



# SUFFERING

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### Lesson 1

## PERSECUTION FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

### NOTE TO THE TEACHER

When we studied about *The Church* (Volume Fifteen), we learned of the triumphs of the first Christians as they took the Gospel to faraway places. One might suppose that, because of their obedience to the command of the Lord, the ministry was easy. Nothing could be farther from the truth! A careful study of the book of Acts might cause us to feel that the early Christians suffered one defeat after another. They were imprisoned in certain places, beaten, stoned, killed. (See, for example, what happened to just one of the early witnesses, Paul—2 Corinthians 11:23-27.) No matter what opposition they faced, the first century Christians obediently proclaimed the message of Christ. Their obedience involved suffering.

Someone has said that extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment for extraordinary sins; sometimes they are the trial of extraordinary graces. God-given afflictions are spiritual promotions.

When Christians are in the perfect will of God are they allowed to suffer? Yes, according to the Word of God. However, it is encouraging to know that our problems (which are for only a short time) are winning for us a permanent and glorious reward. (See 2 Corinthians 4:17.) Whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared to the magnificent future God has planned for us.

**Scripture to be studied:** Acts 3; 4:1-31; 1 Peter 2:19-20

**The aim of the lesson:** To show that sometimes God allows believers to suffer for doing good.

**What your students should know:** Suffering for Christ now is nothing compared to the glorious future God has planned for them.

**What your students should feel:** A willingness to suffer for Christ.

**What your students should do:** Be a bold witness (like Peter and John) this week before their friends.

**Lesson outline (for the teacher's and students' notebooks):**

1. The lame man begs (Acts 3:1-6).
2. The lame man has faith in Jesus and walks (Acts 3:7-26).
3. Peter and John imprisoned for preaching the Gospel (Acts 4:1-4).
4. Peter and John preach to the rulers, are threatened by them and continue preaching courageously (Acts 4:5-31).

**The verse to be memorized:**

*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)*

### THE LESSON

Have you ever been punished for doing something right? Have you ever been punished for doing something good?

Many years ago Peter and John, two of the apostles, were punished for doing something that was both right and good. Listen carefully as I tell you about it.

## 1. THE LAME MAN BEGS

Acts 3:1-6

The first Christians prayed together at the temple three times a day; nine o'clock in the morning, twelve o'clock noon and at three in the afternoon.

One afternoon Peter and John were on their way to the temple for the prayer meeting. At the Beautiful Gate of the temple they saw a poor lame man begging.



### Show Illustration #1

The man held out his hands for money. Peter and John studied the man closely. "Look at us," Peter said. The lame man looked, expecting to receive money.

"I do not have any silver or gold," Peter continued, "but what I do have I will give to you."

The man must have thought to himself, *What can these men give me other than money? It is money that I need! Money!*

Then Peter added, "In the name of Jesus Christ, walk!" How could he walk? He had never walked in his life.