

The Intimate Sufferings Of Christ Luke 22:39-46

In the scripture passage that we'll consider today, we will observe some of the most intimate of sufferings of our Lord Jesus. And we'll also think about some of our own kinds of suffering.

And yes, each of us is very familiar with the many kinds of sufferings, but for clarity, please bear with me as I go ahead and mention some of them and their effects on us.

First of all, yes, suffering is almost always difficult, sometimes very painful. And it is most often unique in the way it affects each of us.

And suffering does not always look the same. It comes packaged in many different forms that are unique to its causes.

During our lifetime, it is certain that we will encounter physical sufferings that are also accompanied by emotional distresses. Our bodies are weak and susceptible to so many different kinds of injuries and diseases, and they all bring miseries to our souls.

For me, in my human condition, probably the most painful of all of the sufferings that I endure are the sufferings of grief that I feel because of the death of someone that I love. Grief is a very special and never-ending kind of suffering.

And yes also, as a Christian, I often suffer the kinds of suffering that the Apostle Paul spoke about there in Romans chapter 7, as he contended with his own wretched soul for the many times that he kept doing the sinful things that he knew he should not do, and for not doing the right and righteous things that he knew he should do.

And yes, also, I often suffer as I watch my dear loved ones, my children, my grandchildren and other dear ones take wrong and sinful paths in their daily behaviors, bringing suffering to them and to their families.

And yes, those are all very, very painful sufferings. And yes, many of them are common within our relationship with our Lord and with our loved ones.

But folks, within all of the private and intimate sufferings that we ourselves endure each day, we really do need to be able to humbly turn our eyes away from our own selves and our own sufferings and to realize, to recognize and to embrace that our Lord, the Lord Jesus has endured far greater sufferings for all of those same people and all of those same purposes.

May I pause here and read our passage for today. And let's consider some of those sufferings that our Lord endured. These words given in Luke chapter 22 beginning in verse 39.

³⁹ And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵ And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." (Luke 22:39-46)

As we, from a distance, observe these struggles taking place in the life of the Lord Jesus, we wonder about all the things that might have been going on deep within His heart, His soul and His spirit, as He suffered.

And He did suffer, and often, and in many ways. And "sin" was the ever-present culprit. Not His own sin, but all the many sins of the people that He needed to atone for.

We see that spoken about over and over again both in the prophecies in the Old Testament and in the writings of the New Testament, with these words here revealing only the beginning of some of the worst of those sufferings.

But what were those sufferings, and why is it important that you and I know about them. And not to just know "about" them, but to be ever so intimately acquainted with His sufferings that we suffer with Him?

May we begin to answer that question by first considering the “why” part of the question? “Why” do we need to know about, to have an “intimate acquaintance” with those deep and difficult sufferings that the Lord Jesus endured?

We need to know the “why” of His sufferings because His sufferings were endured for us, for you and for me, and for our loved ones . . . because of things that we have done, sins that we have personally and individually been a part of. And also, for all those many things we should have done, but didn’t do them. Sins that have been put to our account, sins for which we owe a debt of recompense.

And folks, that recompense is a very, very serious one. It is death, eternal death! Romans 6:23 tells us plainly that,

²³ . . . the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

And by the Lord Jesus enduring our suffering for us, paying our recompense, we will not have to endure that suffering ourselves.

May I remind us again, that if we, if you and I had to suffer our own sufferings we would surely perish. Why? Because we can’t pay the penalty that is due for the sins that reside within us! That penalty is far too great for any man or woman to bear, that is, except for the One Man, the Lord Jesus. He and He alone is worthy enough to be able to pay the debt for our sin.

But also, along with that so very important reason, there is another reason that we should know the “why” of His suffering. It is because He wants you and me to participate with Him in certain parts of that suffering.

And no, we can’t save people, as He can. And He is not asking us to have nails driven into our hands and feet. But there are other parts of His sufferings that we can take part in.

And He wants us to reach forward and embrace our part willingly and eagerly and joyfully. Listen to the way that the Apostle Paul says it in Colossians 1:24,

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24)

And then in Philippians 3:10

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.
(Philippians 3:10)

And then as the Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:12-13

¹² Beloved do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

Exhortations such as these are repeated over and over again in these scriptures, urging us on to accept and to embrace many of the same sufferings that our dear Savior suffered. And we must!

So then, what were those "sufferings of Christ" that we must take part in?

We know that He suffered physically. We speak often about His cruel treatment at the hands of the Romans, the unmerciful beatings and the agony of being nailed to a cross.

But we, in our day, most likely will not suffer those kinds of sufferings, though many during His days did. Lashes and crucifixions were a favorite method of torture and death inflicted by the Romans.

Perhaps in the very "end of days" spoken about in the Book of Revelation, should we be alive to experience them, we might suffer similar sufferings. And those days are said to be more awful than we can imagine. But even then, we must simply count it a privilege to join with Christ in His death.

And we need to be careful and not be confused about some of the ordinary kinds of physical suffering that we might endure, cancer, strokes, heart disease, and the like. Many want to use the expression, "this is our cross to bear".

But many of those ordinary sufferings are not usually for righteous reasons. They are usually just an inevitable cost of being alive.

No, Jesus' sufferings, both physical and spiritual, were inseparably linked to each other and were part of a well-devised, far-reaching plan and purpose, a

plan and purpose that had to do with the “why” of the suffering that I spoke about a moment ago, sufferings that were a part of the “God” side of who Jesus was, and they were for the benefit of other people.

By that I mean, Jesus was inseparably both Son of God and Son of Man. And the sufferings that He suffered most severely had to do with the manner in which those two inseparable sides of Him dealt with the wretchedness of sin that fills the hearts and souls of ordinary men and women like you and me.

And I believe that the struggle that we see taking place there in the Garden of Gethsemane, as He sweated great drops of blood, was the great compassion that He had for mankind.

Being a man and being filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus knew well that each person truly was filled with and consumed by the wretchedness of sin.

We have an expression that is used in today’s culture, and I believe wrongly so, seemingly always in a flippant manner. That expression, “I feel your pain!” “I feel your pain!”

But Jesus really could, and in the most perfect of ways. He really could “feel our pain”. He could feel the over-whelming weight that sin brought into the hearts and souls of men.

He, Jesus, the pure and Holy God who knew no manner of sin for Himself, was willingly reaching forward to us, to “feel” the effects of our sin and to eventually actually take our sins away from us and into His own flesh.

And there in the Garden of Gethsemane, even before He was crucified, He was beginning to do exactly that, to feel the utter wretchedness of it all. He who knew no sin would utterly and completely become sin for you and me. And His suffering was almost too much for His human body to bear.

Again fellow Christian, you and I are not able to actually suffer those same sufferings, or even to really comprehend them. They are much too spiritual for us to understand. But listen, we really must begin to try, because that is what these verses are calling us to do. May I read them again . . . Colossians 1:24

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:24)

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¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. (Philippians 3:10)

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And again, while you and I must never try to be a Savior, there really is a depth of suffering that we must be willing to endure.

These precious words of scripture are real and they are true and they urge us on to take up where Jesus left off. Yes, Jesus paid it all, the full and complete debt for all men's sins. But there is still a lot of "healing" needed within the souls of our fellow believers. And you and I are commanded to reach into the lives of those suffering ones, suffering with them in their sufferings, giving them hope and helping them to heal.

And again, we must not just endure suffering, but we must joyfully embrace it. Those words in Philippians 3 explicitly use the words, "I want to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His suffering". We have to "want" to "embrace" the suffering we encounter.

And yes, that is strange to our thinking, but was that not exactly what the Lord Jesus did long before He came to be among us on the earth. He knew well that He would suffer these sufferings. Recall that only a few hours earlier as He and His disciples were alone in the upper room, Jesus had said to them there in Luke 22:15,

¹⁵ . . . "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. (Luke 22:15)

Jesus willingly embraced all that He was about to endure.

And we must not be confused when we read words like these that He prayed there in the Garden saying,

⁴² "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22:42)

It's true, these words really do not seem as if Jesus was "fervently desiring" and embracing the ultimate suffering that lay just ahead for Him, but He was. He was!

Why? It's because He knew the real truth behind it all. And He knew that it would be worth it all. About these and other sufferings like them, we read in Hebrews 12:2,

² who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus knew that it would be worth whatever suffering He would have to endure.

May I say that another way! Jesus knew that we, you and I were worth whatever it would take to save us. He, and the Father, and the Holy Spirit loved us that much.

And that is the kind of love and commitment that you and I will need to embrace, the kind of love that will suffer any amount of suffering so that others might be saved.

And again, what is the deeper truth that lies behind those words? It is that the alternative, death without the salvation of Christ, is eternal sufferings in the awful burning pits of hell.

It is that serious and that needful. And really, whatever amount of suffering that we might find ourselves suffering in this life cannot compare to the sufferings of eternal death in hell.

And so, as we observe the Lord Jesus suffering there in the Garden, we must know that it was for us, for you and me, because we are worth it to Him.

One last consideration of these words before we close . . . the privilege that is ours in seeing the great suffering that Jesus endured there in the Garden was very purposeful for our own future suffering.

Jesus knew all that lay just ahead for Him, both the spiritual suffering and the physical suffering. And He knew that He needed to deal with the impact that all His suffering would have upon His body, His soul and His spirit. And He knew that He needed to prepare Himself for all that was about to take place.

Consider, in human terms, what might have taken place if Jesus had not taken this time away for intimate prayer with God the Father, and had never prepared Himself for the suffering He was about to endure, but had simply stayed busy witnessing and healing and preaching.

What would His response have been as the soldiers came to get Him, and as Judas kissed Him with the “kiss of death”.

And what would have taken place in His heart and mind as He was beaten and then mercilessly thrown down on the arms of that cross and the nails driven in. What if He had of been surprised by it all?

Would He have cried out to those men “but I didn’t do anything wrong?”

No! No! It would have not been that kind of response! But it surely would have been what you and I would have done, especially if we had not taken time to pray through and to prepare our hearts and minds for that awful suffering.

Thankfully Jesus did, and He left these written words so that you and I could read them and know what we are to do when we are called to suffer.

He got alone with God, His Father, and He dealt fully and completely with all that would come to pass during the next three days. Nothing would surprise Him. He went back over all that He and God the Father and God the Holy Spirit had agreed upon back there in the Trinity, back before time began.

And yes, it was still very difficult that night there in the garden. And the days ahead would be even more so! But because He took the time to deal with His suffering ahead of time, He would suffer well as they beat Him and as they crucified Him.

And so it should be for you and me. We must be faithful to get ourselves alone with God our Father on a regular basis, and to pray and to discuss with Him all the sufferings that we know we will surely endure, because sufferings will surely come if we are faithful in our service for Christ.

But with that being said, we will also, joyfully go about living our daily lives, because those who abide in Christ and in His great mercies really do live a life of joy unspeakable.

And no, I really don't know how God does such things within our souls, joining suffering and joy all together into an impassioned life, but He will surely do it, if we will only remain faithful to Him.

One last thought before we close . . . by all of the intimate sufferings that our Lord was enduring for us, He was demonstrating for us that our loved ones are worth any and every suffering that we might have to endure for them so that they might have the same eternal life that we have in our Lord. And so we must be willing to suffer as our Lord Jesus did! We must!

These words from Philippians chapter 3 as we close . . . verse 10,

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10)

Pray with me.