

Rejoicing In Sufferings

by Anton Bosch

This sermon focuses on the concept of rejoicing in suffering for Christ's sake, emphasizing the idea of partaking in Christ's sufferings and the future glory that awaits believers. It delves into the importance of understanding suffering in relation to Christ's suffering and how God's Spirit of glory rests upon those who are reproached for the name of Christ, leading to His glorification. The message highlights the counterintuitive nature of God's kingdom where suffering and reproach can ultimately bring about God's glory and honor.

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:12, Philippians 3:10, Romans 8:17, Matthew 5:11, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Rejoicing in Suffering", "Glory in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Well, welcome to those who are joining us on live streaming. You can see that things are very different here in California. We're not allowed to meet indoors anymore, and so we're meeting outside.

We think the streaming is working. And please bear with us. If the sound is not great, we're on a very busy intersection, and there's a lot of noise.

And for those that are here, that's why I'm standing here, to try and cut out some of the noise from the microphone, to keep the microphone out of the wind and out of the traffic noise. So welcome, and let's turn to 1 Peter, chapter 4. As we continue our study in Peter, 1 Peter, chapter 4. And we'll read 12 through 17. In fact, 12 through 18.

1 Peter, chapter 4, 12 through 18. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part, he is blasphemed, but on your part, he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a

murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a busybody in other people's matters.

Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to him in doing good as to a faithful creator.

And so we are in Peter. And Peter is dealing with suffering. The whole book really deals with the fact that we are strangers and pilgrims, that we don't fit into the world.

And because we don't fit in, there will be those who don't like us. There would be those who would persecute us. And so he's dealing with persecution.

And sorry, I hate these microphones, but unfortunately. And so he's now come to the heart of the issue, the very core of the issue. And that is, don't think it strange concerning the fiery trial, verse 12, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you.

And now we're in verse 13. In verse 13, and I know that the screen cuts off the top part, but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings.

The idea of rejoicing because of suffering is a very strange idea, particularly these days. It's particularly strange for many people because surely when you're suffering, you must be sorrowful. You must be unhappy.

You must be sad. How can you rejoice when you're suffering? And yet he says that we must rejoice to the extent that you are suffering. And the apostles, you remember that they were beaten because of the gospel.

And it says that they rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. They rejoiced in their suffering. And Peter's going to give us reasons why we rejoice here as we go along.

But notice that he says rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings. In other words, the greater the sufferings, the more the rejoicing needs to be. Now, the problem is that that's very foreign to us because we tend, the greater the suffering, the more we complain, the more we moan and bemoan our situation.

But rejoice to the extent. And so if you have great suffering, you have greater reason to rejoice. And it's not because we are masochists or sadists or have some kind of perverse pleasure in our suffering.

But we rejoice because we partake of Christ's suffering. We partake of Christ's suffering. Now, when he's speaking about Christ's suffering here, we must immediately say that he is not talking about the fact that we are suffering in the same way that Jesus suffered to pay the price for our sin.

Our suffering is not atoning. Our suffering does not pay for our sin or for anyone else's sin. And we shouldn't be suffering because of our sin.

And he's going to deal with that in a few moments. But you can suffer, you know, tremendously. And that will never wipe away one sin at all.

Only the blood of Jesus can wash away sin. And so the suffering that we partake in, Christ's suffering, is not salvific. It is not atoning.

It doesn't deal with the problem of sin at all. It's got nothing to do with that. But you'll see that he says that you partake of Christ's suffering, Christ's suffering.

So is Christ then still suffering? That's the question we must ask. Because clearly we are partaking of the same suffering that he suffered 2,000 years ago. But is he still suffering today? And the answer is yes, he is.

And we say, but he's glorified. He's in heaven. How can he be suffering in heaven? How can, you know, it just doesn't make sense.

He is glorified. But remember that we are intimately connected to him. We are his body, and he is the head of the body.

And there is nothing that you can do to my body that my head doesn't participate in, that my head doesn't feel intimately. And you remember that when Jesus meets Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul says, who are you? And Jesus says, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. You see, because whatever is done to the church is done to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a very, very serious thing. When people attack the church, they're attacking Jesus Christ. And the pain that we feel, he feels that same pain because he cannot be separated from us.

He cannot be separated from the body, but he is intimately connected to us. And so there is a sense in which his suffering continues. It doesn't continue in the sense of making atonement.

When he finished the work on the cross, he said it is finished, the price is paid, there's no more atoning for the sin, it's all done and it's all over. But the suffering will continue. So we partake of Christ's suffering.

And I have a couple of other scriptures in Philippians chapter three, verse 10. He says, Paul says that I may know him, that passage, that I may grab hold of him, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, the fellowship of his sufferings, even being made conformable to his death or conformed in this translation. And so Paul is speaking about the fact that when he suffers, he is having fellowship with Jesus on the basis of suffering.

He's understanding what Jesus endured and Jesus understands what he is enduring. And so there is an intimacy between the Lord and the person who is suffering. We sometimes think, well, you know, he's in heaven and he, you know, we know, I believe that he is intimately affected by the martyrs and by those who are suffering for the faith, that he is there in a special way.

And you just need to read about the martyrs and you'll see how that in many of the cases, God revealed himself to them in a very, very special way. Many people say, and I come across this all the time, people say, well, I don't know if I was physically had to be martyred, I don't know that I'd be able to stand. But the testimony of the martyrs is that the Lord Jesus is present with them in those fires and in those places where they are persecuted.

And of course, you remember the first great martyr, Stephen, and he says he looked into heaven and he saw Jesus standing, not seated, because that's his normal position is he is seated at the right hand of the

majesty, but he is standing. And it seems to indicate that when Jesus sees Stephen paying this ultimate price for the gospel, he actually stands up and in a sense of honoring Stephen in what he is doing. And so he is connected and so we're in fellowship with him in the sufferings.

In Romans 8 verse 17, Paul says, if we're children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. So you see that Paul speaks about the fellowship of his suffering. Here he speaks about that we suffer with him.

And so we can never suffer. And remember, we're speaking about suffering for the faith, suffering for Christ. Peter speaks about it and we'll maybe get there tonight.

I'm not sure. I have to check the clock down around the corner here. But when we suffer for our own misdeeds, well, that doesn't count.

If you do stupid stuff and you get some kind of reprisal or something comes back at you, well, then that's what you get. If you break the law and you get a fine or you get put into prison, well, that's what happens. You're not suffering for Christ.

And unfortunately, so many people claim that they're suffering for Christ, but in fact, they're being obnoxious, they're being rude, they're being all sorts of things. And they say, well, no, you brought it upon yourself. But if we're suffering for him, then we are never alone.

He is with us in the time that we are suffering. And so let's go back to verse 13. So rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's suffering.

So it's not our suffering. We're not suffering for our own sake. We're suffering for his sake.

And he is no man's debtor. He honors those who suffer for his sake. Many times, Christians, I hear Christians really get down in the dumps when they're being persecuted.

And when people are saying terrible things, I got an email from somebody this week calling me all sorts of stuff, the most terrible, terrible stuff. But in fact, Jesus is being said, that is being said of the Lord Jesus, because I'm standing on the truth and I'm standing for him. And so we're partaking of Christ's suffering.

It's not for us, but it's for him. Now, you'll see in Romans, we'll go back to that verse in Romans 8, but he says that when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. So the glory is going to be revealed.

When will his glory be revealed? When he comes again. Remember, this is a part of the problem that the Jews had. They thought he was gonna come in his glory, but he didn't.

He came as a suffering servant. This is a very important principle. So Jesus came and he suffered.

When he comes again, he's going to come in glory. He's not going to come to suffer again. He has suffered once and for all.

He's gonna come in glory. Now, in the same way as the Lord Jesus suffered and then there was glory, in the same way we in a sense have to suffer in this world, but there is glory coming. He will glorify us with the same glory that he has.

And that's why we have, and obviously we didn't, it was here when we bought the building, but right above you can probably see the cross and the crown. We kept that there and gave it a place of honor. It was just on the side of the building when we came because it is such a significant message.

There is no crown without the cross. We must, through the cross, get to the crown. And that's the problem is that so many Christians today, just like the Jews, expected Jesus to come in glory and in power when he first came and didn't understand that he had to suffer first and then come in glory.

In the same way, many Christians don't understand that we're not in a time of glory now, but the time of glory will come. We're not ruling and reigning with Christ now. We will rule and reign with him one day.

And so the same way as he had to go through a particular process to end with a glory, in the same way we go through the same process and we end up with glory. And so when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy, with exceeding joy. So we rejoice, it begins the verse, rejoice in the anticipation of exceeding joy in the future.

Now that's the problem is that we want everything now, we want instant gratification, we want everything to be wonderful now. No, there is a great rejoicing coming. And so we are able to endure now because there is something in the future.

You remember that we need to look unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, Hebrews 12, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame and is now set down at the right hand of the majesty on high. And so the same way, we need to look to, we need to be encouraged that Jesus saw it through. And what caused him to see it through was the joy at the end.

How does and why does a mother go through the travail of childbirth? Just because of the pain, just enjoys the pain? I'm sure not. It's for the joy of seeing that new life or in Cynthia's case lives come into the world. It's that's the joy that makes it all worthwhile.

And one of the choruses that has always been very, very precious and very important to me is, and I don't think we sing it anymore, but it is, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus. One glimpse of his dear face, all trials will repay. Just when we see him and we see him in his beauty, we see him in his glory, and we see him in his resurrected power.

And when we understand everything, because now we only see in part, then we'll know everything. When that happens, all the trials that we have experienced and remember that while we're going through some rough times here, we are not like those in North Korea or those who paid the ultimate price for the gospel over the centuries. But even if you were one of those who was martyred and was burnt at the stake, all of that will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

And so we rejoice because of the exceeding joy that is waiting for us at the end. And so again, Romans 8.17 confirms that we indeed, if we suffer within the second line, and it's probably the first line there, indeed we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together. So the suffering and the glory always go together.

There is no legitimate suffering that will not have a flip side, and the flip side is being gloried. Now, if we go to verse 14, verse 14, if you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part, he's blessing, but on your part, he is glorified.

If you are reproached, if people say bad stuff about you, like they did to me this last week, and I don't wanna get into the details, but some of the most hurtful things, calling me a coward. I've never been a coward. Those who know me know that I'm a fighter, and I have fought in many, many battles spiritually and in the military, and I'm no coward.

But to call me a coward, that's a reproach, and it's a reproach for the name of Christ is because of the stand that we take on the word of God, that we will not deviate from the word of God. We will not buy into the doctrines of men. We will not buy into the fear of the devil.

We will not buy into any of these things. We stand on the word of God, and if it's in the word of God, we will do it, and if it is not in the word of God, we will not do it. So there is a reproach for the name of Christ, for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

Now, he says, if you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, blessed are you. Now, remember this word blessed, the Greek word makarios, and most modern translations translate it as happy. Now, that's partly true, but it really doesn't fully encapsulate the idea.

It's not just that we have a temporary happiness, like when you go to the happiest place on earth, if you ever go there again. I don't know whether that'll ever open, but anyway. It's not that kind of happiness.

This is a knowing that God is blessing you, that his blessing rests upon you, that you, not just that you are happy, but that you are in the place of God's privilege and of God's acceptance and of God's blessing. What a wonderful place. Now, remember that Peter had walked with Jesus.

He had heard Jesus teach some of these things. He's writing by the inspiration of the Spirit, obviously, but did Jesus ever say anything to this effect? Yes, in the Beatitudes, in Matthew chapter five, and in Luke, we just saw that a couple of months ago. Blessed are those who are you when men persecute and say all sorts of things against you.

So there's a blessing in those things, just a blessing in those things, and here's the blessing, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Now, just think about that. Here, we can't rely on experience.

We have to rely on the word of God. What does he say? He says that when we are approached for his sake, we are blessed because, remember the word for, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. And so, as we said earlier, that he is intimately involved when we suffer.

He is there when we suffer, and now he is saying more than that. God's Spirit anoints us, and remember we use this word anointing incorrectly many times, talking about the anointing made me roll on the floor, run around the building. That's not what we're talking about, but knowing God's presence in our lives, in the times that we are approached for his sake.

And so, but it's not just his Spirit, but the Spirit of glory. The Spirit of glory rests upon us. Now, the problem is that many Christians don't experience the Spirit of glory resting on them in times of suffering because they are not taking the suffering correctly.

They're kicking against the pricks. Remember Paul. Paul is hard for you to kick against the pricks because as we'll see, and we won't get there tonight, but as we'll see in the next few verses, that suffering God uses to refine us.

We saw that earlier in a previous chapter. He speaks about the fact that our faith, when it is tried, comes forth as pure gold. So God allows the suffering.

He doesn't bring it about. This is persecution that comes ultimately from the devil and from the world, and unfortunately from Christians, but I question whether they indeed are Christians. But this comes from outside.

It doesn't come from him. And so when the suffering comes, we say, well, how can God be in it? Remember, he works all things for our good. And so he is using our suffering.

He is using the times that we are being persecuted. And during those times, he's anointing rests upon us in a special way. But if we are so busy fighting the situation we find ourselves in, we don't see the spirit of glory and of God because we're seeing the stuff that people are doing.

We see, hearing the words. And remember, we say sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me. That's the biggest lot of rubbish that you've ever heard in your life.

Words hurt far more than sticks and stones. But when we're so focused on the sticks and the stones and the words that we're not hearing from God and we're not seeing God in the situation, and in the process, we don't see the glory. We don't see his spirit.

We're not aware of his spirit because all I'm fixated on is the trial I'm going through. Now, while he's speaking here particularly about persecution, I think that we can apply this to our present situation because remember in chapter one, he speaks about the various trials that we go through. So there's persecution and then there are various trials.

Mostly, we're not going through much persecution right now, but we are going through various trials. Things are really getting tough. Every week, we have to readjust.

Every week, we have to change things to fit in. I really feel sorry for particularly hairdressers and people like Danielle who were open for a week and then suddenly they're closed again and everything goes back to square one again and everything has to change. And we've gone through that here.

This is not persecution. Some think it is, but it isn't. But these are trials and I believe that God is with us in these things.

If we will only see him and not focus on the trials. You remember Job and I'm almost through. I'm not even sure I'm gonna finish this verse.

But you remember Job. Job goes through this tremendous trial and I suppose you can call it persecution in a sense because the devil's getting on his case because he's such a favored man by God. And he goes through all of this stuff and he spends 30 odd chapters in the book.

It's wasted in a sense because Job is talking about and his friends are talking about why is this happening? And oh, there's this problem and maybe Job you sinned and maybe it's this and maybe it's that and maybe it's the other thing. But what is God's response to Job? What is God's response to Job? God says, no, no, don't worry, it's not so bad. You'll get over it.

No, God's response actually is a little bit harsh. We would say, well, you know, God doesn't have a lot of sympathy with Job. But God's response and it's in several chapters but we can sum it up in one sentence.

God's response is where were you when I created everything? In other words, who are you? I'm God, you're just a man. That's really what God is saying to Job and Job gets the message and Job begins to understand that it's not about what he's going through. It's about the glory of God and that he is seeing all of the trials.

Remember his trial was very, very real but he goes through all of these things and he understands in the end, it's not about my trials. It's about seeing him. It's about knowing him.

And remember that he comes to the end of the book and he says, and remember Job was a good man to begin with. There was nothing wrong with Job to begin with but he says, before I had heard of you by the hearing of my ear. In other words, I'd heard about God.

I knew about him by hearing but he says, now I've seen him and because I've seen him, I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes. You see, the whole point of the book is that Job needed to learn to look away from his circumstances and to see God. Remember we spoke a few months ago at the beginning of this crisis about Peter who walks on the water and as long as he's not looking at the waves and at the storm and at the thunder and the lightning, as long as he has his eyes on Jesus, he's able to walk on the water.

But the moment he looks away from Jesus, Peter begins to sink. And so how can we then have the spirit of glory and of God resting upon us in those situations when our eyes are on him? But when our eyes are on ourselves, woe is me, or our eyes are on our circumstances, God can do nothing for us because I'm not listening. I'm not looking where he's trying to point.

And where is he trying to point? He's trying to point to himself. He's trying to bring glory to himself through our sufferings. And so let's have our eyes on him.

I'm just gonna quickly run through the last sentence and then we'll close. On their part, in other words, those who are reproaching, on their part, he is blasphemed. But on your part, he is glorified.

Now just think about what he is saying. What is, maybe let me use this illustration and it's a back to front illustration. But you remember there was this man called Balaam.

Who was Balaam? He was the guy that the donkey spoke to. And he comes to curse the people of Israel and he opens his mouth to curse and what happens? Out comes blessing. Out comes blessing.

Now what he is saying here in a sense is not exactly the same but it's the same idea. That when they are reproaching you, when it leaves their mouths, it is reproach. It's an attack.

But when it hits you, it is glory. And he is glorified. They intend to blaspheme his name.

But in fact, in the end, he is glorified in that. And we say, well, you know, I can't understand. How can he be glorified in the blasphemy? Well, it just shows him up more and more for his glory.

This afternoon when we were setting up, the little light on the transmitter here isn't very bright and I couldn't see whether it's actually on or not. So to see if it is on, I made it dark. And suddenly I can see the light.

And sometimes it needs to get dark for God's glory to shine. Sometimes things need to start getting rather difficult in our lives for his wonder and his preciousness to be revealed in the darkness. If you have a small

little flashlight here in the city, it doesn't make a big impact.

But when you go out there in the desert and it's pitch dark and there's nothing, a little flashlight is visible for miles and miles and miles. And so the greater the darkness, the greater his glory. And the greater the reproach against us, the greater he is as he is glorified in us.

Father, we thank you for your word. These are difficult things because it is counterintuitive. Lord, it's not what we're used to.

It's not what we understand as human beings. And yet, Lord, we pray that you would help us to understand that your kingdom is in fact the upside down kingdom, that things work the other way around in the kingdom of God. We pray that you would help us to, those who would accept suffering when it comes our way, that when we are reproached for the right reasons, not for the wrong, but for the right reasons, Lord, that we would glorify you in those things.

And Lord, I'm constantly amazed as I read about the martyrs and I read how they worshiped you in the midst of the suffering, and in the midst of those fires as they were burned to death, as their limbs were pulled apart on the rack, just worshiping you and bringing glory and honor to you. Pray, Lord, that you'd help us, that even in our little suffering, Lord, relative to what they suffered, in our little suffering in the midst of this pandemic and in the midst of the political turmoil in our country, in the midst of all of these things, Lord, that we have our eyes fixed upon Jesus. And Lord, that we may glorify you.

That the world may look at us and understand and say these people are different because they're able to continue to glorify God in the midst of trials and in the midst of persecution and in the midst of difficulty. Make this real for us, Lord. We pray for those who've joined us via the internet.

We pray for your blessing upon them. And Lord, I pray that for those of our number who are not able to come because they're sick or for whatever other reasons, Lord, we pray for them that you would strengthen them. We pray that you'd go with us now in Jesus' name.

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