

Baptism in Suffering (Video)

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into the topic of suffering for the faith, drawing insights from Hebrews, Luke, Mark, John, and various other biblical passages. It emphasizes the importance of enduring persecution with a focus on Jesus as the ultimate example of enduring suffering. The sermon highlights the need to have a genuine faith that can withstand trials, the purification and testing that suffering brings, and the promise of a crown of life for those who remain faithful until death.

Scripture: Hebrews 5:12, Luke 12:50, Mark 10:38, John 15:18, 2 Timothy 3:10, 1 Peter 4:1, 1 Peter 4:12, 1 Peter 2:19, Revelation 2:10

Topics: "Endurance in Faith", "The Purpose of Suffering"

Description

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Transcript

Turn with me please to Hebrews chapter 5, and we're going to read verses 12 through chapter 6, verse 3. We're continuing our series on the book of Hebrews, and we're specifically dealing with the foundations, or the first principles, or the milk of the word. And today we're in verse 2, dealing with baptisms, but let's just read to get the context again. So Hebrews chapter 5, from verse 12.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. So we're, as I said in verse 2, dealing with the doctrine of baptisms, and you'll see that baptisms is in plural, so we've said that there are four baptisms.

Three of them are pretty well known. The first, baptism into Christ. The second, baptism in water, and then the third, baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The fourth baptism is baptism in suffering. This is an idea which very few Christians understand, and that is certainly not taught in many, many churches. And so we need to have a look at the scripture and see on what basis then are we able to find a verse or verses that speak about baptism in suffering.

We can't just come up with these doctrines and suck them out of our thumb. We need to base them on the word of God, and we'll find that Jesus speaks about it. So in Luke chapter 12 and verse 15, but I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished.

So this is Jesus speaking, and remember that at this point he cannot be baptized into Christ because he is Christ, so he can't be baptized into himself. So that's not what he's talking about. He has already been baptized, albeit the baptism of John, but he has already been baptized.

So he's not talking about water baptism. He has already received the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove after the baptism with John. So he's not speaking about the baptism in the Spirit.

So clearly he's speaking about something else, a fourth baptism other than the first three. Now you'll see that he says, how distressed I am until it is accomplished. So he's connecting this with distress, with difficulty, with sorrow.

In Mark chapter 10 and verse 38 and 39, Jesus said to them, you do not know what you ask. They wanted to be on his left and his right. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? So again he's talking about a baptism which is yet future, so clearly it's not one of the first three, it's a different baptism.

And you'll see that he now connects this with the cup. So the cup, drinking that cup, and the baptism that he is yet to be baptized with, these two things are synonymous. And so we know what the cup is.

The cup refers to his suffering at the cross of Calvary. And so anticipating that suffering, he speaks of it as the cup. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, Father, let this cup pass from me, not my will, but your will be done.

And so he calls that the cup, and he calls it the baptism. So they said to him, we're able. Remember the disciples were very good at just responding and say, yeah, for sure, we can do this.

And remember Peter says, Lord, everyone will deny you, but I won't. We are able. So Jesus said to them, you will indeed drink the cup that I drink.

And with the baptism I am baptized with, you will be baptized. And so again, Jesus is referring to something which is future. Now the disciples had not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit, but that's clearly not what he's talking about.

He is talking about the cup of suffering, and therefore the baptism in suffering. Now we want to have a look at the certainty of suffering in the life of the believer. The problem we have today is that the vast majority of Christians, probably 99% of Christians are raised to believe that Christians don't suffer.

Even though we may not hold to the prosperity gospel, the fact still is that many of the aspects of the prosperity gospel has rubbed off on all Christians, and we somehow believe that life is just going to be easy, and there's going to be no problems, and everything is going to be great. In addition to that, we've had about 150 years of relative acceptance here in America, and in Europe, and England, and in other parts of the West, where Christians have been accepted, not just accepted or tolerated, but many times been seen to be good people, and to be assets to the society. And many societies have been based on Christian principles, even though they may not be Christian as such.

And so we've grown up, and everyone who's alive now has grown up in an environment, unless you come from an oppressed country like North Korea, or some parts of Mexico, and other parts of the world, China, and so on, to believe that we shouldn't suffer for the faith, that it's only some who suffer for the faith. But I want to have a look at a few verses today, four different texts, and there are many, many, many, right through Scripture, that show that suffering and that persecution is par for the course for the believer. It is something that every believer should anticipate.

So the first one, John 15, and verse 18. If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. So here's a principle we're going to see as we look at suffering, is that it is always equated to Jesus.

So if it happened to Jesus, it's going to happen to us. So if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before you. So he's saying, your experience is not unique.

I've had the same experience. Verse 19. If you were of the world, the world would love its own.

Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Now this is a shocking verse, because what Jesus is saying is that if the world loves us, it is a sign that we are one of them. Just think about that.

If the world loves you, they think you're one of them. In other words, you're not living a holy life. You're not living a life which shows them up for their sinfulness.

Now we don't want to live in a way that we seek to condemn others and to make others look bad. But if we're going to live the kind of life that God wants us to live, the kind of life that requires holiness and dedication and zeal to the things of God, we will live different lives. And that will tell people around us that we don't fit in with common society.

We're not part of the world. So if you were of the world, the world would love its own. So when Christians and churches are loved by the world, particularly in these days as the world becomes more and more opposed to Christianity, and yet there are many churches that are very well accepted by the world.

Why? Because their preachers and their people are just like the world. They dress like the world. They use foul language like the world.

They fornicate like the world. They are addicted like the world. In every way they are like the world, and the world just loves them.

I recently saw a documentary on one of the biggest church organizations in the world. I'll name the name, Hillsong. They built their popularity on the fact that their preachers were rock stars and acted and dressed exactly like rock stars.

People went there because they could see these men with their bodies exposed, with their personalities trying to draw people to themselves. You could come no matter what kind of bad behavior you have. Now remember, the gospel is open to anyone.

Anyone can come to the gospel, but you can't stay the way you are. The gospel must change you, and yet the gospel does not change people in these churches. And therefore the world loves them because they continue to be just like the world.

So verse 20 in John 15, remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also.

Did they accept the word of Jesus? Well, initially they did. But when it came down to the cross, they all turned against him. And that's going to be exactly the same.

As long as we preach a nice message, we heal people, we help them, we bless them, we speak words of encouragement, people will accept our word. The moment we begin to speak about the cross, particularly the need for us to take up our cross and follow Jesus, they will reject us just like they did with Jesus. John 15 verse 21.

But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know him who sent me. Now we need to pay attention to the detail of the text. If we go back a few verses, verse 19, if you were of the world, the world would love you.

So he's dealing with persecution that comes from the world or acceptance that comes from the world. But now in verse 21, all these things they will do to you for my name's sake. Now who are persecuting Christians for the name of God? In the name of God or in the name of Jesus? Not the world.

The world are just doing whatever they do. They don't need authentication by using the name of God. It is religious people who use the name of God as a cover for their bad behavior, for their persecution of Christians.

Remember at the time of Jesus, it was the Pharisees and the scribes and the chief priests who in the name of God persecuted Jesus, killed him, and later persecuted the Christians. Remember Paul, he persecuted Christians. He didn't do it as the world, he did it because he believed he was doing the will of God in the name of God.

And in the name of God, in the name of Jesus, Christians have been persecuted for the last 2,000 years, initially by the Roman government but by the Jews and then later on by the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome killed millions of Christians. And then later on the reformers ganged up against what we would today call evangelicals, the Anabaptists, those who stuck to the scriptures and the scriptures alone.

And so this has all happened and even today there are those who attack true believers in the name of the Lord Jesus. And so they will do these things to you for my namesake because they do not know him who sent me. So even though they're operating in the name of the Lord, they don't know the Lord, and the Lord does not know them.

Now 2 Timothy 3 10-12, you have carefully followed my doctrine, Paul says to Timothy, my manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured and out of them all the Lord delivered me. So

Paul is saying to Timothy, you know how my life has been lived and you know the persecutions and the afflictions and the difficulties and the trials that I endured. The Lord delivered me out of them.

Now does that mean that the Lord will always deliver us out of them? No, it doesn't. Remember at the end, Paul laid down his life for the gospel and he died for the faith. In verse 12, he says, yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

This is not a verse that you need a preacher to amplify or to exegete for you. It's easy to understand. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer.

Those two words, all and will, all means every single one who wants to live a godly life. Remember, we don't always succeed. Sometimes we mess up.

If we are without sin, John says, then we lie. So we do sin. But we desire to live a godly life.

Our whole being is focused on living a life that pleases God. If we do that, we will suffer persecution. The reason for this obviously is the same as with Jesus.

We spoke about the religious people persecuting Jesus. And what was the problem? The problem was not his doctrine. The problem was not the good things that he did.

The problem was that he showed them up for the hypocrites that they were. And so the people looked at Jesus, and they saw the real deal. They saw someone who had a real relationship with God, who had a real ministry, someone who had a real gift of God, and who didn't cheat people, and who didn't oppress people.

And so when they saw this in Jesus, and they looked at their own leaders, they could see the hypocrisy and the lies and all the nonsense that was going on in the religious world at that time. That's just the problem, is that the light shows up the darkness. And when we as Christians live the right life, it will offend others, and particularly it offends religious people, because it shows them up for the falseness and the emptiness of their religion.

In 1 Peter 4, verse 1, Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. So here he's dealing with a number of things. Persecution was intensifying against the Christians, and Peter is writing to prepare them for this.

And so, again, you see the connection between Christ's sufferings and our sufferings. Since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind. The word arm means to brace yourself, to prepare yourself.

If you're going to battle, you arm yourself. You get your weapons ready, and you get your defenses up, and you're ready to go to battle. We speak in our common language about a sucker punch.

What happens in a sucker punch? Well, someone hits someone when they're not expecting it. What's the problem if they don't expect it? Well, because they've not prepared, they've not braced themselves to take the punch. You can see boxers and have another boxer pummeling their abs, and the boxer just stands there, and he's able to take it.

Doesn't do anything to him. Why? Because he's armed himself. He's braced himself.

He's prepared himself. And so he's ready to take the pummeling. But that same man can be knocked out in a second if he is sucker punched, if someone comes up from behind and hits him at a time and a place where he is not prepared and he's not expected.

And that's one of the big tricks that the devil uses is surprise. Surprise is one of the biggest tools or strategies in warfare. It's been so for thousands of years, and it still is today.

To hit a nation or a country or an army at a time and a place when they don't expect it. We remember what happened at Pearl Harbor. When the fleet was lying in the harbor, no one was expecting anything.

It was a bright morning like any other morning, and suddenly the Japanese bombers came over, and all hell broke loose, to use that expression. A sucker punch. Peter is saying, don't be sucker punched.

Arm yourself. Be prepared. Be ready.

Expect trouble, because it's going to come. And then he says, arm yourself with the same mind, what the mind that Christ had. In other words, a willingness and a preparedness to suffer.

Now, none of us desire suffering. None of us want persecution. But it's just a fact of the Christian life.

It's going to happen, and it's going to come. And so we need to be prepared to suffer. We need to identify with Christ.

If we are crucified with Christ, then we are dead, and we're willing to take whatever comes our way, just like it did for the Lord Jesus. So be prepared. Be braced.

Steal yourself for the persecution that is coming. For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. I'm not going to speak about that.

1 Peter chapter 4 verse 12. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. Don't think it's strange.

Why? Because it is the norm. It is to be expected. And notice he's not just saying the trial, but the fiery trial which is to try you.

Now, yes, Peter is speaking to a particular group of Christians in a particular political context as things were changing in Rome, but this applies to all believers. Don't think it's strange concerning the fiery trial. Remember, all who will live godly will suffer persecution.

It's not a strange thing. It is the normal thing. And so don't be caught by surprise.

1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 19. Now, here Peter deals, and he also deals with this in chapter 4, with wrong suffering. So you can suffer the right kind of suffering for the right reasons, but you can also suffer for the wrong reasons.

If we suffer for the wrong reasons, we have no help from God, and there is no reward, and there is no blessing in it. And so he says, for this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God, one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. Now, yes, this is just the nature of persecution and of suffering, is that it is always wrong.

There's nothing right about it. Is there suffering that is not wrong? Yes, there is suffering that we deserve. And so in verse 20, he says, for what credit is it if when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

So if we suffer for our own faults, he says, for your faults, in other words, if you've messed up, if you've acted in an un-Christ-like way, if you've mistreated someone, if you've sinned, and someone comes against you because of that, you're not suffering for the right reason. You're suffering for your own misdemeanors. You're getting what you deserve.

And therefore, there is no value in that. And this is not the suffering that we've been talking about. Unfortunately, many Christians, when they get caught in their sin, and they get exposed, or they get disciplined by the church or by God, they lash out, and they react.

And they say, well, I'm suffering for the gospel's sake. No, you're not suffering for the gospel's sake. You're suffering because you have messed up, because you have sinned.

Many preachers and Christians have a bad attitude. They have a bad attitude towards unbelievers. They have a bad attitude to others who don't agree with them, as far as their doctrine is concerned.

And as a result of that, people don't like them very much. And so they react, and they say, well, you see, I'm suffering for the gospel's sake. No, you're not suffering for the gospel's sake.

You're suffering because you have a bad attitude. You're suffering because you're acting in an arrogant and a prideful way. And so, folk, we need to make sure that when we are suffering, it is for the right reason.

If we're suffering because of our own faults, then that's also good, because God is disciplining us and chastening us, even if he uses the world or other Christians. And let's not react against that, but let's submit to God's chastening in our lives, and let's accept the correction, and let's move on. The problem is that we feel that we have to defend ourselves, and so we lash out at those that are correcting us and disciplining us because of our own bad attitude.

And as I said, we hide behind, oh, I'm suffering for Jesus. No, you're not suffering for Jesus. You got what you deserved.

And if you don't respond correctly to that discipline, no matter where it comes from, you deserve more. So, God help us that when we suffer, we ask this question immediately. Am I suffering for the right reason? Are people attacking me because of something that I've done wrong or said wrong? Or is this a legitimate attack against the Lord Jesus and against the gospel? We need to ask those questions, because otherwise we don't know how to respond.

If I'm suffering because I have done wrong, I need to repent. If I'm suffering because I have done right, well, then I have rejoicing, and we'll talk some about how I need to respond to that. But I need to make sure that when I suffer, it is for the right reason and not the wrong reason.

All right, so what then should our attitude be? In suffering. And Revelation chapter 2 verse 10 says, Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison.

So, the first thing he says is, Don't fear those things that are about to come upon you. Don't fear suffering. Remember that Jesus in Luke 22 and in Matthew chapter 24, he says they're going to drag you before magistrates and before governors.

He says, Don't worry about it. I will be there, and I will tell you what to say. I'll tell you how to defend yourself.

We must trust God to see us through, and if he doesn't see us through, and if it is his will for us to suffer more or even be killed for the sake of the gospel, let's surrender ourselves into the hands of God. I'll come back to that idea in a moment. So, indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.

Be faithful until death. Now, when he says you will have tribulation ten days, this is clearly not ten literal days. What he is simply saying is that tribulation is limited.

It is time limited. Ten days. There's an end to ten days.

He doesn't say you will have tribulation forever, because there is no tribulation forever. It's limited. It's ten days.

How long is that ten days? How limited is it? Well, he tells us, be faithful unto death. So, you may even have, if you were born in an oppressive country, you may have tribulation for 50 years, 60 years. But it's going to end.

And it may end in death, but it's going to end. And you say, well, that's no great hope. Yes, it is great hope.

Because remember that 60 years, 70 years, 100 years in this world, in this life, is nothing in comparison to the glory which is ours in eternity. And so it's just ten days. It's just a period.

Yeah, it seems like forever. It is your whole life, but that's the problem. When we see things from a carnal perspective, from a worldly point of view, our life is all we've got.

But when you see things from God's perspective, this life is only the beginning. Our real life begins in eternity. And so it's going to end.

It may end in death, but it's going to end. And what happens after death? Well, there's just glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus. So, be faithful unto death.

That's the next thing I need to do. So, don't fear. Be faithful.

Don't capitulate. Don't give in. Don't run away.

Don't collapse under the pressure. Stand. And as we read about the martyrs, we see how that they were faithful to the very, very end, to their last breath of life.

I'm going to come back to that verse in a few moments. In 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 23, referring to Jesus again, who, when he was reviled, when they said terrible things to him, when they accused him, when they blamed him, when they mocked him, he did not revile in return. He didn't give them equal back.

Remember, he stands before Pilate, and they were bringing all sorts of accusations, and Pilate is dumbfounded. He says, why don't you respond? Why don't you defend yourself? And Jesus says, my faith

is not in your hands. I'm going to come back to that.

So, when he was reviled, he did not revile again. Remember, as he's on that cross, they're saying all sorts of things to him. And what is Jesus saying? Father, forgive them.

Because they don't know what they are doing. And so, when he suffered, he did not threaten. What threat could he bring when he suffered, when they beat him at the whipping post, when they nailed him to that cross? The threat would be, I'll get you.

That's our threat. That's what happens when someone mistreats us. We may not say it in words, but we think it, and we say, I'll get you.

I'll get you back. Now, we can't always get people back, and we shouldn't, because vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.

But in fact, Jesus did have real threats. Would he get them back? Yes, he would. Not in a sense of exercising his vengeance, but just exercising the justice of God.

One day, Pilate, those Roman soldiers, the Jews, will stand before that great white throne, and he will be their judge. But he doesn't threaten. But what he does, and here's the thing that the Lord has ministered to me over my life, and I still struggle to come to terms with it.

And yet, this really, to me, is the heart of this whole thing. He committed himself to him who judges righteously. Remember, I spoke about Pilate.

Pilate says, why don't you answer me? Don't you know I have the power to kill you? And Jesus simply says, you have no power except what God gives you. See, Jesus understood that his fate was not in the hands of Pilate, but his fate was in the hands of his father, who had determined that he would suffer for us. And, folks, when we begin to understand that our fight is not with those who oppress us, and those who persecute us, and those who mistreat us, but our issue is with God.

Our fate is in the hands of God. God alone will determine the future. God alone will determine what's going to happen.

And yes, the devil and the world will use, and the religious world will use whatever they can to attack us, but they can go no further than God permits. And so what we need to do is we need to commit ourselves to God and say, Lord, it's not about these people around me. It's about me and you.

It's about what you're doing in my life. It's about the testimony you've called me to bear to the gospel and to the cross. And so he committed himself to him who judges righteously.

Now, when God judges righteously, remember I said that there's a possibility, even with the best of intentions, there's a possibility that I may be suffering for the wrong reasons. God's the ultimate judge on that. But if I am suffering wrongfully, in other words, if I'm suffering truly for the sake of Christ, God will judge those who persecute us.

Every man who tortured a Christian, every person who said bad things against believers, every executioner who executed Christians for the sake of the gospel will stand before God and he will judge. We are not their judge. And notice that Jesus does not judge Pilate.

He does not judge the Roman soldiers. He does not judge the crowd. In fact, he says, Father, forgive them.

Now, that doesn't mean that they're forgiven because they still need to repent. But he recognizes this is not the time of judgment. This is not the time of vengeance.

And folks, now, as we live our lives today, it's not the time for judgment. It's not. And judgment is not ours.

It's God's judgment. So let me leave it up to God. He sees.

But nothing that happens to us is unknown to God. God sees everything. And not only does he see it, but Jesus feels it.

Remember, we've seen in the beginning chapters of Hebrews that he is that faithful high priest who sympathizes with us. He feels what we feel. Remember, when Paul meets the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, he says, Who are you, Lord? And Jesus says, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

But Paul wasn't persecuting Jesus. Jesus was already dead and risen and gone to glory. Paul was persecuting the church.

But Jesus says, you're persecuting me because what we do to the least of these, my brethren, Jesus says, you've done it to me. And so those who persecute Christians, those who say bad things to Christians, are saying them to Jesus. Those who are murdering and torturing Christians are murdering and torturing Jesus in a sense.

And he will judge. And his judgment is righteous. So let's surrender to the Lord.

Let's not seek vengeance. Let's not seek to defend ourselves. But let's commit ourselves into the hands of a faithful high priest.

Hebrews 12, verses 1 and 3, and we're speaking about what my attitude should be in suffering. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. The need for endurance.

We've seen that word patience earlier on. Endurance. We need to see it through.

Verse 2, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. So here's the next thing I need to do in times of suffering. I need to be looking to Jesus.

Remember Peter said that he commits himself to him who judges righteously. Looking unto Jesus, not looking at those around us, but looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. What he has begun in us, he will complete.

So let's look to him. Let's trust him. Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For the joy that was set before him. And so the first thing I need to do is I need to be looking to Jesus. The second thing I need to be doing is I need to look at the end goal.

The joy that is set before us. Remember, he says in Revelation, the tribulation is 10 days. In other words, there's an end.

And after the end of that tribulation, there's going to be glory. There's going to be eternity in the presence of the Lord. That's where we need to keep our eyes.

Jesus has his eyes on the end result, on the joy that was set before him. We need to have our eyes not fixed on the here and now, and the hardships and the difficulties. We need to have our eyes fixed on Jesus, and we need to have our eyes fixed on the glory that is set before us.

So because he endured the cross, he despised the shame, he was sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. There is a reward coming. And we see in the book of Revelation that the martyrs receive a special reward.

Hebrews chapter 12 verse 3 then, For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself. Consider Jesus. Look at how he acted.

Look at how he responded. Look at how he dealt with the pain, and how he dealt with the rejection, how he dealt with the betrayal, how he dealt with Peter's denial. Consider him.

Who endured such hostility, such contradiction from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You see, we become discouraged when we think it's only me. But when I consider Jesus, and I consider what he endured, and how he did that, it becomes an encouragement to us, so that we don't give up, and we don't become discouraged.

Acts chapter 5 verse 41, and I want to, by means of closing, just look at the consequences of suffering. The first is, in Acts 5 41, persecution had just begun to happen to the Christians in Jerusalem, and these are the apostles, so they got beaten up, and they got really all sorts of things said to them in the council. And so, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

Rejoicing, not because of the suffering. Obviously, we're not crazy. We don't take some perverse pleasure in suffering.

But there's glory in suffering for the sake of Christ. That we are counted worthy to be counted, in just some small way, equal to Jesus. That they treat us the way they treated Jesus.

That's an honor, and that's a glorious thing, for people around us to say, you're like Jesus, and I'm going to treat you like I treated Jesus. Now, obviously, that's a terrible thing for them, but in fact, for us, it is a reason to rejoice, because we have been made and been counted to be one of his. In 1 Peter 1 7, he says that the genuineness of your faith, remember again, Peter is in the context of persecution coming, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And so, he's talking here about gold that is tested in the fire. The fire refines, whether it's gold or silver or steel, the fire burns up all the dross, all of the rubbish, and just leaves the pure gold behind. And that's one of the things that persecution does for us, is that when you're suffering for the faith, there is no time, there is no energy to deal with all sorts of nonsense, and to get yourself into all sorts of things that you ought not to, because the heat is purging, is cleansing, is purifying.

And when we've gone through those fires of persecution, when we've gone through the fires of trial, we will come forth, and our faith will come forth as pure gold. Yes, it tests it as well. And in that testing process, if it is not genuine, it's going to fail.

Now, that's a scary thing, because there are martyrs, or potential martyrs in history that have turned against the faith, that have denied Jesus. Remember, Peter did this at 1.2. When we do that, we're saying we're not real. But the real Christian will see it through.

And so, how do I prepare for persecution? I need to make sure that I'm the real deal, that I have a real, right relationship with Jesus Christ, that I'm truly born again. If I am, I will be able to endure the persecution. If I'm not, I'm going to be burnt up in the trial and the fire.

And that's a scary thing. So, the persecution purifies, and it tests. And he says that though when we've come through that, we may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus.

So, when Jesus comes, it's going to become real. When you look at those martyrs living in those dungeons, in those pits, filthy, bedraggled, starving, sick, and then finally killed in some gruesome way, we look at that and we say, well, this is terrible. In fact, Hebrews 11 says the world is not worthy of them.

But when Jesus comes in his glory, it's all going to be changed. And we will be, and they will be found to be of praise, glory, and honor when Jesus is revealed. In Revelation 2, verse 10, my last verse, remember we looked at this verse before, do not fear those things which you are about to suffer.

Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation 10 days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. I will give you the crown of life.

There is a special reward for those who have suffered for the faith. And there is this promise of eternal life. May God help us to have a right attitude towards suffering.

Now, let me just say by means of closing that there are many who believe that we will never suffer, that we will never have these kinds of problems here in America. But the reality is that things are changing. Things are changing here, they're changing all over the West.

20, 30 years ago, it was a popular thing to be a Christian. Today, more and more Christians are being scorned and being mocked, and being rejected and being sidelined for promotions and other things. And this is going to get worse and worse as we go along.

The next generation after mine will certainly suffer for the faith. We have not really suffered except at the hands of other Christians, but the next generation will certainly suffer for the faith in many, many real ways, despite the constitution that protects, or supposed to protect, religion. And we're already seeing the changes where the freedom of religion clause protects every other religion except Christianity.

And this is going to get worse and worse. So we need to get ready. We need to get prepared.

Things are changing, and persecution is coming. But there is a glory, and there is a crown that is set before us. May God allow us to go through this baptism of suffering, in whichever form it takes.

Sometimes it's words, sometimes it's emotional blackmail, sometimes it's physical suffering. May God give us grace that we might be able to go through these things in a way that will glorify him. Remember that in

Luke chapter 22, Jesus says that this will turn out as an opportunity for a testimony.

May our suffering, the way we deal with trials, the way we deal with persecution and with tribulation, may it be a testimony to the fact that we have a real Savior, we have a real hope, and we have a real faith. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the example of the Lord Jesus who went before us.

And Lord, that he suffered far worse than any of us can ever suffer. Because Lord, he did not only bear the physical suffering, but the spiritual and emotional torment of taking the sin of the whole world upon himself, and being rejected by the Father. Lord, we pray that we may look to Jesus, and we may be encouraged.

Lord, we pray that you would help us to be prepared and to be armed. Lord, that when family members or colleagues or people around us turn against us, we may not think it's strange, but that we may accept that that is part of being one of your disciples. Help us to be disciples indeed, we pray in Jesus' name.

We pray, Lord, that you'd go with each one of us now in Jesus' name, and keep us and protect us and bless us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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