

Monday  
March 24, 2014  
Joyful Suffering

Somewhere along the line in American Christianity, we have gotten it in our minds that our faith should make us happy – content – satisfied. Perhaps we could even say we expect to be comfortable and at ease in the exercise of our faith.

Yet, that picture is foreign to the New Testament. Jesus spoke of his followers suffering – just as he did during the course of his ministry. Look at the followers of Jesus – Paul (who suffered innumerable indignities); Peter (who was ultimately crucified like Jesus) and the first example of suffering in the Gospel era – Stephen.

Stephen was a bold and godly man, filled with the Holy Spirit. His heart was a generous one; he had a servant spirit; he was a good man with a great reputation; he was a dynamic speaker and presenter of the faith.

In Acts 7, we are presented with a stark reality: Despite all of the positive attributes of Stephen, the temple leadership became so incensed they seized him and killed him. It was a violent death and according to the scripture Jesus greeted his suffering disciple by rising and standing to welcome him into glory.

Philippians 1:27 tells us: *“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake...”*

God has given us the great privilege of believing in His name – and He gives us the opportunity to suffer (and sacrifice) Him. Too often we seek the easy way instead of the hard (and the suffering way).

So as we begin another week: How have you suffered for him? What have you sacrificed in your service to Him?

How is God blessing you with the opportunity to serve Him sacrificially this week?

Experience the joy of believing AND suffering (and sacrificing!) for Him this week!