

The suffering referred to in **Philippians 1:29** is that form of suffering which is unique to Christian experience: it is suffering experienced by Christians, and only by Christians, and because they are Christians.

Philippians 1:29: “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”

- Grammatical Usage: “**granted**” or in the Greek, “charizomai” meaning, “show favor; privilege”; “**suffer**” or “paschó” meaning, “experience ill treatment.”
- Literal Interpretation: You are given, in this battle, the privilege not merely of believing in Christ but also experiencing ill treatment for his sake.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. There is a vast difference between viewing suffering as a mystery and as a ministry. **Philippians 1:29** makes it clear that rightly understood suffering is a ministry entrusted to the believer by the Lord.

1. CHRISTIANS SUFFER BECAUSE THEY ARE CHRISTIANS

There is a form of suffering which comes to God’s children because they are His children; those who are not His blood-bought ones escape this specific suffering.

- See what Paul says: “**to you**” (v. 29), and if you will turn to **Philippians 1:1**, you will see that he is writing to “**all the saints...at Philippi**”...and anywhere!
- **V. 28**: When a Christian suffers because he is a Christian, this is a token that he really is a Christian. If we are experiencing no suffering we need to search our hearts to see whether we really are witnessing Christians (**Matthew 5:10-12; 16:24; John 16:33** and **1 Peter 4:16**).
- Read through the Book of Acts and notice the sufferings which came to the early Christians, and particularly to Peter and John (**Acts 4:3**); Paul (**Acts 14:19**); Stephen (**7:54-60**) and James (**Acts 12:1-2**). If we are Christians we must expect to suffer, simply because of our attachment to the Lord Jesus. The more determined we are to be out-and-out followers of Christ, the more we must be prepared to suffer for Him.
- Included here is also every other form of suffering which the Lord permits in our lives. It does not come because of our witness for Christ, but the Lord permits it for other reasons, and it is therefore in accordance with His permissive will and is allowed for some loving and wise purpose (**1 Peter 4:19; 5:10; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**).

2. SUFFERING COMES IN MANY FORMS

- By choosing to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, we are setting ourselves at odds with the world. **Galatians 1:10** says, “**For am I now seeking the approval of man,**

or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."

- By closely adhering to the teachings of the Bible, we set ourselves up for rejection, mockery, loneliness or betrayal.
- If we choose to take a stand for righteousness and biblical truth, we ensure that we will be misunderstood, mocked or worse.

3. THIS SUFFERING IS A GIFT

Here is something which will transform suffering. Read **Philippians 2:5-9** and note the word “**gave**” in **v. 9** and it means “a divinely bestowed honor”. When God the Father wanted to bestow the highest possible honor upon His Son, He gave Him a Name (**2:9**); when He wants to bestow upon His children the highest possible honor, He gives them the privilege of suffering for His sake (**1:29**). This is the explanation of **Acts 5:41** and **16:23-25**.

4. WHY IS IT SUCH AN HONOUR TO SUFFER AS A CHRISTIAN?

Philippians 1:29 suggests that there are two important reasons:

- We “**suffer for him**”. Compare **Acts 5:41**: “**for the Name**”; and **9:16** – “**for my name**”. All suffering is not “**for His sake**”: look up **1 Peter 4:15**! Here we see the secret of the believer’s endurance. It is “**for His sake**”.
- We suffer “**on behalf of Christ**.” That is, “in His stead”. The sufferings of Christ and of His people are one: compare **Zechariah 2:8** and **Acts 9:5**. When we suffer for Christ we enter into a unique experience of fellowship with Him (**Philippians 3:10**; **Colossians 1:24** and **1 Peter 4:12-13**). What a privilege it is to be sharers with Him in His sufferings!

5. WHAT IS GOD’S PURPOSE IN ALL THIS?

He loves us so much, and therefore He must have some loving and wise purpose in permitting us to suffer. That purpose is five-fold:

- In order to test our Faith. See **Deuteronomy 8:2** and **1 Peter 1:7**. God permits us to suffer to see if our faith is genuine and to strengthen our faith (**Matthew 13:20-21**).
- In order to mold our Character (**Hebrews 2:10**; compare **Philippians 1:6**; **2:13**).
- In order to further the Gospel. We get this in **Philippians 1:12**.
- In order to encourage the Saints. Look at **Philippians 1:14** and **30**
- In order to make us homesick for Heaven (**2 Timothy 2:12**; compare **Philippians 1:21-23**).

May the Lord lead us as believers to think and speak not so much of the mystery of suffering as of the ministry of suffering!

- Conclusion: God knows the heart and challenge of each. God sustains the life, reputation and integrity of each. By Him is suffering permitted and rewarded. When called upon to suffer for Jesus...will I answer as Job, “though he slay me yet I will praise Him?”