

The Privilege of Suffering for Him

‘In the beginning, God created earth and rested. Then God created man and rested. Then God created woman. Since then, neither God nor man has rested. // Husband: “I married “Miss Right”. I just didn’t know her first name was “Always”. // “I haven’t spoken to my wife for 18 months. I don’t like to interrupt her”. // First guy (proudly): “My wife’s an angel!” Second guy: “You’re lucky, mine’s still alive”. // Why do men die before their wives? They want to. // Do you know the punishment for bigamy? Two mothers-in-law. // The most effective way to remember your wife’s birthday is to forget it once. // A little boy asked his father, “Daddy, how much does it cost to get married?” And the father replied, “I don’t know son, I’m still paying”. // Then there was a man who said, “I never knew what real happiness was until I got married; and then it was too late”. // Marriage is a 3-ring circus: Engagement ring, wedding ring, and suffering”.’

What all those “husband” jokes have in common is poking fun at the institution of marriage. And, they wouldn’t be funny if they were actually true. For genuine marriages in which both parties are faithful and love each other, there is no higher state of lasting happiness on this earth, save that between each of us and our Savior Lord Jesus, and our Heavenly Father. What these

jokes also imply without explicitly expressing it is that marriages require work, sacrifice, and yes, suffering. When one suffers for their spouse because of love, isn't that suffering well worth it? This, of course, does not apply when there is sin involved, unfaithfulness, infidelity, abuse. But if a spouse becomes chronically ill, not only does that person suffer but their spouse suffers, too. If the sickness renders one spouse an invalid, leaving the other spouse to take care of everything, raising children, working multiple jobs to pay bills, etc., it could be said that the healthy spouse is suffering even more than the sick one. But because they love each other, they willingly, without a second thought, take whatever suffering comes their way. Because they love each other.

But however much an earthly husband and wife love each other, their love doesn't hold a candle to the ultimate love shown by our Lord Jesus Christ. He willingly underwent a suffering so great that it is literally unimaginable to our limited human minds. And His anguish began long before His nailing to the cross. The "crown" of thorns that pierced His skull, the lead-embedded whips scourging, ripping the flesh from His back, was "merely" physical pain. What He went through before all that, before the kangaroo court trial in the high priest's chambers, all alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, which designates where olives are pressed to release their precious olive oil, that was the pressing of His soul where His anguish was first extreme. So extreme it was there that the Bible records that He actually sweat out blood! Though

Peter, James and John were with Him in the Garden, they were of very little help, since they couldn't stay awake to even pray for Him. And the second, even worse anguish was at the moment on the Cross when the full weight of all the sins of humanity, of all those who would be eventually saved and given eternal life, fell upon His soul and spirit like the entire mass of the universe suddenly falling upon Him, crushing Him, literally cutting Him off for the first time in all eternity from the continuous, abiding presence of Father God. Though the physical pain was beyond our comprehension, the suffering of His soul and spirit was far beyond our capacity to even conceive. We truly don't have the words to even begin to describe what He went through on that Passover Day when the lambs were sacrificed to take away the sins of the Jews. But on that day, it wasn't just a bunch of sheep dying for the people, it was the One and Only Lamb of God Who shed His precious, priceless blood, gave up His Spirit, exhaled His last, and died, hanging lifeless on the Cross.

Why did He do this? Why did He have to do this? Well, frankly, He didn't have to do any of it. He could have let well enough alone, and we would all die, spend eternity in hell. The entire human race would be caput; screaming forever in hell. But He did go to the Cross. Why? Because He loves us. That is how much He loves us. In comparison to His love for us, we don't know the first thing about love. Our highest love of giving one's life to save a stranger is the closest we'll ever come, and it's but a

shadow of the real love of Lord Jesus, the Savior of the Universe.

So the question that hangs in the air for each and every person who has ever been given life on this earth is, do we accept His gift of forgiveness and love? Or do we reject it? It's really that simple. It matters not whether we believe it's true or that He exists or not. The truth is the truth, and no matter how much the devil and people currently evil try to camouflage it, cover it up, say it's all lies, etc., truth won't go away and forever lurks in the depths of our hearts until the end of our physical lives approaches. At that point, every person will come face to face with the God Who created them, and will either call upon the name of Jesus, or turn their backs on Him for the final time, and thereby relegate themselves to an eternal death in hell.

Because of His great love for us, those who accept His free gift of salvation experience a tantalizing taste of His love for us, and in so doing, we begin to love Him back. As much as we love Him, we will willingly suffer for Him. For life as a Christian is not a bowl of cherries, but it is filled with the constant, abiding joy of the presence of the Lord. We have our "share" of heartache, sometimes far more than other people in the world, because this world is inhabited by evil spirits and demonic forces that war against God's people who are taking back control of this world from the devil. But our suffering is ultimately a privilege. For as Christ suffered for us, as Paul told the Philippians in 1:29, it is truly a privilege to suffer for Him. For Him. Not all suffering is the same. If

we commit crimes and suffer for them, that is not suffering for Him. Punishment for crimes, for sins, should be repulsive and it discipline us to stop sinning and committing crimes against God and man. But suffering *for* Christ, by living lives that reflect His rules for living, that bless our enemies, that truly love others, that hold up the standard of what's right and good, and expose what's evil and who's doing it, that is truly a privilege to suffer.

Chapter 10 of II Kings is truly a grim chapter. But in its context, it's understandable. For the massacre that took place at Jehu's hands had all been prophesied decades previously by Elijah in I Kings 21. And what was the reason for it? How can we forget? For King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and their family were the worst, the most wicked reigns in all of Israel's history! They did more damage, led more people into grievous sin and away from the love of God, than any other leaders ever. Thousands upon thousands had died, gruesomely, at their hands. The people who stood with God and survived had been oppressed, suffering for decades under the government's persecution. How they all longed for relief and vindication. But as we looked at it last week, it is not our place ever to take revenge. God will repay, and now, in II Kings 10, God repays Ahab's family for all the evil they had visited upon the nation. And not only Ahab, but upon the evil demon god, baal, which had helped lead them into all things evil.

Jehu had become Israel's new king, and because he was obedient to the Lord in exercising God's vengeance upon the evil

family of Ahab, God established a new dynasty of Israelite kings, up until the fourth generation. But not beyond that, because though Jehu had honored God in many ways, despite everything, he still did not root out the worship of false gods by the people. Though he got rid of the baals, he left untouched the two original golden bull calves that Israel's first monarch, King Jeroboam, had erected at Bethel in the south and Dan in the north. Those damnable statues supposedly represented the God Who had brought the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt, parted the Red Sea, fed them for 40 years in the wilderness, and led to conquer the Promised Land. Those despicable metal calf statues were just like the very one Aaron had allowed the people to make at the foot of Mt. Sinai while Moses was conversing with God, receiving the Ten Commandments. How stupid and evil can one get?

Well, we need only look around us today. The current illegal, lawless regime tyrannizing us, ripping up the Constitution, trying to both weaken the nation so that it fully supports the developing one-world government being foisted upon us by the uber-rich globalist elites, while at the same time remaining strong enough to protect the wealth and power of the current uni-party regime in Washington, D.C., almost reincarnates the evil of Ahab's day. We hope that a future slaughter can be avoided, but as far as we who are righteous continue to stand for Christ Jesus and suffer for His name, we are truly privileged! For our suffering will help enable Holy Spirit to bring thousands and thousands more to salvation!

