

To Suffer for Christ's Sake

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In Philippians 1, Paul wrote: “*For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake*, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.” (Philippians 1:29-30, emphasis added). The letter to the Philippians is addressed to believers in Christ, “to the saints in Christ Jesus” who were in Philippi (Philippians 1:1). Speaking to believers, Paul revealed two things.

First, Paul revealed that *it has been granted to us to believe in Christ*. We know that not everyone believes in Christ, but for those of us who do, the reason that we believe is because we are among those to whom it has been granted to believe in Him (Matthew 13:11, John 6:65). We are among those whom the Father has “given” to His Son, and we will all come to Him (John 6:37). We are those who belong to Christ; He calls us, and we follow Him (John 10:3). Having been called to faith in Him, we will receive the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15). We are among those who have been appointed to eternal life, and for that reason we believe in Him (Acts 13:48).

And it has been granted to us, “*for Christ's sake*” to believe in Him, so that:
“*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.*” (Isaiah 53:11, emphasis added.)
This Scripture tells us that Jesus will be “satisfied” when He sees “the many” whom the Father has given to Him (John 6:37), as a result of His suffering and sacrifice at Calvary.

Paul also taught in Philippians 1:29 that it has been granted to us for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, "***but also to suffer for His sake***". We know that Paul suffered greatly for the furtherance of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:24-26). Some believers in every generation will be called upon to endure physical danger and harm because of their faith in Christ. Paul also taught that every believer will experience persecution to some degree (2 Timothy 3:12). Many of us can recall experiencing hostility on some level from those who do not know God.

However, most of us will never experience the degree of physical hostility and harm that Paul and others experienced in the early church, and we might question how our sufferings could in any way be for Christ's sake. The answer to this question can be found in John 12:24-26 and Romans 8:17, which we have considered in previous studies. The lesson taught in these Scriptures is that every believer will, as God determines for each of us, share in the sufferings of His Son in order that we may also share in His eternal glory. God has ordained that every believer will follow Jesus, bearing fruit through the sufferings that we endure according to God's plan and purpose for each of us, just as Jesus did.

In the letter to the Hebrews, we read that Jesus, the Author and the Perfecter of our faith, "for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2). From there He sees the fruit born to the glory of His Father through every one of us who has been called to faith in Him. This fruit is born as we share in His sufferings according to the principle that He taught in John 12:24-26. And the Scriptures tell us that "He will see it and be satisfied." (Isaiah 53:11). This is one way that we suffer for Christ's sake.

Paul revealed another way that we suffer for Christ's sake, when we suffer for the sake of His body, or for the sake of other believers. In 2 Corinthians, Paul taught that God, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, comforts us in all our sufferings so that we can comfort others in their sufferings with the comfort we have received from God (2 Corinthians 1:4-5). Whatever suffering or sacrifice that we may endure, and another believer is comforted or benefited through it in some way, we are suffering for the sake of the body of Christ, and in that way, we suffer for His sake. (Also consider Matthew 25:34-40.)

In Philippians 3, Paul wrote:
"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as ***loss for the sake of Christ***. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, ***for whom I have suffered the***

loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:7-10, emphasis added).

Paul begins in verse 7 speaking of things that he had lost, things that he had at one time considered to be “gain” for him, or profitable for him. These things included his involvement in the Jewish traditions and way of life. But looking back on the loss of those things, and all the things that he had lost since he had been called to faith in Christ, he considered them to be rubbish compared to the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ, his Lord, for whom he had “suffered the loss of all things”.

When we consider the losses that Paul suffered, we might call to mind Jesus’ teaching in Luke 14:27, where He taught that anyone who did not carry their cross and follow Him could not be His disciple. And again, Jesus taught in Luke 14:33 that those who do not give up everything they have cannot be His disciples. Jesus’ teaching in these verses is clear and is consistent with other teachings that He gave to us: every believer will experience undeserved sufferings and losses as part of God’s will for our lives, just as He did.

Paul gave us this same message in Romans 8:17, where he taught us that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory. Paul’s teaching here came from Jesus’ teaching in John 12:24-26, where He revealed that everyone who serves Him must follow Him, bearing fruit through the “death” of the “grain of wheat”, that grain of wheat symbolizing our lives and all that we want for ourselves in this life. And if any Scripture passage could be said to be at the very core of all that the Bible teaches, it would be John 12:23-28 and the narrower passage of John 12:24-26.

We will all be called upon to follow Jesus in His death, submitting to our Father’s will for our lives and whatever He may choose to take or withhold from us as part of His plan for our lives. He calls us to continue to be obedient to Him through all these losses, just as Jesus was. (Consider Philippians 2:7-9.) And through these sufferings and losses, we will bear fruit, as Jesus revealed in John 12:24.

Paul made clear in Philippians 3:7-10 that true righteousness in the sight of God comes not by observing the Law, rather it is a righteousness that comes from God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. As we are considering this passage, every believer should understand that our faith in Christ is not something that we earned for ourselves, and it is not something that we appropriated for ourselves by our own will and decision in the matter (John 1:13, Romans 9:16). Rather our faith in Christ is the gift of God given to us, not because of any work of our own whatsoever, but only because of God's grace toward us were we called to faith in His Son (Ephesians 2:8-9). At that point we received a gift and a calling that is irrevocable (Romans 11:29).

We are among those whom God foreknew, those whom He chose before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. We are those whom He predestined to be adopted as His sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:4-5). We are among those to whom it has been granted by God the Father to come to His Son (John 6:65). And not only has it been granted to us to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).

In Philippians 3:10, Paul emphasized his desire to know Christ, "***and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death***". There is a sense in which we experience the power of Christ's resurrection during the time of our lives on this earth, as we learn from such passages as 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18, and Philippians 4:13. However, the greatest fulfillment of our knowing the power of Christ's resurrection will come on the day we are united with Him in Heaven.

The Bible teaches us that during our lives here on earth, every believer will suffer for Christ's sake. We will all take up our cross and follow Jesus. We will all experience the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings in some measure, as God has ordained for each of us individually. And through these sufferings we will bear fruit and share in Christ's eternal glory. From His throne in Heaven, Jesus sees all those whom the Father has given to Him as a result of His suffering and sacrifice at Calvary. He sees the fruit born through every believer according to the principle that He taught us in John 12:24-26, and He is satisfied (Isaiah 53:11).