

PHILIPPIANS

JESUS OUR JOY

A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families for the week of November 29, 2020

Believe & Suffer

This week, Pastor Steve Shelby preached from [Philippians 1:29-30](#)

- “Faith is a gift but the Bible also tells us that suffering is a gift, especially suffering that comes to us as persecution. We must never forget that living as followers of Christ puts us in a cosmic and spiritual battle here on this earth. There is and will be suffering for the church until He comes again. Our faith ultimately will be manifest in us and through us to others. This witness to the Gospel is causing Paul’s suffering and imprisonment and persecution for the church in Philippi as well. What are we to do with a faith that not only calls on us to suffer, but that suffering is a privilege, something as our text says, has been “granted” to us (29)? Christians take a distinctly radical view: that suffering is neither an evil to be evaded nor a punishment handed out routinely, like some kind of divine speeding ticket, but something to be entered into willingly in order to become more godlike and therefore more fully and more perfectly human. We learn to be grateful not only for the alleviation of suffering but for the suffering itself — that, too, is a gift.” (Kevin Williamson)
- The Bible tells us we suffer because of sin. But we also suffer because God wills suffering for us to grow and change: “Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4)
- But this text speaks more to suffering as a way to be in fellowship first with Jesus and also with other brothers and sisters in Christ.
- The word “granted” (29) actually has the same root as the word for “grace”.
- Because our Savior was the “suffering servant”, when we suffer we experience fellowship with Him but He, too feels our suffering and shares in it with us: “I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, ‘Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely.’ And he became their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love

and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.” (Isaiah 63:7-9)

- Paul would understand this very well because of what Jesus said to him on the Damascus road. Saul on his way to persecute Christians, heard these words: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting’.” (Acts 4:4-5)
- So rather than believe that Jesus is distant from us in our pain, those are the times when he is actually the closest. But we also find that suffering binds us in fellowship with other believers. Why? Because we are involved in bearing witness that causes conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil.
- “We receive this child into the congregation of Christ’s flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to continue as Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.” (from the Episcopal liturgy on baptizing a child)
- And how do we engage in conflict as we are being persecuted: “Lead on, O King eternal, till sin’s fierce war shall cease, And holiness shall whisper the sweet amen of peace. For not with swords’ loud clashing, or roll of stirring drums; With deeds of love and mercy the heavenly kingdom comes.” (Henry Smart)

For Further Discussion: [Philippians 1:29-30](#)

²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

- Think about an ongoing conflict in your life. **What makes that conflict so difficult?**
- Paul sees **two gifts** graciously granted to the Philippian Christians (29). **What are these gifts?** Does either gift of God **surprise or challenge** you?
- Paul references an ongoing conflict of which the Philippians were aware. What was **Paul’s conflict?** (30)
- What does it mean that **belief in Christ is a gift** to the church?
- What is one way that God is **giving you grace to trust Him** these days?

- What does it mean that **suffering for His sake** is part of God's grace to the church?
- If you understand that **God's grace is at work** in your suffering, how does that **change the way you suffer**?
- Can you share a way **you have suffered for Jesus' sake**?
- **Pray together** in light of this week's passage. Pray for all citizens of God's Kingdom, wherever they may be. Ask God for more grace to believe in Christ and more grace to suffer for Christ's sake.

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