

Paul states that "it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him..." (Phil. 1:29). I suspect that most of us are comfortable with believing on Christ, but to suffer for him?

For 5 minutes, recall moments in your life when you have felt, at some level, that you have suffered for what you believe. Can you remember how you felt during those moments? As you reflect on those times, can you see how God used them to stretch and grow your faith in Him? Can you see how God used those difficult times to draw you closer to Him, to experience His grace in a deeper, more meaningful way? If so, talk to Jesus, thanking and praising Him for the work He has done and is continuing to do in your life.

For another 5 minutes or so, recall a time when our suffering was not so positive. Did you feel shame for being fearful or for compromising your beliefs at those times? Talk to Jesus about that. Ask him what exactly it is that you feared. Ask for and receive His forgiveness.

For the last 5 minutes, look at the situations and relationships of your life now and those that lie ahead. Where do you foresee that you may be called to suffer for His sake? What courage or wisdom may you need? Ask him how you might cooperate with cultivating and receiving that. Thank Him for not being satisfied to leave you as you are, but for bringing situations into your life that can cause your faith to abound!