



## Pastor David's Weekly Devotional

The faithful Christian is not immune to discouragement or sorrow. Jesus Himself was “*despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*” (Is.53:3; see Matt.26:38; Jn.12:27). It is a mistake to presume that the Christian life is free from suffering – whether it be physical, emotional, or mental. Spurgeon said it well: “Fits of depression come over the most of us. Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy.” It is important to have a biblical view of suffering so that we can remain steadfast to our Christian calling, and faithful in our Christian witness.

The Christian life is the best life, but it is not an easy life. Contrary to the heretical teaching of the “Prosperity Gospel”, Christians are not divinely protected from pain or grief – no matter how obedient or faithful they are. In fact, in light of Scripture, one can argue that the more faithful the Christian is the more susceptible they are to sorrow and loss. For some Christians, the darkness of discouragement (or even depression) is ever-looming; a chronic and lifelong battle. Unfortunately, all too many Christians wrongly believe that the Christian life is to be all “mountaintops” and no “valleys.”

Yet, paradoxically, Christians are called to be joyful and at peace. In God's Word, we are commanded to “*rejoice in the Lord always*” (Phil.4:4; cf. 1Thess.5:16); to “*rejoice in hope*” (Rom.12:12); to “*bless the Lord at all times*” and praise Him “*continually*” (Ps.34:1); and to “*rejoice and be glad*” even in the midst of suffering persecution (Matt.5:12; cf. 1Pet.4:13)! In addition, we are exhorted to “*let the peace of Christ rule in [our] hearts*” (Col.3:15); to “*be anxious for nothing*” (Phil.4:6; cf. Matt.6:25-34); and to not be “*troubled*” or “*afraid*” (Jn.14:1, 27).

How are we to resolve this apparent contradiction? The point is this: while Christians cannot avoid trouble in this life, they must not surrender to it. We will be tempted and tried, yet we are not to ultimately give in to temptation or trials. We cannot escape suffering in this life, but we can find Christ's joy and peace in the midst of suffering.

The apostle Paul put it this way: “*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies*” (2Cor.4:8-10). Paul experienced much suffering in both his Christian life and ministry (see 2Cor.6:4-5; 11:23-28), but by God's grace and strength Paul was not overcome by suffering. Paul's perseverance did not come from his willpower, or easygoing personality. Paul relied on, and rested, in the peace of Christ.

Christ promised peace to all of His disciples. This peace, however, is not the absence of suffering but the ability to endure and mature in the midst of suffering. The peace that comes from Christ is different than the peace found in this world. Jesus said: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid*” (Jn.14:27). Christ's peace is the spiritual, supernatural, peace of God (see Phil.4:7).

Jesus assured His disciples that they would face difficulty and pressure in this life, but He also assured them that He would enable them to endure as they trusted in and followed Him. He said, “*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world*” (Jn.16:33).

Together in and for Christ,  
Pastor David

**Scripture Readings for the Week** (Monday – Sunday ~ Week #48):

*Deuteronomy 20-22; Nehemiah 1-4; Psalm 137-139; Ecclesiastes 11-12; Malachi; Acts 19-20; 1 John 1-3*

**Recommended Reading:**

*“21 Servants of Sovereign Joy: Faithful, Flawed, and Fruitful” by John Piper*