

Share Christ's Suffering

by

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But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:13 (ESV)

It will be 'Good Friday' when you read this. I write this devotional a few days before. This week I've been thinking a lot about the days before Jesus' crucifixion. As I grow older, I've begun to dwell on the severe sacrifice my King made for me. I read Peter's words above and understand better what he was saying with his words, "*sharing with Christ's sufferings.*" The Apostle Paul used the same words and connection in his passage in 2 Corinthians 1:5. He also said the same thing in Romans 8:17, and in Philippians 3:10 he said, "*that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*" These men understood that they should never allow the sacrifice and mission of Christ to be out of their minds and hearts, and especially what he had done for them personally. I have come to understand by my own conviction that I must keep what He has done for me, alive in me, by sharing in the sufferings of Christ. This week has been an attempt to share what He went through by trying to imagine His emotions, His resolve, the temptation to give up that He faced, and how the man Jesus, would have to carry the burden of the Christ. Yes, I said it like I meant it. It was the man Jesus, who carried the cross and overcame the emotions, the temptations, the fears, and all the other distractions that would make all of us walk away from that cross. It was not the God in Him who stood against the tests He would face. He laid that right aside and walked away from it when He left His throne in Heaven. No, in order to be the Lamb of God, His perfection was required, but not as God would He achieve it, but rather to live a perfect life as a man. Then, it was this unblemished, sinless, Lamb of God that was sacrificed on our behalf. Jesus lived this perfect life required, as a man. Because of this, He had no less temptation to give up, nor any less opportunity to give in than any other man. He had to live His life perfectly to be the unblemished lamb, and he did it. But, it had to be hard for Him.

It was this connection to the man Jesus that has helped me get into the days before He journeyed to the cross, to help me share in His suffering. So, I ask you to go with me on a snapshot into that week before the cross so that maybe you can understand what the man Jesus dealt with, and also share in His sufferings. Here is the recorded chronology of events that week:

- ♣ **On Sunday**, Jesus walked a two-mile journey to Jerusalem from Bethany where Jesus stays each night before Passover on Thursday night.
- ♣ **On Monday**, Jesus protests financial transactions within the temple; argues with chief priests.
- ♣ **On Tuesday**, Jesus predicts/announces the date of his execution; debates with religious leaders; responds to question about greatest commandment and Judas contracts to betray Him.
- ♣ **On Wednesday**, Jesus warns against religious leaders, calling them hypocrites and snakes; from Mount of Olives, Jesus mourns Jerusalem's rejection and pending destruction.

- ✧ **On Thursday** night, Jesus shares the last supper with the disciples - Passover meal –Goes to the Garden of Gethsemane and awaits His arrest.
- ✧ **On Friday, (Early morning from approx. 1:00 AM – 5:00 AM)** The Confrontation in the Garden occurred and Jesus was arrested. Next, Jesus was taken to Annas. It was here that Jesus had His initial physical abuse. Then He was taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin Court for a mock trial and further physical abuse. He was imprisoned at Caiaphas’ palace until being taken to Pilate.
- ✧ **On Friday, (about 5:00 – 7:00 AM)** All the Jewish elders, including the High Priest, scribes and whole Sanhedrin decide to ask the Roman government to kill Jesus. In the hearing before the Roman governor, Pilate declares, "I find no guilt in this man."
- ✧ **On Friday, (about 7:00-7:30 AM)** There was a hearing before Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, who had jurisdiction over Galilee. Jesus refused to answer any questions so Herod returned him quickly to Pilate.
- ✧ **On Friday (about 7:30-8:30 AM)** Pilate repeatedly tried to release Jesus but the Jewish leaders continued to object. Pilate physically tortured and beat Jesus beyond recognition seeking to satisfy the Jewish leaders. However, the Jews demanded that Jesus be crucified. Pilate resisted but eventually gave the order to execute Jesus.
- ✧ **On Friday (about 8:30-9:00 AM)** Pilate's Roman soldiers take Jesus into the court ("Praetorium") and enjoy mockery and continued torture, including driving thorns into his skull.
- ✧ **On Friday (about 9:00-12:00 Noon)** Jesus forced to carry his own cross, then actual crucifixion.
- ✧ **On Friday (about 12:00 Noon – 3:00 PM)** [The final three hours on the cross](#) leading to His death.

As you read the whirlwind account of that week, and especially Friday up until His crucifixion, you must conclude that for the whole week, Jesus undoubtedly had to overcome great emotional challenges. Think about it. Being God, Jesus already knew what would take place with what He would have to endure as a man. This was a time that “*All-Knowing*” might have been too much information for someone to carry. It would have been for me. Ask yourself if you would have had a “*happy week*” if you knew that you would be facing the Friday Jesus would be going through? He knew it completely. Even so.... He still took it on. If you hope to share in Jesus’ sufferings, it would be good to put yourself in His place that week. Do your best to imagine that it was you carrying his emotional and physical load of that week, and especially Friday. Let your emotions engage with the betrayal, the curses and spit flung at you, as it was at Him. Think of the ridicule, the beatings, and the humiliation of being stripped naked to be mocked and to know ahead of time that it would be coming later in the week. How would you have handled yourself? How would you have slept? How would you have eaten? How would you have ministered to others when you were churning inside yourself? Even so, Jesus did. I guarantee if you really get into His emotional state by thinking it was you instead of Him, there will be great relief that it wasn’t you, and there will be tears that Jesus did it for you. This is when we truly understand what it means to share in Christ’s suffering about the best we can, given our limitations.

But there is one more thing. Jesus carried a burden for the lost people of the world. The “harassed sheep” and the “sheep without a shepherd” burdened him. He was burdened for His family, the Church. He was burdened for His disciples. He carried that burden all the time, and maybe He still does until we all go home to Him. Sharing these burdens with Jesus also means to share in His suffering. This is important to know, for unlike sharing Jesus’s suffering on the cross that is physically impossible for us to do, we can share His burden for what He gave His life for. We can share His burden to make disciples. We can share His burden to strengthen His Church and protect her. We can share His burden for the poor, the prisoners, the orphans

and widows. These are categories of people who represent people in need, who are hurting, and who need His love. When we share His love and give our lives for His purpose, we share in His sufferings and in a way, we crawl upon that cross with Him. In a way, we are crucified with Him. In a way, we seem to understand Him better. But for a better understanding of Him, we must start with understanding the man Jesus better, for this brings it close to home.

Therefore, let this day be a day that you begin to understand better this man / God who gave His life for you. Think of Him not only as your God, but also as your best friend. But not only your best friend ... but the one and only man who would go through what He did ... for you.