

A Call to Suffer

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[0 : 0 0] All right, we're going to dive back into our sermon series, Life on Mission, The Ultimate Walk with Christ. This is the third and final installment in that series. And I would love for you to take your Bibles and start to begin to turn to Philippians chapter 1.

Philippians chapter 1. Two weeks ago, we talked about a call to minister. A call to minister. Talked about preaching and praying. These are two of the essential ways that we are all called to be ministers of the gospel.

We preach the gospel to people. That doesn't mean you have to be up here on stage. But you can preach the gospel to all kinds of people in your life by just speaking the name of Jesus, sharing your personal testimony, etc.

So we preach the gospel. We're all called to minister in that way. We're also called to pray for the lost around us. To pray for those without Christ, that he would reveal himself to them, draw them to himself.

And so we are called to the ministry of praying and preaching. And then our takeaway that week was, am I willing to go on mission for God by preaching the gospel and praying for the lost around me?

[1 : 1 2] Last Sunday, we talked about a call to partner. A call to minister and then a call to partner. And specifically, we're talking about partnering with the church by serving.

Partnering by serving. And so we talked about different ways to do that. But my next step could be an increased partnership with God and his church.

So what is my next step? To go on mission for God by partnering with his church. So a call to minister, a call to partner through giving and serving, and then a call to suffer.

So that's what we're talking about today. I know all of you woke up this morning and said, I really hope he preaches on suffering this morning. It's just that kind of day, right?

No, probably not too many of us. But that is a very real part of walking with Jesus. Jesus, Jesus certainly suffered on this earth.

[2 : 1 4] And if we are called to follow in his steps, there is unavoidable suffering. And oftentimes, we're going to see today, we can benefit from the suffering that God allows to happen in our life.

So before we dive into it, hopefully most of you are in Philippians 1, I want to talk to you for just a moment about some of the places our minds go when we think of suffering.

Okay? How many of you have had a surgery in the last year? I know not all of you are raising your hand right now.

How many of you have a surgery coming up? I know there's quite a few. How many of you have had just some real health struggles over the last few years?

Anybody? I know not all of you are raising your hand because I know what some of your struggles have been. That's okay. That's all right. Sometimes we just don't want to go back there in our minds, right? Well, surgeries are a real thing.

[3 : 14] Oftentimes, that is the thing that you try to avoid. And sometimes, you just can't. And I thank God for medical science. I thank God that it's helped many, many over history of its development and all that.

But man, it's still scary, isn't it? Sometimes going under surgery, it's like the last thing. You don't want to do it if you don't have to. But sometimes, you just have to do it. And sometimes, it can fix the problem.

Sometimes, it isn't as successful. So, there's a lot of apprehension. There's a lot of fear surrounding these medical procedures. So, instead of going that route with it, let me just share a few things with you that you don't want to hear while in surgery.

Ready? Ready or not, here it comes. Better save that. We're going to need it for the autopsy.

Wow, that got dark fast. All right. Someone called the janitor. We're going to need a mop. Goodness gracious. If you're here in surgery, wait a minute. If this is his spleen, then what's that?

[4 : 21] Say, can I request a different doctor? Is it too late? Hey, has anyone ever survived 500 milliliters of this stuff before? And then the number one thing you don't want to hear in surgery, oops.

Okay. We're not talking about this kind of suffering per se. Maybe this could be an area of suffering that you have to go through in your life. It's more common than we would like to admit.

These kinds of health problems and surgeries, that kind of thing. But there are lots of other ways that we are called to suffer. So let's look at Philippians chapter 1. And if you're able to join us in standing, would you?

We're just going to read these two verses. So if you're able to join us, please stand together out of honor of the word of God. So let's read Philippians chapter 1 and verse 29.

You have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ. Pause there for just a second. That's not the part that we struggle with as much.

[5 : 28] Now, it's hard to always trust God when we're going through struggles and sufferings. But most of us in this room would probably say, Yeah, hey man, I have put my trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins.

I believe that God is good and powerful and loves me. And he died on the cross and he rose from the dead. We believe the gospel. We trust him for that, right? So it says in verse 29 here, You've been given the privilege of trusting in Christ.

But not only that, also the privilege of suffering for him. Kind of a weird way to put that, right?

The privilege of suffering? Did you mean like persecution, not privilege? Did you mean like the unfortunate fact that we have to suffer?

No, he called it a privilege of suffering for Christ. Verse 30. We are in this struggle together. Man, I love those words.

[6 : 30] You have seen my struggle in the past. And you know that I am still in the midst of it. How many of you would say, I feel like I'm in the midst of it right now?

Like I'm just, yeah, right? Thank you for being honest. I'm going through it. Everything is not perfect. If I could script this out, there'd be a lot of things that I would not include that I'm going through right now.

I'm in the midst of it. Let's pray together. Father, there are people in this room that are in the midst of it. Some of us, we don't even want to think about it right now.

Kind of want a little escape. But God, you are bringing us through something. And if it's not right now, maybe somebody just came out of a storm. Maybe somebody's about to go into one.

Whatever it is, God, suffering is a very real part of our life. But you have called us to this. It's a privilege. I pray that you would show us how we can stay on mission for you, even in the midst of suffering.

[7 : 35] It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You can be seated, church. We finish this up by saying, we have been given the privilege of suffering. And we are in this together.

John 16, 33 ties in beautifully with this passage in Philippians 1. John writes, I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

You will have suffering in this world. He didn't say you may have suffering. He didn't say there's a possibility of it. He said it will come.

It's a fact of life. So you will have suffering in this world. But be courageous. Have courage. Don't fear. Don't quit.

Don't give up. Be courageous. Why? Because I have conquered the world. And as John wrote those words from Jesus himself all those years ago, they are still as alive and relevant for you and me as they have ever been.

[8 : 39] So we're going to suffer. But Jesus says, don't worry. Whatever opposition is coming up against you, I've already conquered it. It may not be pleasant.

It will not be pleasant at times. But don't give up. Be courageous because I have conquered the world. So there's a couple of thoughts about suffering that I want to leave with you this Sunday as we conclude our series on being on mission for God.

Number one, suffer for the right reason. Suffer for the right reason. A lot of times, you and I suffer because of our own mess ups.

Right? I mean, that's true. We don't want to think about it. We don't really want to talk about it or admit to it sometimes. Sometimes we try to blame other things. But if you really got us down to a truthful, transparent moment, we would probably admit, yeah, I might have had something to do with what I'm going through right now.

You could probably trace a lot of it back to me and this bad decision I made. I listened to the wrong voices. Whatever it is, my discernment wasn't there. My emotions got the better of me.

[9 : 50] My anger took over. I responded in this way. And now I'm suffering. Now, I know there's no husbands and wives in the room that would have anything to do with that. Right? Like you ever said something you regret and then for a season your relationship maybe wasn't perfect there between you.

Y'all don't look at me like I'm crazy. I know I'm not the only one. Okay? Sometimes, sometimes we say something that maybe we don't even mean. But in the heat of the moment, you pop off.

And then you got to pay the price for it for a little bit. Right? It's just part of it. We're not all the most forgiving people instantly all the time. So sometimes we can suffer for the wrong reasons.

Good thing about God is God is forgiving all the time. All the time. God is always ready, even when we suffer for the wrong reasons, to pick us back up and say, hey, I love you anyway.

They might not in this moment, but I still do. I'm going to carry you through this. We're going to get back because I've got some suffering for the right reasons that you're going to have to go through.

[11 : 02] And I'm going to help you through this one, and I'll help you through that one, too. So if we suffer for the right reasons, we can count it a privilege, an honor to be suffering for God.

If we suffer for the wrong reasons, then we need to learn from those. And by the power of God's Spirit living within us, not make those same mistakes that led us into that unnecessary suffering.

But there is some necessary suffering that God has planned for us. So let's dive into that a little bit. 1 Peter 2. 1 Peter 2 in verse 19. I've got it on the screen, so you don't have to turn there unless you'd like to.

1 Peter 2 in verse 19, the contemporary English version, says, God will bless you even if others treat you unfairly for being loyal to him. Sometimes people treat us unfairly, and it has nothing to do with the fact that we're a child of God.

Unless it actually does. Sometimes people don't necessarily target you just because you're a Christian. But because you're a Christian, God allows you to go through things because he is shaping you to be the person that he called you to be, to be his child.

[12 : 16] He is conforming us into his image. You know how unlike his image we are right now? We are created in his image.

But centuries and centuries and centuries of sin on this earth have distorted the image of God in us. So God has to almost start over again.

That's why they call salvation a new birth. And then little by little he's growing us back to look like him again. That's a lifelong process.

Just because you've been a Christian for a long time doesn't mean that you've been conforming to his image that whole time. There may have been seasons when you kind of went the other way.

There may have been seasons when you got distracted by your own desires, your own goals, your own priorities. You started moving back away from the image of God.

[13 : 22] So God is taking us through struggles to conform us to his image. So he will keep blessing us regardless of how other people treat us.

Let's look at verse 20, 1 Peter 2. You don't gain anything by being punished for some wrong that you have done. That's what we were talking about just a moment ago.

Unnecessary suffering, right? Suffering that we brought on ourselves. God did not prompt us to go out and do that sin that caused that suffering. Say, man, I've been going through it.

I was going 150 miles an hour down Omega Street and the cops didn't like that. They pulled me over and gave me a ticket. God's really taking me through a season of struggle right now.

No, you, your lead foot took you through a season of struggle. But that kind of suffering we don't gain anything from except the understanding of, hey, I shouldn't have done that.

[14 : 20] Maybe I won't do that next time, right? Verse 20, but God will bless you if you have to suffer for doing something good.

So that is a reality of life. Sometimes when we're following Jesus and we're trying to obey him and live in accordance to the voice of his Holy Spirit and what we read in the scriptures, then we still suffer.

God says that kind of suffering will bring blessings to us. Verse 21, after all, God, look at this, everybody, if you can, look up at the screens.

God chose you to suffer. That is a wild truth. God chose us to suffer.

It's not really the attribute of God that we think about the most. We think about how loving he is. We think about his blessings. I don't know how many of us pray for that.

[15 : 22] God, help me to suffer for you today. It's usually, God, fix this. Solve that. Give me that. Don't let me be sad.

Don't let me go through hurt. Don't let me have any trouble in my life. Those are often the nature of our prayers. But the fact that sometimes we're missing is God actually chose us intentionally to suffer.

He marked us for suffering. Why is that? I mean, y'all can give a little feedback if you want to. Anybody have a thought here?

Why would God choose his children to go through suffering? Because what? To grow us? Because maybe we learn.

Christ, that was money. Because you learn in suffering? It's so true, isn't it? Because sometimes when everything's great, maybe we don't learn the lessons that we do when everything's not great.

[16 : 30] And we have to lean completely on our Father. Is this life all going to go better for us if we lean completely on our Father?

Absolutely. But are we going to naturally lean on our Father if everything's just awesome all the time? No. It's that suffering that drives us, forces us into his arms.

And then he knows that he can take us places once we're there that we could never otherwise go. So God chose us to suffer because we're following in the footsteps of Jesus.

And he suffered, didn't he? He set an example by suffering for you. Christ did not sin or ever tell a lie. He never suffered unnecessarily.

He never suffered because of something he did wrong. Although he was abused, he never tried to get even. Y'all, we could preach a whole sermon right there, couldn't we? Because when we get abused, we always try to get even.

[17 : 32] Usually that is our natural instinct. Jesus didn't do that. And when he suffered, he made no threats. You're going to do that to me?

You better watch it. Boy, you got something coming. No, you got something coming. God wants to keep you away from that mindset.

He wants to get you out of that mindset and be like Jesus was. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he had faith in God.

That's the mindset God's trying to lead us into. Through this suffering, he's trying to make us more like Jesus who had ultimate faith in his father. And we need to get there as well.

And suffering can help lead us there. God always judges fairly. God knows. God knows, all right? He's never going to be convinced by the wrong voices. He's never going to be convinced by the people who are telling a lie about you.

[18 : 28] God always knows. God always judges fairly. He may allow you to suffer. But it's always to build your faith in God to get you to a place that will glorify him and bring goodness to you.

Now, let's go over one chapter. We're going to spend just a few minutes on these verses. So would you flip over to 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 13.

1 Peter 3 and verse 13. So 1 Peter 2 sets it up a little bit. You don't gain anything by being punished for doing the wrong that you've done.

But God will bless you if you have to suffer for doing good. God chose you to suffer. To follow in the footsteps of Jesus. He set the example by suffering for you. Although he was abused, never tried to get even.

He suffered. He made no threats. He had faith in God. Now the next chapter, 1 Peter 3 and verse 13. Submit to every human authority because of the Lord.

- [19 : 35] Whether to the emperor as the supreme authority. Just substitute human government. Don't get caught up on the fact that we don't have an emperor in America. Okay? Human government there.
- Submit to the human authorities over you as the supreme authority on this earth. Or to governors as those sent out by God to punish those who do what is evil.
- To praise those who do what is good. They don't always do their jobs well. But that's what God has allowed them to have those positions to do. Verse 15. For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.
- Submit as free people. Not using your freedom as a cover up for evil. But as God's slaves. Honor everyone.
- Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor. The human government. Household slaves. Submit to your masters with all reverence. Not only to the good and gentle ones.
- [20 : 40] But also to the cruel. So he reminded us in chapter 2. Of why we're suffering. Put it in context.
- What it's about. God is allowing this to happen. To build your faith in him. To draw you to himself. And then in chapter 3. He gets real practical with it. He gets down to the actual nitty gritty of what you're supposed to do.
- How you're supposed to act. You're supposed to respond to those in authority over you. Whether they treat you fairly or not. You respond to them with honor. With respect.
- With obedience. As long as it doesn't compromise your faith in God. And they're asking you to do something contrary to what God has clearly said he wants us to do. Cause harm to others.
- Etc. We don't do that. But when we honor God. We do that in these situations. By honoring those.
- [21 : 38] Above us. Whether or not they're treating us fairly. So that nasty jerk boss on the job. That you just.
- Rubs you the wrong way. You just want to tell him off. And storm out the door. You don't do that. Not just because you value your paycheck. But because you value your God.
- You understand that God is bringing you through this struggle. This suffering. And so you even get to the point. Of valuing the suffering.
- Do you value the suffering. Enough. To keep your Christian testimony. In the midst of suffering.
- That's how we stay on mission. That's how we glorify God. Y'all it's awesome. Two weeks ago we talked about preaching the gospel.
- [22 : 40] That is the most obvious part of being on mission for God. God's given us a mission. To carry the gospel. The good news of Jesus. Out to those who need to hear it.
- That's the most obvious way. That we can go out and be on mission. But the fact of life is. It's not always easy. To stay with that mission. Why? Because we get distracted.
- Because storms come along. Because problems arise. Because we mess up. Because somebody hurts us. Somebody harms us. And then our minds are no longer on the mission. We're not thinking about.
- Who needs to hear the gospel. We're just thinking about surviving. In that moment. But God says. That if you can get to the place. By his spirit. Of keeping it in perspective.
- Thanking him for the suffering. Saying God teach me. Through this suffering. And I'm still going to praise you. We talked about Job several weeks ago.

- [23 : 36] In contrast with Jonah. And how little Jonah suffered. And how dramatic he was. About how horrible life was. But how greatly Job suffered. And how he never lost his faith.
- In the process. He said. God. Sometimes you give. Sometimes you take away. But regardless of what you do. Blessed be your name. I will praise you forever. When we do that.
- The lost world around us. Is confused. The people in our lives. Are like. Wow. How in the world. Does this guy. Or this girl. Keep it in perspective.
- How do they seem to be. Unaffected. In their spirit. Doesn't mean we won't cry tears. Doesn't mean we won't have sorrow. But they never seem to lose their faith.
- We not. They never seem to lose their joy. They never seem to lose their trust. In their God. Now that's something different. Than what. They might have.
- [24 : 38] That's how we stay. On mission. In the storms. We remember. That God is allowing this. And it's for. A great. Great purpose. Oswald Chambers.
- We quoted him last week. He wrote. The book. My utmost. For his highest. One of the great. Theology books. In all of church history. No healthy Christian. Ever chooses suffering.
- He chooses. God's will. Just like Jesus did. Whether it means suffering. Or not. None of you got up and said.
- Man I hope God allows me to suffer today. I didn't. I knew what I was preaching on. And I still didn't. Do that. But I say. God let your will be done in my life.
- Let your will be done in my family's life. Let your will be done with my finances. Let my will be done. Let your will be done. Not mine. With my retirement. Let your will be done. In the school year this year.
- [25 : 33] Let your will be done with my friendships. Let your will be done in your church. Let your will be done. Whether it involves suffering. Or not. I will follow you.
- I won't be perfect. I'll mess up. But I will keep following you. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 10. Blessed are those who suffer for doing what is right.
- The kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Wow. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Why? Because they are following Jesus. That is the hardest way to follow Jesus.
- How many of you would say by uplifted hand. I do my best to be a Jesus follower. Say I am a Jesus follower. I'm going to make you raise your hand one way or the other. All right. I'm just going to make you do it. Got to wake you up a little bit.
- All right. You say I'm a Jesus follower. That's great. Well most of the time what that means for you is I'm going to try to read my Bible. I'm going to try to spend time in prayer.
- [26 : 32] Maybe I'm going to pray before my meals. Before I go to bed. I'm going to try to be in church when I can on Sundays. I'm going to try to you know. Try to keep a Christian testimony in the world around me.
- Try not to be a hateful you know arrogant son of a gun. And so I'm going to try to be a Jesus follower in that way. What we don't think about is so much of what Jesus the life that Jesus walked on this earth was filled with suffering.
- So if you're going to be a Jesus follower. Then you're actually going to have to walk with him through the suffering. So that's why it says the kingdom of heaven belongs to those.
- Because those are the ones who truly follow Jesus. That's what I'm trying to be. That's what we must all with the Holy Spirit of God learn to be his followers even through the suffering.
- There's a privilege in suffering. We read about that in Philippians 1. God is taking me to the next level in my walk with him. Man we can rejoice in that.

[27 : 37] Even in the midst of extreme loss we can say wow. God I hate this right now. I would have never asked for this. I would have never planned for this.

But I know. That you haven't suddenly changed. I know that you haven't suddenly. Turned against me. So I know this is for my good.

And I know this is for your glory. And even through the tears. There's a little glimmer of hope. That you are taking me up.

You're leveling up. Life is not like a video game. But you know when you level up in a video game. You're going to the next level. That's what God's doing with us.

When he takes us through suffering. He's taking us up to the next level. He's growing us up. A little closer to him. He's maturing us. He's taking us to the next level.

[28 : 35] In our walk with him. And the second part of that. God is taking us through this. So I can use it to help someone else. Scripture teaches us. That the comfort that we receive from God.

In these moments of suffering. It's there so that then we can turn around. And give that same comfort to somebody else. Jesus said. I give you my comfort.

So that then you can use that comfort. To comfort someone else. So God is taking you through the struggle. To equip you.

To help someone else through the struggle. Because God has created us for himself. But he uses us. To draw others. To him.

When we focus completely on ourselves. During times of struggle. It's really hard to move past the struggle. We just stay there.

[29 : 35] We get all wrapped up in our own minds. And it's really hard to ever move on. But when. We look through Jesus' eyes.

And we think God. How can you use this. To help someone else through me. That helps us get past. The worst of the storm.

So we suffer for the right reasons. And then in 2 Timothy. Chapter 3. We suffer for the right reasons. And we count it a privilege.

To suffer. For Jesus. 2 Timothy chapter 3. Would you turn over there real quick? For sake of time. I'll go ahead and read. 2 Timothy 3. And verse 10. Just these three verses.

2 Timothy 3. Verse 10. Paul is writing. To his son in the faith. Timothy. He says.

[30 : 34] You have followed my teaching. My conduct. Purpose. Faith. Patience. Love. And endurance. Along with.

The persecutions. And sufferings. That came to me. In Antioch. Iconium. Lystra. All these places. That Paul. Was just beat up.

For preaching the gospel of Jesus. Whether it was at the hands of Roman soldiers. Or the Jewish. Religious leaders. Demon possessed people.

Who were fighting back against him. Snake bites. Storms. Shipwrecks. All kinds of things. That Paul suffered. In his missionary journeys. For Jesus.

He said. Timothy. You followed along. In all the good stuff. And you followed along. In the struggle. The persecutions. The sufferings. But then he says. At the end of verse 11. The persecutions I endured.

[31 : 32] The Lord. The Lord rescued me. From them all. That's the secret. For a Christian. About suffering. God.

Will. Deliver you. It may not always be. According to the time. That you hope. It will be. The suffering. May not be as brief.

Usually it never is. As we would want it to be. The suffering. May not be. In the way. That the deliverance. May not be. In the way. That you would hope. It would be. But it will always.

Be. The best. God will deliver us. Just like he did. For Paul. God rescued them. Him. From them all. In verse 12. In fact. All who want to live.

A godly life. In Christ Jesus. Will. Be. Persecuted. You will suffer. If you want to live. A godly life. Then you will suffer. Now. That might drive.

[32 : 26] Some of you away. And I understand it. Say man. I'm not going to go all in. On this godly life. Because I don't want to suffer. Now. I can clue you in. That you're still going to suffer. It's just going to be.

Without God. Backing you up. It's going to be without God. Providing the meaning. And the value. And the lesson to that. You're just going to create. Your own suffering. For yourself. This life is filled with suffering.

But those who live. The godly life. Of following Jesus. They will suffer. But there will be meaning to it. There will be hope. Behind it. Okay. So now.

We realize that we must suffer. For the right reasons. And then the good news is. We get to suffer. Together. We're not on our own. Okay. So number two. We suffer together. Back in Philippians 1.

In verse 30. This one's from the New Living Translation. I like how it says this. We are in this struggle. Together. You have seen my struggle. In the past. And you know. That I'm still.

[33 : 23] In the midst of it. We are in this struggle. Together. You and I don't have to face these storms alone. And if you are a member of this church. Or you've been regularly attending this church.

Or maybe you're a guest with us. It's your first. Second. Third time here. We can still suffer together. We can still struggle together. We are not meant.

To walk this road alone. If you are walking this road alone. Know that that's not how we want to do it. We want to do it with you. You've got to share with us what's going on.

Side note. If you've got a surgery coming up. Or you're going through a tough time. Would you let me know about it? My email is pastor at fbchenrietta.org. That's not hard to remember.

Pastor at fbchenrietta.org. Shoot me an email. Catch me after the service. Come talk to Joy during the week. Set an appointment. We can sit down. Let us know what is going on.

[34 : 22] We have a whole prayer chain going on throughout the week. People all throughout this church. And this community. Are praying about the requests. That get submitted every week. So if you have something going on. Whether it's health related.

Or something completely other than that. Please share it. So we can bear the burden with you. We're all suffering. We're all struggling. We're all bearing these burdens. But we're doing it together.

It's the only way. To really get through suffering in a healthy way. Is together. Stanford University did this study. And it's going to be a little bit hard to see on the screen.

Because of how small the writing is. But this was based on what we saw during COVID. What we learned during COVID-19 and the pandemic. Social isolation leads to effects over neuropsychiatric disorders.

Like eating disorders. Depression. Learning disabilities. Becoming on the autism spectrum. Bipolar disorders. Anxiety.

- [35 : 21] Dementia. Schizophrenia. You can actually. Maybe you weren't born with some of these problems. Or had them for a long time. But isolation. Can help develop these in you.
- It's a wild truth about how we are physically created by God. To be in community with one another. Next Sunday starts a brand new sermon series on Christian community.
- I've been talking about it for a while. We're launching dGroups. Discipleship groups. On September 8th. The week of September 8th. We'll have different nights of the week. Sometimes up here at the church. Sometimes in someone's house.
- We'll have these community groups. Or discipleship groups. Gathering together from within our church. And even someone from outside our church. Could be invited to come. That could be a great way to start connecting with what God is doing here at our church.
- Because we value Christian community. Why? Because God values it. He designed us that way. We are not meant to go through things alone. So even our biological makeup teaches us that if we have to suffer, and we do, then let's suffer together.
- [36 : 36] Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10. This was Paul's goal. Writing to the church at Philippi, Paul said, My goal is to know God. To know Jesus. And the power of his resurrection.
- Man, we love that resurrection, don't we? We love to talk about Easter Sunday. What did Jesus go through right before the resurrection? Yeah, the crucifixion.
- I mean, you can't exaggerate the amount of suffering that he endured right before he exhibited the greatest display of God's power that we've ever seen in raising Jesus from the dead.
- We love the power of his resurrection. We love the power of his resurrection. But before we can get there, we've got to know the fellowship of his sufferings. I love that word fellowship.
- We could call them fellowship groups if we wanted to. Community groups. Maybe you've been to a church where they had life groups doing life together. Whatever it is, there is a bond.
- [37 : 40] There is a fellowship there that we can enjoy as Jesus followers. But often the nature of that fellowship includes suffering. So it's the fellowship of Jesus suffering.
- Being made, being conformed to his death. So that's what it's about. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. How many of y'all have seen an advertisement for that movie that's coming out, Bonhoeffer?
- It's on, it's the same ones that put out some of the other movies we've gone to see, Sound of Freedom and different things. Their same studio, I think, is releasing this, Bonhoeffer.
- I'm not sure who the creators were. But that's going to bring familiarity to this German theologian who God used greatly through his work in Germany and through his writings that followed.
- So there's going to, y'all are going to maybe, some of you who see that are going to know who I'm talking about when I quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer. But that's all right. He said this about suffering. This was a guy who suffered a lot for Jesus back in World War II Germany.
- [38 : 41] He said the deep meaning of the cross of Christ is that there is no suffering on earth that is not born by God. Look at that again, would you? The deep meaning of the cross of Christ is that there is no suffering on this earth that has not already been born by Jesus.
- That's why the Bible tells us that Jesus suffered in all areas, was tempted in all areas like we were, but he never sinned. He went through all the same struggles that you and I go through, but he did it without sin.
- So when we picture Jesus hanging on the cross and we understand the suffering he endured, we realize that there's nothing that we can suffer that he can't help us through.

There's a meaning behind it. There's a purpose to it. There's a way to stay on mission for God in it. And we get to do it together.

So how do we stay on mission? How do we stay on mission in the middle of suffering? We run to Jesus. That is the greatest testimony of all. Who do you turn to when the going gets rough?

[39 : 53] Do you turn to alcohol? Do you turn to pornography? Do you turn to friends who can't really help you through? Do you turn to yourself?

You turn to Jesus. You turn to Jesus. You run to Jesus. That's the testimony that says, God is real for me. It's not just a talk I talk. It's not just something I talk about when everything's okay.

When it's not okay, he's the one I turn to. So that's the testimony that we leave for those around us. We run to Jesus. So how do we do that? We cry out to him in prayer.

Prayer is the most powerful thing that a Christian can do is talk to his father. When we ignore God and the Holy Spirit walking with us, we are not tapped in to the power within us.

We cry out to him in prayer. He always hears and he'll always answer according to his will. And then we remember his nature. We remember his nature revealed in his word.

[40 : 58] Block out the lies from Satan that try to convince you of something you know is not true. See, God doesn't really love you. God doesn't really value you. Your church doesn't really love you.

The fellowship of Christ doesn't really value you. They don't really care about you. You know certain things to be true. Remember God's nature.

Don't doubt in the dark what you know is true about God in the light. Don't doubt in the dark times what you know is true in the light.

And then we claim his promises found in his word. That's why it's important to dive into the scriptures. Even when things aren't the worst. Even when you're not necessarily going through the hardest times.

We still go to those scriptures and we learn his promises. And we hide them deep in our hearts. So in those moments that are hardest, God brings them out.

[41 : 55] Remember my promises that I will always be with you. I will never forsake you. Remember that I will see you through every storm. You will come out on the other side. Joy comes in the morning.

There's all kinds of promises in God's word. We claim those in those hardest moments. And then we run toward the fellowship of his church. I can't tell you how many times I've seen people pull back from church when the going gets rough.

Say, man, I just need some time to pull back. Like, that's one of the unhealthiest things you can do. Maybe you need to change how you're in community.

Maybe you don't hang out as much in the lobby yucking it up and messing around with everybody. Because that's just not the moment you're in. But maybe you need to go to another brother or sister in Christ and say, Hey, would you just pray for me right now?

I'm going through it. Can't share all the details with you right now, but I just need some prayer. Maybe you talk to those in your Sunday school class or those in your dGroup when we launch those.

[42 : 57] And you run toward the fellowship of his suffering, which is this church. We're all suffering together. So our takeaway this morning is when God calls me to suffer for him, will I run toward him or away from him?

It's a question I want to leave you with. I hope it sticks in your mind and I hope God brings it back up in those moments. When I am called by God and led into a moment of suffering, will I run toward him or will I run away from him?

Will I run toward his church? Will I run away? Will I run toward his spirit leading me or will I run away? Will I run toward the truth or will I get distracted by a lie?

When God calls me to suffer, will I run toward him or away from him? I want to leave you with this this morning. Would you bow your heads with me for a time of prayer? There's a song by a Christian singer named Charity Gale.

It's called We Need a Miracle. In times of suffering, we need a miracle. We're going to play this song in just a moment, but before we do, I want to share these words.

[44 : 10] In the waiting, you get the glory. In the healing, God, you get the glory. In the breaking, you get the glory. And in the breakthrough, you get the glory.

I love the stages that are so real and so many of you have lived those stages of life. Sometimes we're waiting. Sometimes we're healing.

Sometimes God's breaking us. Boy, that's not the fun part. But there is always breakthrough. God will lead us to breakthrough.

And in every one of those stages, he gets the glory. In the waiting, God, we glorify you while I'm waiting for what you're going to do. God, I've been through it, and you're healing me now, but you get the glory for this healing.

God, I know you're breaking me. And it's hard. It's not fun. But you get the glory in the breaking. And whenever the light shines in and the joy comes and the morning comes, God, I know I didn't do this.

[45 : 17] You get the glory for the breakthrough. Matt, would you play that song? Would you all just listen and let this song wash over your spirits? Let the Holy Spirit commune with you right now as Charity sings this.

Let's pray.