

It Is a Sweet Thing to Suffer With Christ

by Anne Dutton

Christians suffer with Christ in filial sufferings, which are a means of exercising their graces and preparing them for glory.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:4, Micah 2:10, Romans 8:17-18, 1 Corinthians 15:54, 2 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 1:6

Topics: "Suffering With Christ", "Eternal Glory"

Description

Anne Dutton preaches about the trials faced by God's people in the present state, emphasizing the peace found in Jesus amidst troubles and the need to prepare during calm times for storms. She delves into the concept of suffering with Christ, distinguishing between His penal sufferings for atonement and the filial sufferings as an example for Christians to follow. Anne highlights the shared purpose, influence of the Spirit, and ultimate outcome of suffering with Christ, leading to a full deliverance from misery and advancement to eternal glory.

Transcript

My Dear Brother,

The present state is a state of trial to all God's people. Troubles of various kinds, from within and without, like rolling waves, come thick, one as it were upon the neck of another. But yet, though in the world we have, we shall have trouble, as our Lord has said--how great is the peace we have in Him!--A quiet harbor amid distress! And now and then, blessed be His name, the 'Lord of winds and waves' is pleased to give a pleasant calm, by His commanding word, "Peace, be still!" Oh that, by the wisdom of faith and prayer, we might prepare in the calm times, for a storm!

"Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is polluted--it is ruined beyond all remedy." Micah 2:10. Sin has entered, and sorrows must be expected from indwelling corruptions, Satan's temptations, the world's snares, dark dispensations, the hidings of God's face, the seeming denial of our prayers, and the delay of promised mercies; various afflictions in soul, in body, in name, in circumstances, in relations and friends, in employments for God--in the Church and in the world. These things must be expected from God, from men, from friends, from enemies, throughout our mortal life, with death itself at last--in our passage through this world to Immanuel's land

And yet, all things wisely mixed and graciously overruled, do and shall work together for our good, and turn unto our salvation; yes, are so many preparations by grace for our eternal glory--"for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and, "if we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified together."

As the sufferings of Christ were penal, the desert of our sin and the fruit of the law's curse for the satisfaction of divine justice, and for our redemption and salvation, so, Christians, do not suffer with Christ. No! our Jesus trod the wine-press of the wrath of God, when He was trodden in it, alone, and of the people there was none with Him. We poor sinners, no, nor angels--those sinless creatures--had all their innumerable hosts interposed, would have been able to endure and conquer those sufferings which were requisite to make reparation to the injured honor of God, and satisfaction to the avenging justice of God, for the sins of men, which were objectively infinite and required an infinite atonement. And therefore, such was the boundless grace of God to us that He laid the iniquity of us all upon His own Son--upon the Son of His own nature--clad with ours, thundered out all the curses of His holy law upon Christ, as standing in our room, and required of Him our substitute--who was an infinite Person--an infinite satisfaction for our guilt--that we might go free from those unutterable torments which our sins deserved, which would have sunk us beneath divine wrath, and made us inconceivably miserable forever.

And such was the boundless grace of the Son of God, that rather than we should suffer--He would endure. I give Myself to suffer freely and fully for all My people--take Me, the surety, and let them, the debtors, go free. God the Father called the sword of justice to awake against the Man that was His fellow, with an "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd; smite the Shepherd!" The hand of God's avenging justice was upon Christ, that we might escape the killing blow--and be saved eternally from all misery--unto all glory--by the hand of His infinite grace.

And the Lord our Savior, in his knowledge-passing love, "endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the joy (of His and His Father's glory in our salvation) that was set before Him." Thus, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," and we, the saved ones, have no share in those penal sufferings of the Savior which He endured according to covenant-contract, and which, from His being an infinite Person, made an infinite Atonement for our guilt, and had in them an infinite merit for our salvation. No! "His arm alone brought salvation, and of all the people there was none with Him." And unto Him alone be the glory, by men and angels, forever and ever! Amen.

But, though Christians do not suffer with Christ in those sufferings of His, as they were penal, yet they do, they must suffer with Christ, as His sufferings were filial; for "though he were a Son, yet (in His assumed human nature), He learned obedience by the things which He suffered," which "He suffered for us, leaving us an example (of meekness and patience, of zeal and courage, of all filial duty, to the Father's glory), that we should follow in His steps." And if we suffer with Him, as His sufferings were filial, we shall also be glorified together.

And in this filial respect Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, or to have a community with Him in sufferings--

1. In that the fountain cause of sufferings, both to Christ and Christians, was and is the love of God the Father, "the cup," said our Lord, "which my Father, from the love of a Father to me, gives me to drink in those sufferings which he now calls me to endure as the surety of sinners, from Him, as a judge, shall I not drink it?" and, "Whom the Lord loves He chastens," says the apostle, "and what son is he whom the

Father chastens not?"

2. In that sufferings, both to Christ the first-born Son and to Christians, the junior brethren, were and are the means appointed of God for the exercise of all graces, and to go before and prepare for all glory. Christ first suffered and then entered into His glory--and so must Christians. Sufferings by Christ, the Head, were first endured, and then glory followed, and thus it fares with all the members--Christians must first suffer with Christ, and then with Him be glorified together. There was a necessity by divine appointment that the sufferings of Christ should precede His glory and prepare Him for it, as He said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and then enter into His glory?" And, says the apostle, "If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together"--which words, though they give us the fullest assurance that we shall also be glorified together, do likewise denote that close connection which there is between sufferings and glory, and that the former are to precede and prepare for the latter, as it is clear from the manner of expression, "if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

3. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that sufferings, both by Christ and Christians, were and are endured under the influence of the same spirit. The Spirit of the Lord in an immeasurable fullness rested upon Christ the Head, and made Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, to discern His Father's hand, and to submit to His will in love to Him in all His sufferings, with all holy confidence in Him, and earnest supplication to Him for deliverance, and with meekness and patience until the full time of it. And thus upon Christians, in their measure as the members of Christ's body, to enable them to endure their sufferings in like manner, after the example which their Lord has given them, the Spirit of God and of glory rests.

4. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that their sufferings are said to be the afflictions of Christ, that is, of the Head, in the members, which He interests Himself in, and is inwardly and inexpressibly touched with. "I rejoice in my sufferings for you," says the apostle, "and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh," which is also true of every believer, the sufferings which they endure in their flesh are the afflictions of Christ.

5. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that both He and they had, and have, the same chief end in view, that is, the glory of God in all their sufferings. "Father, glorify your name!" says our Lord, when He resigned up Himself into His hands to endure His greatest sufferings. And "none of us," says the apostle, "lives to himself, and no man dies to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die we die unto the Lord (that is, in all our sufferings, which are metaphorical deaths, as well as in our last suffering of natural death, we aim at the Lord's glory); whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" dedicated to His honor.

6. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that both He and they had and have an eye, in all their sufferings, to the glory that shall follow. "Christ endured the cross, for the joy (of the crown) that was set before Him," and Christians, as Moses, "endure affliction (the afflictions of God's people), as having respect unto the recompense of the reward."

7. Christians may be said to suffer with Christ, in that both His sufferings and theirs had, and shall have, the same event, in a full deliverance from the deepest misery, and advancement to the highest glory. Sufferings, both to Christ and Christians, neither were, are, nor shall be, eternal. It was impossible that the suffering Head, by reason of the dignity of His Person and the merit of His obedience, should be held

always by the bands of death; and impossible it is that the suffering members, who are the fullness of the Head, and who, as being savingly interested in His merits, are to share with Him in glory, should be held always by the cords of affliction, for "because Christ lives, Christians shall live also." "His dead men (under metaphorical as well as natural death) shall live, together with His dead body (as being mystically in Him, and by influence from Him), they shall arise (from under the deepest depression to the highest exaltation); for His dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead; awake, and sing together with Him, shall those who dwell in dust;" for, if we suffer with Him, from the same fountain cause, the love of God, for the exercise of the same graces, and to precede and prepare for the same glory according to the distinct proportion of Head and members; if we suffer under the influence of the same Spirit; if our sufferings are the afflictions of Christ; if Christ and His people have the same chief end in view--the glory of God--in all their afflictions; if both Christ and Christians have an eye in all their sufferings to the glory that shall follow; and if the sufferings of Christ and Christians have the same outcome in a full deliverance from all misery and advancement unto all glory--we may be well assured, with the apostle, that we shall also with Christ be glorified together, "For we are now partakers of the sufferings of Christ, that when His glory shall be revealed we may be glad also with exceeding joy;" and, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us (as we by grace are wrought upon by it, and prepared for) a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

Hence, then, my dear brother, let us expect trouble while in this world. Let us bless God that we do not suffer with Christ as His sufferings were penal--and that we do suffer with Him as His sufferings were filial. Let us earnestly pray for an eminent measure of the Spirit of Christ, that we, in like manner, may endure sufferings to the glory of God. Let us labor under the direction of the word and Spirit of Christ to tread in His steps, to take Him, our great Pattern, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience, and to be the "followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Let us beware that we do not lose the precious opportunities given us by affliction for the exercise of all our graces. Let us rejoice in that our sufferings are the afflictions of Christ in our flesh, in that we have a dear, sympathizing Head, who inwardly and inexpressibly feels the sorrows of every member, accounts them His own, and is well able to support us in them, and save us from them.

Let us remember, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 1:6-7. And let us expect, with all holy confidence, a like happy outcome of our troubles as Christ had of his, for we that now suffer with Him, shall hereafter be glorified together; and what the greatness of that glory will be--eye has not seen nor heart conceived--it is ineffable, and will be eternal!

O, my dear brother, it is a sweet thing to suffer with Christ--to have such a sweet companion in tribulation! Surely a believing thought of it must sweeten our bitterest potions. If Christ, the Tree of Life, is cast into the bitter waters of affliction, will He not sweeten them so well that our hearts shall freely drink them? To suffer with Christ, methinks it should make our hearts leap for joy! for if He is with us we shall not sink in sorrow; everlasting arms underneath us, will raise us from deepest sinkings. The Lord is risen, saints must rise, sorrows shall hold us not a moment beyond the appointed time, nor exceed their appointed degree. Soon our momentary light cross shall be turned into a weighty eternal crown. If we suffer with Christ we shall reign with Him, we shall be glorified together.

O this sweet word, together! Methinks it puts a glory upon glory itself--a sweetness into those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand. Our glory would not be so ineffably glorious if it were not to be enjoyed with Christ, nor the joys of heaven so ineffably sweet, if we were not to rejoice together with Christ. The once-suffering Head and the once-suffering members glorified together! O how will it enhance each other's joy in glory! The sorrows both of Christ and Christians will then be turned into perfect joy, and their eternal joy and glory so much the greater for all the time-sorrows which they endured and the deaths which they survived, to reign in life together unto ages without end.

Sorrows will not hurt us, brother, if we are enabled to live unto God under them. Nothing but sin will be bitter upon reflection; and the sorrows that we meet with, even from sin itself, through God's forgiving and subduing grace, shall be turned into the joy of victory, to His eternal praise.

But oh, this killing thing, sin! It dishonors God our Father, wounds our Lord-Redeemer, and grieves the Lord our Comforter; it puts death into our comforts and a sting into our crosses. Let us beware of yielding to sin, and then we need not, with a slavish fear, dread sufferings; let us be humbled before God for all our unbelief and impatience under afflictions, and press forward most earnestly after a greater measure of faith and love--of humility, meekness, and patience--of an enduring, Christ-like spirit, under all the trials we are exercised with, for "if we (thus) suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified together."

Great grace be with you. Farewell, in the Lord.

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