

"How Jesus Endured"

The cross calls us to think seriously about Jesus Christ. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders! And this is a Bible study, In Search of the Lord's Way. Today we look to Jesus for strength. Jesus found the strength to endure the cross. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to study the Scriptures. And we thank God that you're studying God's Word with us. The Bible opens up for us the heart of the Lord Jesus so that we can see His love and His desire to save us. We're here today because churches of Christ and individuals across the country support this program. We want to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

Life is filled with struggles: job stress, financial burdens, family struggles, illness, and age. We face the struggles of temptation, self-control, sin, and guilt. Jesus faced tremendous struggles at Gethsemane and the cross. How did He keep calm on the cross, when people were mocking and abusing Him? How did he keep from calling twelve legions of angels?

The word "struggle" means something is hard or demanding. Some struggles tempt us to lose heart and to quit. When life gets hard, we all wish we had more ability to fight, to discipline ourselves to do the right thing. We don't want to give up on our faith but to have a greater devotion to the Lord. We love the Lord.

Have you considered how Jesus bore the last hours before his death. When Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, he knew what sufferings he faced. He knew Judas would betray Him and Peter would deny Him. He knew that He faced false accusations, and blasphemies, and scourging. He heard the crowd call for Barrabas to be released and for him to be crucified! Jesus saw Pilate wash his hands of the situation and turn him over to the Jews. He felt the weight of the cross upon his bloodied back and the crown of thorns upon his head. There never was a day when one so good was treated so cruelly and hatefully. Mankind did their very worst to Jesus. How did He persevere?

Well, we offer copies of this program free. And it's called, How Jesus Endured. If you'd like a printed copy of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number: it's 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website www.searchtv.org and on YouTube.

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church in song, and then we'll read from 1 Peter 2:21 to 24 and examine how Jesus endured the cross.

Our reading today comes from 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 21 to 24. And there Jesus is calling us to follow His example.

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example (to) for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so thankful that Jesus was willing to suffer. To suffer greatly for our sins. And Father help us to die to sin and to live to righteousness. Help us to be the people You want us to be. And Father help us to endure whatever problems come our way. In Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus chose to face the struggle. Oh, He could have stopped it. Remember when the soldiers and Judas came for Jesus in the garden. Matthew 26:51 to 54 say, "And behold, one of those who were

with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?"

Well what were the inner sources of Jesus' strength? Where did he get the nerve? Where did He find His courage, His fortitude, and His power to endure? Now if we can understand his sources of strength and if those sources are available to us, you know what, we can endure our struggles as well. I realize that Jesus had miraculous powers as the Son of God, but Jesus didn't use miraculous powers to overcome the agony of the cross. He used inner strength. Well can we find that strength?

Now Jesus drew upon some wonderful, non-miraculous resources of strength in the midst of his struggle. By His grace, He makes these resources available to us. And we can enjoy His strength in our lives. Ephesians 6 and verse 10 says, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." We need the strength of Christ.

First, Jesus lived with the assurance that He was not alone. In John 16:32 Jesus said, "Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Jesus maintained a close relationship with His Father in heaven. Jesus frequently took time to pray to the Father. His prayers were built on love and oneness of purpose. Jesus loved the Father and was devoted to His will.

This is why Peter urges us in 1 Peter 2:21 to 24, "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, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but (He) kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

You see Jesus kept entrusting Himself, putting Himself into His Father's hands. Jesus prayed four times in his struggle. First, in the garden, Jesus prayed in Luke 22:42, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done." As they nailed his hands and feet, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). In anguish Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46, but is quoting Psalm 22 verse 1). And as He breathed His last and died, He said, "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Jesus stayed close to the Father. We can do that too, when have rough days we can be close. Hand your troubles over to God—even Jesus did this!

At the hardest times, we too can entrust ourselves to the hands of God. 1 Peter 4:19 says, "Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." Sometimes all we can do is put ourselves into His hands. I love this poem: Into Your hands, Father, into Your hands, I commit my spirit into Your hands. All I am and have I yield to You. Your love and grace will bear me through, For You know what's best and what I should do, So I leave my soul within Your hands.

A second source of strength for Jesus was His passion for His mission. Jesus came into this world to save people from their sins. And He never forgot that. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." He cared about every person deeply. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. (and then he says) And yet for this

reason (Paul says) I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”

Jesus focused more on saving us than saving himself. In Matthew 20:27 to 28 Jesus said that, "whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Jesus on the cross was concerned about people. As they were nailing His hands and feet, He was praying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Such love, I confess to you, is beyond my comprehension.

Could Jesus, while on the cross, see the multitudes of people who would follow Him in the future? I mean His people of all time, in all places—every person who would believe in Him, love Him, and obey the gospel. I wonder if Jesus could see all the people in every country and century in the churches worshipping the Father. Perhaps He was thinking also of you, my friend, wondering if you would serve Him. Jesus died to transfer people out of the domain of darkness and bring them into His kingdom, where there is forgiveness of sin. He wanted His people to be with Him in heaven.

Hebrews 12:1 to 2 reminds us to be faithful, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy, the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The cross was not joyful, but knowing His loved ones would one day enjoy heaven forever kept him motivated to endure the cross.

The third source of Jesus' strength was His undying and unfailing love for His Father and for people. John tells us of Jesus' meeting with his disciples on the night before He went to the cross. John 13:1 says, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." Jesus was willing to take the worst men could give to Him because of this overwhelming love within Him. It's truly hard to envision such love.

It's almost as if Jesus said, "Do your worst to me, I will still love you. Scatter, deny me, betray me, curse me, and I will still love you!" Jesus loved the people who crucified Him and hurled abuse at him. Remember, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus loved people in spite of the fact that He hated the sin that separated them from His Father.

I can hardly understand or explain such love. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost to the people who crucified Jesus, they were pierced to the heart and cried out "What shall we do?" And the Lord opened His heart and offered them the forgiveness of their sins if they would repent and be baptized in His name. He didn't hold back his love from anyone who was willing to come to Him in faith, and obedience and love.

While He was on the cross, the love of Jesus never failed; real love never fails (1 Corinthians 13 verse 8). Love means doing what is best for others at all costs—and that's what Jesus did. Paul said in Ephesians 2:4 to 5, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price for your forgiveness, for your hope, and for you to have a home in heaven.

It's that love that creates in our hearts such a marvelous gratitude and thanksgiving. The word for grace in Greek is *charis*. The word for thanks in Greek is *charis*, the same word. This word basically means favor. When God gives us His favor, this is grace. He forgives us out of His love and mercy. And grace is His unmerited gift to us. When we give our favor to God, it's found in the form of thanksgiving

and appreciation. God doesn't need our mercy or forgiveness; we need His. Our task is to be thankful enough to give ourselves to Him.

Now think with me of what Jesus did for us. Matthew 16:21 to 23 says, "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must [yes, He must] go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and (He) said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" Jesus never set His mind on anything but on God's will and saving you and me. He focused on delivering us; His suffering and death must take place.

And our response to Him should be one of deep love and commitment. We should say with the apostle Paul in Galatians 2 and verse 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." Do you live and breathe Jesus Christ? Is He the first and most important thing in your life? Is He what you think about first thing in the morning and the last thing in the evening? Do you live by faith in the Son of God? And would you die for Him?

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14 to 15, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." That love He showed for you and me ought to make a difference in our lives and whether or not we are willing to sacrifice ourselves for Him. It ought to make a difference in our moral lives, whether we go to church, how we treat others, and whether we tell others of Jesus Christ.

Our spiritual strength comes from loving the Lord with all our hearts. And we're able to bear the burdens of life because our Father is with us, because we're focused on the will of God in our lives, and because our love for God and others moves us to live for a cause that's bigger than ourselves.

Yes we can have those resources. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so thankful that You gave Your son Jesus. And that He was willing to sacrifice it all for our sakes. Father help us to be lovers of You and of our Lord Jesus. Help us to give ourselves completely and fully. In Jesus name, Amen.

Everybody faces struggles, but your struggles don't have to overcome you. Struggles actually are blessings to us as Christians. James 1:2 to 4 says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness (or patience). And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." God actually builds our strength through the struggles that we face.

Many people, unfortunately, play and pretend at Christianity. They don't change their lives, they don't fight temptation, and they don't serve the Lord. Many claim to be Christians but rarely worship with the church, rarely pray, rarely open their Bibles, and rarely say no to temptation and sin. They want help with their problems but are not willing to draw close to Christ to get it.

God wants us to draw close. And you have to draw close to Him to find that strength. James 4 and verse 8 says, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." If you let Him, God can transform your life; but you have to let Him. You have to take time to draw close to Him.

We can trust the Lord, who loves us. We can believe every word He says and we can commit ourselves to follow the Lord. We can forsake our sins completely and turn our hearts to the Lord. We can confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. And we can be united with Christ by being baptized into Christ and rising to walk in newness of life according to Romans 6 verses 4 and 5. Now in baptism we're crucified with Christ, set free from our sins and born again as God's children. We can serve the

Lord by serving others, showing our love for God. Now closeness to God, is a sense of mission, it's an undying love. All of these things can make a difference in our lives.

We hope that you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy of this message, "How Jesus Endured," mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. As we do many others. Many people come to us and we help them one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.