

156. The Gospel of John—15:18-25

Hated Without a Cause-Part 5

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

(9/12/21)

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We are currently in Chapter 15 of John's Gospel where we have camped on verses 18 through 25—looking at the subject of persecution and suffering for Jesus' sake—for representing Jesus in this fallen world as we go into it sharing the Gospel.

John 15:19-20, 25 (NKJV)

¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also... ²⁵ But *this happened* that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

Suffering for Jesus' sake is something very few Christians in America know much if anything about primarily because it doesn't cost us much to follow Jesus like it does other Christians that live in Muslim or Communist countries.

Now, that may change (and change quickly). If it does change it will mean that American Christianity will finally look more like biblical Christianity—maybe for the first time in our nation's history.

Listen, biblical Christianity is all about following Jesus—which means as Jesus was the **"Suffering Servant"**—so must we be also.

>>> Last week we ended our study by saying that **suffering in the Christian life can take several different forms**—but the bottom line is that **suffering is 'part and parcel' of the Christian life**. In fact, it is so much a part of the Christian life that to try to separate it from Christianity would be like trying to separate the cross from Christianity—which would in effect destroy the Christian faith altogether.

It would be like saying you could separate Christ from the cross and still have a Christian faith—which is impossible because the Christian faith is built on atonement (the *payment* for sins, leading to the *forgiveness* of sins)—

Hebrews 9:22 (NKJV)

²² ...[for] without shedding of blood there is no remission [of the penalty of sin—no forgiveness].

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

**There can be no Christian faith without the Cross which means
there can be no Christian faith without suffering.**

Luke 14:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

>>> Now, please don't misunderstand — ***I am not saying that the suffering we endure as Christians helps to atone for our sins***—as some faith systems teach.

I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church which believes and teaches that Jesus' suffering on the cross *plus* our sufferings in life working together atones for our sins. In Catholic theology, purgatory is the place Catholics go to if they have not suffered hard enough or long enough or done enough good works (i.e., 'go to mass, keep the sacraments, light candles, pray the rosary') to atone for all of their sins while on the earth.

That is a heretical and blasphemous doctrine. It is a denial of the completed work of Christ on Calvary's Cross for our atonement—

Hebrews 10:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ ...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

John 19:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Hebrews 10:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

So, the Bible is clear—we are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ Who suffered and died on Calvary' Cross apart from anything we do in the way of works (keeping rituals, ceremonies, sacraments)—including any suffering we endure whether it be inflicted on us by others or self-inflicted.

One pastor said with regard to this—

"Every year in the Philippines at Easter time devout Catholics walk barefoot on rocks and broken glass while they flagellate themselves with whips as a way of atoning for their sins and worshipping God.

These forms of 'worship' are not according to the truth in God's Word—He never commanded or prescribed them. They are nothing more than ignorant, blasphemous acts of man-made piety that God not only rejects—but will hold against those that practice them on the Day of Judgment no matter how sincere or pious they might have been."

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

So, once again—our suffering doesn't help to atone for our sins, but it does help to conform us into the image of Christ and allow us to help others to come to know Him through our witness.

REFLECTION: In your own words, describe "the suffering servant":

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- Talk about first century Christians who were martyred while they were singing praise to God and forgiving their enemies and how it brought many to Christ.

As I just said—many Christians in America are ignorant to what the Bible really has to say on the subject of suffering for Christ—why is that?

First of all, because they feel it doesn't pertain to them as Americans (it only applies to Christians living in other parts of the world). Or secondly, any talk of suffering for their faith makes them uncomfortable and scared—and so they tend to 'skip' over those Scriptures choosing rather to focus on the more "positive" and uplifting passages in the Bible.

Let me give you a little flavor of what God's Word has to say on the subject—

1 Peter 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*.

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)

¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Philippians 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

2 Corinthians 1:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

1 Peter 4:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Philippians 1:29 (NKJV)

²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

John 15:18, 20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated you*....²⁰ ...If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...

REFLECTION: How might you explain "Suffering for Christ" to a new seeker, family member or friend?

A lot of people get saved and for a while they're living on the mountain top with Jesus where they are filled with great joy and blessing in their newfound faith. Like Peter when he was up on the mountain top with Jesus in Matthew 17 and asked if he could build a few booths so that he could just stay up there—so do many newly saved believers in Jesus want to live on the mountain for the rest of their Christian life.

But, at some point, they have to come down from the mountain top and follow Jesus into the valley of suffering. Since nobody has told them that suffering is just a normal part of the Christian life—they often become discouraged, disillusioned, and defeated when it comes knocking.

Many Christians are troubled by the idea that God would even allow His children to suffer in this life—they reason how could a loving Father allow this? So, often they walk away from the Lord—because no one told them that adversity and suffering were a normal part of the Christian life.

Why does God allow suffering in the lives of His children? If we don't properly understand this subject—there is no way we can serve Jesus in this fallen world.

1. Suffering *proves* the reality of our faith

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "*My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;* ⁶ *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*"

Jonathan Cho, president of Christ College in Taipei, and director for the Chinese Church Research center in Hong Kong, has studied suffering in the context of the suffering church in China said, "*One can almost say that suffering for Christ in our country is a mark of discipleship.*"

Martin Lloyd Jones—"*If you are suffering as a Christian and because you are a Christian it is one of the surest proofs you can ever have of the fact that you are a child of God.*"

2. Suffering *promotes* our dependence upon God

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹ Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead...

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

3. **Suffering purifies our relationship with God.**

Psalm 119:67, 71 (NKJV)

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word... ⁷¹ *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*

Suffering cleanses us from sin. It teaches us obedience and it brings forth from our lives what Paul called “*the fragrance of Christ.*”

One author shared this story—

“There was a French painter by the name of Pierre Renore. He was afflicted with arthritis and his hands eventually became twisted and deformed so much so that even something as simple as holding a brush was excruciatingly painful.

In time he was confined to a wheelchair, but he would not give up painting. One day his friend, Henry Mateese visited him and watched as he painfully grasped a brush with only his fingertips. Every movement caused him pain, yet he doggedly kept at this painting.

Mateese asked his friend, “What do you do this for? How can you paint at the expense of such torture?” Renore replied, “The pain passes but the beauty remains.”

That’s what happens to a Christian who goes through suffering—the pain passes but the beauty of a deeper, purer, and more loving relationship with God remains.

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

4. **Suffering provokes courage in other believers**

Philippians 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

One author said—

“In our time it’s hard to overstate the impact that the martyrdom of Jim Elliot, Nat Saint, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming and Roger Udarian has had on countless students.

The word that appeared over and over again in the testimonies of those who heard the story of the Auca Indians and the slaying of those men, the word that kept coming up was the word—DEDICATION.

But part of the story that is seldom told when the story of the Auca’s is told and the martyrdom of these men was—the courage of their wives.

Barbara Udarian wrote in her diary that night in January of 1956, ‘Tonight the captain told us of finding 4 bodies in the river. One was wearing a tee shirt and blue jeans; Rog was the only one that wore them. God gave me this verse 2 days ago: ‘For this is God, Our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death.’ (Psalm 48:14)

As I came face to face with the news of Rog’s death my heart was filled with praise. He was worthy of his home going. Help me Lord to be both mommy and daddy.’ And out of that testimony hundreds and hundreds of recruits went to the mission field.”

More recently the execution of Wycliff missionary, Chet Bitterman by the Columbian guerrilla group, M19 unleashed an incredible zeal for the cause of Christ.

“Chet Bitterman had been in captivity for 7 days while his wife Brenda and their little daughters, Anna and Esther waited in Bogotá.

The demand of the M19 was that Wycliff get out of Columbia. They shot him just before dawn, a single bullet to the chest.

The police found his body in the bus where he died, in a parking lot in the south of town. He was clean and shaven, his face relaxed, a gorilla banner was wrapped around his body.”

In the year that followed Chet Bitterman’s death, applications for overseas service with Wycliff Bible translators doubled and has continued to double every year since—and it all can be traced back to the moment of his suffering for Christ.

John 12:24-25 (NLT2)

²⁴ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil and dies, it remains alone. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. ²⁵ Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity.

5. Suffering provides opportunities for witness

2 Corinthians 4:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus [through our suffering], that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

Philippians 1:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel, ¹³ so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ...

One of the most powerful stories I have ever heard about the purpose and power of suffering in being a witness for Jesus—is about a man named Joseph, who had come to Christ out of his Muslim religion.

“One day Joseph who was walking along one of those hot dirty African roads met someone who shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with him. Then and there he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior and the power of the Holy Spirit began transforming his life. He was filled with such excitement and joy that the first thing he wanted to do was go back and return to his own village and share the same good news with the members of his local tribe.

Joseph began going from door to door telling everyone he met about the cross of Jesus and the salvation that it offered, expecting their faces to light up just as his had. To his amazement the villagers not only didn’t care they became violent. The men of the village seized him and held him to the ground while the women beat him with strands of barbed wire. He was dragged from the village and left to die alone in the bush.

Joseph somehow managed to crawl to a water hole and there after days of passing in and out of consciousness found the strength to get up. He couldn’t understand the hostile reception he had received from the people he had known all of his life. Finally, he decided that he must have left something out or not told the story correctly.

So, after rehearsing the message he decided to go back and share his faith again. He limped into the circle of huts and began to proclaim Jesus, “He died for you so that you might find forgiveness and come to know the living God.”

Again, he was grabbed by the men of the village and held while the women beat him reopening the wounds that had just begun to heal. Once more they dragged him unconscious from the village and left him to die. To have survived the first beating was truly remarkable, to live through the second was a miracle.

Again, days later Joseph awoke in the wilderness, bruised, scared, and determined in his heart to go back. He

returned to the small village and this time they attacked him before he had a chance to open his mouth. As they flogged him for the third and probably the last time, he again spoke to them of Jesus Christ the Lord and before he passed out the last thing he saw was that the women who were beating him—had begun to weep.

This time he awoke in his own bed, the ones who had so severely beaten him were now trying to save his life and nurse him back to health—[through Joseph’s witness]...the entire village came to know Jesus Christ.”

I wonder how much pain and suffering are we willing to bear that *others* might come to know our Lord Jesus Christ?

6. Suffering prepares us to reign with Jesus

Romans 8:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, ⁵ *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.

2 Timothy 2:12 (NKJV)

¹² If we endure, we shall also reign with *Him*. If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us.

Suffering prepares us for heaven—so we must prepare for suffering.

REFLECTION: Pastor Phil has outlined six attributes of Christian suffering for Christ? Comment on how these attributes have affected your personal walk with Jesus:

My Suffering:

- Proves the reality of my faith _____
- Promotes my dependence upon God _____
- Promotes my relationship with God _____
- Promotes courage in other believers _____
- Promotes opportunities for me to be a witness _____
- Prepares me for heaven _____

Paul taught his converts that they would suffer for Christ—

Acts 14:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ And when they had preached the Gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Let me close with a final story—

"One Christian author relates how Richard Wormbrand endured 14 years of imprisonment and torture for Christ in his homeland of Romania between 1948-1964.

He had led a secret underground ministry when the communists seized Romania and tried to control the church for their purposes. Wormbrand, like the apostle Peter, stresses the tremendous need to get spiritually ready to suffer.

Listen to what he said,

"What shall we do about these tortures? Will we be able to bear them? If I do not bear them, I put in prison another 50 or 60 men whom I know because that is what the Communists wish from me to betray those around me."

And here comes the great need for the role of preparation, he wrote,

"It will be too difficult to prepare yourself for it when the Communists have put you in prison. I remember my last confirmation class before I left Romania. I took a group of 10-15 boys and girls on a Sunday morning—not to church but to the zoo.

Before the cage of lions, I told them, 'Your forefathers were thrown before such wild beasts for their faith. Know that you also will have to suffer, you will not be thrown before lions, but you will have to do with men who would be much worse than lions. Decide here and now if you wish to pledge allegiance to Christ.' They had tears in their eyes, and they all said 'yes.'"

May God give all of us grace to endure whatever is coming whether testing, tribulation and suffering may come our way for Jesus' sake—that by His grace and strength, we might endure and glorify God and win our enemies to Jesus—

1 Peter 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).