

PASTOR DOUG'S FAVORITE BIBLE VERSES
Hebrews 12:3

My thanks to Tim Martin for speaking last Sunday. I listened to Tim's sermon over the church's website and was smiling as I heard him actually speak on, among other things, his **favorite verse from the Book of Mormon**. If you somehow missed Tim's sermon I would encourage you to listen to it for, in the end, it was a **most excellent sermon** on the nature of the true gospel and how it is rooted in Christ's work and not in our repentance or perfect law keeping.

But we are near to wrapping up my "Favorite Bible Verses" and next Sunday will be our last time looking at one of these verses before we begin a very lengthy study of the book of Acts.

Now for today's verse...

Hebrews 12:3

It has been my experience that most people, Christian or otherwise, sooner or later face grief from others. Indeed, when I think of Hebrews 12:3 I recall my writing to a man, now many years ago, and in that letter referencing this very verse. For this man was, at that time, in a place where he was getting **constant grief** from those around him...

- His wife had left him, having abandoned him for her male hairdresser
- His three children were upset with him, blaming him for their now broken home
- His employer wasn't happy with him
- And while I don't recall if he owned a dog, if he did, most certainly the dog was trying to bite him.

The point is that **things were really going poorly** for this guy. It was GRIEF from every side...grief to the point that he was almost despairing of life.

Have you ever been at that kind of place?
I have.

Some years ago I wrote an article entitled THE SADIM TOUCH. You may recall reading it. SADIM was the word Midas, spelled backwards. Midas,

as you may recall, was King Midas, in Greek mythology, known his ability to turn everything he touched into gold. It is from that myth that we have the saying "The Midas Touch." And so it was that as a pastor and church for many years we experienced "The Midas Touch." Seemingly **nothing could go wrong**. Whatever program we tried, it worked. Whatever new idea or approach to things we attempted succeeded. But in time that touch turned from gold to lead, and what followed was a period in which seemingly **nothing could or would go right**.

Midas turned to Sadim...and it was truly SAD. And with that came a lot of grief.

Hebrews 12:3 is a challenge to us all to get our griefs, our trials, our sufferings, into perspective.

- You're hurting. You say you are actually in pain. Just how bad is it? This past week I was hit with a violent gastrointestinal attack. The pain was the worst pain I have experienced in my life. As things turned out it was apparently just a 24-hour flu. But when some ladies heard about my pain and how I thought it was so bad, I understand that their response was, "Ha! Try childbirth Doug!" The point is we think our pain is so bad. But then CONSIDER CHRIST! Christ was put to a cross. Indeed the word "excruciating" – the word we use for the most severe of all pains – is from the Latin, meaning, quite literally, "from (ex) the cross (the crux, or cross)." Our pain is as nothing compared to his.
- Or you're getting grief. You say you feel as though everyone has turned against you? CONSIDER CHRIST! Christ was rejected by all. Isaiah 53:1-6.
- You're feeling as though everyone has abandoned you? Even your best friends are not standing with you? CONSIDER CHRIST! On the night that he was betrayed by Judas (his supposed friend), denied by Peter, and abandoned by all of his disciples.

So Hebrews 12:3 is about putting our own sufferings, our own griefs, into perspective. But Hebrews 12:4 takes it one step further...

Hebrews 12:4. The truth is, whatever griefs we have faced, it is unlikely that it has brought us to the point of literally shedding our blood. But for Christ it did reach that point.

- They beat him;
- they scourged him;
- they pulled out his beard;
- they pushed a crown of thorns onto his head;
- they drove spikes through his hands and feet

Charles Spurgeon, the great 19th century preacher, wrote that a man would have to be a MONSTER to take any kind of solace from the greater sufferings of another. Yet, on the surface, that is what Hebrews 12:3 appears to be doing – having us consider the even GREATER SUFFERINGS of our Lord so as to get our sufferings in perspective. "Consider Him" the text says...

"You think you have it bad...then think of what Jesus faced!" Certainly that seems to be the thrust of Hebrews 12:3.

But maybe there is something else also going on. Maybe the point is NOT so much to say, "You think you have it bad, look at Jesus" as it is this:

Christ suffered even worse than you...but look how he took it!

That is, "Sure, I understand you have had it bad. But Christ had it even worse and **consider how he handled it.**" And why would I even suggest that that may be the author's intent?

It is because of what proceeded verse 2.

So let's go all the way back to verses 1 and 2 of Hebrews 12...

Hebrews 12:1-4

You see Christ suffered greatly. And yes, he suffered (verse 3) even worse than we have...even (verse 4) to the point of shedding blood. But just HOW did he handle his sufferings? And it is here that we must go BACK in the text to verse 2...

1. He endured the cross

Now Jesus did this, we understand, because there was simply no other option if He was going to see us be made right with God the Father. If somehow, some other way, our redemption could have been secured I'm sure Jesus would have been the first to have his hand up saying, "I'll vote for that!" Indeed, what we read of him saying while in the Garden of Gethsemane supports that notion for we find him there crying to his father, "Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me," that is, "Father, if there is **any way** that I can avoid all of this, then please let it be so." But there was no other way.

There is no one to blame here.

Some try and blame God the Father for all of this, as if he was or is some **very mean or cruel heavenly despot**. But I don't see it that way. Rather I see it that our sins were such that FOR WHATEVER REASON they had to be dealt with as they were. Sin, for a reason that is beyond my understanding – and I'm okay with the idea that we won't understand that reason until eternity – REQUIRED A BLOOD SACRIFICE. And so for thousands of years the Jews had been carrying out their blood sacrifices – to the point that they were quite TIRED of them. These sacrifices were but a foretaste of what was to come...**shadows** of the coming reality...hints at what would finally bring it all to an end. And that end was Jesus. And it was all finally finished when he cried from the cross "IT IS FINISHED."

So he endured the cross. And in doing so he gave us – get this now – he gave us **an example of how we might also ENDURE OUR SUFFERINGS**.

But the truth is, most of us are a bit too soft.

- So the job gets hard and we want to quit
- Or the marriage gets tough and we start thinking, "I don't need this" and we're ready to walk out.
- Or we get a bit of kidding or slander or being talked about because of our Christian faith and we're tempted to just be quiet.
- Or we have some difficulty at church – like a lady I met yesterday who felt quite miffed by how a church treated her and her family – and what do we do? We quit church!

The point is we face difficulties and all too quickly we simply fold.

We would all do well to read some of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, or The Martyr's Mirror, or the more modern Jesus Freaks. Indeed I would highly recommend the reading of Jesus Freaks in all of your homes. It will give your children a grasp of what some Christians have endured through the centuries and what some are enduring even now. The sufferings of the Chinese Christians, or the Iranian Christians, or the Egyptians Coptic Christians...oh man, they put us all to shame!

So, Christ's enduring is meant to be an example of how we might also endure. And just how did he endure?

1 Peter 2:21-23. Talk about an example of enduring suffering!

1. When reviled he didn't revile back. Now **THERE'S AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR MARRIAGES!** When you face a smart remark, **just stay silent**. Let it go. Don't enter into the "who can dish it out the best" kind of game...the tit for tat shoveling it back at your mate. Just stay silent
2. Jesus didn't make any threats
3. Instead Jesus committed his ways to God who judges justly. Remember...Genesis 18:25c..."Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?" Commit your ways to God and **let him deal with the problem** or the problem person.

2. He looked beyond his sufferings (looking to the joy that was set before him).

Christ knew that, as he said in Luke 24, **it was necessary** for the Christ to suffer and afterwards to enter into glory. Without the cross there would be and could be no crown. And what was true for him is true for us.

It is for that reason that in the New Testament we find a sort of glorying in suffering. Certainly the apostle Paul was doing this. Not that he **WANTED TO ENDURE SUFFERINGS** (Indeed we find him trying to avoid them when he could). But when he did suffer he considered that he was "filling up the sufferings of Christ"...sort of doing what was intended for him all along. And in 2 Timothy 3:12 Paul goes so far as to state that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus **WILL BE PERSECUTED.**" It is as if suffering should be considered just a natural part of the Christian life and that as we suffer it causes us to look beyond this life to what awaits us in glory.

Again, Paul wrote in Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

3. Still, Jesus "despised the shame." That is he was **not the least bit happy about it.** He hated it and everything about it.

He hated that he had to suffer for us.

He hated that he had to take the scoffing and rebukes from his own depraved creation.

He hated that he had to face the shame of the cross: stripped naked, whipped and bloody – for him to endure and for all to see. Who would ever want that?

Christ was no masochist and neither are we Christians.

We're not desirous of suffering. We don't look at suffering and go, "Oh, this is right...this is good. This is what I get for not being more righteous." We don't view it as being **our lot, our choice, our fate, or our desire.** We hate sufferings.

And when that abused husband or wife feels like he or she is facing it royally there is no pleasure in it, no desire to stay in it, and no attitude of "this is my lot...it's payback time...it's what I get for being how I was."

No, while we may endure it, we try and deal with it as Christ dealt with his own sufferings, despising every minute of it.

And in handling our griefs like He handled His we become just a little bit more like him.

(And now let's again eat and drink in remembrance of what He truly endured for us...)