

### Hard Times

Which of the following is a line from an old hymn?

- "You don't know how I suffer."*
- "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen."*
- "If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all."* If you chose b), you got it right:

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen  
Nobody knows but Jesus  
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen  
Glory Hallelujah*

Jesus offers us an abundant life (John 10:10), but not an easy one (Matthew 8:18-20). This week we will see what it means to follow Jesus in his sufferings and (if necessary) bear injustice for the sake of his name, trusting in him all the while. Glory Hallelujah, indeed!

#### Monday – Consciousness of God

*"Spontaneously to God should turn the soul, like the magnetic needle to the pole."* Thomas Hood, 19<sup>th</sup> c. British humorist and poet

- Please read 1 Peter 2:17-25. How can consciousness of God (v. 19) strengthen us to properly submit to authority (v. 17-18)?
- Take a look at Matthew 8:5-13 and describe the Centurion's submission to authority. How do you think his consciousness of God (v. 10) affected the way he exercised his own authority over others?
- See Philippians 3:7-11. How will sharing in Christ's sufferings help us grow in our consciousness of God?

**Making it Personal:** Do you seek God's guidance in how you respond to those in authority over you – employers, parents, teachers? Pray that you will properly honor God in all those relationships.

#### Tuesday – In His Steps

*"Against the persecution of a tyrant the godly have no remedy but prayer."* John Calvin, 16<sup>th</sup>

- Please read 1 Peter 2:20-21. Have you ever suffered adverse consequences for doing right? What happened? Did God honor your decision in some way? How?
- Peter suffered his own hardships, despite doing nothing wrong. How do you think he felt when arrested in Acts 12:1-19?

**Text Insight:** Herod arrested Peter during the most crowded time of year in Jerusalem, hoping to please even more of his subjects through a big showy trial. He must have been sorely disappointed when God freed Peter.

- What is your evaluation of the justice Herod's showed when he punished the guards under his authority?

**Making it Personal:** Do you have authority over anyone in any way? What is your responsibility to them?

#### Wednesday – Suffering Unjustly, part 1

*"The Christian is cheerful, not because he is blind to injustice and suffering, but because he is convinced that these, in the light of the divine sovereignty, are never ultimate."* Elton Trueblood, 20<sup>th</sup> c. American theologian

- Please read 1 Peter 2:22-24. Why did Jesus allow himself to be treated unjustly?

**Text Insight:** Crucifixion was a cruel and dramatic way to kill someone. It was used on the most contemptible criminals in order to make them suffer and serve as an example for others to see.

- Peter quoted from Isaiah 53:9 regarding Jesus' submission to this injustice. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and list the sufferings that were prophesied concerning the suffering of the Messiah.
- What does Isaiah say will come from the Servant's suffering for those who belong to him?

**Making it Personal:** Ask God to show you how to honor him in thanksgiving for Jesus' sacrifice. Pray for wisdom to exercise your responsibility in a God honoring way.

#### Thursday – Suffering Unjustly, part 2

*"They gave our Master a crown of thorns. Why do we hope for a crown of roses?"* Martin Luther

- Please read 1 Peter 2:22-24. In whom did Jesus put his trust during his sufferings?
- How did Jesus – God the Son – show his trust in God the Father in Luke 22:39-46? How do you show your trust in God?

**Text Insight:** The Old Testament repeatedly uses the image of a cup as the symbol of God's judgment.

- How do John 18:11-14, 19-24, 28-32 and 19:1-3, 16-24 match up to Isaiah 52:13-53:12?

**Prayer Focus:** Pray for those who are suffering for their faith (visit [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) for information).

#### Friday – The Good Shepherd

*"Follow Him as well for the bitter cup of His passion as for the loaves."* Jeremy Taylor, 17<sup>th</sup> c. English pastor

- Please read 1 Peter 2:25. What was Peter saying about his readers and their relationship with Jesus?
- In John 10:1-10, how does Jesus compare the true shepherd with others the sheep interact with? Have you seen this in your own life when it comes to following Jesus or choosing to follow others? When?
- What does Jesus say he will do for his sheep in John 10:11-18? How does verse 18 assure the effectiveness of Jesus' actions for those who belong to him?

**Text Insight:** The "other sheep" in v. 16 refers to believers who would come from outside the nation of Israel.

**For the Weekend:** Re-read 1 Peter 2:18-25. What is most difficult for you to accept? Why? Pray that God will guide you in understanding his will for you and how you can honor him in following that will. For more on the life-giving role of suffering in the life of a believer, you are invited to listen to Pastor Francis Chan at [http://www.cornerstonesimi.com/special/media\\_player.html](http://www.cornerstonesimi.com/special/media_player.html) (after typing in the link, click on the message, Living a Life that Matters, 2/15/09).