



Following His Suffering

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21 ESV).

It is a pretty self-evident statement that most of us want to live a normal life, with all the promise that “normal” entails. “Normal” means leading “fulfilling” lives with purpose that offer security, peace, a nice family, a nice home, and a good job.

Some of us want an “extraordinary” life. We want to be important, looked up to, and held in esteem. They want to be a part of something important and of great purpose.

One thing is for certain, however—no one is rooting for a “less-than-ordinary” life. Who wants to be *“despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face”* (Isaiah 53:3a)? Who looks forward to a fellowship in sufferings?

This was Jesus’ life on earth—a life that you and I *“should follow in His steps”* (1 Peter 2:21b). This suffering was not for suffering’s sake, however. It had a purpose: *“As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors”* (Isaiah 53:11-12a). Suffering in our lives has a purpose too.

Suffering in the body in a Believer’s life takes many forms. God often uses suffering in our lives to chisel and conform us *“to the image of His Son”* (Romans 8:29a), for our flesh cannot abide suffering because it seeks only

opportunities for relief, satisfaction, and pleasure. But if we feed it what it wants, we train ourselves to fall easily into temptations to sin because *“the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so”* (Romans 8:6-7) for the *“flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please”* (Galatians 5:17).

Suffering interrupts a “normal” life, whether momentarily (flu), chronically (headaches), or permanently (serious injury). Walking through suffering can force us to face our flesh’s hostility, resentment, and bitterness against God’s will, which is to “mortify” our flesh and make us like His Son, for *“since Christ has suffered death in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered death in the flesh has ceased from sin”* (1 Peter 4:1). But suffering in life as a Believer does not mean we are miserable, *“for just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ”* (2 Corinthians 1:5), for it is our desire to *“be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead”* (Philippians 3:9-11). *“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God”* (2 Timothy 1:8). Amen.