**More Like the Master**

In His Suffering

Lesson 17

*“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things,*

*and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed…”*

*(Mark 8:31)*

**A World of Suffering**

We live in a world of suffering because we live in a world that has been affected by the consequences of sin (Genesis 3). There will be suffering as long as there is sin in the world. Jesus made it clear that all his disciples, then and now, would have a life of suffering. Jesus did not paint a rosy picture of discipleship. For example, he taught in the Sermon on Mount that his disciples would be persecuted, hated, and slandered (Matthew 5:11; Luke 6:22). Later, he told his disciples that they would be hated, persecuted, and even put to death *“for my name’s sake”* (Matthew 10:21-23). He spoke of how his disciples would need to take up their cross (a symbol of suffering) and follow him (Matthew 10:38; 16:24). He also warned his disciples that they could expect the same kind of mistreatment that he received (John 15:18-20).

The Old Testament prophets *“testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them”* (1 Peter 1:11; see also Acts 3:18; 17:2-3; 26:23). Isaiah was one such prophet who predicted and prophesied that Jesus would be a suffering servant. He wrote: *“He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”* (Isaiah 53:3-4). Philip applied this scripture to Jesus in Acts 8:28-35 when preaching to the Eunuch. Jesus was the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah. Jesus suffered because he was fully God and fully man (John 1:14). As a man, he felt all the pain and hurt of suffering and persecution (Hebrews 2:9-14). He *“suffered in the flesh”* (1 Peter 4:1). Jesus suffered more than just physical pain. Jesus suffered in many ways both emotionally and physically. In this study we will examine what Jesus suffered, how Jesus responded to his suffering, and what things Jesus accomplished through his suffering. We study Jesus’ suffering so that we can be “More Like the Master” in his suffering.

**Jesus and His Suffering**

Jesus experienced great suffering:

***He suffered rejection*.** We are told about the sufferings of Christ in the gospels by those who witnessed what he went through. Peter, for example, was *“a witness of the sufferings of the Christ”* (1 Peter 5:11). Consider the how Jesus suffered *“many things”* (Matthew 16:21). For example, Jesus was *“despised and rejected”* of men (Isaiah 53:3). He suffered many things and was rejected of his own generation (Luke 17:25). He was rejected by the very people he came to love and help. He came to his own people and even they often rejected him (John 1:11). Jesus realized that he would be rejected by his own people and he said to them on one occasion, *“No prophet is acceptable in his own country”* (Luke 4:24). The Jews who heard these words were filled with wrath and cast him out of the city (Luke 4:28-30). Jesus was also rejected by Gentiles on one occasion after healing the Gadarene demoniac. They asked him to leave and he did not stay where he was not wanted (Matthew 8:34 – 9:1; Mark 5:17-18; Luke 8:37). Jesus was rejected again in Nazareth. The people there were astonished at Jesus’ teaching, but they were offended in him (caused to stumble) and would not believe in him. Jesus marveled at their unbelief (Matthew 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6). At the time of the Passover, Jesus was rejected by his own physical family. John records: *“For even his brethren did not believe on him”* (John 7:5). Jesus was rejected and even hated by the world. Jesus said, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hates, because I testify of it, that its works are evil”* (John 7:7). The reason Jesus suffered rejection was because he was the *“light of the world”* (John 8:12). He came to offer the “light” of truth to people sitting in the “darkness” of sin. But, many wanted to remain in their sinful world of “darkness” and did not want the “light”, so they rejected Jesus the “light” (John 3:19-21). But since Jesus came to do his Father’s will, he went on loving those who hated and rejected him.

***He suffered persecution.*** The Jews persecuted Jesus because he healed a lame man on the Sabbath (John 5:16).

***He suffered ridicule.*** Jesus suffered ugly, unkind, and untrue remarks made about him from his enemies. He was *“set at nought”* (Mark 9:12) meaning he was put down and ridiculed. The author of Hebrews wrote that Jesus *“endured a contradiction of sinners against himself”* (Hebrews 12:3). This means that Jesus endured ridicule during his ministry. For example, the crowd in Jarius’ home laughed Jesus to scorn, but he was not deterred by their ridicule. He went on to raise the daughter (Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53). Jesus was also ridiculed by the Pharisees for casting out a demon from a man. Sadly, they charged him with casting out the demon, *“By the prince of demons…”* (Matthew 9:32-34). During one Passover, the multitude got in on the ridicule as well and said, *“You have a demon…”* (John 7:20). Later, during the same Passover, the chief priests and the Pharisees prejudiced the people against Jesus (John 7:45-52; see also 9:22,28). The unbelieving Jews in the temple called Jesus a “Samaritan” (a derogatory term at this time) and accused him of having a demon (John 8:48,52). During his trial and crucifixion, Jesus was ridiculed for what he had said about destroying the temple of his body (Matthew 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29). Even when Jesus was hanging on the cross, his enemies continued to ridicule and taunt him saying, *“If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross”* (Matthew 27:40-43).

***He suffered grief.*** Jesus was *“a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”* (Isaiah 53:3). He suffered internal and emotional sorrow, grief and agony, as he thought about the condition of the sinful world around him. He wept over Jerusalem (John 19:41-44) and cried, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem…”* (Matthew 23:37-38). Jesus’ sufferings caused him to be *“troubled”* (John 12:27*), “sorrowful and very heavy”* (Matthew 26:37-38), and *“sore amazed”* (Mark 14:33-34). Jesus experienced *“agony”* in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44) and he cried, *“My God, My God why have you forsaken me…”* from the cross (Matthew 27:46).

***He suffered pain.*** Jesus suffered the physical pain of the cross. The author of Hebrews wrote that Jesus *“endured the cross, despising shame”* (Hebrews 12:3). There were times during Jesus ministry that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus and Jesus knew it (Luke 4:29; John 7:19,25,30,44; 8:37,40). When the Jews finally got their opportunity, they caused Jesus to suffer great physical pain from being scourged and from crucifixion. First, Jesus was mocked, stripped, whipped, hit, and spat upon (Matthew 26:27-31). Next, Jesus carried his cross for some distance (Matthew 27:32; John 19:17). Jesus was then nailed to the cross where he hung upon it for six hours and finally died on it (Matthew 27:33-56).

Jesus responded righteously to suffering:

***He endured.*** We are told in the scriptures that Jesus suffered many things, but we are also told that he responded righteously to his suffering. Jesus endured his sufferings (Hebrews 12:2-3). He remained faithful to his Father throughout all his sufferings. He did not give in or give up. He patiently and steadfastly held up under the pain of suffering and came through it victoriously.

***He did not revile or threaten.*** Jesus did not revile when he was reviled and he did not threaten when he suffered (1 Peter 2:21). He held his peace (Matthew 27:14; Mark 14:61) and refused to strike back (Luke 22:63-65). He *“opened not his mouth”* (Isaiah 53:7) in retaliation. Jesus never acted in an ungodly or unrighteous manner toward those who persecuted him and caused him to suffer. He did not return evil for evil, rather, he returned good for evil and blessing for cursing (Romans 12:14,17). He prayed for his enemies saying, *“Father, forgive them…” (Luke 23:34).*

***He committed himself to God.*** Jesus placed himself in God’s hands during his suffering (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus certainly defended himself and answered his accusers (Mark 14:62), but he did not fight against them. He trusted in God’s will and way during his suffering. He trusted that God would judge righteously all the injustices made against him and he believed that God would take care of him during his suffering.

Jesus accomplished great things in suffering:

***He is able to succor.*** The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus *“suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted”* (Hebrews 2:18). Jesus can succor (aid) those who go through the same sufferings by hearing and answering their prayers (Hebrews 4:14-16).

***He learned obedience.*** The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus learned obedience *“by the things which he suffered”* (Hebrews 5:8-9). Jesus “learned” obedience in the sense that he experienced a life of obedience to his Father which led to his suffering. He willingly submitted to his Father in obedience even when it led to suffering. Jesus’ “learned” experimentally through doing. In this way, Jesus becomes an example for us how to go about doing the Father’s will.

***He authored salvation.*** The author of Hebrews goes on to write this about Jesus: *“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus was made a perfect, complete, and qualified savior by means of his own sufferings (see also Hebrews 2:9-10). Jesus *“suffered without the gate”* so that he could sanctify the people through his own blood (Hebrews 13:12). Ultimately, his suffering on the cross allowed for a sacrifice to be made for the sins and salvation of the world. Jesus *“suffered for you”* (1 Peter 2:21) and he *“suffered for sins”* (1 Peter 3:18). The suffering of Jesus on the cross brings all mankind together who obey (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 2:14) and it brings all mankind to God who obey (1 Peter 3:18).

***He received a crown.*** Jesus bore his cross before he wore his crown. He suffered first, before he entered into his glory. His glory followed his suffering (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11; 4:11). He was humbled first through suffering and then he was exalted in heavenly glory (Philippians 2:5-11). It was only after he endured the cross and the contradiction of sinners that he sat down at the right of God (Hebrews 12:2-3). He was *“crowned with glory and honor”* after he suffered (Hebrews 2:9).

**The Christian and Suffering**

Like Jesus, Christians will be immersed (baptized) in suffering (Mark 10:39). The apostles suffered for Christ (Acts 5:18-19,41; 1 Corinthians 4:12-13; 2 Corinthians 6:6), Stephen suffered (Acts 7:51-60), James and Peter suffered (Acts 12:1-4), and the early Christians suffered as well (1 Corinthians 12:26; 2 Corinthians 1:6; Galatians 3:4; Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 10:32; 1 Peter 5:9). The Apostle Paul, in particular, suffered greatly for Christ (Acts 9:15-16,25; 14:19; 16:23-24; 2 Corinthians 11:24-27; Galatians 5:11; Philippians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Timothy 4:10; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:3,9,12; 3:11).

We will experience great suffering. Paul wrote that Christians will *“suffer with him”* (Romans 8:17) and that Christians will *“suffer in his behalf”* (Philippians 1:29). Like Paul, when Christians live like Christ, they will experience *“the fellowship of his sufferings”* (Philippians 3:10). The Thessalonians were told in advance that they would suffer for the cause of Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:4) and they would suffer for the kingdom of God (1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5). Paul wrote*, “All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12). Peter writes that we are *“partaker’s of Christ’s sufferings”* (1 Peter 4:13). The church at Smyrna was told by John that they would suffer and that some would even die for the cause of Christ (Revelation 2:10; see also 2:13).

We must respond righteously to suffering. Christians need to respond properly to suffering. One thing they can do is to help their brethren who are suffering. Paul writes: *“And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it…”* (1 Corinthians 12:26). Faithful Christians can respond to suffering by gaining comfort from God and from one another (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). They can also put their trust in God (2 Corinthians 1:8-11). When Christians suffer for the cause of Christ it is a conscious choice they make to live faithfully for the Lord (Hebrews 11:25). They also do what they can to help out those who are suffering (Hebrews 13:3). Like the Old Testament prophets and Job, faithful Christians patiently endure their sufferings knowing that they will be blessed for it one day (James 5:10-11). Like Jesus, Paul (2 Timothy 3:11), and early Christians (Hebrews 10:32), Christians today can and must endure their sufferings (1 Peter 2:19). Christian who suffer can also pray to God (James 5:13). They follow Christ’s example of suffering. Peter wrote: *“For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps”* (1 Peter 2:21). Like Jesus, Christians do not revile or threaten, but they live patiently and remain committed to God during their suffering (1 Peter 2:18-23; 4:19). God stands ready to strengthen us during our suffering (1 Peter 5:10).

We will be rewarded for our suffering. Christians will be rewarded for their suffering. Paul writes that when we *“suffer with him”* we will be *“glorified with him”* (Romans 8:17). Paul also writes that our suffering is not to be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us in the judgment day (Roman 8:18). It is not fair when faithful Christians suffer wrongfully (1 Peter 2:19-23). But, they suffer for well-doing, they stay happy, and they remain committed to God at the same time (1 Peter 3:14,17; 4:12-17). They know that after they suffer for a little while they will be glorified (1 Peter 5:10). Like Jesus, they know that suffering comes before glory; the cross before the crown.

**More Like the Master in His Suffering**

Jesus expected to suffer. He knew in advance that he would suffer and he even predicted his own suffering to his disciples (Matthew 16:21; 17:12,22-23; Mark 8:31; 9:12,30-32; Luke 9:22,43-45; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26,46). In a similar way, Christians can expect suffering. Paul writes: *“All that would live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12). If we are living godly lives, suffering will come! Are we ready for it? Will we face as Jesus did?

In order for Christians to be partakers of Christ and his salvation, they must be willing to be partakers of his suffering (Philippians 3:10). We do not suffer just for suffering sake. We suffer for *“righteousness’ sake”* (Matthew 5:10; 1 Peter 3:14), for *“the gospel’s sake”* (Mark 8:35; 10:29), for *“my name’s sake”* (Matthew 10:18,22,39; 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:12,17; Acts 9:16; Revelation 2:3), and for the sake of our brethren (Colossians 1:24). Like the apostles, we count ourselves *“worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name”* (Acts 5:41). Our prayer is that God would help us to have the humility (1 Peter 5:6) and the courage (2 Timothy 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:5; Revelation 2:10) necessary to endure all the suffering that comes our way. Let us all be “More like the Master” in his suffering.

**Questions**

1. What did Jesus teach his disciples with reference to suffering?

2. What did Isaiah prophesy about Jesus with reference to his suffering (Isaiah 53:3-4)?

3. What are some ways that Jesus suffered and why did he suffer?

4. How did Jesus respond to his suffering?

5. What did Jesus accomplish through his suffering?

6. What are some ways that Christians today suffer and why do they suffer?

7. How are Christians supposed to respond to their suffering?

8. What reward will Christians receive when they remain faithful throughout their suffering?