



The Caller

A Weekly Newsletter of the Elizabethtown church of Christ
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Spring Gospel Meeting

April 23-26, 2017



Speaker: Gary Massey

Times & Topics:

Sunday

9:30 a.m. – *Authority for Unity*

10:30 a.m. – *The Habits of Jesus*

6:00 p.m. – *What Is Holiness?*

Monday 7 p.m. – *7 Secrets to a Bulletproof Marriage*

Tuesday 7 p.m. – *If Creation Is True*

Wednesday 7 p.m. – *The Purpose of Life*

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Suffering Saints

The last two weeks I have preached all four sermons from Paul's letter to the Philippians. We have discussed in detail Paul's suffering that provide the context for that letter. Only a few days after his conversion recorded in Acts 9 we read about the Jews wanting to kill him because he stopped persecuting Christians and joined them. Then after some time passes, he began his missionary journeys, which his missionary efforts on multiple occasions led him to being arrested and beaten; once he was stoned and left for dead. After all that suffering, and being in prison for 2-4 years Paul wrote about his great joy! Now I know we have discussed this subject, in great detail, and I don't want to be stuck on the same topic forever, but during our sermon series, "Joy From A Jail Cell" we were only able to briefly mention that sometimes God will require Christians to suffer. I'd like to us this space to talk more about this truth.

As uncomfortable and unpopular it may be here is the truth: If you are going to be a real Christian you are going to suffer for your faith. People wrongly think that if you live faithfully to God you'd have a blessed life where you are healthy, secure, and materially blessed. That's not true at all. You will suffer for God, maybe a lot. Jesus wasn't joking or being dramatic when He told the disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross every day, and let him follow Me," in Luke 9:23. He also wasn't exaggerating when He said in John 15:18-19, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." The world isn't going to love us because we love God, just the opposite! Being a Christian isn't about making our earthly life "better" from a worldly perspective it's about serving God, and he just might call us to suffer in that service. We must be so in love with God and so dedicated to His mission that it won't matter if we do suffer, because we are looking forward to eternal things! Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:17, "For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." Paul's afflictions from my perspective were not light and momentary. To my knowledge there are no Christians suffering what Paul suffered in our country today, we have it easy compared to Paul, but Paul wasn't concerned about earth's problems because he was fixated on his eternal reward.

Now can living the Christian life provide us with earthly benefits like Joy? Absolutely, I preached on it for four weeks! However we can't live under the illusion that because we become a Christian everything that happens to us is going to be incredible from an earthly perspective because we just might be called to suffer for the cause of Christ. The vast majority of the benefits of Christianity don't come on earth (even though some do) but we are rewarded for all of eternity and that is a far better deal!

1 Peter 2:19-23 says, "For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 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. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." I underlined a few lines for emphasis, but know this encouraging truth, you will probably suffer some for doing the right thing, but God is watching, and on the day of Judgement God is going to judge justly, He will punish those who do wrong and reward those who do right. He knows what you have done for Him, and He will not let it go unrewarded. Let this truth impact your life, you are living for God and going to heaven. Where there will be no more suffering, only eternal reward.

Kurt Montooth
Elizabethtown, KY