

CHRIST VOLUNTARILY SUFFERED: BE GRATEFUL

Luke 22:14-22, 39-46, 63-65

Many of us have quoted Ben Franklin when we have said “there are no gains without pains.” We usually think of such a truth in connection with physical exercise, but Ben was writing an article entitled “A Way to Wealth.” As with so many truths, the basic principles of a truth find applications in many different venues. I don’t know that we can generalize a correlation between the degree of suffering and the extent of the gain, but as those who play the lottery say, you can’t win if you don’t buy a ticket. If a seed does not fall to the ground and then die, there will be no harvest. If nothing is invested, then there is no possibility of a return.

If we turn to the Scriptures and look for things related to this idea, then we see that worship involves sacrifice and we also see that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. We see also that Christ taught us that if we want to go where He goes, then we must deny self (pain) take up our cross daily (more pain) and walk the same path that He walked. The glories of the resurrection must be preceded by the cross.

We can certainly learn this truth from the life of Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Suffering in Anticipation – 22:14-20

¹⁴ When the hour had come, He reclined *at the table*, and the apostles with Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷ And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹ And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁰ And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. Luke 22:14-20 (NASB95)

The preparations had been made and Jesus and His disciples had arrived at the upper room to observe the Passover. For 1467 years the Children of Israel had kept this observance to commemorate God's salvation in delivering them from slavery in Egypt. For 1467 times the generations had performed a drama that was to teach them a key truth of the Plan of Salvation. For 1467 times lambs had been sacrificed in each home so that they might understand the offering of the Lamb of God as a sacrifice for sin for the whole world. The moment in history when “the real thing” was going to take place was almost upon them. This Last Supper really was the last time the observance of the Passover would point to the offering up of the Lamb of God. It would be the last time that Jesus would take part in such an observance until the fullness of the Kingdom of God comes. The future occasion is thought by many to be a reference to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb that is mentioned in Revelation 19:9.

As the time for the culmination of the earthly ministry of Jesus drew closer, the events started taking on obvious (to us with 20-20 hindsight) significance. The Passover meal Jesus and His disciples would eat together would be the last one in the old order of things. It would be transitional and take on the spiritual significance for which the Passover was intended to represent.

What Luke does not tell us is that the group of disciples really had no idea of how significant this event really was. They did not know that the events of that night and how they behaved would be told and retold thousands of times. Had they realized this, they might have not been so caught up in their own little world of greed and pride wondering who would be the

“greatest” in the kingdom.

During the course of the meal, Jesus told them how He had anticipated or looked forward to this particular Passover observance. I believe that He had looked forward to this time since the very first time the Passover meal was eaten by the children of Israel when they were in Egypt. The events of this Passover observance would be the culmination of all those past observances that pointed to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

Though Jesus had made specific reference to His suffering and death, the disciples did not anticipate nor fully comprehend the magnitude of what was to happen in the next 24 hours. None of them (especially Judas) would have dreamed that Jesus would be beaten nearly to the point of death, a crown of thorns pressed on His head, would have ridicule heaped upon Him by the leaders of the Jews, would be spat upon, and would undergo the agony of the crucifixion and the feeling of being abandoned.

Let’s examine what happened during the Passover meal. The cup of wine was shared four times during the Passover meal. According to D. A. Carson, this was the sequence of events at the Passover meal.

Opening prayer

First Cup of Wine with a dish of herbs and sauce.

Story of first Passover was told followed by singing Psalms 113

Second Cup of Wine

Prayer for God’s grace (blessing on the food)

Main course of the meal (roast lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs) was eaten.

Prayer followed by the Third Cup of Wine.

Psalms 114-118 was sung and the Fourth Cup of Wine was drunk.

In Luke’s account, we see the drinking of the cup on two occasions. Luke’s first mention of it was in conjunction with a prayer and this event was likely the Second Cup mentioned in the above list. This was followed by breaking the bread which was the initiation of the main course. The second occasion for passing the cup that Luke mentioned was likely the Third Cup referenced in the order of events for the Passover meal. It was this Third Cup to which Jesus tied His shed blood for the establishing of a new covenant with a new observance.

The new observance included and started with breaking bread. Throughout His ministry, Jesus referred to Himself as the Bread of Life. He was born in a little town the name of which literally means House of Bread. The symbolism of the bread being broken is significant. If you have a loaf of bread and it cannot be broken, then it is not of much use except to be attractive. Likewise, God wants us to experience broken-ness in that we stop relying on our own strength and realize that we are completely dependent on God. When we put the “breaking of the bread” in the Passover meal sequence, we see the comment Jesus made that this is “My body which is broken for you” could have referred to the entire meal – the lamb, the unleavened bread, and bitter herbs.

After they had eaten the main course (literally after they had supped), the cup was passed around. This time it had significance in that it was to represent the Blood of Jesus. It represented His blood that which would seal the New Covenant. A covenant or “will” does not go into force until the maker of the will dies. When Jesus died, the New Covenant became effective. This was in fulfillment of the prophecy from Daniel 9:24-27 that in the middle of the seventieth week (of years) He would establish a new covenant and would be cut off. We also know (from the post-cross time frame) that Christ’s blood shed for us is the price of our redemption.

Suffering Disappointment – 22:21-22, 39-40, 45-46

²¹ “But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. ²² “For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!” Luke 22:21-22

According to Mark’s account, the timing of the revelation that one of the twelve would betray Him was prior to the Supper. Jesus knew what Judas had done in agreeing to turn Him over to the religious authorities. We can only speculate as to his motives for doing what he did.

The Plan of Salvation had been determined before the world began. Jesus knew what was coming and He allowed it to play out on the stage of history. The fact that God knows what the world and people in the world will do does not relieve any of us of our responsibility to make the right choices and to do the right things.

None of the other disciples suspected Judas. They questioned among themselves as to whom it might be. Mark quoted them as saying, “Surely it is not I.” We have a tendency to always think that “it is someone else” rather than ourselves who need help or who may fail. This too is part of the pride we have and speaks to our need for humility and broken-ness in our own lives so that Jesus can express His life through us. The disciple (except Simon Peter) realized their “fail-ability.” They did not doubt the words of Jesus – they doubted themselves. The lesson for us is that we need to keep in mind that we are vulnerable to temptation. You recall what Peter said: “All the rest of these fellows may let you down, but not me, I would even die for you.” You know what happened! We see things happening even today with people being vulnerable to temptation. It can happen to people who are involved in religion. It happens to those in government, in business. All are vulnerable.

³⁹ And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him.

⁴⁰ When He arrived at the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” Luke 22:39-40

⁴⁵ When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” Luke 22:45-46 (NASB95)

Jesus and the group went out to the Mount of Olives *as was their habit*. Since it was their usual practice, Judas knew exactly where to find them. Jesus had given His disciples some good advice that night in the garden: “Pray that you enter not into temptation.” There were many challenges that night and they were tempted. The first temptation was to give in to their desire for physical comfort. They had just had a meal and it was getting late in evening, it was dark, and they were exhausted. The predictable happened: they fell asleep.

This situation must have been a disappointment for Jesus. However, He probably was not too surprised. The fact that mankind has failed to be faithful in almost every situation proves our need of salvation. Even now, Jesus finds His disciples, the Church, asleep and not watching. How many people really spend an hour a day in prayer or devotion. The consequences of not doing that is clearly spelled out here: we enter into temptation.

Suffering Great Stress – 22:41-44

⁴¹ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, ⁴² saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” ⁴³ Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. Luke 22:41-44 (NASB95)

Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends.” He knew what He was talking about for that was what He faced as He struggled with the future. STRUGGLING is an appropriate word for what Jesus was doing that night as He and the disciples left the upper room and went out the garden of Gethsemane.

That which was ahead of Him in the immediate future would involve intense and immense physical pain. In addition to the physical suffering, He realized the great emotional

pain and the agony of spirit He would undergo. Listen to His plea: “If You will Father, let Us find another way for salvation.” There was NO other way. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. The blood of bulls and rams could not permanently cleanse us from our sin and our sins. It had to be done over and over. However, what Jesus did was “once and for all.”

There are many situations we face in life where we would like another way and we sometimes settle for less than the best. How did Jesus handle the situation He was in? “Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.” The bottom line for our ultimate happiness is to follow what we know to be God’s will for our lives.

It was not that Jesus didn’t know what God’s will was. At issue was an alternative. So many times we hear people pray and say, “Lord, do this or do that, if it be Your will.” This is somewhat of a cop out. We need to find out what God’s will is, then pray according to that will. It may cause us much grief to give up our own plans to be in touch with God’s plan for our lives. However, we can never be all that we should be if we do not let go of our plans and follow what God has for us.

Notice that when Jesus came to accept God’s way, God’s will, God’s method; he then agonized over the decision. It was an intensely stressful time and He sweated profusely because of the intensity of the situation.

Even the name of the garden was indicative of the stress of that occasion. Gethsemane means "olive press" and Jesus was feeling tremendous pressure regarding what He knew was about to happen. We can learn from His example: He turned to prayer. When life is pressing in on us and we are struggling with doing what we know we ought to do, we can find the strength to carry on in prayer. Even though the decision would have to be His alone, He wanted the company and support of those close to Him. How often have we had someone ask us to pray with or for them? This is similar to Jesus' request to Peter, James and John, "Watch with me."

We are told that Jesus got down on the ground – face down and prayed. In the Old Testament, this was the position that signified submission and worship. He humbled himself before God, the Father and endured intense agony of the soul as he struggled with this issue of how to secure salvation for mankind. We are told in Hebrews "He learned obedience by the things He suffered." Obedience is not just doing only what you want to do. Jesus was literally determining the future of the entire universe with what He did that night. He certainly determined the future possibilities for you and me. We also are in the business of determining our future and we even have significant influence on those around us. What we did yesterday and what we do today will determine what we will be and what we will have tomorrow and all the other tomorrows.

Suffering Humiliation – 22:63-65

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him, ⁶⁴ and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, “Prophecy, who is the one who hit You?” ⁶⁵ And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming. Luke 22:63-65 (NASB95)

While at the house of the high priest, Jesus began to be mistreated by the men who were guarding Him. They mocked Him and beat Him. Blindfolding Him, they mockingly asked Him to prophesy by telling who hit Him. Apparently they knew of His claims, but they had a misunderstanding of true prophecy.

All of us are appalled by man’s inhumanity to man. We ask the question “How could anyone in their right mind do such things?” We hear reports of mobs attacking a person for reasons that are completely unrelated to anything the person himself had done. We think that it

is insanity. Those who abused Jesus did not have any basis for attacking Him. They did not have enough information to even have hatred for Him. What they did was a blatant abuse of power and they let the raw evil deep down inside of their fallen human nature come to the surface. Most of the time, they likely conducted themselves in a civil manner as “ordinary citizens” would be expected to behave. This basic flawed nature was exactly what Jesus came to change. He was their hope for deliverance but the evil that was within them would not allow them to accept their only hope.

All that Jesus had said about being betrayed and being arrested was happening. The disciples had probably thought that it was just so much talk -- maybe just an over statement for effect. But no, it was literally happening. Those who were out to stop Jesus were from the religious establishment. What a tragedy it is that religion gets in the way of Christianity.

At this point in the unfolding events and throughout the ordeal, Jesus was in control. We see a little further on in the Scripture that He told His disciple that if He wanted to be rescued that He could have called for angels to come. We need to realize that we can back away from what is right and so often do when the going gets a little rough. Jesus did not back away and we should follow His example.