recall the encouragement that Paul gave to us when he said: “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:5).

This comfort that “is abundant through Christ” is provided to us through His grace and power, which is given to us in a measure sufficient for our every weakness and need in life (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). And this comfort is also given to us through the word of God as revealed in the Scriptures, because Jesus Christ Himself is the living Word of God (John 1:1, 14). As we study God’s word, we find many promises of His help, mercy, forgiveness, restoration, and provision for our lives, and we take comfort in knowing that every one of these promises is given through the One who is called Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11-13).