

# PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

## Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.14.2

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This newsletter continues the book titled "*The Way of the Disciple*."

One aspect of being a disciple of Christ that should encourage many is that it does not matter where a person is at, or what his condition is in life. He can still be a disciple.

In the days in which Christ and his apostles were ministering, the Roman Empire held sway over a large part of the world's population. The Roman Empire permitted slavery, and there were millions of slaves throughout the nations in which Rome ruled.

It did not matter whether a man was slave, or free. He could answer the call to be a disciple of Christ.

I Corinthians 7:21-22

Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

Christ will ask us to walk in a righteous manner no matter where we are found. There are many who receive these newsletters who are in

prison. Being in prison does not prevent a man or woman from being a disciple of Christ. We can obey God wherever we may be found.

The cost is also the same, no matter where we may be found. If we walk righteously in this world, living to do the will of the Father, we will experience persecution. This is true for those in prison, as well as those outside.

We are also all partakers of the same grace. Nothing will ever separate the disciple of Christ from the love of God. We will never walk alone.

## Food for Thought

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"He who forgives ends the quarrel." Author Unknown

"A forgiveness ought to be like a canceled note, torn in two and burned up, so that it can never be shown against the man." Henry Ward Beecher

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." C.S. Lewis

## Scripture Memory

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Matthew 16:24

Then Yahshua said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

### Parables Newsletter

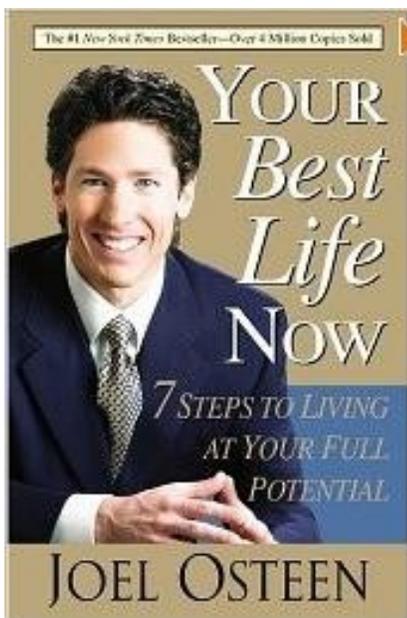
- Series 1.14.2
- *The Way of the Disciple*
- Chapters 4-6

# The Way of the Disciple

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## Suffering Saints

There is a great deception that Satan has foisted upon multitudes of Christians who are eager to accept it. The foundation of this deception is the belief that God wants Christians to have happy, materially abundant, pleasurable lives free of poverty, poor health, sorrow, or persecution. If someone were to write a book to promote this false doctrine they might name it “*Your Best Life Now*.”

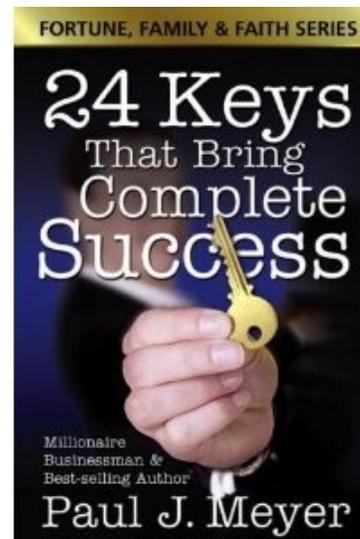


Such a book would be bound to be a best seller, for it would proclaim the things the soul of man wants to hear. It would tell Christians that God wants them to be healthy, happy, and materially prosperous; to experience success and fulfillment of their soul’s deepest desires while in this world, with an expectation of entering into the reward and blessing of God when they die. We should not be surprised that ministers who proclaim this **anti-cross** message are widely embraced, that they sell millions of books, and speak in arenas that seat tens of thousands. The apostle Paul testified that the last days before the return of Christ would be precisely as we see them today.

## II Timothy 4:3-5

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but *according to their own desires*, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

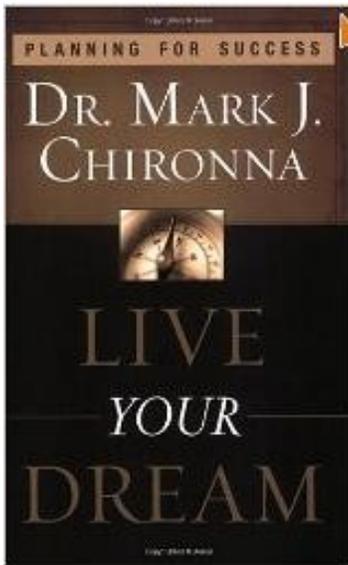
Notice the highlighted words, “*according to their own desires*.” What do men and women desire? Do they not desire to live materially prosperous lives, to be comfortable and at ease? An honest review of the most popular Christian books and teachings today will reveal that the church has indeed “heaped up for themselves teachers” to tell them the things they want to hear.



The image of the successful Christian has become so inculcated into the modern religious mind by hordes of teachers, preachers, books, and sermons that the majority are unable to any longer perceive that what is being proclaimed is the opposite of the example and message of Christ and His disciples.

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### Emphasis on “YOUR”

Matthew 16:24-27

Then Yahshua said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

Consider what Christ is testifying here. When the Son of Man comes in His glory, He will reward every many according to his work. Just before stating this, Yahshua describes two very contrasting lifestyles. There is the man who denies his soul, refusing to live for personal satisfaction, who takes up his cross, and follows in the footsteps of Christ. This man will receive glory and honor and life when Christ appears.

Then there is another lifestyle presented. This is the man who seeks after the world and the things

in it. Self-fulfillment, rather than self-denial, is the overriding motive of this man’s life. He seeks to gain those things his soul desires, whether they be material possessions, a comfortable life, many pleasures, or the approval and applause of other men. This person may convince themselves that a pursuit of their soul’s desires is the will of God, but when they stand before Christ they will find that they have forfeited the salvation of their soul.

*A great many voices are proclaiming the message of the **anti-cross** today.*

A great many voices are proclaiming the message of the **anti-cross** today. I understand the appeal of the prosperity and self-fulfillment message. Nobody likes to suffer. If we were given the choice between spending a day enjoying ourselves, or a day suffering, and were promised that the reward at the end of the day would be the same for both, who in their right mind would choose suffering?

This is precisely where the deception comes in. The reward at the end of the day is NOT the same for the ones who choose to please themselves and the ones who embrace suffering in order to follow Christ.

Luke 13:23-30

And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able... And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last."

Have you ever seen a popular speaker today who gathered tens of thousands of followers by telling them that they are blessed to have less of the world’s goods than others, even to be considered poor, to have little to eat, to live a painful life of sorrow and tears, and to be hated by others?

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Such messages do not attract the materially covetous, or those who are prospering in this world system. Megachurches would be emptied overnight if those carnal saints who fill them were suddenly subjected to the message that Christ proclaimed.

Luke 6:20-26

And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your re-

*The man who has an expectation of being called to suffer will be much more accepting...*

ward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your

comfort in full. Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets."

The heaped up teachers of prosperity have no shortage of admirers who love the message of living a full and satisfied life. It has not occurred to most that this was not the message, or the example, of Christ and His disciples. The message of fulness and pleasure appeals to the soul, but it leads to destruction.

A great many Christians today are afraid to take a closer look at what Christ actually taught and exemplified in His life. It is imperative that they do so, however, for at the end of the day it will matter greatly which principle one lived their life

by. Christ will ask, "Did you take up your cross and follow Me, or did you seek to save your natural life and satisfy the desires of your own soul?"

One path is afflicted, leads to life, and "few there be that find it." The other is a broad way. It is crowded with pilgrims who assure one another that it is a good and pleasant way. Notwithstanding the repeated promises of the myriad of preachers along this great highway, its end is destruction and woe.

Jeremiah 5:31

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! ***But what will you do at the end of it?***

My goal in this chapter is to point out a very important consequence that arises from the mindset we have adopted. The man who has an expectation of being called to suffer will be much more accepting, and less likely to complain, when he encounters trials and difficulties. The man who believes the best path is one of blessing, satisfaction and comfort will find much to complain about, even finding fault with God, when his experiences fall short of his soul's desires.

Last week while riding my motorcycle I was struck by an elderly lady in her 90s. This resulted in a serious injury to my left leg. I received a compound fracture, and my ankle was dislocated. Surgery was required and metal plates and screws were put in my left leg.

Although I have had much grace from God, there is some pain and discomfort associated with such an injury. I was in the hospital two days and then sent home. My daughter Kristin invited me to stay with her, as I was instructed to keep the leg elevated and not put any weight on it for two weeks. The evening my daughter brought me

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home it was a bit warm in the home, but we opened the windows, as it was evening, and it cooled off adequately.

The next day was Friday and my daughter had to go to work. She left the air conditioner on for me, but the house grew warmer and warmer throughout the day. We live in Georgia and even though it is September the temperature reached the low 90s. I was in a considerable amount of discomfort from my injury. In addition to this, I began getting hotter and was sweating lying in the bed. When my daughter came home she realized at once that the A.C. wasn't working. She called her landlord, but was told it would be Monday before a repairman could be sent out.

The week-end continued hot, and in addition to the pain and heat I had some encounters through e-mail and other venues in which some Christians were acting, or speaking, in ways that tempted me to be short, or cross with them.

Have you ever been "hot and bothered?" In such times it is very easy for a person to speak or act in a manner unbecoming the nature and Spirit of Christ. Perhaps we might be tempted to complain against God, knowing that He could make our circumstances much easier and pleasant. When encountering some provocation from another human, we may be inclined to speak impatiently, without the gentleness, the self-control, longsuffering, humility and peace that Yahweh would have us to manifest.

During the three days at home following the accident when I did not have air conditioning, the Spirit led me to contemplate these things. I saw clearly that Yahweh was giving me an opportunity to be enlarged spiritually through my experiences of suffering. If I could remain patient, gentle, calm, thoughtful of others while refusing to complain, find fault, or bemoan my suffering, then I would make an advancement that could

only be gained under such circumstances.

It helped tremendously that I already accepted the fact that suffering is part of the experience of all who would follow Christ. On the morning of the day I was injured I had just posted the writing titled "*Why Does God Require Christians to Suffer?*" I did not think it unusual that I should be experiencing some difficulty, or affliction. I understood that it is in the fire that the sons of God are purified. As they bear up patiently under all kinds of suffering they are transformed more and more into the image of Christ.

Monday the air conditioner repairman stopped by. It was nearly 8 P.M., and he had been long at work, but he came by. He had the problem fixed in about five minutes. Ants had gotten into the electrical connections and were keeping contacts from closing. This is a common problem in the south.

I had just written to a sister a day or two previously about a plague of insects she had been experiencing in her home.

She related to me how she had lost her cool, and had acted rebelliously toward her husband, as one small incident after another piled up until she was at a

breaking point. Her husband did not want to pay for a pest control company to come in, but she told him he had no choice, and she went and called a company to spray the house. Later, she lamented the fact that she had acted as she had.

*One path is afflicted,  
leads to life, and "few  
there be that find it."*

I saw a parable in what she shared with me. There are many small agitations that come into our lives, just like the parade of insects into her home. These things can "bug" us. We see them as nuisances, and pests, and our thought is to see

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them gone so we can be at ease and comfortable again.

In truth, these things are divinely ordered experiences. Yahweh tests us to perfect us. A sister

*“there can be no  
TESTimony without a  
TEST.”*

in Christ recently wrote to me and said, “there can be no TESTimony without a TEST.” I thought that was very clever, and very true. Sometimes we can handle a large event in our

lives, such as my wreck on the motorcycle and the ensuing surgery. But how will we do when we get home and the air conditioner is not working? What if someone begins to speak or act toward us in a dishonorable way. Will we patiently bear with it, or will we in our discomfort blow a fuse?

In our tests we can go one of two ways. We can embrace the suffering and seek to grow spiritually, utilizing that grace which Christ so liberally offers us. Or we can respond in the flesh. We can be self-focused, and snap at others, or explode at circumstances, when they are not to our liking. This latter course will not bring any man to conformity to the image of Christ.

The air conditioning sure feels good this week. It was turned back on Monday night. Tuesday I began noticing a rash coming up on my injured leg. It itched. The next day it had spread. By Thursday it was spread far more and itched tremendously. I contacted the doctor and he advised me to take some Benadryl, suspecting that it is a reaction to some of the strong antibiotics they gave me in the hospital.

I smile as I think of this. We get rid of the ants and in come the fleas. We get rid of the fleas and in come the roaches. They are pests. They do “bug” us, but all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called, according

to His purpose. Shall I murmur against God, or shall I grow more in the grace and character of Christ?

People of God, it is appointed unto Christ’s disciples to suffer many things. There is no suffering without purpose, and no affliction through which we cannot grow and be enlarged. Did the apostle really mean “everything” when he wrote the following:

Philippians 4:6

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

It is not wrong to ask God for relief from some distress, or trial, but we should always keep in mind that it has come to us from God’s hands with good intent. When we come to see suffering as a necessary part of our advancement into the image and likeness of God, we will not be so quick to see only evil in our distresses. We may even come to say with the Psalmist:

Psalms 119:71

It is good for me that I was afflicted...

I admire the apostle Paul’s attitude toward the suffering of his life. He learned to meet each new affliction with contentment.

II Corinthians 12:9-10

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Only a person who understands the necessity

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and purpose of suffering could find contentment with it. May Yahweh have many sons and daughters in these last days who find this place of contentment.

### Sharers in Christ's Sufferings

The union of Christ and His body is a great mystery. Much has been written and preached regarding the oneness of Christ and those saints who comprise His body. One aspect of our identification with Christ that has been largely neglected, especially in this late hour at the end of the age, is the church becoming one with Yahshua in His suffering.

The apostles were not averse to speaking openly about this aspect of our union with Christ. They actually had much to say on the subject.

#### II Corinthians 1:5

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

Now, if Paul had said "the riches of Christ are ours in abundance," or "the pleasures of Christ are ours in abundance," we could be certain that this passage would be one of the most quoted in this hour of sensuality. Yet, that is not what the apostle declares. He says, "the SUFFERINGS of Christ are ours in abundance."

Consider carefully what is being stated. Paul is not speaking of any and all suffering. He is speaking specifically of the sufferings of Christ. These are afflictions and sorrows and trials that are uniquely associated with the Son of God. Let us define these sufferings that Paul is talking about.

The sufferings of Christ are those sufferings which arise as the will of man comes into conflict with the revealed will of God. Christ ALWAYS chose to do the will of the Father. He testified that He did not come to please Himself. The will of God will not lead us to the same experiences we would choose for ourselves. Christ was not born in a mansion. Yahweh did not give His Son a great reputation among the people. Quite the contrary. The Jewish leaders accused Yahshua of being born illegitimately, of being a Samaritan (mixed race), of having a demon.

"the SUFFERINGS of Christ are ours in abundance."

The Father did not choose for His Son to walk in a position of worldly power and prestige. Christ had no great ministry center. He had no wealth, or political influence. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Yahweh chose for His Son to perform His ministry as a wanderer, a poor man who was homeless. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head.

Yahshua is a pattern for the body of Christ. Whenever any man or woman accepts the invitation of Christ, when they begin to walk as His disciple, they will be brought to this form of suffering that is unique to Christ. They must act as if they hate their own soul in order to follow in Yahshua's steps.

#### Luke 14:26

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate... even his own life (psuche - soul), he cannot be My disciple."

The apostle Paul most certainly has this form of suffering in mind when he declares that "the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance." You

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cannot be Christ's disciple without experiencing the suffering that arises as your own soul's desires are denied that the will of the Father might be accomplished. The disparity between man's desires and the Father's are at times extreme.

*We read that some were imprisoned.*

Matthew 26:38-39

Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

There are times when the Father reveals some trial ahead of us, and everything within our natural being recoils in horror, fear and loathing at what is before us. To be numbered among the overcomers in Christ we must not shrink back at such moments. We must press forward. There are great consequences riding upon our decisions, even as there were for the Son of God in that moment portrayed above.

Hebrews 10:32-39

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by

faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Here are described some of the sufferings of Christ. Those who come to Christ, and become partakers of His Spirit, are to surrender their lives to be led of the Spirit in all things. This surrender will result in conflict with the world, and the religious spirits in this fallen world system.

The Hebrew saints addressed in these words experienced "a great conflict of sufferings." These were truly the sufferings of Christ. The Jewish religious leaders persecuted them, and Roman society also did the same. The disciples of Christ were subjected to public reproach. They were made spectacles before their neighbors. They had to accept scorn, shame, and many evil accusations. We read that some were imprisoned. Others had their property seized.

Do not be deceived in thinking such things could not happen to those who walk faithfully with Christ today. I can tell you truly, from my own experience, that such tribulations are as likely today as they were 2,000 years ago. This must be so, for Christ's body has always been perfected through suffering. Let us remember again the words of Paul:

***the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance...***

This testimony occurs frequently in the Bible.

I Peter 4:12-16

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

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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 upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

Both Peter and Paul are speaking in harmony. Paul states that the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance. Peter shares that when we encounter the sufferings of Christ we should not act as if some strange thing were happening. What could he possibly mean, other than that being a partaker of Christ's suffering is common to all disciples? Christ's sufferings are to be expected, anticipated, and received with grace. These two apostles are speaking in perfect agreement with the Son of God Himself. Yahshua testified that no man could be His disciple apart from taking up his cross and following Him down an afflicted path. This testimony is found from the gospels to the book of Revelation.

### Revelation 1:9

I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Yahshua, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Yahshua.

The day is at hand when a remnant of God's people will once again identify themselves as John did in these words. When we speak to a true brother or sister in Christ we will acknowledge one another as "a fellow partaker in the tribulation... and perseverance of Christ." The troubles of Christ are appointed to us in abundance. Think it not strange. These things must be.

In former years the saints in Christ were more amenable to suffering with Christ. I do not mean to suggest that there has ever been more than a

remnant who have embraced such things, but at least the church spoke openly about such matters, even if only a few had the attitude of Paul expressed in the following words.

### Colossians 1:24

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

In 1693 Thomas Shepherd wrote the first stanza to the hymn titled *Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?*

*Must Jesus bear the cross alone  
And all the world go free?  
No, there's a cross for ev'ryone,  
And there's a cross for me.*

I recently finished reading the wonderful biography of Amy Carmichael written by Elisabeth Elliot. The title of the book is *A Chance to Die*. Ms. Carmichael left a comfortable life in England in the late 1800s to live among the native people of India as a missionary. She understood something about the ways of God, and the call of the body of Christ to share in the sufferings of Christ. The following poem that she penned gives eloquent testimony to her understanding and her experience.

*Christ's sufferings are to  
be expected, anticipated,  
and received with grace.*

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## Hast Thou No Scar

Amy Carmichael

*Hast thou no scar?*

*No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?*

*I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;*

*I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.*

*Hast thou no scar?*

*Hast thou no wound?*

*Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,*

*Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent*

*By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.*

*Hast thou no wound?*

*No wound? No scar?*

*Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,*

*And pierced are the feet that follow Me.*

*But thine are whole; can he have followed far*

*Who hast no wound or scar?*

What a question to ponder in this hour. "Can he have followed far who hast no wound or scar?" I have at times considered that I would not want to stand before Yahshua on the day when I must give an account of my life and not have any testimony of being a partaker of His sufferings. I would be ashamed to stand before the One who suffered so much for me, and to not have suffered anything for Him.

Consider the attitude of Peter, and the other apostles toward suffering.

Acts 5:40-41

After calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Yahshua, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Christ tells the saints that this attitude is right and proper.

Matthew 5:11-12

"Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

People of God, I am not a bold or courageous person. God chose one of the most timid, fearful, weak, and anxious of all men when He claimed me as His son. I have often been in fear and trembling and great anxiety as I have viewed the afflicted path before me. Christ has come to me at such times and given me great comfort and encouragement. Yahshua has held me to the course and preserved me through many perils.

For years, as I followed the leading of the Spirit of Christ, I did not know from one day to the next where my family's provision would come from. I found such an existence to be exceedingly taxing. Yahweh did not choose this path to torment me. Rather, He desired to set me free from the giants of fear and unbelief. I would not have personally chosen to face these giants. I would have avoided them if I could, but I am grateful that my Father had my highest good in mind, and He would not relent despite my many pleas.

I have faced physical trials of health in my body,

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and among family members, and have been instructed by the Spirit to look to Him for healing. When I was diabetic, and later had a heart attack, the Spirit would not permit me to seek medical care. These things were for my chastening, and I had to bear up under them patiently while trusting my life to the hands of my heavenly Father.

As I have followed Christ wherever He would lead I have been brought into conflict with many other saints. I have been rejected by ministers, put out of churches, and have had my wife and son depart from me. Other ministers and Christians have vilified me, and used their ministry platforms to launch attacks against my character and my teachings. I have accepted poverty during many seasons of this walk, and have been in lack often. Twice I have been jailed. I have faced the threat of having all my possessions taken from me by force. In all these things I had to choose to yield my soul's desires to whatever the Father should choose for me to experience.

It is evident that our Father often chooses for those who follow in Christ's steps to suffer. We should "think it not strange." As we respond to each new trial with faith, grace, patience, forgiveness, and love we will find that Christ is formed more fully in us. This is Yahweh's purpose. He wants us to share His image and likeness. We are matured through those things we suffer.

I am no glutton for suffering. Yet, the Spirit of Christ has shown me that none can come to maturity in Christ apart from accepting that path He has chosen for them. All must yield their lives to the direction of the Holy Spirit. We must not shrink back. We all have need of endurance so that after we have done the will of God we can receive that which is promised.

In Gethsemane the Father presented to His Son a bitter cup of suffering from which He was to

drink. Christ's soul had to be crushed as unto death in order for Him to accept that which His Father chose for Him. The Father is offering the same cup to His sons and daughters today. The apostles understood that it is an honor to be invited to drink from the same cup as Christ. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to do so.

Will you accept the invitation to drink from Christ's cup? Will you become a partaker in His sufferings?

*Must Jesus bear the cross alone  
And all the world go free?  
No, there's a cross for ev'ryone,  
And there's a cross for me.*

*Will you accept the  
invitation to drink from  
Christ's cup?*

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## We Wrestle Not Against Flesh and Blood...

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood...

This series has focused upon the necessity of Christ's disciples to experience suffering. In perhaps a majority of circumstances the sufferings of Christ's disciples come to them through the hands of other men and women. There is a natural enmity between the natural descendants of Adam and the spiritual descendants of Christ. This enmity was viewed as far back as the strife that existed between Cain and Abel, and between Ishmael and Isaac. This enmity continues on to this day.

The disciples of Christ should not be surprised that it is those who confess faith in Christ who are their chief persecutors. It was those who swore allegiance to Yahweh who crucified the Son whom He loved.

*Many find it hard to imagine being persecuted as a Christian in a nation such as America.*

Yahshua said this same state of things would persist throughout the church age.

John 16:1-2

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues (churches); yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.”

Who is it that thinks they offer God service except those who claim to be His servants? Yahshua is declaring to His disciples that the very ones who profess obedience to God will become their persecutors. It is Christians who will arise more than any others to inflict reproaches

and suffering upon Christ's disciples in this day. They will quote Scriptures as they do so, and present evidence that what they are doing is the will of God.

Yahweh has revealed to me that He has called me to serve as a pioneer and explorer for others of His sons and daughters. He has led me down an afflicted path for these past 12 years that I might serve as a guide, instructor, and encourager to a much larger number of His children who must walk a similar course in these last days. I do not share my experiences to boast of those things I have passed through. Rather, I share them to reveal to my brothers and sisters what Christian discipleship looks like in this hour in a nation such as America.

There are no experiences that the Spirit of Christ has led me through that were not common to the early church. The first disciples' experiences are recorded for us in the New Testament. We have previously read that Christ's disciples suffered many things. They were made a reproach and spectacle before religious and secular people. Some had their possessions confiscated. Others were imprisoned. They were put out of the synagogues. Some suffered beatings, while others were put to death. The sufferings of Christ were shared abundantly among those who accepted Christ's invitation to “Come, take up your cross, and follow Me.”

Over time the church at large has drifted away from discipleship, having replaced it with confession of Christ as Savior. The Lordship of Christ is no longer observed in the lives of most who profess to be Christians. There is no surrender, no yielding of one's life to “follow the Lamb where He goes.” Because of this, very little of the sufferings of Christ are known to this generation.

Part of the value of Christ having me share the experiences I have encountered since I yielded in

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1999 to follow wherever He should lead, and to do whatever He should ask of me, is to demonstrate to the saints that such a walk will result in affliction. Many find it hard to imagine being persecuted as a Christian in a nation such as America. The vast majority of professing Christians get along remarkably well with the society around them. Causes of conflict are difficult for many to imagine.

The lack of suffering among Christians in American society, when compared to the very substantial suffering of those early saints in Roman society, is not due to the world having changed. It is the result of Christians having abandoned the call to be disciples. The following statement is a universal truth throughout all nations and societies during this kingdom age.

## II Timothy 3:12

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Yahshua will be persecuted.

During the past 12 years I have experienced tremendous resistance from men and women in American society. There have been reproaches, condemnation, rejection, even attacks and unveiled hatred. The greatest part of this has come from professing Christians. Adamic man has not improved since the days of Christ, nor have the natural affections and passions of the flesh become more accepting of the spiritual. There remains a natural antipathy in the hearts of natural men toward those walking as spiritual. Indeed, there is great hatred, even to the point of murder.

## Matthew 24:9-12

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another... And because lawlessness is

increased, most people's love will grow cold.”

James writes to the people of God and reproves those who have an abundance of the world's goods with the following words:

## James 5:6

You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

I have found, both in Scripture and in personal experience, that it is those who have much of the world's goods who become exceptionally antagonistic toward the disciples of Christ.

## James 2:5-7

Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

Those who love money, comfort, and material possessions find that a natural enmity exists in their hearts toward those who are Christ's disciples. A man cannot serve God and mammon. Despite this clear declaration of Christ, the vast majority of Christians today are trying to do that which He testified to be impossible. Most Christians are attempting to serve God and to pursue material prosperity at the same time. Little do they realize that in doing so they are adopting a mindset that is antagonistic toward Christ and His disciples. Such ones are at risk of becoming the persecutors of the righteous while thinking they are doing God a favor.

*Adamic man has not improved since the days of Christ...*

# The Way of the Disciple

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Luke 16:13-15

“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at [Yahshua]. And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts.”

There are many pharisees in the church today. Many of them appear as the most righteous and devoted of all believers. They sit in the best seats, and are given honor, for the leaders of the churches favor those who exude a material prosperity and worldly success.

The Scriptures, personal experience, and the witness of the Spirit of Christ, all lead me to conclude that much of the suffering, reproaches, and persecution that will accrue to those who surrender to follow Christ in this hour will arise from those who profess to follow Christ while pursuing material prosperity. Christ will lead many of His sons and daughters to embrace a path where most, if not all, of their material possessions must be left behind. Having a house, or a nest of their own will no longer be a certainty. Those who follow Christ will of necessity need to manifest a contentment with whatever God chooses for them. There will be periods of lack. Food will not be present in the same abundance as former days, nor the comforts of life that so many take for granted.

Those who esteem such things will become critical of those whose pursuit of obedience to Christ has replaced a pursuit of the material. Family members, church leaders, fellow saints, and the members of a materialistic society will all scorn those whose lives appear to be cursed with poverty. Men and women will receive condemnation for not giving themselves to a pursuit of mam-

mon. They will be vilified as lacking compassion for their family members, of being lazy, prideful, or spiritually deluded.

I am at this very moment aware of saints who are entering into times of material lack as they labor to follow Christ with all their hearts. God has certainly ordered their steps. He has promised not to forsake them. He will provide them their daily needs, but what God has defined as man's need is very different from man's definition.

I Timothy 6:8

And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

Remember once more the Scripture we reviewed in the previous chapter.

Luke 6:20-26

And turning His gaze on His **disciples**, He began to say, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.”

Christ is revealing to those who will follow Him that they are going to have a very different experience from those who are full and satisfied,

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those who are comfortable and full of happiness. If you surrender to follow Christ, you will know lack where others know plenty. You will be reproached when others are honored. You will face difficulty when others are at ease.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, is a type of those who are forerunners in suffering. Joseph knew suffering and reproach when his brothers were living lives of ease as the sons of a wealthy father. Yah-

*Yahweh must have some sons who will embrace suffering...*

weh must have some sons who will embrace suffering that He might bestow promotion upon them. At this hour, many are being called to surrender their lives to fol-

low Christ wherever He would lead. A desire to obey their heavenly Father will lead these sons and daughters into Egypt where they must undergo the furnace of afflictions. For a season they will be separated from their brethren. All natural affection toward them will appear to have disappeared. Great is the reward that awaits those who endure to the end.

The point I want to address in this chapter is that the source of your suffering will very often be people. It is rarely some nameless circumstance that leads to our suffering. There is usually a human hand behind it. When we encounter reproaches and persecution from human sources there is a temptation to enter into striving with man. In counseling with others I have frequently encountered a wrong focus. Many of Christ's disciples seek to deliver themselves from suffering by contending with those they view as their persecutors. It is never the will of God that we strive with man.

Consider the example of Joseph. After he had matured through many years of suffering in Egypt, this man of God came to understand Yahweh's purposes in his suffering. Although his

brothers had acted with evil intent toward him, Joseph perceived that God had ordained all of his experiences of suffering with good intent. Speaking to his brothers, Joseph declared:

Genesis 50:20

And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

If you surrender your life to follow Christ wherever He would lead, you will find yourself brought into experiences of suffering. Those who you counted as brothers will treat you as their enemy. Some will act with great hatred, seeking to cause you much harm. The reflex of the natural man is to defend oneself, and to strike back. Those who are spiritual must not do so. We have Christ as our pattern.

Acts 8:32

"He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth."

These words that describe the response of Christ to His attackers are applied to those who would follow in His steps.

Romans 8:36

Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

The apostle Peter testified that Christ did not strive with man. Instead, He entrusted His soul to His Father when enemies arose against Him. Peter presents Christ to the saints as the pattern we are to emulate.

## The Way of the Disciple

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I Peter 2:21-23

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously...

As we observe the life of Christ we find the following pattern. When He was faced with persecution, even crucifixion and death, Christ was silent before man. When He was threatened, He did not threaten in return. When He was reviled, He did not defend His own reputation. When brought before man's courts Christ was silent.

Mark 15:3-5

And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, "Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!" But Yahshua still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

The counterpart to this silence before man is that Christ DID make His petition before the Father. Yahshua pleaded with the Father to deliver Him, if it be His will to do so. Ultimately, Christ surrendered to whatever the Father chose for Him to experience.

Luke 22:42

"Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done."

John 12:27-28

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glo-

rify Thy name."

Yahweh has shown me that this is the pattern His saints are to follow when they are facing persecution. He has directed me repeatedly to not strive with man. Even when I have been brought before the courts of this world, I have been instructed to not argue, accuse, nor to present a defense. Like Christ, my petition has been lifted up to the Judge who sits on high. I have made my plea to Yahweh, and I have accepted whatever He should choose for me before I have faced those who judge on earth.

This is a most important matter. As sons of God we must always discern that the experiences of suffering we face are ultimately chosen for us by our Father in heaven. Did not Christ reveal this when He prayed to His Father in Gethsemane? He understood that the cup of suffering presented to Him was chosen by God. It could only be honorably removed by the same. Christ could have delivered Himself in the courts. He could have mounted a defense. He could have confounded His accusers with His wisdom as He had done so many times before. Yahshua had legions of angels at His dispatch, and could have called on them to deliver Him. Yet, He did none of these things.

As we come to discern the necessity of suffering, and its role in our perfecting as sons of God, we will enter into this same place of rest that was demonstrated by Christ. We will not act out of fear, seeking to deliver ourselves from the suffering we see before us. Those who trust Yahweh will know that He will not ever permit anything to truly harm them. Though our outer man may perish, our inner man will be preserved alive.

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as

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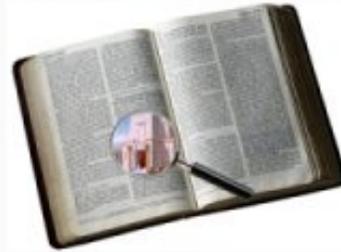
it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Yahshua our Lord.

It seems strange that the church can read a passage such as this and not understand that it is appointed to the sons of God to suffer many things. Yet, through deceit, often embraced willingly, the church has come to believe that these words speak of someone other than themselves.

If you have embraced the understanding that YOU are called to follow Christ down an afflicted path, you will not think it strange when you encounter difficulties and difficult people. It is my hope that you would perceive that adversaries must come, and many will appear from within the household of God. If you are not afraid of suffering; If you stand in the confidence that it is Yahweh who holds your life in His hands and not man, then you too will be able to resist the urge to enter into contention with flesh and blood. You will be able to bless those who curse you, and to walk calmly to the slaughter as a sheep that is silent.

It is as we quiet our souls in the face of many threats that we begin to experience the release of the Spirit within us. That gentle, patient, forgiving, and longsuffering nature of Christ is revealed in us. Perhaps we too will find that some will be brought to marvel at the peace in which we abide. Such is the faith that overcomes the world.

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### PARABLES PRECEPT— Is That in the Bible?

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Perhaps you have heard someone say the following with great authority, “*God helps those who help themselves.*” This quotation is often uttered with the confidence that one would reserve for the words of God. Yet, these words are not found in the Bible.

These words were made popular

in America by none other than Benjamin Franklin. He included this saying in the popular “*Poor Richards’s Almanac*” that he published in 1757.

Benjamin Franklin did not come up with this saying himself. He was merely quoting Sidney Algernon who lived from 1622-1683. Mr. Algernon published a writing titled “*Discourses on Government.*” This is the earliest published source for this quotation.

Does God help those who help themselves? I suppose it all depends on what one is talking about. There are times when

God will require us to do something before He will perform some promise. Yet there are other times when God must act completely on our behalf, realizing that we have no ability to help ourselves.

Salvation is one such instance in which man cannot help himself. Try as hard as you might, you can never attain to the righteousness of God in Christ. When it comes to salvation, man was quite helpless to save himself.

Romans 5:6

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.