

When Faith And Life Collide, Pt 1

Sooner or later every one who believes in God will experience a crisis of faith. It could be that we loose our job, or our unemployment runs out and the hiring prospects are dim. It could be that our spouse becomes distant or even leaves. We might experience a crisis of faith because of a doctor's diagnosis or by loosing a child.

There's almost no end to the variety of ways that the unexpected can come crashing into our life and make us feel like our world is falling apart.

That must have been how Jesus disciples felt at the crucifixion. There are literally hundreds of prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament. So many talk about the throne of David.

Jesus was a direct descendant of king David. God had promised King David, *"I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body."* (Psalm 132:11)

And even though Jesus talked to His disciples about the cross and what was coming, their idea of Jesus as a world ruler/king was firmly rooted in prophecy.

They were looking for that kingdom and they were expecting to share in it.

Palm Sunday, just 5 days before, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem and the people hailed Him as king, just reinforced their sincere belief that now was the time for Jesus to rule politically.

The disciples had a reason to be confused. The Jewish prophets had written about the Messiah from two different perspectives.

In one place Isaiah wrote, *My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground.*

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!

But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. (Isaiah 53:2-6 NLT)

That was clearly predicting a suffering messiah who would pay for our sins.

Then, in those verses we often read a Christmas time, the same prophet Isaiah gives us an astounding prediction. *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

That's not a suffering messiah, that's describing a ruling king. Even the prophets themselves couldn't put it all together. The Bible says, *They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. (I Peter 1:11)*

What they didn't understand was, there would be a first coming of Jesus Christ to suffer as our Savior and a future second coming where Jesus will rule as king.

So here are Jesus' disciples totally confused. They were men of faith. They believed the Bible. But this train wreck as they perceived it, this calamity confused them. The reality of life collided their hope of faith.

What do you do when you expect life to move in a certain direction, and then bam, life comes at you in a totally unexpected way?

Here's how the disciples responded:

Judas was so disillusioned by Jesus not driving out the Romans occupiers of Israel that he betrayed the Lord for the price of a slave, 30 pieces of silver.

By Sunday all the disciples were locked in a room, cowering and afraid that they'd be arrested too. Peter, the fisherman, goes back to his old trade. He's supposed to be fishing for men but he says to James and John, "Let's go

fishing.”

Even after they saw Jesus resurrected from the dead the Bible says, *When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!* (Matthew 28:17 NLT)

What was the problem? What they believed didn't line up with what they were experiencing, so what did they do? They let their experience dictate their lives instead of operating in faith.

All of us should be eternally grateful that the disciples couldn't create reality by wishful thinking. We should be forever thankful that history didn't go the way they wanted it to.

The Bible says at one point, *Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” (Matthew 17:21-22)

Don't talk about dieing Jesus, you're the King.

In fact, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the garden Peter pulled out his sword and tried to defend Jesus.

Think about that. One of Jesus' closest friends and followers still didn't get it. Jesus' way was the cross. Peter's way was no cross. No cross means no hope.

We call this Good Friday. That's kind of a strange name for a day to commemorate the execution of an innocent man. What makes Good Friday good?

No matter how many times Jesus would try to convey to the disciples that He was heading to Jerusalem to be crucified, the disciples never quite grasped it.

So when Jesus took His disciples to the Garden to pray, and when He was arrested that night and by 9 am was hanging on a cross, they were not only in shock and awe, but they were totally disillusioned.

You can sense this in the words of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus when they said in Luke 24, "We had hoped...that He would be the Messiah."

If we're not careful, we can be disillusioned by the events of our lives. If we have a shallow understanding of who Jesus is and what Jesus Christ has done we can be just like the disciples and come up with an idea of life and how it's supposed to work.

God never promised us a life where we'd never get sick, or have any trouble, or face sorrow and tears.

You want the proof of that statement? Just look at the cross. Look at the cross and see the Lord of Glory suffering.

Jesus said, *A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.*

We're not above our master. If Jesus suffered, so will we.

At first the disciples were disillusioned and disappointed by the cross. They gave up their careers, they left family and friends, and invested 3 entire years of their life to following Jesus. Now all that they had hoped for hung on a cross.

And yet on that cross God was accomplishing His greatest achievement. The cross wasn't an accident. It wasn't a last minute decision. The cross was designed by God to be the payment for the sins of mankind.

Jesus didn't die for any crimes He committed. That's why His trial was stacked with false witnesses. That's why the Roman leader Pilate *took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."*

Jesus didn't die for His crimes. He died for yours and mine. It was our sins that nailed Him there. He died in our place.

We're the guilty ones before God. That was our cross. Those were our nails.

That was our suffering as Jesus cried out: *My God, My God why have you forsaken me?*

It was all for us. The just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.

If you've never trusted Christ for your forgiveness, why not do it now. Talk about Good Friday! This would be the best Friday of all.

The Bible commands us to look: *...unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

As a pastor I've been asked some hard questions by people whose faith collided with life. I was asked once to perform a funeral for a man I had never met. He was in his 40's and died an excruciating painful death from cancer. His wife had faithfully cared for right up until the end.

I came in the house and sat down with the grieving family. I mentioned something about God and His comfort and the wife stares right into my face and says, "God? Where was God while my husband suffered in agony for weeks on end?"

That's a tough question, isn't it. You have to believe that was just flowing directly out of her emotions and her heart. What she was asking was, "If God is merciful, why didn't His mercy keep my husband in good health. If God is compassionate, why am I alone now?"

I didn't have all the answers to her specific questions. I didn't claim to. But I did have a place to point her. I pointed her to the cross.

If God punished His sinless Son for our sins. If God gave the innocent Christ to redeem us who are guilty, then the cross becomes the evidence of God's love. The cross becomes the confirmation of the fact that God can be trusted .

That's how we navigate the twists and the turns of life.

The Bible says, *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*(Romans 3:23)
As we read in Isaiah, 'We've all gone astray like wandering sheep.'

The cross was horrible because sin is horrible.

For the wages of sin is death, Through sin we earn death. Physical death is separation of the soul from the body. Spiritual death is separation of the soul from God. That's the death that we should fear.

But there's good news.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)

You can't earn a gift. You can only earn wages. Eternal death is what we earn. Eternal life is what we receive by faith. Eternal life was bought and paid for by the highest possible price. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord.

How do we face life when life and faith collide? By remembering that the God who loved us enough to send His Son for us is a God who is completely trustworthy.