

How many of us, like little children, want to shout out, "It's not fair!" Since we are required to "stay at home, stay safe," many cannot go to work, even though they had jobs before this. That does not seem fair. It does not seem fair that we cannot visit loved ones in nursing homes or in the hospital. It does not seem fair that we cannot gather together in the Lord's house for worship. These are just a few of the hardships which we are facing right now. It also does seem not fair when a member of my family gets ill suddenly, especially when he did not drink or smoke or have any of those vices that so many others have! It's not fair that any show I watch on TV celebrates things which God calls sin, trying to make those sins seem normal. There are so many things in life which simply do not seem to be fair. I am sure that you have felt this way in your life. When our life is not going as smoothly as we think it ought to be, then we have the tendency to get a little depressed and begin to question God about what He is doing to us. Yet, this evening, as we look at the Word of God before us, we shall see that we are not the only ones who have crosses to bear in this life. Our Savior also had to bear His cross. So LET US LEARN OF HIM TO BEAR THE CROSS. We shall see, by its very nature, a cross is not something which is pleasant to bear, but we shall also see that even with a cross, God has a plan.

Whenever we begin to feel that we are the only ones who have to bear a cross, that bad things only happen to us, and not to others, I think we need to pause a minute to remind ourselves of the cross which Jesus, our Savior, bore for us. John records for us, "**Carrying his own cross, he went out to the Place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified Him.**" (17) While it is true that Jesus literally had to bear His own cross, in connection with that we should think of all of the other sufferings which Jesus had to endure. Even before He was forced to carry the wooden cross on which He was to be executed, Jesus had endured many sufferings in our behalf. While in the custody of the chief priests, He was slapped, beaten, and spit on. By Pilate He was flogged and beaten. When the cross was finally laid upon His back, He was weak from the beatings, and His back was raw from the flogging. He was in such rough condition that He was not able to carry the cross Himself, and they had to force someone else to carry it for Him. Then they nailed Him to that cross until He died. He suffered terrible physical pains from all of this.

But the cross which Jesus had to bear was not just a cross of physical pain. It was also the shame that went along with being executed as the basest criminal. He held the place of honor in this execution, as being the worst of the three criminal offenders. Then Pilate put the charge for which He was being executed above His head. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Again this was meant as a humiliating slap in the face. On top of all of this, the crowds which passed by hurled their insults and ridicule at Jesus. His enemies stood around Him, taunting and ridiculing Him throughout His agonizing death.

This was all a part of the cross which Jesus had to bear. On top of all of this is the fact that Jesus did not deserve any of this. When we complain and ask God why bad things happen to us, we realize that we are sinners who live in a sinful world and do not deserve any of God's love and blessings. But Jesus is the spotless Lamb of God. He was enduring all of this, bearing this cross, only out of His great love and compassion for sinful mankind. The path before Him was not at all pleasant, especially when He endured the agony of hell, being separated from the Father. That was the greatest cross which Jesus needed to bear to be the Redeemer of all mankind.

As long as we remain in this life, we shall also be carrying various different crosses, some as a result of evil in this world, and some as a result of our following Jesus in faith. None of those crosses will be pleasant. They will cause us pain and heartache. They will put our faith to the test. But like our Savior, let us go to our Father in prayer, asking Him, if it is His will, to remove the cross from us. But if it is not His will, then ask Him to strengthen us so that we will be able to bear up under it.

We will bear up under it without complaining when we remember that these things will happen according to God's plan for us. In Gethsemane, Jesus had prayed, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Jesus

recognized that the painful path which He was about to travel would not be pleasant, but He would be willing to walk it if that was the way the Lord wanted Him to go. It is easier for us to see why Jesus had to bear His cross, for the Lord had revealed to us His plan for saving all mankind, and that plan included Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. It was not possible for the Lord to take this cup of suffering away from Jesus without Him drinking it, because then we would have been lost and condemned eternally to hell. That did not make it easier for Jesus to endure His cross. It was extremely painful, especially suffering the agony of hell itself to atone for the guilt of our sins. But since it was according to God's plan, Jesus was willing, without complaining, to endure it all.

Jesus recognized God's purpose in His suffering and death, and also knew that the Father would be with Him through it, to bring His good out of it. Satan had not triumphed when Jesus died. The Lord had not abandoned Jesus through it all. It was all according to the Lord's plan. His will would be done, even through the cross which Jesus had to endure.

So if the Lord was able to be with Jesus, and bring the best results possible from the sufferings which Jesus had to endure, we need to learn of Jesus to bear our cross. Like Jesus, we are to confidently trust that the Lord will be watching over us, strengthening us to endure through it, and bringing the best results for us even from those crosses which we must bear.

No cross is pleasant to endure. By their very nature they are painful and cause us great sorrow. But even through them, may our trust in the Lord shine through as we exhibit our confidence that the Lord knows what He is doing and will bring good things out of them.

Many times, we will never know exactly what the Lord has in store for us with the trials which He allows to come our way. As we look back at these crosses after a number of years, we may begin to get an understanding of what the Lord has done. To help you understand this, I will give you an example. Late one winter, I had a member, who was a farmer, who had a heart attack which landed him in the intensive care of the hospital. They did a heart catheterization on him. By God's grace, the heart attack did not seriously damage his heart, and he recovered quickly enough that he was able to plant his crops that spring. In other words, his heart attack probably saved his life because it helped to identify the blockage which could easily have taken his life. It was not until later that he was able to see God's loving hand in allowing him to have that heart attack. We need to learn of Jesus to bear whatever cross comes our way in this life, trusting that God is in control and will bless us even through it.

The Lord will accomplish His will for us. He sent His Son to suffer His cross so that our greatest problem of sin would be washed away. At times He may allow crosses to come into our life, but even through them, He promises that He will bring good out of it for His dearly loved children. That will not change the fact that these crosses are painful to bear. But it will help us to bear up under them when we realize that they will happen according to God's plan for our lives, and He will be with us through each of them. So let us learn of Jesus to bear these crosses that will come our way in this life.