

Straitened by Suffering

Luke 12:49-50

The Apostle Paul writes “we exult in sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, character, hope, and ultimately a deeper knowledge of God’s love” (Romans 5:3-5). How many of us really understand the principle that suffering is not only something we cannot avoid, but it is something we shouldn’t even dread? In our text we read what suffering (or the thought of it) did for our Lord Jesus. There are two important words in this text. The translators all translate the first important word the same (baptism), but the translators are all varied on how to translate the second word (distressed).

NAS – “But I have a **baptism** to undergo, and how **distressed** I am until it is accomplished!”

NIV – “But I have a **baptism** to undergo, and what **constraint** I am under until it is completed!”

KJV – “But I have a **baptism** to be baptized with; and how am I **straitened** till it be accomplished!”

I. Jesus knew His life was, is, and was to be immersed in suffering.

Often people see the word “baptism” and think “water.” The Greek word baptizo literally means “to immerse.” It was used in ancient literature to speak of “pots and pans” being immersed in water to be cleaned – and that’s why as “Baptists” (notice the word) we believe that when one “identifies with Christ” through a public baptism, it is a total immersion (in water) that pictures and declares for me this message: “When Christ lived His life of perfect obedience, I was “in Him,” and when Christ was on the cross, I was “in Him,” and when Christ was in the tomb, I was “in Him,” and when Christ rose from the dead, I was “in Him,” and I’m declaring to you today through my immersion in water that by faith I am “in Christ” through His life, death, burial and resurrection! Since the word “baptism” only means “to be immersed.” So when you see the word in Luke 12:50, it doesn’t refer to immersion in water” (Jesus had already been baptized in water), and it doesn’t mean being immersed in the Spirit” (Jesus already had the Spirit without measure), so this “baptism” (immersion) is into suffering.

- A. **Suffering shouldn’t surprise us** – “No one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this” (I Thessalonians 3:3).
- B. **Suffering should cause us to rejoice** – “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation” (I Peter 4:12-13).

II. Suffering straitens me for a time that I might be satisfied for all time.

I’m quite confident that when you saw the title for the sermon you thought: “Suffering straightens me out, for it takes out the bad in my character and produces good in me.” That is true. But... The KJV word used for what suffering does to Christ is “straitened” not straightened. What is that? **Straitened** – means “destitute, poverty-stricken, or characterized by loss” as in “I live in straitened circumstances.” Jesus “though He was rich, yet for your sake became poor, that you might become rich” (II Corinthians 8:9). Christ endured His suffering “for the joy that was set before Him (Heb. 12:2). The Greek word in Greek – *suneko* – means “to hold together.” It conveys the idea of “having it all together.” We use this expression when we “fall apart.” We say “*Suneko!*” – “Hold it all together!”

Application: Thank God for your suffering. Don’t waste your sorrows. Hold it together because:

1. **Being straitened causes me to realize my true identity.** Without Christ, I am nothing.
2. **Being straitened causes me to look toward ultimate good.** “All things work for my good.”
3. **Being straitened causes me to not trust in corruptible things.** Which never last or endure.
4. **Being straitened causes me to experience the surpassing worth of knowing Christ** (Phil. 3:8).