"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philippians 1:29).

If there is one thing above all else that the human mind and body resists, it is suffering. We recoil from it. We try to avoid it by every means possible. We let our minds dwell for a moment on the sufferings of Jesus, and we somehow think it unfair that we should suffer, forgetting the words of Jesus Himself: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord" (Matthew 10:24).

Jesus drank of the Cup of Suffering and was baptized with the baptism of death, and we are given these words: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

As Jesus went to the cross, His human nature cried out..."O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:..." but His spirit prayed, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

If we would embrace the Way of the Cross, we must also accept the Cup of Suffering. Let us see then, what the Way of the Cross requires of us.

Self-Denial

The Way of the Cross is a Way of Self-denial. It is no longer what we want, but what God wants for us. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Our cross is His cross.

Jesus did the will of the Father (John 4:34), and so must we if we are His. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:50).

The disciples forsook all to follow Him (Matthew 19:27). The apostle Paul suffered the loss of all things (Philippians 3:8). The rich young man went away sorrowful because he was not willing to give up his many possessions (Matthew 19:22).

Persecution

The Way of the Cross is a Way of Persecution. "Yea, and all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). The sinless Son of God suffered at the hands of the mob. "And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him...and the servants did strike him with the palm of their hands...and they clothed him with purple, and plaited a crown of thorns, and put it about his head...and they smote him on the head with a reed...and led him out to crucify him" (Mark 14:65;15:17-20).

Space would not permit the accounts of the persecutions of the prophets, of whom the world is not worthy (Hebrews 11:35-38), nor the cruel treatment and death of the apostles, nor of the accounts of men and women through the ages who have given their lives for the sake of the gospel. Around the world today there are many who are partaking of the Cup of Suffering because they have chosen the Way of the Cross rather than deny their Lord.

These I would remind of the words of your Lord: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11,12).

Reproach

The Way of the Cross is a Way of Reproach. It is a savor of death to those that are lost (2 Corinthians 2:15,16). If you are a friend of the world, you are an enemy of God (James 4:4). If you go the Way of the Cross, do not expect to be popular. You will be misunderstood. You will be treated as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things (1 Corinthians 4:13).
But "...being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat:..." (1 Corinthians 4:12,13). "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you:..." (1 Peter 4:14).

Physical Suffering

The Way of the Cross is a Way of Physical Suffering. Jesus "...though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). How much more you and me? The apostle Paul had a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet" him, but the Lord said unto him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly therefore," said the apostle, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:7-8).

We must be made weak in ourselves so that we can be made strong in Him. Yes, as many as He loves, He rebukes and chastens (Revelation 3:19), and this chastening sometimes takes the form of a thorn in the flesh, a physical suffering, something which drives us to our knees and causes us to rely on Him and His strength.

Physical suffering is coming to many at the hands of the enemies of God today, and we pray that God will give them grace to boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:6).

Offense

The Way of the Cross is a Way of Offense. Just before Jesus went to the cross, He told the disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night..." (Matthew 26:31). Many of His disciples walked no more with Him because He told them, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53,66).

The world will accept a cross-less, blood-less religion. If you accept the Way of the Cross you will not only offend those who are lost, you will offend the professors of Christianity who choose to remain lukewarm and carnal rather than, like Moses, to suffer affliction with the people of God (Hebrews 11:25).

Forsaking

The Way of the Cross is a Way of Forsaking. "...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). It is a forsaking of sin (Proverbs 28:13). It is a forsaking of one's own self, of one's way of life, of one's ambitions. It is a forsaking of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world..." (2 John 2:15).

Aloneness

The Way of the Cross is a Way of Aloneness. As Jesus surrendered to His captors, His friends "...all forsook Him, and fled" (Mark 14:50). At the most crucial point in your life, you may find yourself alone, bereft of all human help. True saints of God often find themselves without the fellowship and understanding of those about them.

There's only room for two on the pathway of the cross, but the One who walks with you has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Yes, the Way of the Cross is a Way of Self-Denial, Persecution, Reproach, Physical Suffering, Offense, Forsaking, Aloneness and much more. It is the way that Jesus walked, and it is the way we must walk.

Whatever comes your way, rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41). Amid the suffering there will be joy; there will be peace; you will have meat to eat that others know not of (John 4:10-32).

Accept your cross and carry it unashamedly. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:14).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him..." (2 Timothy 2:12).