



# Learning Obedience Through Suffering

Examining the life of Christ  
and the path we must follow

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## Part 1: The Path Jesus Followed

The gospels give us many incredible details about the ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, **but they are surprisingly quiet about His childhood and upbringing.**

Matthew and Luke describe His miraculous conception and birth, and they explain a few events surrounding His circumcision. But aside from His sojourn in Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23) and His visit to the temple at Passover (Luke 2:41-52), the scriptures are largely silent about the Lord's early years.

**There's one verse that gives us a glimpse into Jesus' life as He grew to adulthood.** Luke 2:52 reads, *and Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.*

This entire verse is remarkable, but let's take a moment to consider just one word, **increased**. It's the Greek word *prokoptō* and, despite what it might seem, its primary meaning isn't to grow steadily, like a plant. It means to lengthen out by hammering, as a craftsman stretches and shapes metal. It's from the root word *koptō*, which means to cut, strike, or smite.

**Lengthen out by hammering.** These certainly seem odd words to apply to Jesus, don't they?



But this verse tells us that Father worked to hammer, stretch, and shape His Son during His earthly life. Why?

So He'd be ready to fulfill His role as Messiah.

Now wait a minute.

**Jesus is God, so why would He need preparation to be our Messiah?**

Isn't that why He came in the first place? These are great questions, so let's search the scriptures together for the answers.

John 1:1-3 confirms that Jesus, the Word, is God. He was with God at the beginning of all things, and He made everything. He has always been God and always will be.

**But in addition to being the Word and the Creator, Jesus had another role to fill.**

John explained it this way, *in Him was life, and the life was the light of men* (John 1:4). This verse describes His role as Messiah, the One to bring light and life to humankind. In other words, He came to show us the Father and restore to God all who would place their faith in Jesus.

Paul gave us some understanding about this in his letter to the Philippians. He wrote,

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)*

Scripture confirms that Jesus was God. But to secure our redemption, He had to become human. He had to become one of us. **So He gave up His right to act independently and assert His nature as God, and He emptied Himself.** This doesn't mean that He ceased to be God because



that's not possible. It means that, during His incarnation, He chose not to function as God. Jesus lived and functioned entirely as a man, the way God always intended us to live.

And as a man, Jesus did something that God hadn't done before.

**He learned to depend on His Father.** Jesus learned to listen to His Father's voice and trust Him as He walked by faith.

And just as Father does with us so often, He didn't always reveal everything to Jesus. That's why Jesus didn't know who touched Him (Luke 8:45) or the hour of his return (Mark 13:32). All this was part of Jesus' hammering, shaping, and stretching process that Luke told us about.

**What exactly did this process look like in Jesus' life?**

Hebrews 5:8 gives us this insight, *although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered*. An expanded translation might read, *by the things He suffered, He developed the habit of hearing attentively and then complying fully*.

Most certainly, Jesus toddled, stumbled, and learned, just as any child would. He discovered, wondered, and marveled as He grew. He learned many things, including how to be a responsible, sensitive, and obedient son to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:46-51).

Through His normal life experiences, He developed the skills to become a Jewish son, a Roman subject, and a carpenter. And during His earthly ministry, He endured misunderstanding, rejection, loss, grief, and pain, seemingly at every turn.

**Scripture tells us that, through all this, Jesus increased continually in wisdom and favor.** He learned steadily Who He was and what His role as Messiah looked like. He grew to understand His Father's grace and love.



He learned to yield to His Father, Who lovingly worked to lengthen and shape Him. And as He did, Jesus' insight, wisdom, and judgement grew, too.

The author of Hebrews explained *that being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him* (Hebrews 5:9).

But hold on a moment.

How can the phrase ***made perfect*** apply to Jesus?

After all, He was God, so wasn't He already perfect? Of course, He was. But in this sense, the word *perfect* doesn't mean to be without flaw or failure. It means to be completed, fulfilled, brought to the full end.

In other words, it means to be made completely suited to the task at hand.

And *perfect* is in passive voice, which means that Jesus didn't perfect Himself. Another acted upon Him to do that. Put differently, it was Father God Who worked in Jesus' life to hammer, stretch, and shape His Son so that, through His suffering, He would be ready to fulfill His role as Messiah.

Our Savior's suffering culminated with his arrest and crucifixion, beginning in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41-43). He prayed there in agony, asking God to spare Him and whether there might be another way to redeem mankind.

**What an incredibly honest thing for a person to pray.** No one wants suffering, not even Jesus.

But here's where His hammering, stretching, and shaping bore the ultimate fruit.

Amid his anguish and wanting any path but the one He walked, He gritted His teeth, trusted His Father, and said, *not My will, but Yours, be done* (Luke 22:42). These simple words were the ultimate expression of His faith, trust, and obedience to His Father God, the ultimate fruit of the



hammering, stretching, and shaping that He suffered. In a sense, He said, “I trust you, Sir. I’m not sure that I understand, but I trust you. Let’s do this”.

**Dear ones, we need to pause here to answer a question that’s relevant to all of us.**

How did Jesus manage life in a cursed world? How did He show boundless compassion, forgiveness, patience, and love amid all the adversity? How did He navigate through oceans of rejection, hostility, and suffering? And how was He still able to bear fruit for the kingdom, despite all this?

He did so because, as a man, He learned through suffering the secret to living a fruitful life. The secret that really isn't a secret at all. **He learned to walk in obedience and trust His Father completely, to say “not My will, but Yours, be done”.**

This is our path, too, a path of suffering that resembles the one Jesus walked. It’s a path of learning to abide, trust, and say “Yes, Sir” to our Father, when we feel like we want anything except what He’s prepared for us. It’s a crucial path, one that leads to being conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29) by being conformed to His death (Philippians 3:10).

Why is our suffering necessary?

Because it’s the only way that we, like Jesus, can be made completely suited to the task at hand, to fulfill the purpose God has crafted for our lives.

So that we can bear much fruit for Him.



## Part 2: The Path We Follow

**We shouldn't be surprised when circumstances in this life cause us to suffer.**

In fact, Jesus warned us that they would (John 16:33). The painful reality is that all of us face life in a fallen world, surrounded by many who turn their backs on our Lord and Savior. Rejection and loss can assault us at every turn, and we can find ourselves despised, ignored, and abused.

**Amid our sufferings, we can feel like we're in the world's crosshairs ... because we are.**

*Jesus said, If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you ... I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (John 15:18-19).*

**We're not talking about mild disdain here.** This is an active hatred, one that pursues, detests, and persecutes us because we belong to Jesus. For the time being, the world is under our enemy's control (1 John 5:19), so we shouldn't marvel that we're hated (1 John 3:13). And we shouldn't expect anything less.

**But here's the good news.**

When Jesus warned His disciples in John 16:33 about their certain suffering in the world, He sandwiched that warning between two incredibly comforting truths. He said,

*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.  
In the world you will have tribulation; but take courage;  
I have overcome the world.*

**The first truth is that His peace is available to us.**

Dear ones, please don't read this casually.



When things seem bleakest, when we feel trapped with no path forward, our Savior promised that we can have His peace.

But not just His peace ... we can have His PEACE!!!

It's a supernatural peace that's beyond our understanding (Philippians 4:7). Like a military sentinel who defends against hostile attack, His peace can protect our hearts and minds, our feelings and thoughts, so they're not overwhelmed by what afflicts us.

**But this peace comes with a condition – it's available to us only in Jesus Christ.** It's His peace. We can't achieve it by meditating or focusing our positive thoughts. And Jesus doesn't give us His peace like it's something separate from Him. Instead, He offers us Himself, the Person Who is our peace (Ephesians 2:14).

No matter how much we might want it, peace simply isn't possible without Him. We might have calm and quiet, what the world mistakenly calls peace. But real peace comes only from Jesus, and He must live in us before we can experience it. That old bumper sticker was right.

*No Jesus, No Peace.  
Know Jesus, Know Peace.*

How is it possible for us to receive His peace?

**That's the second truth in this verse.** It's possible because our Lord has conquered and is already victorious over the world (John 16:33). That's right, the world that actively hates, pursues, and persecutes us is the same world that Jesus has overcome. And because we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37), we're able to share His victory over the world.

**However, just like His peace, His victory also comes with a condition.** We must take courage (John 16:33), just as Jesus said. Why courage?





Because it's easy to forget that He's already won, to lose heart when the suffering and loss around us seem overwhelming. That's why courage is so critical.

It's strength, His strength, in the face of pain, grief, and fear. It's a determination to see things through God's eyes, no matter what's going on around us. It's a gut reaction that says, "I know how things seem, and I know how I feel ... but what is the truth? That's where I choose to set my mind".

Dear ones, His peace and victory can be ours when we step forward boldly to trust Him. But let's be honest here.

### **Trusting our Father can seem so incredibly hard sometimes.**

And it's the last thing our enemy wants us to do, so he'll fight tooth and nail to stop us. The world can scream at us, our emotions can paralyze us, and we can sit in fear of all that might happen. That's why courage is so necessary, because with it we can see through our enemy's smoke screen and set our minds on what's true.

When we gather our courage and choose to act on our mustard seed faith, we're saying, "I trust you, Sir. I'm not sure that I understand, and I don't know how this will end, but I trust you. Let's do this". This is what Jesus did when, facing the agonies of Gethsemane and the cross, He gritted His teeth, trusted His Father, and said, *not My will, but Yours, be done* (Luke 22:42).

Have you ever noticed Jesus' attitudes before, during, and after Gethsemane?

- **Before** going in to pray, He was very sorrowful, even to the point of death.
- **During** His prayer, He felt abandoned by His disciples. And while praying, He pleaded with His Father to take this cup away and consider another path (Matthew 26:36-42).



- **It wasn't until after** He submitted to His Father's plan, accepted the path laid out before Him, and said those amazing words, not My will, but Yours, be done, that an angel came to comfort Him. Jesus received the peace He sought, but it came only after he surrendered His will to the One Who knows all things and loves Him beyond measure.

Did God's peace really make a difference?

**It most certainly did!** Scripture records a different Jesus Who walked out of Gethsemane. Gone was the anguish and pleading. Instead, He calmly woke His disciples and said, "It's time, let's go" (Mark 14:41). Then He walked out of that garden, fully prepared to face His accusers, endure scourging, and suffer on a cross until death.

When we read this, we might be tempted to say, "Wow! Is the peace of God really THAT powerful?"

Yes, it is.

**Not only did it guard our Savior's emotions, but it kept His mind focused on God's purpose in Him.** Scripture tells us that for the joy that was set before Him (Jesus) endured the cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2). He set His mind on things above (Colossians 3:2), just as we are to do. He kept His focus on His Father, trusting Him at every step, even when the steps were agonizing.

**And the glorious truth, dear ones, is that God's peace can do the same for us.**

The path Jesus followed required Him to cling tightly to His Father while the sufferings of life swirled around Him. Our path is the same. It's a path of intimate dependence, one we never walk alone. God is always there to show us how and to encourage us along the way.



Hebrews 12:3 explains it this way, *consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*

This amazing verse encourages us in two important ways.

**First, when we are suffering, we are to consider Him.**

What does this mean? It's not that we view Him as a blueprint for behavior, a detailed map for our steps. Because intimate dependence isn't a pattern or formula we work hard to follow. Rather, it's a deep, trusting relationship that we nurture and cultivate with our Father over time. When we suffer, and we most certainly will, we are to grit our teeth and set our eyes on Jesus. And we are to trust our Father, the One Who sustained Jesus through His suffering. Because He will do the same for us.

**The second way that Hebrews 12:3 encourages us is this – we are to consider Him so that we will not grow weary and fainthearted.**

Our Father knows that we're likely to fail when we face suffering alone. That's why He reminds us to consider Jesus, to set our minds on things above as He did, and to let our minds dwell on what is just, pure, and lovely (Philippians 4:8). He assures us that, when we do this, we won't grow weary and lose heart. How do we know this is true? Because our Father promises it. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13). And God can't lie.

Maybe you've never thought about cultivating such an intimate, dependent relationship with God. In fact, you might wonder whether that's even possible for you. **Don't worry; Father guarantees that it is.**

If you're a believer, then Jesus Christ is alive in you. The same Jesus Who depended intimately on His Father through all His earthly suffering is now living in you. And He's ready, willing, and able to live that very same life through you ... **if you'll let Him.**



Dear ones, when our Father parts His protective hedge around us and lets suffering in (Job 1:10), He wants us to trust Him, to walk in intimate dependence just as Jesus did. To rely on Him to guide our steps, even when we can't see where to place our feet. To depend on Him for our provision, our protection, and our very lives. To place into His hands our hopes, dreams, and expectations. And to cast every care, anxiety, and fear upon Him, because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

**Our path in this world, like our Savior's, is one of suffering.**

And our peace is the very same peace that Jesus received in Gethsemane. It's the peace that enabled Him to endure the cross. It's a perfect peace, and we experience it when we choose to trust Him.

**How do we know?**

Because our Father promises it. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You (Isaiah 26:3). And God can't lie.

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