

The value of suffering for Jesus

Why is it that Christians often ask, "is it safe to go to a particular location"? When did Christ ever promise safety? And why do we value safety so much? Would we feel differently if we knew that the way to greater joy and greater reward was through suffering?

Matthew 5:11 says, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven..."

Suffering leads to deeper joy in our relationships with Christ. Suffering also displays Christ more radiantly than anything else. Christ becomes even more real to others when they see His people hope in Christ over anything else.

"What proves that the Giver is precious is the glad-hearted readiness to leave all His gifts behind just to be with Him" - (John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad)

The word "passion" is derived from the Latin "*pati*", meaning "to suffer". An accurate way of defining "passion" is: "the amount of suffering you will endure to achieve a goal". We understand the sacrifice or suffering needed to succeed in sports, music, work, or any other discipline. However, the word "passion" originally concerned the passion-suffering of Christ and describes our own personal denial, sacrifice and suffering as we pursue our joy in Christ alone. (Voice of the Martyrs)

For the last 2,000 years, the battle for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ has been a costly one. It is estimated that since the first century over 50 million Christians have been martyred and now every year over 300,000 are added to the ranks of those who did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Nearly 1,000 believers a day lay down their lives in the battle to carry the Gospel of Christ to all men. Even now as you read this (or "hear" if you're reading out loud - we love you reader for hanging in there so long!), hundreds are dying, and tens of thousands are locked away in prisons and jails. (Written by Bro. Paul Washer, Heart Cry Missionary Society)

We want to caution ourselves against our own usual tendency when we hear statistics like these. We distance ourselves and we pity the persecuted and we thank God that we are not in the same predicament. Instead, we want to challenge each other to pray to be like our brothers and sisters! The Great Commission will not be completed without this kind of suffering. Paul said in Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death".

The majority of us Western Christians are intoxicated by our comfort and ease. Yet suffering brings incredible clarity to our dulled spiritual senses and increases our capacity for seeing Christ more clearly and enjoying Him more fully. Isn't that worth pursuing?