**SUFFERING SAINTS!**

**Phil 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and *the fellowship of his sufferings*,**

**being made conformable unto his death…**

**INTRO.:** A. Twenty first century saints have a very mistaken view of the Christian life. Instead of accepting suffering, slights, persecutions and problems as the norm in the believer’s life they cry out **“Why me?”** Instead we should ask **“Why NOT me?”** If we use the Scriptures as our pattern, we find that almost every saint of God went through the deep waters of suffering in order to be included in the believers Hall of the Faithful in Hebrews 11 and throughout the Bible.

From righteous Abel murdered by his brother Cain after Eden, through Job, Joseph, Daniel, and Joshua as well as Peter, Paul and the believers at Phillipi - they all had one thing in common. They were **suffering saints**.

It has been so throughout time. Trophimus, Epaphroditus, Savonarola, Luther, Moody, Booth, Spurgeon (especially), and on and on even through my lifetime, those who have left their marks on our society and our world for Christ have suffered greatly. To this day the great preachers and men & women of God greatly used of the Lord, went through or are going through the valleys of pain and persecution before they were or are elevated to the heights of blessing and help to others, and finally stand before their longsuffering Savior.

But let’s get both personal and scriptural.

**SHIRLEY, MY WIFE…**

…suffered for 3,650+ days or over 10 years with great pain and discomfort. She graduated from a cane to a walker, to a scooter and finally to a wheelchair and oxygen before her physical death. She had Polymyalgia *(poly [everywhere] myalgia [pain] or pain everywhere)* and diabetes. She had at least 3 bouts of *extreme pain* daily. But she continued to be a blessing to churches wherever I pastored or preached by playing the piano or organ and almost never missed a service in spite of barely being able to get out of bed. One of the hardest things for her was when the church she had played for for years removed the piano out of the auditorium. That was due to her inability to play any longer as a result of arthritis in her hands. *She wept that day*. The pain wasn’t physical, but it hurt more than the physical pain because she couldn’t continue to be a blessing to others. She never did stop witnessing verbally wherever we went to the last week of her life on earth. You will not find her name in any books of the giants of the faith or those who made their marks in Christianity. But you will find her name in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and I believe at the Judgment Seat of Christ she will outshine many whose names are inscribed there. In fact, though I was the preacher, she may have more rewards than I. By the way, I never heard her complain due to her pain or physical limitations! In fact, she would apologize to me for being a burden. *(Please pardon the personal references.)*

***Isa 43:2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.***

**PAUL, THE APOSTLE…**

…was famous, wealthy, healthy (as far as we know), and highly regarded in his position as a Pharisee in Israel --- ***until he got saved!*** Then it was infamy, poverty, poor health and slander, not to mention his physical pain and suffering. Most now think of Paul as the greatest of Christians. His resume would be thrown out if he candidated for the pastorate in most churches today or eliminated by any mission board because of his reputation as a **jailbird, a rabble rouser and a religious bigot.** So, what made him so great in God’s eyes and now our eyes? It was not because he was the great church planter, the great speaker or motivator. In fact his own testimony was that his speech was not that polished and his physical countenance was somewhat repugnant. Instead it was his suffering for our Savior! (See **Philippians 3:10** above.)

Paul probably didn’t have a day without pain! He carried **195 whiplash** stripes in his body!!! *(I don’t know if I could endure more than two!)* On top of that he was **beaten** with “rods” or sticks. Then he was **stoned** (resulting in his death and resurrection), he was **shipwrecked** on three occasions (never a pleasant experience). He was **overboard in the ocean** for a day and a night (a truly chilling thought!). He also experienced horrendous **verbal abuse, hunger, extreme thirst and even exposure to biting cold and embarrassing nakedness! He became a wanted man and a fugitive as well.** (Any volunteers for the ministry?) 2 Cor. 11:16ff

**JESUS, OUR SAVIOR…**

…was not even believed on by his own family members. *(That must have hurt!)* Herod tried to hunt Him down and murder Him when He was about 2 years old. Mary and Joseph did not understand Who He was in Luke 2 *(look at v.50)* as evidenced by the experience in leaving Him behind at Jerusalem when He was only 12 years old. *(What parent does that?)* He was rejected by His own neighbors in the town where He grew up. When He visited a Synagogue at the beginning of His ministry they threw Him out and tried to throw Him over a cliff to kill Him *(again).* There were constant threats of bodily harm and hurtful innuendoes and taunting as well as plots against Him even when He was busy healing lepers, the maimed, halt, blind, poor, diseased people, casting out demons and raising the dead! You know the story, but one of the greatest hurts came one dark night in Gethsemane, with His disciples, when one of His chosen betrayed Him with a kiss!

That began the greatest of His humiliation and suffering. The ridicule of His former followers, the abandonment of His disciples, the shame of the howling mob, the trumped up charges, accusations and trials. And finally the scourging, beatings, berating, the crown of thorns, the pounding into His flesh of the spikes to nail Him to the cursed Cross, and then the offering of vinegar to quench His horrible thirst, His heaving chest as He gasped for air. And before He finally succumbed to the torture one hardened Roman soldier pierced His side with a spear!

But none of our Savior’s sufferings were without meaning for you, me and the entire world, as you well know. All suffering is difficult, but all suffering is for a purpose. We may not understand it, and God may not let us in on the reasons, but Romans 8:28 is still in the Book (and so are the accompanying verses)!

***Rom 8:28-32 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.***

***29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?***

**YOU AND ME…**

So, you ask, what does all of this have to do with me? Suffering serves a purpose, as it did with our Savior’s sufferings…for the entire world! Paul’s sufferings, including his (and the other original Apostles’) deaths, all had a meaning and all will receive great rewards as a result.

But what about my wife’s suffering…and yours and mine! God is no respecter of persons, so all **SUFFERING SAINTS** will likewise receive great blessings at the Judgment Seat of our Savior. Even those times of pain, pressure and problems which caused us heartache, heart-break, headaches and humiliation which seemingly did not have anything to do with our service for the Savior are a part of the ***“all things”*** the Lord allowed or sent to us. Those irritations, irrational and intentional hurts and seemingly meaningless aggravations will all add up to that coming time of reward. And those rewards will last forever!

So, **SUFFERING SAINTS,** look up for your redemption *(and reward)* draweth nigh. I don’t know why Shirley had to suffer so much when I got off so easily or why her disabling pain was allowed and she was taken to Heaven while I am left behind. But our God doesn’t make mistakes! We can ask Paul and the saints down through the ages who agonized over their pain, prayed over their problems, writhed in agony over their tortures, wept over their disablements, shed tears over their loved ones who abandoned them for their stand for our Savior, and never understood this side of glory, *WHY?!* But *“It Will Be Worth It All, When We See Jesus”* who suffered the most!

Most of what **SUFFERING SAINTS** go through down here are never explained, but it will all make sense by and by! So, hang in there, my brothers and sisters. You will soon trade your tragedy for a throne, your disability for a diamond tiara, your pain for a position in the Millennial reign of our Savior, your sickness and sadness for unending service for Him and your heartache and heart-brake for an heirship alongside your King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

*Oh, what a day that will be, when my Savior I shall see. When I look upon His face, the One Who saved me by His grace. When He takes me by the hand, and leads me to the Promised Land, What a day, glorious day that will be!*

*JUST THINK…*

*Of stepping on shore, and finding it Heaven,*

*Of taking a hand, and finding it God’s,*

*Of breathing new air, and finding it celestial.*

*Of waking up in Glory and calling it Home!*

Sincerely in The Savior, [Fedena's Website](https://pastorpaulfedena.weebly.com/)

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