



To Suffer For His Sake

I've heard it said that the Bible was written for believers. While it certainly contains powerful truths that apply to every human, I believe this statement is generally true. Why? Because to understand, appreciate, and live by God's Word, we must have faith and be guided in comprehension by the Holy Spirit. A lot of what we find in Scripture is impossible to reckon with if we don't have the Spirit working within us. (See [John 14:26](#), [John 17:17](#), [Luke 24:45](#), [2 Peter 3:16](#)).

Today we come across a passage that is sandwiched between a couple of very popular ones, [Phil 1:21](#) and [Phil 2:1-2](#), yet I don't recall seeing this one on any coffee mugs or cute signs at Hobby Lobby:

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.
[Phil 1:29-30](#)

For context, Paul had just encouraged the Philippians to live for Christ, to strive together for the faith, and not to be alarmed by those opposing (and in effect, persecuting) them. And as we'll see next time, the same exhortation to righteous living flows into chapter 2.

As we've learned before, Paul suffered greatly for the cause of Christ. Once an esteemed Pharisee and zealot for the law, he hunted Christians and put them in prison or to death. Then on his way to stalk Christ-followers in Damascus, he was met by the risen Lord and his heart was transformed. At that time Paul was told how much he suffer for Christ's sake. See [Acts 8-9](#) for the full story.

Surely knowing this, the Philippians would have understood what Paul was referring to when he said, ***“for to you it has been granted... to suffer for [Christ's] sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me.”*** They witnessed the ordeal Paul was in at the time he wrote this letter (cf: [Phil 1:7](#)). And at first glance this seems like it would have been a heavy thing for them to read. Imagine receiving a letter from a foreign missionary who was locked in a dungeon and said this same thing. *You're going to suffer just like me.* Hmm, not sure I'd find that super encouraging!

But did you notice that Paul used the word **“granted”**? This is the Greek *charizomai* which has its root in the word *charis*, which is translated “grace”. This is defined as “bestowed or freely given out of favor”. It's the same word we'd use if we received a valuable gift. So you're telling me that scripture says suffering for Christ is in fact a precious blessing??



This is where the rubber of real faith meets the road. We learn throughout this book that the Philippian believers lived out their faith in tangible ways (cf: [Phil 4:15-18](#)). Unlike in several other epistles, Paul didn't have a lot of correction for these Christians. They seemed to be doing pretty well in their walk, staying true to their calling. Infused with the Holy Spirit, this statement about suffering would have likely been well-received, and dare I say even uplifting. When our faith is real and strong, it is far easier to tolerate and find joy in hard times. Indeed, we are encouraged and even commanded to rejoice when suffering trials and persecution for Christ:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. [1 Peter 4:12-14](#)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [Romans 8:18](#)

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [James 1:2](#)

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. [James 1:12](#)

Reading through and contemplating these tough passages, it again speaks to why the Bible was really intended to be read, studied, and understood by *believers*. To someone who lacks faith or even a simple belief in God, finding joy in suffering is insanity (cf: [1 Cor 1:18](#)). But to those of us who have faith, and know that this world is quickly passing away and that eternity is just around the corner, we find joy, peace, and even happiness in trusting that when we endure these earthly trials, no matter what form or shape they may take, we are a blessing, joy, and pleasing aroma to our wonderful and worthy Savior.

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