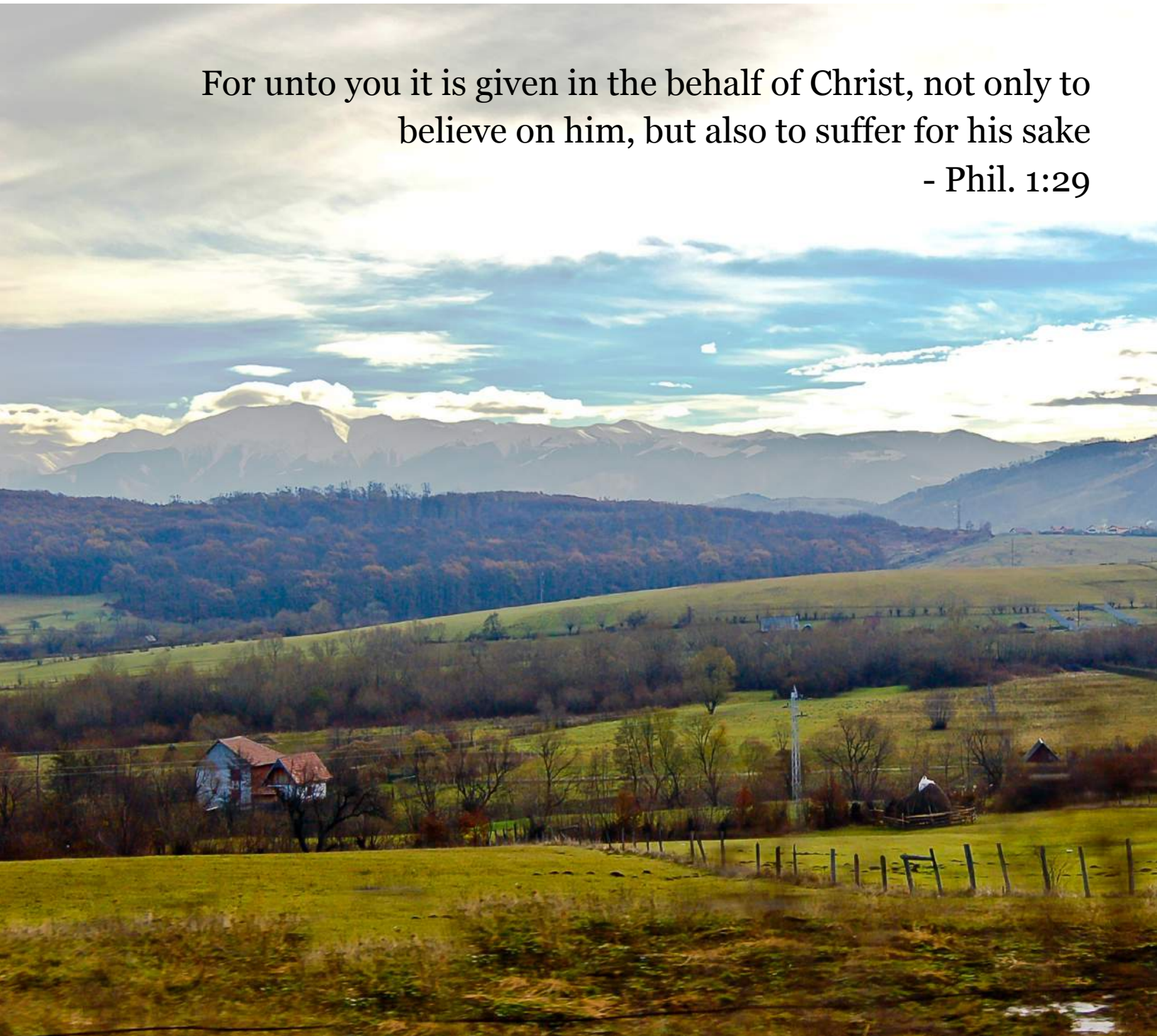


## SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

A gift and privilege often overlooked.

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to  
believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake  
- Phil. 1:29





## SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

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Dear Friends,

I live, eat and breathe that I may glorify Jesus Christ and help others come to know *Him*. Day-by-day Jesus gives me strength and joy, even in the hard seasons of life. Waking up as the sun shines through my skylight, I look forward to how I can do my part in helping others become rooted and grounded *in God's love, in God's truth and in God's ways*. I don't care if people get upset about my firm beliefs in the Word of God, for I stand upon the Rock of the Living Word of Jesus Christ - the resurrected King of the Jews! He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and I glory in that fact - He said He would rise from the dead and He did! He has saved me from the penalty for my sins - His just wrath that I *deserve* to suffer forever in everlasting hellfire. Christ has had mercy on me! I am a Christian not because of what *I do for God*, but because of what *Christ did for me, for you - for all of us!* Yes, there has been opposition against my faith since I *surrendered* to Christ in 1989, when I was "*made alive in Christ*." But so what, this is part of the *normal Christian life*. The Bible teaches, "[I]t is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil 1:29, KJV). As you read the following, know that my words are not a pity party. Rather, I am writing to express my triumphing in life *through Jesus Christ*.

For the cause of Christ I've endured being spit on, screamed at, blasphemously assaulted, physically attacked and savagely bitten. Regarding being bitten, I waited for medical test results for six months to find out if I had been infected with HIV and Hepatitis. Thankfully I wasn't. Since 2003 a scar from that once gaping, oozing, contusion on my left forearm has served as a constant reminder that I will be hated and mocked as a Christian. It's also a reminder that there is a demonic realm that wants to destroy humanity! The man that bit me was a demon-possessed, cross-dressing, homosexual drug-addict. A month after I was attacked I shared the love of Christ and the Gospel with him and explained how he

### Victory Through Persecution

Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. (Ps. 50:14-15)

Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. (Lk 6:21)

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: (2 Tim. 2:12)

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; (2 Cor. 4:17)

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18)

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. (Rom. 14:8)

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; (Heb. 10:32)

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come...But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:1,10-13)

could be free from Satan's power and the demons within him. He resisted, tears streaming down his cheeks, locked in indecision. I've prayed for Mark's salvation off and on for ten years. May God free him from the demons.

Looking back over the years, I've lost several jobs for simply speaking the truth - because I would not lie when pressured to do so by two corrupt employers. I've been forsaken by comrades, lied to by church leaders, once *left in the lurch* in the mission field, and wrongly stripped of missions support. By God's grace I have learned how to endure financial hardship, overseas as well as in the USA. It's no big deal though, because as a Christian I serve a far greater and far more glorious cause than anything that could ever set me back. Like a fighter that gets knocked down and stands back up again, I am learning to be resilient, regardless of what happens. Nothing really surprises me anymore. I just keep getting back up on my feet. In numerous ways my family and I have experienced hostile forces of evil that have stood against us and our work in exposing evil. Buffeting, bruising, hardship, yes; but giving up, no, by God's grace a thousand times no! The Eternal God of Hope and Truth has enabled me to press on, and He alone deserves the credit and the glory for allowing me to triumph in life through Christ Tears, pain and weakness have all had their seasons in my life, but through them I have learned to *rely on the Lord* - not the arm of the flesh. The arm of the flesh does not work in the line of work I am involved in, nor will it ever.

Emotional grief, physical suffering, financial struggle, being betrayed and misunderstood, experiencing all of these things and more have helped me see understand more clearly what Paul the Apostle and Christians through the centuries have endured for the cause of Christ. My sufferings as a Christian are *nothing* compared to countless millions of others who have suffered for Christ's cause in this world. God somehow works it all out for His glory. "And we know that all things

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work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his" (Rom. 8:28) Regardless of difficulties that we all face, all of us should seek to *proclaim* the Gospel, *edify* the Church, and *contend* earnestly for the Faith! This is the Christians clarion call!

Being harassed, punched and having my shoulder kicked half way out of its socket by evil spirits - because the familiar spirits from the Psychic medium next door didn't like us evangelizing - was indeed an eye-opener for my wife and I. Standing up against evil doctrines, satanic belief systems and false teachers destroying the Church of God does come at a price, and I am not talking about money. We are in a war! Unfortunately, many Christians nowadays, because of ease and laxness and listening to watered down teachings, don't even realize that Satan's minions are ferociously engaged against *all* Christians, and all humanity. (Ephesians 6:10-20) Demons hate the advance of the Gospel and Christians who assume that the forces of darkness *are not* going to give up their territory without a fight are clueless.

Through the many trials, little by little, I am becoming more like my Lord. So too, I am learning more about what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). In my zeal for God's truth, and in consideration of the hostile aggression that has been meted out against myself and many of my colleagues - for standing against deception in the Church and in the world - I realize that the source of all of my endurance comes from the wonderful power of God the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord of Life who is enabling me to believe and say, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

Perhaps you are struggling in your faith. If so, do not forget that this glorious fight for the truth of the Gospel and the purity of God's Church is worth every ounce of misfortune, trial and struggle that we and every other Christian through the ages has faced for standing true to God and His Word. We must not forget that our suffering as believers in Jesus Christ is not only a gift

from God - *it is a privilege!* Yes, a gift and a privilege! Getting it right on this one is imperative! If we as Christians are not willing to learn the basic lessons of endurance for the cause of Christ, we will *never* be able to stand firm in the face of brutal persecution. Here is what the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, has revealed about *the gift* of suffering for Christ. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Phil. 1:1,27-30).

It is time for "comfortable" Christians to seriously understand that the contemporary *Prosperity, Health and Wealth Gospel* is a destructive Word Faith teaching that turns biblical Christianity *upside down*. Suffering for the righteous cause of Christ *is* part of biblical Christian living. As time rolls on things in our world will continue to get *worse* for Christians. Remember, this world is not our home, heaven is. God says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12). Altogether, it is no big deal if people hurl insults, rocks or even bullets and bombs at us for standing up for the truth of Jesus Christ. False religions, cults, the forces of darkness and a Christ rejecting world will continue doing what they do. Our job as Christians is to love as Christ loved, proclaim His Gospel and give glory to God.

In the final estimation of things, we are to *love our enemies and pray for them*, that they too may be saved from the day of wrath that Jesus said would come (Rev. 4-18).

*Praying that you stand firm in Christ,*  
- Chris Lawson

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