

APOLOGETICS MADE EASY

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Suffering and Rejection

Some Protestant schools of thought, especially in our part of the country, preach the “prosperity gospel,” that if we are right with Jesus we will be rewarded with material wealth and physical well-being.

The Bible says that followers of Christ will suffer and be rejected and persecuted. At Luke 9:23-24, Jesus lays out a basic principle for His followers: “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

In Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus says: “Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

In Colossians 1:24, St. Paul writes: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church...”

Is Saint Paul suggesting that the suffering of Jesus was insufficient to bring about the salvation of humanity? No. He is communicating the mystery that those of us who are true followers of Christ are united to His suffering in a powerful way. As Paul explains in First Corinthians, we commit to share in the sufferings of Jesus when we participate in the Eucharist.

Christians are to follow the example of Jesus Christ. The most fundamental way we can imitate Jesus is to live a life characterized by self-sacrifice, suffering for the good of others and for our faith in Christ. A life without sacrifice, without rejection, without persecution, does not resemble the life of Jesus.