

**"Paul's Letter to the Philippians —  
'The Witness of the Apostle Paul —  
Sharing Christ's Suffering Is Our Glory and Should Be Our Joy AND Calling!'"**

**Review:**

- **We have seen how it was Christ's Resurrection Power that was at Work in Paul:**
  - **And, we have seen how Christ's own seven-fold "emptying" leads directly in this letter to the seven-fold offering up by Paul. Christ "willingly" offered himself. Paul also did the same, right? And he asks us to enter into this as well with the same hope and expectation that was his!**

***Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . .***

- **But it was this motivation that was central to Paul's focus here. For him it was the "mind" reference that was of critical importance. This joy that was set before Christ was also Paul's as he testified and it was that that made the difference. This motivation must be a central focus here or we will miss the whole point of it. The quality of the motivation or its essential purity is what Paul is writing about here.**
- **But much was sacrificed for this glorious goal to be reached. What Christ gave up in the Incarnation and then in his death for sin and sins may seem quite incomprehensible. But what Paul gave up for the sake of Christ and his ministry may be much more understandable for us perhaps. That is the power of his example, isn't it?**

***Phil. 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.***

- **And since the motives here were all important, he even says he had lost the confidence in the flesh. Such an amazing statement this is and the implications of it for us are great.**
- **In addition, and this is essential for us to comprehend. It is an entirely spiritual and indeed heavenly example that Paul sets before us here. This is NOT comparable to Christ's teachings in his earthly ministry that was primarily directed to Israel. The consequence of this is very great as we are learning.**

### **Our Main Scripture:**

#### ***Phil. 3:8-11***

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things [but] loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them [but] dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead

- *This verse (verse 10) summarizes it and it became very personal to the apostle. But this is not only about what sufferings were brought upon Paul (persecutions, for example) but rather his desire to enter into suffering for his precious Lord Jesus, and, not really knowing what it would mean for him eventually, he learned day by day as the Lord taught him.*

### **Today's Theme: "Sharing Christ's Suffering Should Be Our Joy AND Calling!"**

#### **Our Outline:**

- ***Paul Learned That Suffering with Christ Was Better Than Deliverance***
- ***Paul Learned That Suffering with Christ Was Indeed His Calling***
- ***Paul Learned That Suffering with Christ Would Be His Life Long Challenge***
- ***Paul's Example is For Us All!***

#### **I. Paul Learned That Suffering with Christ Was Better Than Deliverance!**

- *This is an amazing thing, is it not? That suffering is for Paul better than deliverance from his many trials and sufferings for Christ.*

#### ***2 Cor. 11:30-33***

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

- ***Learning humility was central to Paul's education! I have always found this experience of the apostle to be so indicative of the workings of Almighty God under grace. Are we not all in the same "school" the apostle Paul was in? Each in our own way, of course, but it is the same school indeed!***

**2 Cor. 12:5** Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

- ***Such life experiences were the best training in what he called in the verses we have been focusing on here, "confidence in the flesh".***
- ***He writes of his "basket" experience to illustrate with some compelling details that he could not ever forget and that would form the foundation of also his boasting.***

## **II. Paul Learned That Suffering with Christ Was Indeed His Calling!**

- ***Well, we all know that suffering is one thing. But suffering "with Christ" may be something else altogether. There are some examples of this, perhaps the greatest being in Matthew's gospel:***

***Matt. 7:21-23 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.***

***Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?***

***And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."***

***[READ ] 2 Cor. 4:6-11***

**6** For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.**

**8** [We are] troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair;

**9** Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

- *The Lord had revealed to Paul THAT he would be suffering for his sake. But the dimensions of that suffering and the depths of it were not known in advance and could not be. In the letter to the Colossians Paul writes what is probably the most detailed description of his ministry as a whole and his sufferings in particular:*

**[READ ] Col. 1:24-27**

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 [Even] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

- *The Giant Question Remains: Will we follow [or imitate] Paul as he imitates Christ, suffering together with him? He writes in several places that WE SURELY SHOULD. But that means of course taking the form of a servant as well and suffering the loss of all things, even our own confidence in the flesh. But may it be so. Witness: "Cripple Tom".*

**[READ ] 2 Cor. 12:7-11**

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

- *Verse 9 here summarizes his entire message on the working of God under grace and its fullness: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*
- *What this is NOT saying: That is many trials and afflictions were mere opportunities for the miraculous working of God to be displayed to all. In another time (dispensationally speaking) that might have been so. Let's make sure we take his teaching here literally.*
- *What this IS saying: Our many trials are at the heart of God's working under grace and its fullness! Any testimonies?*

### **III. Paul Learned That Suffering with Christ Would Be His Life Long Challenge:**

- *But there is more written here, for the wording here challenges us to our limits and, of course, even beyond:*
- *"... being made conformable unto His death": **Of course, Paul is referring here to his own life since he is teaching us that the power of Christ's resurrection is to be seen and known in this life.***
  - *As I hope you have realized by now, these verses are the heart of the apostle's teaching in this letter to the Philippians. The present passive participle in verse 10 ("being made conformable") underscores the apostles conviction that his constant suffering is the result of the continuing and permanent work of the Lord in his life. It was a continuing and in fact never ending challenge to him as we have seen in his writings elsewhere.*
  - *Note also that this is an adverbial clause qualifying what was written just before regarding "the fellowship of his sufferings".*

- *Previous uses here in Philippians of this root word “form” (upon which “conformable” is built) show what the apostle reveals to be the divinely appointed goal in his life and I would submit to you also, in Christian living in general. And, of course, through it all, Christ himself is to be our ultimate model as he wrote in chapter 2:*

- *Going back to our most central scripture:*

***Phil. 2:5-7***

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, **being in the form of God**, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him **the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men:

- *“The form of a servant” (or a bond-slave). These are strong words and words carefully chosen. And, by the way, these are words divinely given to Paul to write here for our benefit.*

*There is so much more involved here than what is merely the physical side of the Incarnation. Rather, there is an emphasis on what is internal and spiritual and more significant therefore than what is physical and visible to mankind.*

- *What does “form” or morph mean? “form” or “morph...” == “That what is outward accurately reflecting what is inward”:*

- *The word used here is important indeed:  
“conformable”: συμ-μορφόω = συμ + μορφόω*
  - *“συμ”: “together with”, “sharing in”*
  - *“μορφόω”: “with outward form reflecting inner reality”*
- *This is all about the work of Almighty God, isn't it? When the outward form is consistent with the inner reality, there is no hypocrisy or inconsistency at all. God's working is then clearly revealed, even to its fullness. That was true of our Lord and was also in a limited degree true in Paul as he imitated Christ.*

***BUT IT IS ONE THING TO OFFER ONESELF — AND IT IS***

**ANOTHER THING THAT THAT OFFERING BE  
ACCEPTABLE TO ALMIGHTY GOD. BUT THAT IS WHAT  
PAUL INTIMATES HERE, IS IT NOT?**

- **Some commentators write effectively concerning this:  
"The agony of Gethsemane, not less than the agony of  
Calvary, will be reproduced however faintly in the  
faithful servant of Christ" (Lightfoot). "In this passage  
we have the deepest secrets of the Apostle's Christian  
experience unveiled" (Kennedy).**
- **But what is the form of a slave? What is a slave in Roman  
times? It is one who has no rights and privileges and may  
even suffer a death on the cross, something no Romans  
citizen ever needed to fear.**
- **But, in all of these cases it is the same - outwardly reflecting  
what is true inwardly, and so much more! Slaves accurately  
reflected outwardly what they really were inwardly. In their  
hearts, in their spirits, they had no liberty at all. No, none.  
They were completely at the mercy of their masters. And so it  
was with our Lord as in his incarnation he had and would  
continue to submit perfectly to his heavenly father's will. This  
was the redemptive plan of God and the suffering servant, the  
Lamb of God, would accomplish the task set before him.**
- **Christ's example stands before us, doesn't it, the death of the cross  
with its shame. Paul's lesser example leading to the prize of his high  
calling is our standard as well. He is our standard bearer. May we  
not draw back from the high standard of God's unlimited grace and  
suffer the loss of that crown. Amen.**

**IV. Paul's Example is For Us All!**

- **Paul Testifies that Christ's Resurrection Power Promises Great  
Glory?**
  - **"For the joy set before him . . .": He endured the cross with its  
shame**
- **Is this for Paul only? But if so his example lacks significance for us  
altogether, doesn't it? Indeed.**

- *This light on Paul's path only became brighter and brighter as each step led to another and that to another. His experience of walking with the Lord had confirmed always that the light of Christ's presence and power (need I say again, resurrection power?) was indeed with him enlightening his path with glory and grace.*

*So, for Paul this was not only a reality but a bright one indeed. That light burned ever brighter as the days passed and the apostle reached ever closer to his destination, "to be found in him not having his own righteousness" but "the righteousness that was by faith". That would be at that day appointed for his glorification together with our Lord Jesus.*

- *WHAT ABOUT US? WHAT ABOUT YOU AND ME? Is this true for us as well? It may be.*
- *Will you enter gladly into Christ's ongoing suffering? Is so, great glory will be yours. Indeed his resurrection life with all of its blessings, for now and for eternity.*

*Take upon yourself the form of a bond-slave and find that his grace is always sufficient, each step of the way, even if those steps lead to a cross. Amen.*

**Some Final Words from Paul's Letter to the Galatians:**

**[READ ] Gal. 4:19-20**

**19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,**

**20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt.**

***May there be no doubt at all about us!***