

Jesus loves us - about the pain and suffering

Friends with this topic we may have to 'wing it'. Everyone is going to be different and each person is sensitive to a different degree, so we will have to pray for inspiration (which we will be doing anyway, every second of the day) and allow Jesus to lead the way. Inspiration will come, Jesus isn't going to leave us without an answer but we will need to be sensitive to each person's individual needs. I believe the best response is turning them to examples in the Bible. People referred to in the Bible suffered under the name of 'justice'. Jesus' people took the stand, refused to follow Satan's temptations and suffered the penalty. They also were living in the devil's playground and suffered under the curse of sin, but triumphed by the grace of Jesus and became an example of what trust in Jesus and the love of Jesus can do. The difference between them and us is their story has been written, ours on the other hand is still in progress. The same God that got them through their trials does still live today and He hasn't changed, He will also get us through our trials, we only have to let Him lead. These people are a great inspiration to Christians today and I believe we can take a leaf out of their book and follow in their footsteps. Today's trials are no different to those of Christians past, we are fighting the devil and standing up for Jesus, but today's trials have much more finality to them, these trials are the last this world will face and more than ever before we need to trust in our beautiful Saviour and allow Him to carry us home.

Let's take a quick look at some of those people and examples from the past.

Daniel 6 - Daniel in the lion's den. I believe we all know this story, it was a favourite of mine as a child, but let's take a closer look. There is one verse in particular I believe we should look at.

Daniel 6:22 "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

Question one - what is Daniel doing in the lion's den? And two - why is he there? The secret to understanding one of the many mysteries of heaven lies in the answer to this question. Firstly - what is Daniel doing in the lion's den in the first place? Well, the short answer is Satan put him there. The long answer lies deep within the battle between Jesus and Satan. Once again Satan is attacking the servants of Jesus, especially the ones who are leading by example and are 'out there' for all to see. Daniel was a prime minister, very highly ranked and his Christian example was more than Satan could bear. So Satan hatched a plan to 'rid' the earth of Daniel's (Daniel's, referring to everyone down through the ages who 'dared to be a Daniel'), something he (Satan) has continued to do down through the ages. It wasn't just a plan against Daniel, it was about the God Daniel served. Daniel made no attempt to hide his religion or his love for Jesus and Satan was out to destroy this evidence and ridicule the God of Daniel. Jesus allowed the plans to develop and this leads us to the answer of question two. Daniel is in the lion's den purely because he loved his

Saviour more than life itself, Daniel was in no way going to shame his Saviour by rejecting Him in his (Daniel's) most dire hour. Daniel had faith in Jesus and would stand by Him during the good times and during the bad, even if it cost him his life.

We also are in the same position as Daniel and we can use this example to strengthen the brethren. We are standing up for Jesus more now than ever before, Satan is now more desperate to smear Jesus' name more than ever before and we are caught in the crossfire. Bad things are going to happen to good people purely because Satan hates Jesus and everything He stands for. Satan also hates his own followers and his (Satan's) own people are also going to be suffering purely because of the hatred of the devil for everyone and everything. Jesus isn't standing back because His people are being hurt, oh no, Jesus is in there, in the midst of the suffering and pain and He is trying to lead His people to safety and we need to help Him. Pain and suffering are a part of Satan's reign, we are living under Satan's rule and we are caught up in this battle like 'piggies in the middle' (everyone does know that game, right?). Jesus is in the mix with us, the question is, "do we dare to be a Daniel?"

There are many other examples we can use, they all have the same parameters, it is Jesus training someone to stand for Him, Satan trying to bring them down and powerful evidence that God is stronger. There is Esther (I loved that story, but I believe from what I have gone through now that she would have borne a lot of pain and fear. It is beautiful that her trust for Jesus shone through and she stepped up to the plate when destruction of her people was imminent and Jesus moved upon king Ahasuerus to act on Esther's testimony), Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, along with many others. We are standing in their footsteps and we also are about to step up to the plate and go into bat for Jesus. These are very inspiring stories and many people know them by heart. If we compare them with today's events we can turn people's minds to the fact that we also are about to witness for Jesus. Yes the path may be painful and rugged, it wasn't all glory for the people of the past, but Jesus is with us and we are entering the battle of our lives, fighting for Jesus and putting the devil to shame.

People are going to be hurting and they are going to blame God. We need to remind them that Jesus never causes the pain, but sometimes He does use it. They are caught up in the judgements of God against the wicked, please stress 'against the wicked', and Jesus will give them strength and courage if they will put their trust in Him. Jesus loves us dearly. In the Bible there are many assurances of His tender love and watchcare. As we meet these people we need to impress this message upon them, especially as they are going to be distressed, in pain and questioning "where is Jesus in all of this?" We can remind them that Jesus is always with us, He was with the people we were just referring to in the Bible, He was with the martyrs of old and He will be with us today. Whenever God's people are walking through the fire Jesus is always right by their side. Satan will be on the attack, Jesus will be on the defence, and as I said before we will be the 'piggies in the middle'. It is vital, more than ever before to stand ready, always remembering that Jesus is beside us. Amen

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