First Fruits First The Fellowship of His Sufferings August 1, 2023

*My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.* [Philippians 3:10]

What is the purpose of suffering? After all, who wants to suffer? Like it or not, everyone is going to suffer. Yes, everyone. Doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor; born in America or Antarctica; Jew or Gentile.

Why? Not simply because of original sin, we must add a lack of justice. Nor can we be hasty in looking for some legal utopia. Justice is not a remedy to avoid suffering. Justice pursues balanced scales by seeking common ground. Justice cannot guarantee equality or equity, although it does point us in their direction. And even the most just decision can’t avoid suffering.

Thus, when someone is hurt, let’s not fool ourselves into believing that applying justice will authoritatively achieve a fair and adequate resolution. At its best, justice properly applied can make great strides toward reconciliation. Justice is a compass, not a conclusion in and of itself.

Man’s systems for restoring right where there has been wrong is limited by our own character flaws. While our Abba Father gave us His Torah to provide guidelines for righteous living, His commandments actually revealed our weaknesses and exposed our sin.

The only way to fulfill the law of Torah was for our Father to send us His Son, the Firstfruits of creation. And the only way for Yeshua to fulfill the Word of Torah was to suffer. The lesson God taught us is that suffering is essential for humanity to regain righteousness.

It’s not that God doesn’t love us. Quite the opposite. God so loved us, that He sent His Son to set matters straight. Sin must be dealt with. For us to deal with the sin of the world, we too must suffer. Even though our own sin has been paid for, we too are called to be as Christ. He gave us notice: “*In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*” [John 16:33].

This is where forgiveness steps in. Only in allowing ourselves to forgive sin and injustice will we understand suffering. And only in being willing to suffer will the Kingdom of God invade the darkness and restore what God originally gave us.

Knowing that our sin has been covered by the life, death and resurrection of Yeshua arms us to do the same for others. He suffered. He teaches us the need for suffering. And in the suffering, our Lord shows us the light of His love that overcomes the darkness. This is resurrection power.

There are things that won’t get better unless we are willing to pay a price. Part of that price is to suffer. Pain and suffering are the currency paid for righteousness to be restored. Count the cost. Get to know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings. Our pain is God’s gain.