

# Contagious Joy

## Part 5 – Is Suffering Really Necessary?

Philippians 1:28-30

March 29, 2009

*Is suffering in the Christian life really necessary? After all Jesus said that he came to give us “abundant life”! Why does there have to be any pain? Can’t we just live in the bubbled protection of Christ’s love and grace?*

### I. What should we remember about suffering? (v.28)

A. Opposition is to be **expected** (v. 28a) <sup>28</sup>*in no way alarmed by your opponents*

1. *Alarmed:* “Not startled in anything.” from (*ptoeō* terror).

- The metaphor a startled, timid horse who bolted, often because of something perfectly harmless, and threw his rider.
- Christians in Paul’s day, including those in Philippi, often had good human reason to be terrified of possible beatings, imprisonment, and even execution by **opponents** of the gospel. Others faced somewhat less serious **opponents:** family members, friends, and neighbors who ridiculed and disowned them.

2. What is your response to opposition?

- We want to avoid it. Most of us want to live comfortable lives and avoid pain at all costs.
- Every NT book refers to either suffering or the conflict we will experience as Christians if we stand up for Him and our faith.

B. **Persecution is evidence of your salvation.** It proves 2 things... (v. 28b)

1. God's opponents **lose!** *--which is a sign of destruction for them,*
  - Enemies of God are under His judgment. It is describing eternal punishment not annihilation.
  - *Sign:* Evident token or proof (*endeixis*)
  - Psalm 73 describes what happens to the bad guys. They don't win!  
*<sup>27</sup>For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. <sup>28</sup>But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge that I may tell of all Your works.*
  - But however serious their conflict might be, they were not to be **alarmed**, because the very fact that they were being attacked because of the gospel was proof that their opponents were headed for **destruction**. MacArthur, J. (2001). *Philippians* (93). Chicago: Moody Press.
2. God's order **wins!** *but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.*
  - Persecution for the sake of Christ proves believers belong to Him. Don't be discouraged if you are persecuted. It is sign that you are saved!
  - *Matt. 10:22 You will be hated by all because of My name*
  - *John 15:18-20 The World hates me...they are going to hate you!*
  - When people oppose you for your Christian testimony, you may be sure of two things: 1) You are going to heaven. 2) They are going to hell.
3. **In the early days of Christianity, a scoffer reportedly inquired, "What is your Carpenter doing now?" And the answer of the unperturbed Christian was bold: "Making a coffin for your Emperor!"**

4. We are on the winning side!

**C. Suffering is part of His plan (v. 29-30)**

1. It is a **privilege** (v. 29) *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

- We have the privilege of belief and to suffer for Him. Suffering is part of the Christian experience, but most of us want nothing to do with it! It a privilege! Paul isn't asking them to do anything he hadn't already experienced.
- II Cor. 11:23-27 <sup>23</sup>Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. <sup>24</sup>Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. <sup>26</sup>I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; <sup>27</sup>I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.
- *Acts 5:41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.*
- Adoniram Judson was the first overseas missionary sent out from America. In the early nineteenth century, he and his first wife went to India and, a short while later, to Burma, where he labored for nearly four decades. After fourteen years, he had a handful of converts and had managed to write a Burmese grammar. During that time he suffered a horrible imprisonment for a year and a half and lost his wife and children to disease. Like Paul, he longed to be with the Lord, but, also like the apostle, he considered his work for Christ to be infinitely more important than his personal longings. He therefore

prayed that God would allow him to live long enough to translate the entire Bible into Burmese and to establish a church there of at least one hundred believers. The Lord granted that request and also allowed him to compile Burmese-English and English-Burmese dictionaries, which became invaluable to the Christian workers, both foreign and Burmese, who followed him. He wrote, “If I had not felt certain that every trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings.” MacArthur, J. (2001). *Philippians* (77). Chicago: Moody Press.

2. It is **predicted**
  - *II Tim. 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*
  - *I Thes. 3:3 We were destined to suffer. So that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.*
  - *John 16:33 in this world you will have tribulation*
  - Evangelist E. Stanley Jones - the first Christians didn't wring their hands in despair and say, “Look what the world has come to.” Instead with they declared, “Look what has come to the world.” It's never been easy to be a Christian. It wasn't then, it isn't now.
3. It is **personal** (v. 30) *experiencing the same conflict which you saw for them, in me, and now hear to be in me.*
  - Paul reminds them that suffering wasn't theoretical, but very real. They had both heard of it and seen it in his life.
  - *Conflict*: (*agōna*). Athletic or gladiatorial contest I Tim. 6:12 (*Fight the good fight*); II Tim. 4:7. *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith*

- *The conflict which you saw in me* refers to the hostile opposition and persecution he and Silas faced when they were imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:16–40). Little did he know that in AD 70, the Romans entered Jerusalem under Titus and killed 1,300,000 Jews and took many into captivity. Jerusalem was plowed up as a field. This marked the beginning of the Jewish dispersion.
- *And now hear to be in me* refers to the apostle’s present imprisonment in Rome, which he has already mentioned (v. 12–18) and his past
- Back in the 1800’s George MacDonald wrote: “No words can express how much our world ‘owes’ to sorrow. Most of the Psalms were conceived in a wilderness. Most of the New Testament was written in a prison. The greatest words of God’s Scriptures have all passed through great trials. The greatest prophets have “learned in suffering what they wrote in their books.” So take comfort afflicted Christian!  
**When our God is about to make use of a person, He allows them to go through a crucible of fire.”**

II. Can you really trust God with your life? What are you really living for? Show Clayton video

### Table Talk

1. What in “our culture” alarms you? (v. 28)
2. What had been granted to the Philippians on behalf of Christ? (v. 29)
3. Look up all the “extra verses” in the outline and share 1 or 2 that are meaningful to you!
4. Why is suffering needed in our lives?
5. Share a time when you “suffered” and brought glory to God.
6. Share a time where you have had to trust God with a difficult situation.