

The Parchment

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Are you willing to suffer?

I felt stunned when I left the dermatologist's office on April 18th. I went into the appointment with my research notes and printouts on a new drug for psoriasis called Stelara. It's a novel drug, a once every quarter injection, with an effectiveness rarely seen in psoriasis medications. Knowing I needed to stop one of my medications (Neoral) for at least twelve weeks, I figured I would replace that one with Stelara. Instead, my dermatologist felt uncomfortable starting me on a new therapy when she heard I would join a short-term missions trip overseas to Asia this summer. I still needed to stop the Neoral, however. We both knew I would break out.

That April day, I stopped taking those pills which had been my comfort and security over the past five years. I need to give my kidneys a long-deserved rest. Without strong medicine to replace the Neoral, I asked myself how willing I am to suffer to save my kidneys and go on the mission trip. Since no one looks forward to suffering in any form, I knew that I needed to see a higher purpose or goal to choose suffering. That choice was not an easy one. Now I'm over halfway to reaching twelve weeks. God's strength and mercy have carried me this far. But I have suffered

sleepless nights and quite a bit of physical discomfort since. And it may worsen through the trip.

In my solitude and silence times, I have reflected on the Gospel and suffering in relation to my current predicament. Christians in the early church, along with many others since, chose to suffer for Christ. Peter writes, "But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2:20b-21). He is writing to slaves, whom he exhorts to live a good life no matter how they are treated. We can discern a principle in his teaching: *Christ suffered for doing what was right, and we too will follow in his footsteps.* His higher goal to suffer is ours as well—to benefit others and extend God's Kingdom.

Are you willing to suffer for Christ's glory? Today we partake the communion elements that remind us of the great sacrifice our Lord and Savior made on our behalf. If we are take up our Cross daily and follow Him, our obedience will lead us to suffer in some way. Christ said that in this world we would have trouble, but to take heart, for He has overcome the world (John 16:33). If our highest goal is to not experience suffering, then our highest goal will only be to serve us. But if we are willing to suffer for Christ, our life's purpose will extend into our broken world and into eternity. And that's truly a reason worth suffering for.