

Preparing for a Time of Suffering

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the necessity of preparing for suffering as a vital aspect of the Christian faith, encouraging believers to embrace trials with a perspective of hope and community support.

Duration: 39:39

Scripture: Hebrews 10:35, Hebrews 11:3-5, 1 Peter 4:12

Topics: "Suffering And Trials", "Faith And Endurance"

Description

This sermon is a call to prepare for a time of suffering, drawing from the experiences of the past and the need for endurance, confidence, and love in the face of trials. It emphasizes the importance of faith, endurance, and separating from evil, while trusting in God's faithfulness and love. The message encourages believers to stand firm, have courage, and be prepared for the challenges ahead, knowing that God will be with them through it all.

Transcript

I'm speaking a message this morning that I wish I didn't have to. But in obedience to God, in the circumstance and day we find ourselves in, it's a heavy title, preparing for a time of suffering. But if you will hold on and just let me finish the message, you'll be shouting at the end.

Now, some of you will be shouting for victory, and others will be shouting at me, but you'll be shouting nevertheless when this message is over. First Peter, Chapter 4, please, if you will. First Peter, Chapter 4. Thank you, Greg and choir, for a wonderful time of worship.

Orchestra, God bless you for that this morning. First Peter, Chapter 4. Father, I thank you, God, with all my heart. Lord, you never leave us as your people in the dark.

We are not children of darkness, your word says, but children of light. And there is no day that should overtake us as a thief. You will speak if we want to listen.

If our hearts are open, you will tell us. And so Father God, I ask you for an anointing from heaven. You've already confirmed the word with your presence here today.

Lord, you wouldn't confirm with your presence what wasn't from your mouth. I know this. And so God, I'm asking you in Jesus' name to give me the ability to speak this in a way that every person can hear it and understand this comes from the heart of a God who loves us and cares.

And I pray, God, for an anointing for everyone in the sanctuary, those that are online today, to be able to hear this. And Father, give us grace for the days in which we are about to enter. I thank you for it in Jesus' name.

1 Peter chapter 4, preparing for a time of suffering. Now, you remember that in this church, for those that were here just prior to 9-11, before the towers were struck, God warned us as a congregation. Beginning in about July, a soberness came into this auditorium that I remember we couldn't sing as a choir.

There were times we couldn't preach. We couldn't pray. We didn't know what to do.

Pastors would just sit here, and we'd just look at each other. And we'd look down the row, and nobody wanted to get up because presence of the Lord was in the sanctuary. And the only thought, there was a continuous thought in all of our hearts, is that we were about to face some very, very difficult days in the city, that people will be running in the streets.

They would be terrified. We didn't know why. But we were to be prepared as a congregation to minister to them.

Now, not everybody was willing to hear this message. There were several dozens, if not even a few hundred, that said, we didn't come here for this. We came here to be blessed.

We didn't come to hear that a calamity was coming to the city. And they left during that time. But for those who stayed, when the towers were struck, I just remember the sense of strength and stability in this congregation when men and women said, we heard from God.

We weren't caught unawares. And people were ready to minister. People started showing up from all over the city that were part of this congregation.

And they rolled up their sleeves. And they said, tell us what to do. We're ready to minister.

We began to buy out the small stores that are around here, water and food. We put people out into the streets. We sent a truck down to Ground Zero.

We were ready as a congregation. If we are open to hear, the Lord never leaves us in a place where we're caught off guard. We're not children of darkness.

What it really takes is courage. It takes courage for the preachers to preach it. And it takes courage for the people to hear it.

We all want to hear that our finest and best days are just ahead of us. And folks, when a nation is about to go into judgment, one of the final signs is the rise of the good time prophet. You see that all the way through the Old Testament, even in the New, the good time prophets arise.

And they preach this continued prosperity, endless joy, and advantage. And when that starts happening, you know that difficult days are right at the door, when there's very, very few voices left. I'm reminded, as I prepared this message this week, that in 1987, God put a burden on a man's heart, Pastor David Wilkerson.

And he founded this church. And the Lord told him if he would obey him, he said, if you will obey me, I will give you a facility that will take your breath away. He said, I'm sending you to New York City to gather a

remnant.

In other words, to gather a people who want to walk with God, the people who are interested in the real, sincere walk with God through Jesus Christ. And I want you to warn them that judgment is coming to the city. Pastor David saw 1,000 fires burning in New York City.

He said there were race riots. And he said it would affect not only New York City, but many major cities throughout the country. And you and I know that those days might be starting in our midst.

Hope to God they aren't, but they might be. You and I don't know for sure. But we have prayed in this church.

And we said, God, let there be 1,000 fires of revival burning in this city before those other days come. Let there be 1,000 churches whose doors don't close, and people can come in by the thousands and begin to seek God and find Christ as Lord and Savior. And that's what we pray for.

Because mercy triumphs. It doesn't mean judgment is not coming. But mercy triumphs over it.

Mercy takes away its finality. When men and women have found Christ as Savior, it doesn't matter what times happen to come to this world or to this city. Heaven is their home, and mercy has triumphed.

I thank God for that with all my heart. 1 Peter chapter 4, beginning at verse 12. Peter says, 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 also may 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 as 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.

Let those who suffer according to the will of God. What a foreign doctrine to this day we live in. Those who suffer according to the will of God.

There are some people today in America who would say, I thought the purpose of God was to keep us from all suffering, not necessarily so. You remember when Paul the apostle was first touched by the spirit of God, there was a gentleman sent to the house in which he was residing, the Holy Spirit said to him, I will show this man what great things he must suffer for my name's sake. He was a man appointed to suffer, and to this day I can say thank God that he was, because in that suffering he found the keeping power of God that is not available to the casual seeker, not available to the person who just lives for God for the sake of themselves.

No, Paul lived for the benefit of others, lived for the glory of God, and because of it, God put a pen in his hand and he wrote words that have opened the doorway to eternity to hundreds of millions of people over

the last 2,000 years. In the first years of the Christian church, the Lord was always faithful to warn his church when difficult days were on the horizon. In the book of Acts, I'll just read it to you, chapter 11, verses 27 to 30, it says, and in these days came, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Then one of them named Agabus stood up and showed by the spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. Now, it's not necessarily a popular message when God begins to warn of hardship, but historically, the early church moved to make preparation both for themselves and for other people, they received it, there was a witness of the spirit.

There's something in your heart that bears witness. If I'm speaking the truth this morning, there's something inside of you that says this is right. God's Holy Spirit has to bear witness, doesn't much matter what I say, it matters that the spirit bears witness in your heart that what you're hearing is the truth.

And this prophet Agabus stood up and said, there's gonna be a great famine throughout all the world. And of course, it was going to happen, and it wasn't happening at the particular time, but the disciples, the church heard it, and they moved each according to his ability, not only to prepare for themselves, but to prepare for others who were going to be in need. The apostle Peter cautions in verse 12, because all the seasons, as seasons of peace, God's people can become complacent and forget that we live in a world that can suddenly and even violently become opposed to Christ and those who belong to him.

We have strangers in a strange land, folks. And this world is, at its core, hostile to Christ, hostile to the lordship of Jesus Christ, hostile to the cross of Jesus Christ, hostile to the lifestyle of Jesus Christ. But there are seasons where there seems to be this ability to intermix, where the church is accepted, the world is accepted in the church, and the church is accepted in the world.

But suddenly, and it's starting to happen now, you know this, I don't have to convince you, suddenly a fiery trial starts to happen. Suddenly the church, which has been operating in relative peace, suddenly comes into fierce opposition. Suddenly bakers who won't bake a cake for a wedding that they disagree with find themselves out of business.

All of a sudden, there's this hostility coming towards that which represents God and represents truth. And though the church had been operating in relative peace, opposition in Asia Minor was growing and would soon be officially sanctioned by the government. When Peter wrote around AD 62, 63, the church was essentially accepted and there had been peace, but there was this growing anti-Christian sentiment in the society.

Folks, listen to me. They were only a year or two away from Rome burning, and the Christians being blamed for it, and the streets being filled with the blood of those who were followers of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit knew this.

Now, I'm not saying that's coming our way. I'm just giving you a history lesson. God knew it, and he put it in the hand of the apostle Peter to say a trial is coming your way, and it's not a strange thing.

It's not odd. We've lived in peace, and thank God for the season of peace that we've had, but don't think it's strange when this world turns against you, as it will against Christ. This world is mounting a wholesale rebellion against the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our generation.

Lawlessness is going to abound until the day that Christ removes the restraining hand of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the rapture of the church is my personal belief. I believe it could happen any moment.

I believe the trumpet of the Lord's gonna sound, the dead in Christ are going to rise, and we who are alive and remain are gonna be gathered with them, but it doesn't mean that there may not be some difficult days between now and then. Peter says in verse 13 of chapter four, rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings that when his glory is revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. In other words, remember that an eternal kingdom and great joy is just before you.

Don't lose sight of that. Christianity is not just about getting along in this world. It's not all about just being happy in the here and now, for the scripture bears witness that your life and mine, we're just a vapor.

We're just here for a moment. I think I'm more aware than I've ever been that my life is just a vapor. I'm 62.

I was talking to my wife yesterday. I said, you know, in 20 years or so, maybe less, we're gonna be in heaven. This is all gonna be over, maybe less.

But a great and eternal kingdom is before us. This world's only temporary, but heaven is forever. It never ends.

A million years from now, 10 million years from now, we will remember because the Bible says we will know as we are known. We'll remember having been here. We'll remember the words of this meeting.

We'll remember that God warned us. We'll remember that we made a choice to walk with Jesus and we will be forever thankful. Verse 14 says, 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. Remember, Peter says that when this world rejects you, it's a declaration that the spirit of God rests on you. If the world accepted you, it would mean that you are one of its own.

But when you make the choice to step out of the ways of a fallen world and you begin to embrace the value system of God's holy word, you trust in the power of the Holy Spirit, that every promise of God that is made to you, that you will become a new creation, that God himself will fulfill in you as you just simply walk with him, your life changes, your conversation changes, your heart changes, your motives change. And then suddenly, don't think it's a strange thing that this world will reject you. We are going in one direction and the people of this world are going in another.

Hallelujah. But here's where the preparation begins. Remember the early church in Acts 11, they said they started making preparation, not just for themselves, but for others.

And we've got to make preparation now. Peter says, let none of you suffer as a murderer. First John 3.15, John said, whoever hates his brother is a murderer.

Folks, we got to get away from racism. We got to get away from all of the cultural things that are dividing this society. We've got to get away from it.

We've got to forgive. We've got to hate it. We've got to put it away.

So this, you have no part in me anymore. I'm not going to be, I'm not going to let this spirit of murder, this spirit of hatred get a hold of me. I'm not going to let it become part of my life and my conversation.

Jesus Christ died for all people, of all persuasions, of all lifestyles. I'm not going to get on a soap box and start pointing my finger at various elements of society. I'm going to stand at the cross and call all men, all women of every race, every language, every culture, every lifestyle, everybody, to the forgiveness that God offers through Jesus Christ.

I will not be a partaker of hating my brother. I will not be a partaker of hating my brother. Let none of you suffer as a thief, living in a place of unlawfully taking or withholding at somebody else's expense.

Let every one of us work with our hands, the scripture says, and have something to give to those that have need. Let's not be takers, let's be givers. Let's not be selfish.

let's live that Christ's love might be known through us or as an evildoer 2nd Corinthians 6 17 says come out from among them and be separate says the Lord do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you don't suffer because you become a partaker with evil it's time folks listen to me on this it's time to separate yourself from evil and I don't have to define it you already know what it is it's time to make the choice it's time to take the step it's time to turn it's time to get out of that relationship leave that club put that book down put that internet site away it's time to become separate from the things that are weakening you and blinding you this is or as a busybody in other people's matters a gossip a critic somebody that's too quick to speak on advisedly but the preparation

doesn't end there according to the book of Hebrews chapter 10 here's another thing we have to do to prepare verse 32 it says but recall the former days in which after you were illuminated you endured a great struggle with sufferings remind yourself how faithful God has been how God brought you through all of your former trials your former rejections your former struggles how good God has been remind yourself remind yourself you can say I'm not where I think I should be but thank God I'm not where I used to be and he brought me out of captivity and he took me out of living a life for the devil and he took me out of those initial struggles and he brought me through you remember when you first came to Christ your family all thought you were crazy your former friends wouldn't hang out with

you anymore people started accusing you at work just because you do right now they're accusing you in the workplace because you speak the truth you won't cook the books you don't work under the table you do it all right and now you you're facing the brunt of accusation but you were willing in the beginning and God showed himself strong and he brought you through he didn't fail you did he he didn't forsake you did he and he won't fail you in the days ahead remind yourself David did that when he failed and he made mistakes and he brought his own followers into a place of captivity sat down on the ground says he encouraged himself in the Lord and in my heart I I see King David going back to his youth and back to the time when he was in the flock back to the time when he fought the lion back

to when he fought the bear back to when he came into the camp of Israel back to when he had to endure the mockery of his own brothers back to when he ran into the valley to face Goliath and he remembered how faithful God had been to him even though he had made mistakes and fallen in measure by the wayside God had been faithful and it's so important as we prepare for the days ahead that we remember God is faithful God cannot fail God cannot forsake you verse 34 Paul says or the writer of Hebrews says you had compassion on me and my chains and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven in other words we were

assured of what we believed and we had confidence in the pathway before us was worth the price

you had compassion on me and my chains many of these believers hadn't suffered but they knew that suffering had been the portion of others who had gone before them they knew it even though they themselves have not suffered and in their heart they took the plundering of their goods in other words they said every one of you have come to Christ has to have said this where you leave me I will follow what you asked me to be I will be by the grace of God where you send me I will go in the plundering of your goods is the laying down of of of all your own plans and dreams and ambitions and ways you thought your life should should work out and you took up the plan of God for your life but you knew that suffering could be part of it even though it wasn't we have been a church age largely I know

many of you have suffered you've gone through your own valleys and your struggles your trials being single parents and fighting to find a job and trying to keep your family together or getting over the heartbreak of divorce or loss I know you've gone through struggles and trials but we've been in a environment of relative peace but that's soon to change and we know that from time to time suffering can be the call and the cup of following Jesus Christ he said you joyfully took this boiling of your goods and you were assured that it was worth it here's how you prepare be assured it's worth it it's worth it no matter what I have to go through no matter what people say or do it's worth it I'm fighting for something eternal not just for myself but for others I'm fighting that people might come

to the saving knowledge of Christ and that we might leave something for our children verse 35 he says therefore do not cast away your confidence which is great reward for you have need of endurance so after you've done the will of God you may receive the promise for yet a little while and he was coming will come and will not tarry now the just shall live by faith don't cast away your confidence when things start to go south I don't know what the future is I I've asked the Lord doesn't show it to me I just know it's going to be difficult don't cast away your confidence keep your confidence in God you have need of endurance and he just shall live by faith and we go into the next chapter of Hebrews chapter 11 I just want to speak about three things very very quickly verse 3 it says by faith

we understand the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible here's the point God has the power to create a place of safety for you which cannot be seen with the natural eye a place of safety a place of peace a place of joy a place of knowing that I am till God says I'm not a place where angels begin to walk with men an incredible place not visible David talked about he said God took me out of the miry clay he set my feet on a rock put a song a new song in my heart and many will see it and fear and trust in the Lord in other words they look and say well where did he get into this place and how what how does one find this place this place of joy this place of confidence this place of trust it's an understanding God has

the power to create a place of safety for you place where you can sing going down the street no matter how difficult it might be place where you can sing on the subway a place where you can sing walking into the workplace even when they're threatening you with the loss of your job because you stand for Christ or at least you're just an honest person that's what we're coming to where honesty is now becoming punished verse 4 it says by faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain through which he obtained witness that he was righteous God says I will bear witness myself of my presence in your life God says I will bear witness you open the doors of your temple you make the choice to separate from that which defiles it I will bear witness I will bear witness to myself in

your life I'll be the light in your eye I'll be the thoughts in your mind I'll be the words in your mouth I'll be the tenderness in your hands I'll be the path before your feet I'll be your coming in I'll be you're going out I'll bless you when there seems to be no tangible way you could ever be blessed I will bless you I will keep you I'll protect you and I'll preserve you Lord says I'll bear witness and lastly in verse 5 it says by faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death and was not found because God had taken him for before he was taken he had this testimony that he pleased God by faith God will draw you to himself so the power of death and sin cannot touch you as it touches many around you God will draw you to himself you protect you thousand fall at your hand your

right hand 10,000 at your left but it will not come now you there's going to be a fellowship in the body of Jesus Christ like you and I have never seen in our lifetime there's going to be a joy when we come together there's going to be times when we don't want to leave the house of God because there's nothing to leave it for we're going to come together we're going to sing we're going to shout we're going to dance we can do a Jericho March I don't care what we do the joy of the Lord's going to be in this house the joy of the Lord is going to be our strength there's coming a day when sinners are going to come into this house and others like it in droves looking for the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus say tell us your reason for the hope that you still have the hope is in Christ and the

hope has come because we took the time to prepare we heard the warning of God we knew the dark days were coming but by God's grace we got oil and put it in our laps and we can point to this generation and say behold the bridegroom comes go ye out to meet him first Peter 4:19 Peter says therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to him and doing good as to a faithful creator if you suffer according to the will of God commit your soul to him and don't cease to do good he will be faithful to you many before us have had to go through the trials of fire they've had to go through floods we've studied it we've studied the children of Israel we studied the Hebrew boys we've studied the Prophet Daniel we've studied the early church and now in God's grace he may

give us the privilege of glorifying him by allowing others to see his strength in us in a time of suffering I don't know what form this is going to take I've told you that but I know this society is turning against the testimony of Christ at a very very rapid rate now we have warned you for many years here that this was coming the days are here we need endurance the writer of Hebrew says don't cast away your confidence which is great reward for you have need of endurance so that after you've done the will of God you may receive the promise I need endurance you need endurance I need that inner ability not to quit not to back up not to draw back to try to preserve myself I need the ability and I believe that God is going to give it to us in this last day I do with all my heart because the

when you read the scriptures you realize that the best wine is always saved for the end of the banquet I don't see a whimpering church going out into eternity I see a victorious church a church that is Christ's honoring a church that is standing in the power of the Holy Spirit just like she began in the book of Acts I see this with all my heart we see multitudes coming into the house of God Lord's burdening our hearts to prepare for it now we need endurance I've been praying for endurance in my own life I don't have the strength to do what God's calling me to do but he does and I have the sense to know that I don't and he does and so I have to turn to him with all my heart and let him begin to speak and give me the courage to get everything out of my life that's going to weaken me just as

you have to do it's time of preparation Lord take everything out of my life that will bring weakness into my heart and bring me into that place where your strength within me will become my endurance and we need

confidence for the future because many of us are afraid it is a fearful thing to come into times as we are in today where the gospel is no longer in a place where it will be tolerated for much for many more days where God's people are going to be the focus of persecution again we need courage the only thing I know that cast fear out of the heart is the scripture says perfect love cast out all fear I need to know you need to know that you're loved by God and God will not forsake you you are held in the palm of his hand and he's going to hold you until the day you stand before his

throne and we need to love people all people everyone created in the image of God no matter how they're living today all men and women are created in the image of God and Christ died for all and when you and I have that kind of love come into our hearts it casts away fear we will fight for them because we love them and it will be the love of God that's emanating from our hearts and just for a little season it's going to be hard but one day one day one day one day you and I are going to be at the throne of grace one day we will all say thank God we made the right choice thank God we were willing to hear his word thank God we turned to him it was amazing and there'll be testimonies throughout eternity of how God kept us how he walked with us how he empowered us how he changed us how he gave

us that new mind and that new heart and that new spirit that are promised to us and we will make a significant difference in our generation we are not going to be pushed into a corner because God can't be pushed into a corner we're not going to be driven out of society because you cannot drive God who is omnipresent which means he's everywhere you can't drive somebody who's everywhere out of anywhere you understand you cannot drive God out of your society by God's grace he has a church and we will stand I believe it with all my heart I want to give an altar call this morning for people who are afraid because of your present trial and we're just going to pray that God give you the courage that you need and the people who need confidence in God strength to be able to face tomorrow endurance

for your present trials and the ones that might be coming your way and all we're going to do is pray together there is no real there's no mystical formula to this we just pray and ask God to be our strength and he says yes I will whatever you ask for the scripture says you shall receive that your joy might be full I believe that we are going to be a witness of Christ in this generation you are I am all of us together we're going to be a witness of Christ as we stand together please if the Lord's drawing you that's the cry of your heart just come please so we can pray together we'll worship for a few moments and then we're going to pray ask the Lord for courage endurance confidence don't give up in your present trial he won't forsake you don't let the devil lie to you and tell you you're

going to get through are you going to be pushed to the sidelines that's not going to happen just come please after about 10 minutes of worship we'll pray together hallelujah 19 November 1989 pastor Teresa and I came back from Eastern Canada after having just preached an evangelistic campaign there to come back and find our home that we had worked 12 years to build burnt to the ground and I remember standing there in the yard looking at the foundation that's all it was left and remembering where I sat there was from our kitchen there was a three steps or so going up into the living room and I sat there with my guitar and wrote that song one day and you but in moments of hardship you can make wrong choices wrong decisions I made the choice to declare that God is faithful and God is good and

there's a divine purpose to everything that he allows into our lives whether we understand it or we don't understand it you know our three children were home and through a circumstance really divine they were saved and yesterday I was holding my newest grandson I lost the house folks but God will never allow us to be tested above that we can bear and even what looks like to be a disaster turns out to be a blessing I

can stand here today and I've come through sickness I come through sorrow it comes through fire trial difficulty and I can stand here and say God is faithful thank you Jesus and God will be faithful to you no matter how bad your situation looks no matter how difficult your home life might be or how precarious your job is at the moment or lack thereof how much you're being

reviled in your colleges because you believe in God marginalized can put down a stupid in your school because you you believe there's a creator an intelligent design in the universe God will not fail you and you will not regret having put your confidence in him you will never regret it for all of eternity let me pray for you father I would you join hands with the person beside you at the altar and in the congregation because none of us can do this alone don't worry about the diseases you can wash your hands on the way out the door Lord God Almighty we are a body and none of us can do this alone and we must encourage one another now help us to make preparation for each other not just for ourselves but for others around us give us a love Lord in this church that cannot be found in this

world it can only be found in Christ guide us and guard us and protect us Lord from discouragement wanting to swallow our hearts as we look around and just see everything crumbling under our feet God keep us in the love of Christ and father I thank you for this with all my heart help us Lord to make a difference especially now in these dark days and we thank you for it and we praise you for it in Jesus name amen and amen praise God

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26402.mp3>

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/E04JE2FZHBw.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/carter-conlon/preparing-for-a-time-of-suffering/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net