



INTRODUCTION

We discovered last week that our willful conduct should reflect our gratitude toward an all-sufficient Savior. We also learned that because we follow Christ we will encounter adversaries and if we, the body of Christ, stick together as one, we should have no fear of them. Today's text tells us though we should have no fear doesn't mean the enemy won't come against us if for no other reason than to test our resolve. However, the enemy's strongest desire is to break us to rejoin his ranks as enemies of God; to steal, kill and destroy. What the devil doesn't realize is that if we experience the onslaught we aren't doing it for our own sake but on behalf of Christ and it is our honor to do so. To think that God thinks enough of us that He allows us to do battle with the enemy. Remember from **Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)**

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. This is true even if the enemy comes in the form of in-laws or outlaws.

Philippians 1:29-30 (NKJV)

29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

There are several lessons to be learned in these two verses and any attempt to cover every aspect in our short lesson would be frustrating at best. So we will deal with just a few of these aspects.

The first thing Paul is telling us is that we have been blessed to have the opportunity to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "granted" implies "grace" or "favor".

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV) says:

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God,* ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We can all agree that we are blessed or privileged to be called a child of God and all we had to do was to confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in our heart that the Father raised Him from the dead. Because of Christ's redemptive power we are considered a chosen generation, a royal priesthood a holy nation, His own particular people (**1 Pet. 2:9**).

With that we are afforded blessings others who don't know Him as Lord, Savior and Master are not. If all God had to offer was eternity with Him that would be enough. To have that "Blessed Assurance" is a peace of mind that surpasses all understanding, but thanks be to God He offers things that we can be blessed by in this body. Our needs are met. Our prayers are answered. Our bodies are healed. Our minds are renewed. Our hearts are made flesh.



Isaiah 61:3 (NKJV)

³ To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

The second point Paul is trying to make is that we should not be saddened by the fact we will suffer but we should feel privileged just as the Apostles were at the very beginning of their ministries after Christ ascended into heaven.

Acts 5:40-41 (NKJV)

⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ **So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.**

The apostles were rejoicing that they were found worthy to suffer in the name of Jesus. They witnessed how much Jesus had suffered for them, so they felt this was the least they could do.

What if we went through life without suffering for Christ as others have? Most of us have never lost a job because of our faith. Many Christian businesses have never been sued over their belief in Jesus Christ by what they will or won't do concerning God's word. Some have never been verbally attacked by an atheist professor in college or a strict Darwinian in public school. Does that mean something's wrong? If we are not in turmoil for Christ's sake are we not a child of His? The answer to these two questions is: Absolutely not!

God doesn't want us to seek suffering. However, we should not support businesses that defiantly go against our Judeo-Christian values. We should take a stand for Christian rights in our schools and businesses in the boardrooms and at the voting booth.

The third lesson in this text tells us that if we do suffer for Christ sake, we aren't suffering alone. We are not so holy that we alone are suffering for Christ. Not only that, no matter how much suffering we may encounter, we will never suffer as much as our Savior did.

Another fascinating aspect is found in 2nd Chronicles 20:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ **And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.'"**