

Remnant Life Church
April 3, 2022
The Church of the Philippians
Part 12
Defining Suffering
Philippians 1:27-30

This morning we come to the end of the first chapter of Philippians

- Contrary to what you may think, there were no verses and chapters when the original manuscripts of the Bible were written
- We tend to read the passages as being complete thoughts at the end of a chapter
- It is also easy to interject the chapter coming to a climatic conclusion
- None of these things are true
 - The Bible was first divided into chapters by Stephen Langton, The Archbishop of Canterbury in 1227
 - The Hebrew OT was further divided into verses by a Jewish Rabbi, Nathan, in 1448
 - The NT Greek verses were set by Robert Estinne (Stephanus) in 1555

I tell you this because you may be thinking that after 3 months working our way through this first chapter of Paul's letter, we're going to have this big, splashy, all-encompassing climax...but you would be wrong

As a matter of fact, Paul not only does not do that, but he ends this part of his letter with a reminder that not everything of our lives is going to be easy

READ – Philippians 1:27-30 (Vance Crawford)

Paul has told the church in Philippi:

1. He is delighted with how they are living as new Christians in this Roman colony
2. They must continue to love one another filled with the fruit of righteousness
3. His imprisonment is for the furthering of the Gospel
4. It does not matter what others are saying about him (What does it matter?)
5. They should live their lives worthy of the Gospel
6. They cannot stand in the face of opposition alone – it must be in unity

We spoke last week about the importance of courage in the face of obstacles or persecution

- We recognize that courage is not the absence of fear but doing what needs to be done in spite of your fear
- I read an interesting account of what that means...
- One summer morning, a man by the name of Ray Blankenship was preparing his breakfast. He glanced out the kitchen window and a small girl caught his eye as she was being swept along in the rain-flooded drainage ditch beside his home. He knew that downstream the water picked up speed as it disappeared with a roar underneath a road and then emptied into the deep, main culvert. Ray dashed out the door and raced along the ditch, trying to get ahead of the drowning child. When he had, he hurled himself into

the deep, churning water. He surfaced and was able to grab the child's arm. They tumbled end over end. Within just a few feet of the road, Ray's free hand felt something hard protruding from the bank and he able to grab hold. He clung desperately, but the tremendous force of the water tried to tear him and the child away. "If I can just hang on until help comes," he thought. But he did better than that. By the time fire department rescuers had arrived, he had managed to pull the girl and himself to safety. Both only required treatment for shock. And so, on April 12, 1989, Ray Blankenship was awarded the Coast Guard's Silver Lifesaving Medal. The award was very fitting for this selfless person was at even greater risk to himself than people knew. Because you see, Ray Blankenship couldn't swim.

- But he acted with courage to do what had to be done in spite of his fear

As we draw this segment to a close, how do we wrap it up?

- There is obviously much here as evidenced by the time we have taken to look through only one chapter
- I want to finish by examining a word and a concept that is seldom explored because it's not a very nice one
 - We enjoy sermons on love, comfort, forgiveness, joy, and kindness
 - But this conjures up all kinds of things in our mind that are not very pleasant
- I am talking about the word Paul uses, not only here, but 21 other times in his letters – suffering or to suffer

I recently read this as we begin to consider what we are talking about...

Imagine that you are news correspondent sent out to a dangerous battle zone. You expect to see battle-weary soldiers in combat fatigues, dirt on their faces, living in the most difficult conditions, covered with weaponry. But, instead, at the battlefield you're surprised to find the soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, playing volleyball and cards, lying around swimming pools, sipping cold drinks, with no weapons anywhere in sight. If such an army was defending our country from a hostile enemy, we'd have good reason to be alarmed!

The problem is that army has forgotten its mission. It thinks that its mission centers around its own comfort and having a good time. Having forgotten its mission, it would easily fall to a hostile enemy. If that enemy attacked, the members of the army might try to desert, claiming, "I didn't sign up for this! I signed up for all the benefits. I had no idea I might get shot at!"

In many ways the American church is a lot like the army I've just described. Too many times we have promoted from the pulpit the Christian life as one exclusively filled with benefits: "Come to Christ and He will give you peace and happiness. He will help you overcome your problems. He will give you a happy marriage, family, and wealth. He will give you an abundant life." So, the recruits sign up, thinking they will be sitting poolside and enjoying the good life with Jesus. Then, the bullets start to fly, and the bombs start to drop, shrapnel is flying everywhere. People are getting hurt and dying. And these laid-back recruits turn and run, thinking, "I didn't sign up for this!"

Many people come into the life of a Christian somehow thinking that their life is set in that same way

But the Bible is clear that the Christian life is not an oasis free from the trials and challenges of life

- God did not provide a way of salvation for you to live in comfort, free from the battles of life, and in great wealth
- This is why the teaching of people like Joel Osteen and Kenneth Copeland are so dangerous and deceptive
- Because they are preaching something that the Bible simply does not say, and in fact teaches the opposite!

Is this then what Paul is speaking of in **Phil 1:29** that the Christian is to not only believe, but suffer for Christ?

- It is
- But biblical suffering must be understood so you know what it is and what it is not

Suffer

- The original language – *PAHS-Kho*
- We tend to see this word in the same way we often refer to the word “consequence” – always in the negative
- But suffer, like consequence, can also be positive
 - The literal definition is to be affected or have been affected
 - In the positive it means to experience an impression or sensation
 - In **Gal 3:4** – Paul asks of the people, *Have you suffered so much for nothing...?*
 - He is asking them, have all your experiences been for nothing regarding understanding how salvation comes from God and not through their efforts
 - Jesus also used the word in **Mark 10:14** when He said, *Suffer the little children to come unto me*
 - But that word, while the same for us in English, holds a different meaning
 - It means to permit, allow, or not to hinder
 - Of course, in the negative it means to endure hardship or be in a bad way

This means that, like in every other instance of reading God’s Word, context becomes critical in understanding the meaning

In the Scripture, there are four classic examples of suffering in the negative way

1. Joseph – hated by his brothers; sold into slavery; lived the life of a slave; severely tempted; imprisoned falsely (**Gen 37-39**)
2. Job – all of his sons and daughters lost; all of his possessions stolen or burned; sores over his entire body (**Job 1-2**)
3. Jeremiah – persecuted by his own family; plotted against by the people of his hometown; rejected and ridiculed by his religious peers; arrested, beaten, and accused of treason (**Jer 11, 12, 20, 37**)
4. Paul – plotted against; stoned and left for dead; beaten and jailed; falsely accused; endured storms and shipwrecked twice; bitten by a deadly snake; and abandoned by his co-workers (**Acts; I Thess; 2 Tim**)

And while their circumstances were different, they all had one thing in common that spoke of what God was doing in their lives

- They never abandoned their faith in God and that was seen by how they lived in the midst of those difficult times of suffering

Suffering is the result of several things

1. The consequences of our actions
 - a. Sin does carry the consequence of suffering
 - b. But not all suffering is the result of sin
 - i. Jesus made this clear to His disciples in [John 9](#)
2. The actions of others
 - a. The people of Israel often suffered because of the actions of their leaders
 - b. Just as we are suffering today for the actions of ours
3. God's will to permit things to happen in our lives
 - a. God does not tempt us ([James 1:13](#))
 - b. But he will allow circumstances to come into our lives in order to strengthen our faith and help us to grow

A dangerous way to respond to the difficult things in your life is to see them all as something horrible that then completely takes over the rest of your life.

- Troubles and struggles are a part of life
 - We live in a sin-filled world that is controlled by satan
 - This will not last, but it is why things are the way they are right now
 - God has not abandoned us
 - God has not lost control
 - God is not losing to the enemy
- NOTHING is occurring right now that is not a part of God's plan
- And so today, for you and for me, the focus is and what for you should now be a common theme, how do you respond to those times?
 - Do you allow it to change you into a person others don't want to be around?
 - Do you allow it to bring a dark, gloomy cloud over you that robs your life of all joy, laughter, and compassion?
- Or...do you deal with it for what it is, *our light and momentary troubles* as Paul says in [2 Cor 4:17](#)
 - And because they are momentary, do you keep things in perspective?
 - Do you reach out to others for encouragement, support, and the balance of that right perspective?
- Do you thank God for the blessings of your life that will always far outweigh the struggles?

You may need to go through some suffering from time to time in your life

- It may be a relational struggle
- A health issue
- Financial
- Work related

- Emotional or spiritual attacks

Whatever form they take remember that Paul teaches us that *it has been granted to us to believe and suffer for Christ (Phil 1:29)*

- That word “granted” translates in the original language as *to do something pleasant or agreeable*
- IOW it is a privilege, a gift to believe in and suffer for Christ
- Jesus said to His disciples in **Luke 6:26** - *Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.*
- If you are living for Jesus, there will always be those people who do not like what you say, what you stand for, and what you know to be right and wrong
- And their responses may bring some suffering with them

Nobody enjoys prolonged stays in times of trial or suffering

- But a man or woman who continue to live, act, and speak with joy and with the mind of Christ to others is one who God is powerfully at work in
- Seek to learn all that God has for you in those times and He will not only see you through them but will powerfully bless you in the process!