



Following Christ in Suffering

By Jeff Bedwell on June 24, 2022

TODAY'S READING: Acts 21

As Paul continues to make his way to Jerusalem he has an idea of what is ahead for him. In the last chapter we read, *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me"* (Acts 20:23, ESV). In chapter 21 Paul is being warned by others concerned for his well being that suffering awaits him (vv. 4-6 & 7-12).

Paul's response was powerful: *"Then Paul answered, 'What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'" And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done." After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge"* (Acts 21:13–16, ESV).

This reminds us of Jesus himself when He was heading to Jerusalem which would result in His arrest and crucifixion, *"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:51, ESV).

Peter reminds us that following Christ will likely involve suffering, *"For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps"* (1 Peter 2:19–21, ESV).

Paul would write to Timothy, *"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 2:3, ESV). He would later add, *"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* (2 Timothy 3:12, ESV).

We tend to avoid suffering if at all possible. We will continually be tempted to value our comfort and safety more than we value following and glorifying God as we obey His will. Yet scripture, church history, and brothers and sisters across the world today all testify that suffering is quite common as we seek to follow Christ in a world that is in opposition to God's will and ways.

Today, ask God to move in your heart and life to value honoring and serving Christ and His Kingdom more than you value your comfort and safety. Ask God to help you treasure Him and His Kingdom above all else. Share with Him your willingness to suffer if it is the Lord's will for His glory and for His purposes. Pray for brothers and sisters in Christ across the world that are suffering for following Christ today.

PRAYER: Father, help me love and treasure You and Your Kingdom above all else! Help me endure suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. I ask You to strengthen and encourage brothers and sisters in Christ today across the globe who are suffering for the cause of Christ. May we all together bring honor and glory to Your name.

TOMORROW'S READING: Weekend is for catch-up and review.

MONDAY'S READING: Acts 22

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