God’s Gifts Come in Pairs September 30, 2018

*Philippians 1:27-30 Series: Inextinguishable Joy*

Jesus has many who love his kingdom in heaven, but few who bear his cross. – Thomas à Kempis

Intro: Bob Dylan’s encounter with Jesus.

1. Suffering and faith are gifts of God.
2. Faith is a gift of God.

v. 29 *it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should … believe in him*

Acts 11:18 *And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”*

John 6:65 *And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”*

Rom 12:3 *think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned*

C. S. Lewis: When we talk of a man doing anything for God … It is like a small child going to his father and saying, "Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present." Of course, the father does, and he is pleased with the child's present. It is all very nice and proper, but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction.

1. Suffering is a gift of God.

v. 29 *it has been granted to you that … you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake*

1 Peter 2:21 *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*

Acts 14:21-22 *When they … had made many disciples, they returned … saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain: When it was hard to be a Jew people stayed Jewish. When it was easy to be a Jew, people stopped being Jewish. Globally, this is the major Jewish problem of our time.

* Why might it be necessary for God to “grant” that we believe or “grant” that we repent? i.e. Why can’t we just do those things without God’s help?
* Is C. S. Lewis’ illustration of the child asking his father for money to buy him a present helpful in understanding your relationship with God? How?
* In Acts 14:21-22, teaching about suffering seems to be a key part of Paul’s discipleship of new believers. Why might this be important? Was teaching on suffering a part of your discipleship?
* How could suffering be a gift? Does Jonathan Sacks’ quote give a hint in understanding the role of suffering? How?
1. Suffering shows what we really believe.
2. We can’t earn the gospel by our lives, but we can reflect it.

v. 27 *let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ*

v. 28 *This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.*

Francis Foulkes: In all ages—and not least today—the greatest hindrance to the advance of the gospel has been the inconsistency of Christians.

1. True faith expresses gospel determination.

v. 27 *whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm*

v. 27 *striving … for the faith of the gospel*

1. True faith expresses gospel unity.

v. 27 *in one spirit*

v. 27 *with one mind*

v. 27 *striving side by side*

1. True faith expresses gospel fearlessness.

v. 28 *not frightened in anything by your opponents*

* What’s the difference between saying “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel” and ‘now that you’re a Christian, try and keep all of these rules?’
* Why is the godly response of Christians to suffering, and particularly persecution, a “clear sign” or our salvation and our opponents’ destruction?
* Why are fellowship and unity so important during times of suffering and persecution?
* What helps a Christian be fearless in the face of suffering?
* Where do you most need prayer in responding to this passage?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Philippians 2:1-11.

Notes