



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Seeing God Through Suffering Series, Lesson 13

Lesson Title: Paul – Suffering Because We Follow Christ

Take Home Point: Be prepared to suffer for Jesus' sake.

Warm-Up:

You've no doubt seen and heard the advertisements. "No money down and no payments for 12 months!" "You're special. You work hard. Do something for yourself." Our economy is built on the premise of consumption, and in our great personal wealth (relative to the rest of the world), that consumption usually goes far beyond the basics of living – food, clothing, and shelter. We are encouraged to acquire something as a way to avoid discomfort or difficulty of any kind, and to adopt a lifestyle of ease, running from any hint of persecution or suffering. That includes our spiritual life. Directly, and through the influence of this world, Satan fosters that attitude, because it sets us up for confusion, anger, and resentment toward God for "making us suffer."

Read: Acts 9:1-28; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27; 1 Peter 3:13-18

Observation (What happened?):

What did God tell Ananias about Saul's future in Acts 9:16?

List the various circumstances of suffering Paul encountered from 2nd Corinthians.

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why do you think was Paul reluctant to list his sufferings to the Corinthians?

What is the blessing in suffering?

Insight:

The Bible commentator Carl F. H. Henry once wrote, "Two heavens are too much to expect for those that never deserve one." We know we have a perfect eternity ahead of us only because of God's unfailing love, mercy, and grace. But we must go through the dark times of this world to get there. We should expect to suffer for living in a sinful world, but more than that, we should expect to suffer in the form of persecution for being a devoted Christian. Jesus himself told us that those of the world would hate us and we would have trouble in this world. If he knew it, how can we expect to avoid it? And keep in mind that persecution doesn't always come from other people; Satan himself will directly try your soul, persecuting you and tempting you even more strongly for renouncing him and his evil ways. If you doubt this, read the book of Job. It is not that anyone eagerly desires to suffer, but we can honor God in our suffering by our attitudes and actions both personal and public. A wise man once said, "In good times we enjoy our faith; in bad times we exercise our faith." God wants us to exercise our faith in him.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

If you are suffering at this time, is it because you are a Christian or simply because you live in a sinful world where bad things happen?

Pray for Christians around the world being persecuted and suffering for the cause of Christ.

Kingdom Quest Year 2 – Lesson 13