

EDITOR: Jim Wood, 15 Fenay Crescent, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD5 8XY.
Tel. 01484 537981; e-mail: jawood@talk21.com

Exhortation

"Let this mind be in you . . ."

11. "The joy that was set before him"

Jim Wood

FROM THE Scriptures available in his day Jesus knew he was to be the Lamb that God would provide for a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Scriptures told of his sufferings. Isaiah had spoken of him being despised and rejected by man, and of the associated sorrow and grief.

There would be physical pain too, because he was to be wounded, bruised, chastised and beaten (53:3-5). David had described him as "a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Ps. 22:6). He would be laughed at and derided (v. 7). So shamefully would he be treated that his hands and feet would be pierced (v. 16), his bones pulled "out of joint" and his heart would melt "like wax" (v. 14). His strength would ebb away and his tongue would cleave to his jaws (v. 15).

Such a prospect was daunting, and would have been discouraging, possibly even to the point of destroying faithfulness, were it not for the fact that the sequel was also described. What lay beyond the successful endurance of all things was laid out clearly for him to see. For example, Psalm 30 spoke of the joy that "cometh in the morning" after a night of weeping (v. 5). It goes on: "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness" (v. 11). Psalm 16, shown to refer to the Lord Jesus by Peter on the day of Pentecost, speaks of resurrection: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (vv. 10,11). Here is the joy that was set before Jesus.

This prospect, coupled with the strongest possible desire to do his Father's will, an unparalleled compassion for his fellow-man, and the knowledge that he was to be the means of their salvation, was what fuelled the steadfast en-

durance he displayed. Throughout pain and persecution, ridicule and rejection, trial and temptation, a belief in the promises of a loving and never-failing heavenly Father sustained him.

To differing degrees, from the superficial to the severe, we all experience the hurt that accompanies reproach, ridicule and rejection. We feel the mental anguish associated with disappointment, sorrow and grief. Sacrifice of any sort, by its very definition, carries with it some type of pain. Relief is, of course, often possible, but only through rejecting or compromising the principles spelled out by the law of Christ. In some cases physical pain may be inflicted by those opposed to our commitment to the Truth. To all of us physical pain comes as a result of our mortality and corruptibility, and illness, extreme and unpleasant, has the potential to cause us to doubt the goodness of God.

Where can we find the strength to endure faithful to the end? In the example of our Master and in the joy that is set before us: "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). God has promised that He will "wipe away all tears . . . there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4). What joy there will be when these conditions are experienced, with garments of shame discarded and each saint robed in righteousness and girded with gladness!

With such joy before us, with an undiminished determination that His will be done in our lives, and in heartfelt appreciation of what the Lord Jesus Christ did for his friends, let us look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Let us embrace the same ideals and goals. Let us strive to attune our thoughts to his. In the words of Paul, for whom to live was Christ, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus".