

The Life of Christ: The “cost” of leading movements of multiplication
(Subtitle: The Pattern of Jesus in regards to suffering
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God loves you and has a very difficult life planned for you. If you choose to follow Jesus, you will experience troubles, shame, persecutions, difficulties and trials. Daily you will have to pick up your cross and carry it. Some of you will experience deep pain and distress, physical torture, great loss of life and family, even death. Yes, God loves you and has a plan for you.

How many of us are brought to Christ with these types of statements? I’m sure not too many of us. For many of us it has taken years to begin to see the truth of the statements above.

Jesus never called us to a life of safety. Not even to a fight that is fair. The promise of the Bible is that God’s people will suffer. In Acts 14:22 Paul told all his young churches, “Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom.” Jesus said, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you” (John 15:20). Peter says, “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you” (I Peter 4:12). In other words, suffering it is not strange...it is to be expected. It is normal. Paul states, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

God’s Word is even more emphatic when it states that suffering is our calling, “For you have been *called* for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). It is our calling. “For this *it has been granted* for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Philippians 1:29). Paul writes that we should not “be unsettled by our trials...we were *destined* for them” (I Thess. 3:3).

With about 200 million Christians worldwide who suffer persecution for their faith, with another 200 to 400 million who face discrimination for simply being a Christian (Compass Direct), we need to clearly understand Christ’s perspective on suffering. It is our calling. As John Piper has said, “Christianity was born in a world of totalitarianism...it was not strange to be persecuted. What is strange historically is that so many of us are not suffering for our faith.”

A few examples

Following Jesus in many parts of the world means open persecution. Here are just a few contemporary examples.

Iran: March 8 (Christianity Today) A military court in Iran has sentenced Christian pastor Hamad Pourmand to jail for three years and has ordered his immediate transfer to a group prison cell in Theran’s notorious Evin Prison. Several other ex-Muslims who have converted to Christianity, like Hamad, have either been executed or assassinated by court order, under the guise of spying for foreign countries.

Eritrea: February 23 (Compass Direct)—Twenty-seven Sunday school teachers and students were arrested in the Eritrean capital of Asmara. They were mostly young people meeting on Saturday for Christian instruction. Police authorities have arrested a total of 214 Eritrean Christians in the last two months alone. Some suffer imprisonment in metal shipping containers or underground cells for refusing to renounce their faith.

Nigeria: February 3 (Compass Direct)—Muslim militants pronounced a death sentence on five Christian students expelled from public schools in November for conducting an evangelistic outreach. The families of two of the students, Miss Hanatu Haruna Alkali and Abraham Adamu Misal, were attacked on January 26 when militants went to their family homes intending to kill them.

India: March 10 (Christian Monitor)—Insurgents in India are threatening to start killing evangelical leaders Thursday, March 10, and “totally destroy” the country’s leading missionary organization unless it pays a ransom of \$186,000 dollars to avoid the bloodshed. The terrorists say they will target US backed Gospel for Asia and especially the organization’s five Bible Colleges, 70 Bridge of Hope schools, and over 750 Believers Church Congregations in India’s troubled north eastern state of Assam.

China: January 5 (Christianity Today)—Chinese authorities arrested prominent housechurch leader Zhang Rongliang off the street in Zhengzhou, central Henan province, on December 1. Since 1974, Zhang has been incarcerated a total of 12 years, and according to China Aid, has experienced severe torture. This all “comes in the midst of serious crackdown against the house churches”. Some estimate these house churches to contain some 70-100 million believers with 1,000,000 pastors...most of whom are facing severe persecution for their faith.

Questions to ponder:

What are the implications of suffering being our calling?

In what ways are we in GYI experiencing suffering?

What is the most difficult form of suffering...physical, emotional, or social?

Where is the church suffering the most?

Others?

My purpose

While the purpose of this paper is not to document all that is happening in the arena of persecution, my desire is to clearly document what Jesus has told us to expect and how to respond. My desire is that all of us in GYI will see clearer our calling, and as we seek to birth movements of multiplication globally, to realize what that may look like in regards to the life modeled and taught by Christ, and thus be better prepared to respond appropriately.

My approach will be to look at the pattern of Christ’s life as he encountered suffering, and then seek to make application of these truths to our own lives. I Peter 2:21 tells us exactly this. “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.” This has been translated as “following the pattern of Christ Jesus”.

UNDERSTANDING THE LIFE OF CHRIST

I believe all of us in GYI understand the ministry mission of Jesus was not to just make Disciples, but to make disciples who could make disciples. His passion was not to reach the then known world, as much as it was to make disciples who could penetrate the whole world. He was about creating a movement of multiplication. His clear end result was found in Revelation 7:9 “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from *every nation, tribe, people and language*, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes...”

Jesus’ ministry life was invested in birthing a movement of multiplication, and then he told His disciples... I want you to “do what I have done” (John 14:12), “walk as I have walked” (I John 2:6), “follow the example I have given you” (I Peter 2:21). For years I hesitated to quote this last verse, because I knew its context...one of following the pattern of Jesus, not just in ministry principles, but in the school of suffering.

The humanity of Jesus

From my perspective, to fully understand the Son’s Life, you must clearly understand his humanity. This is especially true concerning this subject of the “cost” of being a Christ follower as applied to movements of multiplication. This cost is best understood as we take a look at the true suffering of Jesus—especially in the context of his humanity.

The Scriptures tell us clearly that Jesus was “fully God”. “In Him the fullness of deity lives in bodily form...” (Col 2:9). But not only was Jesus fully God, He was fully human. In eternity past, Jesus chose to “become flesh and dwell among us” (John 1:14). The only way He could have completely accomplished this task, being both fully God and fully man at the same time, was “by choosing to veil His deity so that His humanity could find full expression” (See footnote 1 for further explanation). Charles Ryrie describes this hypostatic union, as “never less than God, He chose to live His life never more than man”. Bruce Ware said it this way, “His deity was unexpressed, so that His humanity could be fully expressed.” Wayne Grudem gives his insight by saying, “Jesus refused to rely on His divine nature to make obedience easier for Him”. While carrying the “God card”, it is my conviction that Jesus never used the God card...otherwise He would not “have been like us in every way” (Heb 2:17). With much at stake here theologically, St. Gregory clearly emphasized, “if Christ did not become fully human, then the redemption of man could not have been fully complete” (See Hebrews 2-5).

Because Jesus lived as that second Adam and was “fully human”, the suffering Jesus experienced as the sinless Savior in a sin-infested world was “progressive, complete, and weighty”.

“Progressive” in that it began at his birth and continued all the way to the cross...even to death upon the cross (Philippians 2:8). Christ’s suffering was not just on the cross. I believe it began immediately at his birth, and continued all the way to His death...progressing in intensity and passion. I believe we do a great disservice to the life of Christ when we think only of the suffering or “passion” of Christ as happening during the last week of his life. To do this, means to miss much of what Christ’s life was about. While culminating on the cross, His suffering experienced was throughout his life. (See

footnote 2).

“Complete” in that what Jesus suffered was the full impact of sin. Because he never caved into sin’s temptation, His temptations were real, intense, and complete. He was made “like us in every way” (Hebrews 2:17) and that included the reality of the temptations He faced and the impact of their sting. Because we so quickly give into sin and its “temporary pleasure” (Hebrews 11:25), we on the contrary do not feel its’ complete sting. (See footnote 3).

“Weighty (full)” in that on the cross all the full weight of God’s wrath was poured out, thus satisfying God’s justice in giving us “Christ’s righteousness” as the means and source of our salvation. Weighty in that the full impact of God’s *stored up wrath* was poured out on Christ, and God’s justice was fully satisfied. (See footnote 4).

Therefore, as we look at how Christ suffered and lived through the suffering of a sin-infested world, we must continually be aware of the full humanity of Jesus to appreciate and follow “the pattern He gave us” (I Peter 2:21).

Questions to ponder:

- Why is the understanding of Christ’s humanity essential to understanding His suffering?
- How would Jesus suffering differed if He would have relied upon His God card?
- How did Jesus’ suffering differ from ours?
- How was it similar?
- How does the hypostatic union work? ☺
- Others:

UNDERSTANDING THE SUFFERING OF JESUS

How can anyone fully understand the suffering of Jesus?

Who could imagine:

What suffering a perfect sinless little baby would feel when encountering for the first time the stench of a sinful world as seen in the coldness of a damp manger, in the smell of the animals, in the fear and anticipation of a young mother.

What a sinless young child would feel the first time Mary or Joseph in their sinfulness or weariness failed to meet the real needs of a baby for such things as warmth, a timely embrace, or words of comfort.... as imperfect parents would.

The pain incurred in Jesus’ sinless heart upon hearing for the first time Joseph yelling at Mary in anger, or the voice of Mary being raised in pain for an unmet need at home, or a conflict of anger between sinful parents.

The suffering incurred through a quick trip in the middle of night made to Egypt...to flee from the murder of small children two years and younger.

The hurt and sorrow Jesus felt when hearing God's name taken in vain, or hearing a curse for the first time, or the confusion in a young heart when destructive gossip is witnessed first hand.

The genuine suffering and hurt that came with seeing His siblings... James, Joseph, Simon, Judas, and his sisters (Matt 13:55)... fight and cry and selfishly demand their own way when playing together or with Jesus.

The hurt and insults that came His way for His holy lifestyle, along with all the scorn and shame... resulting in it being said of Jesus that "I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mothers sons, for zeal for your house consumes me and the insults of those who insult you fall on me." (Ps 69:7-9)

The sad feelings in a heart and soul of a young man, possibly a teenager, being mocked at the gates and being a "song of drunkards" (Ps 69:10-12). Perhaps all of this because of rumors of being an illegitimate child... no one knowing in the small town who his father was... and making crude remarks about him and Mary. This mocking seemingly occurred throughout his life as seen by the self righteous Pharisees alluding to Jesus' illegitimacy by saying, "We are not illegitimate children". (John 8:41).

The true pain of His stepfathers' death, perhaps when Jesus was quite young, and now having to carry the weight of caring for the family. (See footnote 5)

The tremendous suffering in the wilderness, when Satan for forty days, put a full court press on Jesus, tempting Him to cave in and use His God card to escape the temptations... "if you are God" was the challenge, yet Jesus refused to give in. (Matt 4:3,6).

His deep grief at the loss of his good friend Lazarus (John 11:35). Or the heaviness of heart that swept over him at the news of his cousin, John the Baptist being beheaded, causing Jesus to "withdraw by boat privately to a solitary place" (Matthew 14:13).

The obvious grief over his slow learning disciples as expressed in moments of "Are you so dull?" (Mark 7:17), "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?" (Mark 8:17) "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." (Mark 9:19).

Add to this, the sufferings that intensified as Jesus drew near to the cross... the physical pain, the pain of bearing our sin, the abandonment by family, friends, and ultimately his Father, and the full 'wrath of God' being poured out. Knowing full well what awaited Him, (Matthew 16:21) Jesus stated, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38). (For an understanding of what Jesus knew was before Him, look at: *Psalm 22*... My God, my God why have you forsaken me? I am a worm and not a man... scorned, despised, mocked. They hurl insults. Bulls surround me... roaring lions tearing their prey. My bones are out of joint... my strength is dried up... my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth... dogs surround me... evil men have encircled me... they have

pierced my hands and feet. *Psalm 69*...I am in trouble...I am scorned, disgraced and shamed...all my enemies are before me. Scorn has broken my heart and has left me for helpless. I looked for sympathy but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar to drink. I am in pain and distress. *Isaiah 52-53*...his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. He carried our sorrows...stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquity...the Lord has laid on Him the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted...led like a lamb to the slaughter. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause him to suffer...pouring out His life unto death...he bore the sin of many.)

The scriptures tell us that Jesus was “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief”. (Is 53:3). “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, with loud cries and tears...he offered up prayers and petitions” (Heb 5:7).

He suffered all the way to the cross...even death on the cross. We are told that Jesus “suffered when he was tempted” (Heb 2:18). Because He never gave in to temptation, He experienced the full weight of that temptation. *In each temptation, Jesus suffered.*

We in turn, often give in to temptation, exchanging short-term pleasure for the benefits of long-term obedience. Our benefit of righteous suffering is diminished because of our lack of obedience. Our suffering takes on a different nature...it is the result of disobedience versus the joyful and rewarding result of obedience.

Through this process we are told, “it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should *make* the author of our salvation *perfect through suffering*” (Hebrews 2:10). Jesus righteous suffering yielded full and complete maturity...bearing exactly the fruit His Father intended on every occasion. Jesus was made perfect through the suffering He encountered. Never did the impact of His suffering accomplish anything short of God's perfect will in His life. It was God-allowed and God ordained...yielding Godliness in its perfect form.

Jesus “learned obedience from what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.” (Heb. 5:8-9). Jesus’ sufferings made Him the one who flawlessly “fulfilled all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15) and thus became the author and perfecter of our faith...the source of eternal salvation. (See footnote 6).

Questions to ponder:

When you think of the sufferings of Jesus, what do you think of?
What other times and ways do you think Christ suffered?
Was Jesus able to sin, or not able to sin? Why is this important?
How did Jesus learn obedience through suffering?
How can someone who is perfect, be made perfect through suffering?
What are the implications of Jesus’ suffering for the training we teach?
Others:

UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERN OF JESUS IN RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

As I think about the cost of creating movements of multiplication, we must go back and learn from the Son's life. But not only are we called to follow Christ, we are called to imitate Him...following the pattern He gave us. There is a pattern to the way in which He approached suffering and we are called to follow that pattern. Let me try to identify that pattern from my limited perspective.

Jesus saw it coming and understood its source

Jesus was clear in the message he gave to his disciples. He knew that they could not escape suffering. "In this world you will have troubles," Jesus said (John 16:33). "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). "Man is born for trouble, as surely as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

Like one of my favorite theologians, Dr. Seuss, Jesus understood that the question was not if we are going to face suffering, but when. In his children's book, *O The Places You'll Go*, Dr Seuss writes,

Oh the Places you'll go!
You'll be on your way up!
You'll be seeing great sights!
You'll join the high fliers who soar to great heights.
You won't lag behind, because you'll have the speed.
You'll pass the whole gang and you'll soon take the lead.
Wherever you fly, you'll be best of the best.
Wherever you go, you will top all the rest.
(Pause)
Except when you *don't*.
Because, sometimes, you *won't*.
I'm sorry to say so but, sadly it's true
That Bang-ups and Hang-ups *can* happen to you.
You can get all hung up in a prickly perch.
And your gang will fly on.
You'll be left in a Lurch.
You'll come down from the Lurch with an unpleasant bump.
And the chances are, then, that you'll be in a Slump.
And when you're in a Slump, you're not in for much fun.
Un-slumping yourself is not easily done.

Because he understood it, Jesus knew that suffering (pain, sorrow, afflictions, persecution) came for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. We suffer because we live in a sinful world and sin reigns in the hearts of men. We suffer because of man's own foolishness, reaping what we sow. We suffer because God at times chooses to discipline us, "for whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Heb. 12:6), building character and perseverance in our lives. And we suffer because "men love darkness rather than the light", thus our faith becomes offensive to those who walk in the darkness. But ultimately Jesus knew that all suffering had to pass through the hands of a loving Father before it could enter into our world.

Jesus also knew that suffering in itself is not virtuous, nor is it a sign of holiness. It is not a means of trying to gain points with God as in asceticism. At times Jesus avoided conflict (John 7:1, 10:39, Matt. 15:21, 16:4), but most of the time He faced it head on, facing the suffering that came with the presentation of truth (Matt. 16:21).

John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrims Progress*, was no stranger to suffering. Having the choice of avoiding prison at any time if he promised to stop preaching, he chose prison. For 12 years he suffered in a small jail cell. At one point, when seeing his oldest child Mary, blind from birth, visit him in prison... and unable to help care for her, John wrote that it felt like, “the pulling of the flesh from my bones.” (Quoted in *The Hidden Smile of God*, John Piper, p. 12). During his prison stay, Bunyan wrote *Pilgrims Progress*, which has been said to be “next to the Bible, the best selling book...translated in over 200 languages.” (Quoted in Piper, *ibid*, p.60) Spurgeon is said to have read it every year for the depth of its message. George Whitefield said of *The Pilgrims Progress*, “It smells of the prison. It was written when the author was confined in Bedford jail. And ministers seldom write or preach so well as when under the cross: the Spirit of Christ and of Glory then rests upon them.” (Quoted in Horner, *The Pilgrim’s Progress: An Evangelical Apologetic*, p. iii.)

However, Bunyan when asked if we can choose to flee from suffering if the chance arises, wrote:

“Thou mayest do in this as it is in thy heart. If it is in thy heart to fly, fly: if it be in thy heart to stand, stand. Anything but a denial of the truth. He that flies has warrant to do so; he that stands, has warrant to do so. Yea, the same man may both fly and stand, as the call and working of God with his heart may be. Moses fled, Exodus 2:15; Moses stood, Hebrews 11:27. David fled, I Samuel 19:12; David stood, I Samuel 24:8. Jeremiah fled, Jeremiah 37:11-12; Jeremiah stood, 38:17. Christ withdrew himself, Luke 9:10; Christ stood, John 18:1-8. Paul fled, 2 Cor. 11:33; Paul stood, Acts 20:22-23...

There are few rules in this case. The man himself is best able to judge concerning his present strength, and what weight this or that argument has upon his heart to stand or fly...Do not fly out of a slavish fear, but rather because flying is an ordinance of God, opening a door for the escape of some, which door is opened by God’s providence, and the escape countenanced by God’s Word. Matthew 10:23....If, therefore, when thou hast fled, thou art taken, be not offended at God for man: not at God, for thou art his servant, thy life and thy all are his; not at man, for he is but God’s rod and is ordained, in this, to do thee good. Hast thou escaped? Laugh. Art thou taken? Laugh. I mean, be pleased which way so ever things shall go, for that the scales are still in God’s hand. “
(*Seasonable Council, or Advice to Sufferers* p. 726)

Unfortunately for many of us coming out of the influence of the Western church, we have often viewed suffering as something to be avoided at all cost. Our energies become focused upon moving away from stress and towards comfort and safety. It never occurs to us that choosing discomfort, danger, or stress might be the right thing...even the

biblical thing to do.

As John Piper writes, “If we will not freely take our cross and follow Jesus (Mark 8:34) on the Calvary road, it may be thrust on us. It would be better to hear the warning now and wake up to biblical reality. Existence in this fallen world will not be pain free and trouble free. There will be groaning because of our finitude and fallen ness, and many afflictions because of our calling (Romans 8:23; Psalm 34:19). Frustration is normal, disappointment is normal, and sickness is normal. Conflict, persecution, danger, and stress—they are all normal. The mind-set that moves away from these will move away from reality and away from Christ. Golgotha was not a suburb of Jerusalem.” (The Roots of Endurance, John Piper, p. 19)

Jesus understood His Fathers plan in suffering. He clearly saw His Fathers sovereignty and intentions over all forms of suffering. He understood the role of suffering as a refining fire worthy of great rejoicing (I Peter 1:6-7), an opportunity for expression of true dependence (I Peter 2:23), a normal part of true Christian living (I Peter 4:12), a joyful vehicle for eternal glory to come our way (I Peter 4:13), and a sweet fellowship with believers around the world (I Peter 5:9-10).

Jesus understood suffering, saw it coming, and prepared his disciples for it. Jesus told His disciples that since people had persecuted Him, they too would be persecuted (John 15:30). Just as Jesus understood the role of suffering and saw it coming, so did his disciples. Tradition and history tells us that:

James was beheaded
Philip was crucified
Matthew was slain by the sword
James the Less was stoned to death
Matthias was stoned and then beheaded
Andrew was crucified left hanging on the cross for three days
Peter was crucified upside down
Nero in Rome beheaded Paul
Jude was crucified
Bartholomew was beaten to death with clubs
Thomas was speared to death
Simon the Zealot was crucified
John was exiled to Patmos and died a prisoner

While we cannot verify each of these facts with exact details, it seems that none of the apostles escaped persecution. All died as a result of their bold witness to the faith. “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33).

It has been said so correctly, that there are no closed countries to the gospel, if we are willing to face persecution, suffer and die for our faith.

In GYI, as we seek to birth movements of multiplication globally, perhaps our picture of a movement will have to be shaped by the refining fires of suffering and persecution. I am convinced being a truly global Christian, will cost us more in the years to come. And

finishing the Great Commission is going to cost some of us our lives—as it always has.

Eighteen hundred years ago Tertullian said, “We (Christians) multiply whenever we are mowed down... the blood of Christians is seed” (Apologeticus, 50) 200 years later St. Jerome said, “The Church of Christ has been founded by shedding its own blood, not that of others; by enduring outrage, not by inflicting it. Persecutions have made it grow; martyrdoms have crowned it” (Letter 82).

Questions to ponder:

How does ‘seeing suffering coming’ change our view of it?

How would a proper theology of suffering impact our lives?

Jesus prepared His disciples for suffering, how does that impact us in GYI?

When do you stand and face suffering, and when do you flee?

How does suffering change our view of the abundant life?

Does God “allow” suffering or does God “ordain” suffering?

Jesus embraced it

As we continue to study the pattern modeled by Jesus, not only do we see Jesus understanding the reality of suffering, but also we see Him willingly chose to embrace that suffering...moving toward it willingly. In Luke 9:22 we read, “The Son of Man *must* suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he *must* be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” Matthew 16:21 tell us, “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he *must go* to Jerusalem and suffer many things...”

Jesus not only turned toward the suffering, He embraced it. Mark 8:32 tells us “Jesus spoke plainly about these things”. Jesus clearly stated that it was His willful choice to embrace this suffering...“I lay down my life...no one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord” (John 10:17-18).

Jesus understood something so many of us fail to grasp. Because of that understanding He was willing to embrace suffering. In Matthew 5:11 Jesus helps us understand that truth. Listen to what He says, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because *great is your reward in heaven*, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Six major facts stand out about this beatitude. It is the last and longest of the beatitudes. It is the only beatitude with a command and the only one with an explanation. It is the only beatitude repeated by Jesus and the only one addressed directly to the reader. All of these unique truths signify its importance and emphasize its role in our lives. It is a command with explanation...for great is our reward in heaven. It is to be expected...for they persecuted the prophets before you. 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us something of the same, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

But Matthew presents a shocking piece of advice. Who in their right mind can “rejoice and be glad” in the midst of moving toward hatred, mocking, torture, and death? We

know that Jesus does have death in mind, for that is what they did to the prophets, would do to him, and what they would do to the disciples. Matthew 24:9 says, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.”

Either this is nonsense penned in an ivory tower, or this is reality shaped by truth that we know little about. Obviously the latter is true.

Jesus could embrace suffering; despise the shame, because of the joy set before Him (Heb 12:2). Jesus clearly knew those who would embrace suffering would truly experience “an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Cor. 4:17).

There is a mystery here! Joy in the midst of agony, gladness in the midst of misery and pain. It is the assurance that heaven has a hundredfold compensation for every pain suffered in Jesus name. In this we can “rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven”. In this promise we too can move toward suffering and embrace it—following the pattern of Jesus.

The prophets, martyrs, and saints who have gone before understood this promise. What caused Rowland Taylor and Bishop Ridley and John Bradford to kiss the stakes on which they were burned?

What moved Obadiah Holmes, after ninety lashes turned his back to raw flesh, to say to the torturers, “You have struck me with roses”?

Why did Thomas Hardcastle say that persecution is “a precious season of grace”?

What caused the children of John Rogers, as he was being burned at the stake, to call out encouragements to him through their tears...that he might be strong and not turn back and honor Christ?

What caused Jim Elliot to write, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose?”

The modern day sufferers also understand this truth. What caused Brother Yun, often called the Heavenly Man, to often thank God for the great privilege of being tortured for Christ, saying that “the Lord wants us to embrace suffering as a friend. We need a deep realization that when we’re persecuted for Jesus’ sake it is an act of God’s blessing to us. I have never hated my persecutors. Never. I have seen them as God’s instruments of blessing and his chosen vessels to purify me and make me more like Jesus.” (The Heavenly Man, Paul Hattaway, p.311) When asked why he was so joyful during his suffering he responded, “How can I not be happy? This day *I have been chosen* to suffer for the name of Jesus!” (p. 153)

What could be the impact of GYI if we clearly saw the reality Jesus so clearly saw? What would happen if we moved with open arms to embrace the suffering that awaits us? How much faster would we see the globe open up to us if we were willing to embrace suffering as Jesus did?

As Piper so powerfully writes, “A life devoted to making much of Christ is costly. And the cost is both a consequence and a means of making much of him. If we do not embrace the path of joy-laden, painful love, *we will waste our lives*. If we do not learn with Paul the Christ-exalting paradoxes of life, we will squander our days pursuing bubbles that burst. He lived “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich: a having nothing, yet possessing everything” (2 Corinthians 6:10). The Calvary road is costly and painful, but it is not joyless. When we embrace with joy the cost of following Christ, his worth will shine in the world.” (Don’t Waste Your Life, John Piper, p.63).

Questions to ponder:

What does ‘embracing suffering’ look like?

What is the opposite of ‘embracing suffering’?

How does this differ from asceticism (seeing suffering as good in itself)?

How do we know if suffering is for discipline or pruning?

What are the many God ordained by-products of suffering?

What is the suffering God is calling the church in your part of the world to embrace?

What is the suffering God is calling you to embrace?

Others:

Jesus learned from it

Not only did Jesus understand the cost of the cross, He embraced it...willfully moving towards it. But in the midst of living life, He learned from that which He suffered.

In the passage where we learn that Jesus “offered up prayers and petition with loud cries and tears”, we are told, “He learned obedience from what He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). When Christ was tempted, he suffered (Hebrews 2:18). In his humanity, I believe each temptation helped Christ grow stronger in His capacity to trust (Ps 22:8-9, Hebrews 2:13). Suffering became tools in the hand of His heavenly Father to test, confirm, and satisfy that ‘covenant of works’ as that Second Adam...purchasing for us that gift of righteousness and the life that saves us. (Romans 5:10) (See footnote 6)

In the same way, we need to learn from the suffering, growing stronger in our ability to trust and obey.

In Arizona in the desert, scientists spent millions to try to create the perfect environment. In a large space bubble, they created a seemingly perfect atmosphere—free from all dangers. The only problem was that they were never able to grow trees, as there were no natural winds, developing strength for the trees. To be healthy, they needed some opposition.

In the space program, bees were taken in outer space, only to soon die...because there was no natural resistance in the gravity-free environment. Bees need resistance to stay strong and live. Without it they soon died.

In the same way, the resistance of suffering makes us strong and steadfast. I Peter 5:10

says, “After you have suffered awhile, Christ Himself will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast”. Romans 5:3 tells us that “we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, and perseverance yields character, and character, and hope”.

The Psalmist understood the value of suffering. He wrote in Psalm 119:67, “before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.” Suffering yielded obedience, producing a humble brokenness through which God’s grace can flow.

The Psalmist continues in verse 71 saying, “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.” Afflictions yielded knowledge of God’s word in a way and depth, which could only be learned in the school of suffering.

Later the Psalmist writes in verse 75, “O Lord your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me.”

Notice the progression of maturity...from straying to obedience (verse 67), from obedience to praise (verse 71), from praise to acknowledgement of his sovereign control (verse 75). A progression of growth brought about by suffering.

Martin Luther understood this when he thanked the pope for trying to kill him—thus making him a good theologian through the difficulties. For he said, “I myself owe my papists many thanks for so beating, pressing, and frightening me through the devil’s raging that they have turned me into a fairly good theologian, driving me to a goal I should never have reached.” (The Legacy of Sovereign Joy, John Piper, p.104)

John Calvin wrote his Institutes to defend the many who were being burned alive...his works were forged in the furnace of burning flesh.

George Mueller, preaching at the funeral of his wife who died after 39 years of marriage said, “ I am satisfied with the will of my Heavenly Father...I kiss continually the hand that has thus afflicted me”.

John Piper writes, ”There is more to be had of God in times of suffering than any other time” (The Hidden Smile of God, John Piper, p. 71).

Like Jesus we need to understand suffering, embrace it, and learn from it.

(John Piper has also written extensively on the purposes of God in suffering. In his book “Let the Nations Be Glad” he lists six reasons in Chapter 3. Or you can study four messages he preached in a series in August-September 1992. These are available at www.desiringGOD.org.)

Questions to ponder:

In what ways did Jesus learn from His suffering?

What is often the first lesson learned in suffering...the last lesson?

What is the most important lesson you have learned from suffering?

What is the suffering you are currently facing and what do you think God wants

to teach you?
Others:

Jesus rejoiced in it

While I find no direct reference to Jesus rejoicing in His sufferings, we find several indirect references. Hebrews 1:9 tells us of the lifestyle of Jesus as being one that is “set above your companions by anointing Him with the oil of joy”. Jesus was attractive, both to sinners and saints, because of His deep felt joy, even in the midst of opposition.

In Psalm 69, a Messianic Psalm about David and seemingly Jesus, they both cried out saying, “I am in pain and distress...yet I will praise God’s name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs” (verse 29-31).

This joy was evident in Philippians 2 when we are commanded to “think and act, just like Jesus” (verse 5). The passage continues by saying “who being in the very nature God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.” It later tells us we are to “do everything without grumbling or complaining” (Philippians 2:14). The inference was that this was the attitude of Jesus we are to replicate.

We do know that on the journey to the cross, Jesus never cried out, never retaliated, never made any threats, always entrusting Himself to him who judges justly (I Peter 2:23). These actions display a deep sense of trust in His father’s control in all events of the cross.

But why do we never see Jesus rejoicing in His suffering, like we are told to do? It is clear that we are to “consider it pure joy, my brethren, when you face trials of many kinds...” (James 1:2). We are to “rejoice and be glad” (Matthew 5:12), “exult in our tribulations” (Romans 5:3), “greatly rejoice” (I Peter 1:6), and “rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ” (I Peter 4:13).

Could it be that Jesus’ suffering was a different type of suffering or for a different purpose? Could it be that Jesus’ suffering was for the propitiation of our sins; our suffering is for the propagation of the gospel. In this we can and must rejoice. Could it be that he suffered in payment for our sins, we suffer for purification from our sins? Joseph Tson said “Christ’s cross was for propitiation; ours is for proclamation.” Christ suffered to accomplish salvation; we suffer to spread salvation.

How does this work? Colossians 1:24 says, “Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions”.

Filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions? How can anything be lacking in Christ’s afflictions? Was not his suffering and death for us completely sufficient?

In the context, Paul is speaking about the “mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of

glory” (verse 27). Paul is also speaking of his commission to make this mystery known among the Gentiles...presenting everyone complete in Christ. In this context, Paul is not speaking of adding anything to the worth of Christ’s afflictions, but to their extent. What was lacking was the visible expression...a presentation of that suffering in visible form to the world.

God’s answer to this is to take His present body, the church, and to present the afflictions of Christ to the world—to carry them from Jerusalem to the ends of the world. Could it be that the afflictions of Christ are to be presented to the world through the afflictions of his people—displaying that mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory”. Could it be that the church is most effective in presenting the cross of Christ, when the people see the cross of Christ in us. Our afflictions become the picture of Christ’s sufferings to a world yet to see Jesus. Our afflictions become the “filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Colossians 1:24). (For an expanded presentation of this passage, see Piper in his August 30, 1992 message on the missions’ purpose of suffering. www.desiringGOD.org)

We can rejoice therefore in our afflictions, because they are the very things that help reveal Christ to a lost and dying world. Christ’s sufferings were for propitiation...our suffering is for proclamation. As we experience suffering, the brokenness we face, causes the Christ in us to more freely shine through us. The result...revealing Christ to the world.

Scott and Janet Willis have become good friends. As a pastor of a small church on the south side of Chicago, they had learned to live from month to month, trusting God’s good provisions. In late 1994, while driving a van loaded with nine of their twelve children, a metal bracket fell off of the truck in front of them...going under their van, rupturing the gas tank and causing a huge explosion. Barely able to get the vehicle stopped, Scott and Janet rolled out of their burning vehicle, barely escaping with their lives. In an effort to rescue his children, Scott suffered severe burns on his hands and upper body. One child was rescued, only to die the next day.

Immediately rescue and camera crews were on the scene. On the roadside next to their burned vehicle, the TV cameras captured Scott and Janet in tears, praying together. Some of their first words out of their mouths were, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble” (Job 2:10). “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away...blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21).

Their story captured the attention of the news media. Added to the mix, was the fact that the truck driver had illegally acquired his driver’s license through a corrupt administration that was being investigated. In the hospital, the media waited for them to lash out in anger...but it never came. In the hospital, Scott and Janet ministered to the needs of the nurses and media. No one could understand their grace and resolve, as Christ shone through them. Scott and Janet became Christ to a sin-soaked world and displayed the riches of his grace in the midst of great suffering. Suffering served as the vehicle to get the world’s attention. Suffering served its purpose...it served the advancement of God’s Kingdom in a way that only eternity will be able to grasp.

Could it be that this reflects what was meant when Colossians said, “I complete what is

lacking in Christ's afflictions, for the sake of the body." (As told by John Piper in Aug 30,92 message).

Perhaps in GYI, for us to experience rapid movements of multiplication...will require rapid acceleration of suffering. Perhaps the very thing we are seeking to avoid is the very thing that is needed. Could it be that we need to understand the strategic nature of suffering as clearly as Jesus, embrace it willingly, learn from it fully, and then rejoice in completely...and then we will see God move in a powerful new ways through broken vessels of joy?

Questions to ponder:

Did Jesus rejoice in His suffering...how and when?
What changes when we begin to rejoice?
What is appropriate rejoicing...what is inappropriate?
Why is this so hard?
Others:

Jesus endured through it

We are told that for the joy set before him, Jesus endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2). As the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus did not focus on the surface of things, but looked to that which was beyond the finish line. No one enters into suffering with gladness, but with clarity of focus on the outcome, the suffering can be endured. Jesus was both the author and perfecter of our faith, by showing us how to live through suffering.

Jesus not only understood the role of suffering in fueling movements of multiplication, but He embraced it. While embracing His Father's good will, He learned from that suffering and experienced joy in the midst of the pain—encouraging us to consider it pure joy and to exult in our tribulations as they serve the cause of “filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions” (Colossians 1:24). Jesus persevered to the end for the joy set before Him.

J. Oswald Sanders told the story of an indigenous missionary who walked barefoot from village to village preaching the gospel in India. His hardships were many. After a long day of many miles and much discouragement he came to a certain village and tried to speak the gospel but was driven out of town and rejected. So he went to the edge of the village dejected and lay down under a tree and slept from exhaustion.

When he awoke people were hovering over him, and the whole town was gathered around to hear him speak. The leader of the village explained that they came to look him over while he was sleeping. When they saw his blistered feet they concluded that he must be a holy man, and that they had been evil to reject him. They were sorry and wanted to hear the message that he was willing suffer so much to bring them. So the evangelist “filled up the afflictions of Jesus” with his beautiful blistered feet. (As told by John Piper in his message on August 30,1992).

Michael Card has told a similar story of Joseph, an African, who was walking along a hot dusty African road, and he met someone who shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with him. Immediately he accepted Christ and experienced His transforming life. The change caused him to want to share that Good News immediately with members of his own tribe.

Joseph began going door to door, telling everyone he met about the Cross and suffering of Jesus and the salvation he offered, expecting to see their faces light up the way his had. To his amazement the villagers not only didn't care, they became violent. The men of the village seized him and held him to the ground while the women beat him with strands of barbed wire. He was dragged from the village and left to die alone in the bush.

Joseph somehow managed to crawl to a water hole, and there, after days of passing in and out of consciousness, found the strength to get up. He wondered about the hostile reception he received from people he had known all his life. He decided he must have left something out or told the story of Jesus incorrectly. After rehearsing the message he had first heard, he decided to go back and share his faith once more.

Joseph limped into the circle of huts and began to proclaim Jesus. "He died for you, so that you might find forgiveness and come to know the living God," he pleaded. Again he was grabbed by the men of the village and held while the women beat him, reopening wound that had just begun to heal. Once more they dragged him unconscious from the village and left him to die.

To have survived the first beating was truly remarkable. To live through the second was a miracle. Again, days later, Joseph awoke in the wilderness, bruised, scarred—and determined to go back.

He returned to the small village and this time, they attacked him before he had a chance to open his mouth. As they flogged him for the third and probably the last time, he again spoke to them of Jesus Christ, the Lord. Before he passed out, the last thing he saw was that the women who were beating him began to weep.

This time he awoke in his own bed. The ones who had so severely beaten him were now trying to save his life and nurse him back to health. The entire village had come to Christ.

With Highest Honor

The scene is the throne room of heaven. The time is somewhere beyond tomorrow. Multitudes are gathered for the commencement exercises. Friends and family members eagerly wait for the ceremony to begin. The angelic concert choir sings "Glory to God in the Highest." A massive chorus of tens of thousands rises to sing "Crown Him with Many Crowns." In come the dignitaries—Abraham and Isaac leading the way with Jacob limping behind them, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, the apostles James and John, and Peter who was crucified upside down. Following them are the martyrs from across the centuries—men and women who paid the ultimate price for their faith. Look! There is Jan Hus who was burned at the stake. And over there is Jim Elliot who was killed by the Auca Indians. Hundreds and thousands strong, they march in one by one.

Then at last a voice cries out, “All rise.” In comes the Lord Jesus Christ—clothed in pure white, dazzling in beauty. Look! He’s smiling. This is the day he has been waiting for. Now the names are called:

Bill Hodgson. With Highest Honor
Dave Patty. With Highest Honor
Mark Edwards. With Highest Honor
Mark Tittley. With Highest Honor
Rod Taylor. With Highest Honor
Abraham Sahu. With Highest Honor
Ernesto Alfaro. With Highest Honor
Woody Rowland. With Highest Honor
Andrew Tay. With Highest Honor
Dave Garda. With Highest Honor

On and on they come—bright saints of God, entering into the joy of the Lord. On this earth they suffered in so many ways. No one had an easy passage to heaven. Some knew sickness, others broken dreams and others were abandoned and forgotten. But the Lord knew what they had done for him. And he never forget them. No, not for a moment. Now they are entering into their eternal reward.

Oh, I want to be there in that day. I want to cheer for my friends and give a standing ovation for my loved ones. And more than anything else, I want to live so that when that great moment comes, I can hear him say: “Dann Spader. With Highest Honor.”

Is it possible? Yes, God intends that all of us should pass through the School of Sorrow and Suffering. But thank goodness, school doesn’t last forever. Those who stay in school and learn their lessons well will one day be greatly rewarded. In the end, no one will regret the sufferings of their life. The blackest moments will be transformed into eternal light and will shine like the sun forever. (As told by Ray Pritchard in a sermon on Job).

Questions to ponder:

What is it going to take in GYI for us to see movements of multiplication in Muslim countries?
Are Muslims more willing to suffer that we are? Why or why not?
What have I missed in the “pattern” modeled from Jesus?
What needs to be studied more in this area?
Who really understands suffering and youth movements?
Others:

Footnote #1

The Council of Chalcedon in 451 B.C. settled the dispute regarding the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ and declared what has stood the test of time, that Jesus possessed “two natures without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation”. This became the orthodox statement that refuted both the Nestorianism and

Eutychianism of the day. (For a further study on this topic see my paper on “The Humanity of Jesus” under downloadable resources at www.sonlife.com.)

Footnote #2

The scriptures tell us that Jesus suffered all the way to the cross...even to death on the cross. I believe we do a disservice to the full life of Christ, when we think only of His suffering as that which happened on the cross. Unfortunately, I believe theologians and preachers have emphasized the death of Christ at the expense of the life of Christ. While the death of Christ is eternally significant for our reconciliation, it must be kept in balance with His life of sinless obedience, which caused Christ to become our “righteousness” before God. Romans 5:10 tells us that His death reconciles us, but it is by His life that we are saved. The significance of the sinless life of Christ cannot be overstated, for by it He “fulfilled all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15) on our behalf and has been made “our righteousness” (I Cor. 1:30, Romans 5:19). If Christ would have only needed sinlessness and not a life of perfect obedience, then he could have died for us when he was a young child rather than when he was thirty-three years old. Christ lived that full life of obedience, fulfilling that covenant of works, and acquired for us that “life of eternal righteousness”.

Footnote #3

The question is often asked, “If Jesus were fully God, was He able to sin?” Nowhere in Scripture do we have a direct answer to that question. We know four things. Jesus did not sin (I John 3:5). Jesus was tempted in all ways like us (Hebrews 4:15). God cannot sin (I Peter 1:16). God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). In other words, “Jesus was tempted, Jesus was fully man, Jesus was fully God, and God cannot be tempted.” These truths, while not contradictory, present a seeming dilemma in our understanding...a mystery that is beyond our ability to fully understand...similar to other doctrines such as the Trinity etc. The question still remains then...was Jesus “able not to sin”, or “not able to sin” (impeccable). For reasons too demanding to explain in this footnote, I believe it is imperative that we always come down on the side of impeccability when forced to choose. The dangers are far less and the complications less demanding to untangle. Perhaps my best way of resolving this “mystery” is to state that Christ was “not able to sin” (impeccable), but He chose in eternity past to not know that truth in His humanity. Thus His temptations were full, complete, and real. “He chose to veil His deity, so that His humanity could find full expression”, is the theologically correct way to state it. Jesus did not give up His deity, or give up parts of His deity, or even give up parts of His deity temporarily (for how could God stop being God, even temporarily); instead He chose to veil His deity so that His humanity could be fully expressed and experienced.

Now it is critical to understand that the humanity of Jesus was “fully human”...like Adam before the Fall...the second Adam. Our humanity is a depraved humanity, not a full humanity. We are sinful. Jesus was sinless. Therefore the temptations that Jesus faced were full and complete. Many theologians have pointed out that only he who fully resists a temptation to the end, fully feels the full force of that temptation. A weightlifter who lifts the full weight over his head, knows the full force of that weight, better than the contestant who tries but doesn’t lift it fully. So it was for Jesus. Every temptation He faced, He faced to the complete end...experiencing the full force of that temptation...much more than those of us who give in to the temptation. You could argue

that the reality and weight of the temptation was in some ways, even more real for Jesus, because He never gave in.

Footnote #4

Perhaps the greatest of all the sufferings of Christ was the pain of bearing the full wrath of God upon Himself for mans sins. (Perhaps this is why we never see Jesus “exulting in His tribulations” as He knew the horror of this. We are to “exult” and “rejoice” and “consider it pure joy”, not because of what we will add to Christ’s afflictions, but because of what Christ has done for us. Our “rejoicing” is rooted in what Christ has done for us and paid for us...making our afflictions worth eternal meaning.)

Grudem tells us that “Romans 3:25 has put forward Christ as a “propitiation” (NASB) a word that means “a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath to the end and in so doing changes God’s wrath toward us into favor.” Paul tells us “This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had *passed over* former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26). God had not simply *forgiven* sin and *forgotten* about the punishment in generations past. He had *forgiven* sins and *stored up his righteous anger against those sins*. But at the cross the fury of all that stored up wrath against sin was unleashed against God’s own Son.” (Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 575)

Grudem also writes, “Yet to bear the guilt of million for even a moment would cause the greatest of anguish for the soul. To face the deep and furious wrath of an infinite God even for an instant would cause the most profound fear. But Jesus’ suffering was not over in a minute—or two—or ten. When would it end? Could there be yet more weight of sin? Yet more wrath of God? Hour after hour it went on—the dark weight of sin and the deep wrath of God poured over Jesus in wave after wave. Jesus at last cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Why must this suffering go on so long? Oh God, my God, will you ever bring it to an end?”

Then at last Jesus knew his suffering was nearing completion. He knew he had consciously borne all the wrath of the Father against our sins, for God’s anger had abated and the awful heaviness of sin was being removed. He knew that all that remained was to yield up his spirit to his heavenly Father and die. With a shout of victory Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Then with a loud voice he once more cried out, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” (Luke 23:46). And then he voluntarily gave up the life that no one could take from him (John 10:17-18), and he died. As Isaiah had predicted, “he poured out his soul to death” and “bore the sin of many” (Isaiah 53:12). God the Father saw “the fruit of the travail of his soul” and was “satisfied” (Isaiah 53:11).” (Grudem, p. 576-577)

Footnote #5

Particularly in regard to family life, it is helpful to remember that Joseph is nowhere mentioned in the Gospels after the incident in the temple when Jesus was twelve years old. It is especially interesting that Joseph is omitted from the verses that list Jesus’ mother and other family members, even naming his brothers and sisters (see matt. 13:55-56: Mark 6:3: cf. Matt.12:48). It would seem very strange, for example, that “the mother of Jesus” was at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1) but not his father, if this father were still living (cf. 2:12). This suggests that sometime after Jesus was twelve Joseph

had died, and that for a period in his life Jesus grew up in a “single-parent home.” This would mean that, as he became older, he assumed more and more of the responsibility of male leadership in that family, earning a living as a “carpenter” (Mark 6:3) and no doubt helping care for his younger brothers and sisters as well. Therefore, although Jesus was never married, he no doubt experienced a wide range of family situations and conflicts similar to those experienced by families today. (Quoted from Grudem, p. 537)

Footnote #6

Most theologians would argue that God had a covenant of works with Adam, even though the term covenant is not used in the Genesis narrative (some refer to this as the Adamic covenant). This covenant was a legally binding set of provisions that defined the relationship between God and man (Adam). The requirements of that relationship are defined in Genesis 1:28-30 and 2:15. The boundaries were established in Genesis 2:16-17. The blessing of eternal life, Genesis 2:15, was contingent upon Adam and Eve meeting the conditions of obeying God completely until the time of testing was finished. Paul seems to reference this life of perfect obedience, if it were possible, as that which would lead to eternal life. (Romans 7:10, 10:5, Galatians 3:12) Because of man’s sinful nature, it is obviously impossible to meet this covenant of complete obedience. However, Christ met all of those requirements of obedience, completed the full testing, and as the Second Adam...purchased for us the benefits of that eternal righteousness...based upon what He accomplished. We now as NT believers, are under a Covenant of Grace, freed from the covenant of works by virtue of the finished work of Christ.

Gerald Hawthorne brings out an interesting insight into the humanity of Jesus by explaining how Christ accomplished that perfect obedience on our behalf. (His book is titled: *The Presence and the Power—the Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus*, p. 35). In Romans 3:22, 26, Galatians 2:16, 3:22, Philippians 3:9 the Greek appears as “*pistis Iesou*” and “*pistis Iesou Christou*”. Most frequently translated “faith in Jesus”, the literal meaning is that of “the faith *of* Jesus” or the “the faithfulness of Jesus”. Look now at the meaning and insight this translation provides, especially as we refer to Jesus living in full obedience to the covenant of works. Romans 3:22 “This righteousness from God comes through the ‘faith of Jesus’ (in contrast to faith in Jesus) to all who believe.” Emphasis is here placed upon the humanity of Jesus that lived a life of faith (complete dependence upon His Father)...fulfilling the complete covenant of works as that second Adam...and became the “righteousness” on our behalf. Look at Romans 3:26 in this light...”the one who justifies those who have the faith of Jesus” (versus faith in Jesus). Again an emphasis upon Christ’s perfect humanity and how He lived His life. Look also at Galatians 3:22 in this light. “But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised (Covenant of works?), being given through the ‘faith of Jesus’ (verses ‘faith in Jesus’), might be given to those who believe.” WOW...what a thought about the significance of Christ’s life in balance to the significance of His death. We need to have the ‘faith *of* Jesus’, as well as ‘faith *in* Jesus’. Remember, by His death we are reconciled, but it is His life that saves us! For those of us committed to studying and living and teaching the Son’s life...this is critical as we fully understand not only what Jesus did...but *how* Jesus did what He did...especially as we seek to “walk as He walked”.

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