

Resurrection Sunday
March 31, 2024
For the Joy Set Before Him

The past two Sundays we have focused on the meaning of the cross. If you had actually been there to see the crucifixion you probably would have screamed or vomited, or fallen to the ground and pounded the earth, or you would have turned your eyes away and cried until your gut hurt.

Seeing a body beaten almost beyond recognition, with spikes pounded through his arms and feet, hanging on a cross tearing up his back as he tried to clift himself up to breathe, and then a spear thrust into his side—seeing this would be unbearable to watch let alone endure!

Jesus Christ was not a victim of Rome's cruelty. No one forced him to be crucified. In Matthew 26 Jesus said that he could have had 72 thousand angels to rescue him. In John 10:18 our Lord said, "No one take [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself." Herod and Pontius Pilate were not in charge at the cross. God was in charge and Jesus obeyed God willingly.

So, here is the all important question. How did Jesus Christ endure the cross? Why did he endure the cross? Tremendous suffering for the least deserving, how and why did Christ endure this? Let's read the answer this Resurrection Sunday from Hebrews 12:1, 2.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the [a]author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ endured the cross for the joy that was set before him—for joy! Jesus Christ endured the cross for joy! The humiliation of being stripped and whipped and spit on, the pain of being beaten with rods and having the flesh on his back ripped away, the electric volts of pain as nails ripped through his hands and feet—Jesus endured all of it for the joy, for the joy that was set before him!

And what was that joy? According to Mark 8:31 Jesus would suffer and die but after three days he would be raised up from the dead. According to Acts 13:34 and Hebrews 7:16 Jesus would be an everlasting priest with the power of an indestructible life. He will never die again. According to Matthew 28:18 and Ephesians 1:19 all authority in heaven and earth would be given to Jesus Christ.

According to Romans 1:4 Jesus would be declared the Son of God with all power by the resurrection from the dead. According to Hebrews 1:2 Christ will inherit all of creation. According to Hebrews 2:10 Jesus by his resurrection will bring many people to life and glory. According to Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 Jesus will be seated at the right hand of God with power and authority over every form of power in the universe. According to Revelation 17:14 Jesus Christ will be King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus was promised everlasting life and pleasures forever more in God's presence. Let's read this prophecy.

I have set the LORD always before me;
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will ^{rest} in hope.
10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to ^{see} corruption.
11 You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.
(Psalm 16:8-11)

God promised not to leave Christ's soul, his life, in the grave. He promised that Jesus would not decay into dust. Jesus would be resurrected and shown the path of life. Fullness of joy and pleasures forever would be his! When Hebrews 12 reveals that Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before him, all of what we have just learned was that joy! The resurrection to life and the full glory and pleasures forever more gave Christ the strength to endure the cross.

If Jesus Christ were here, and he is, here is what he would say to you. From John 15:11 Christ would say that he wants his joy to be in us and for our joy to be full. God desires for the joy that was set before Christ and enabled him to

endure the cross be in us. For as Nehemiah 8:10 declares “the joy of the LORD is your strength.” The hope of resurrection and glory that gave Christ power to endure suffering gives us joy and strength even in the midst of life's greatest struggles.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:16-18)

Knowing and believing in Jesus Christ is not a get out of trouble card. But the troubles of this present time are not worthy of being compared to the glory awaiting us. If we focus on our present troubles we will be depressed, discouraged and in despair. But if we focus on our future glorification, we will have joy and strength. I am not saying that we should live in a fantasy land. But it is not fantasy to look forward to our great hope of glory.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

The Greek word translated “light” means a weightless trifle. And the Greek word for “weight” means an extremely heavy mass. Let's assume 80 years of

suffering and troubles compared to an eternity of life and glory—one second compared to one million years. Let's read from Acts 16 about two missionaries, Paul and Silas. A demon possessed girl who made money for her master's from fortune telling was mocking the apostle. When he finally had enough, he cast the demon out of her and it came out. But the money-making masters were angry. And they dragged Paul and Silas to the town magistrates who beat them severally and put them in prison. But look what happened.

And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; ²¹ and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." ²² Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods. ²³ And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴ Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill

himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their stripes*. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized.

³⁴ Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.
(Acts 16:22-34)

During a terrible situation Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God. Their hearts were filled with joy in God and Christ. And the prisoners heard them. And there was an earthquake and the prisoners escaped. And the jailer was about to commit suicide. Instead the jailer and his family were saved by faith in Jesus Christ!

How did Paul and Silas sing to God and love the jailer after being beaten and thrown into the dungeon? Four times in the book of Acts Paul says that all he did he did for the hope of the resurrection.¹ The resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of all believers when Christ returns was the joy and sustaining power in Paul for all he endured.

In other words, for the joy that was set before him he endured. His light affliction was not worthy to be compared to the glory that is coming. John 3:16 declares,

For God so loved the world
that He gave His only begotten

¹ Acts 23:6; 24:21; 26:8; 28:20

Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

What great joy there is in that truth! John 3:36a says "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life;" In John 10:27-30 we read,

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. ³⁰ I and My Father are one."

There is joy in this. Christ gives us everlasting life and we shall never perish. And no one, no one shall ever be able to rob us of this destiny!

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has [eternal](#) life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, [and](#) that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.
(1 John 5:11-13)

According to Colossians 3:4 when Christ appears than we also will appear with him in glory. According to Romans 8:17 we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. According to Ephesians 2:7 in the ages to come, for all eternity God will show us one act of kindness after another. According to Revelation 5:10 in the coming kingdom of God we shall rule as priests and kings. Let's review our first Scripture from this morning.

Therefore we also, since we

are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus and let his joy be in you this Resurrection Sunday and always!