

How Satan Destroys a Church - Part 4 (The Worm That Had to Die)

by Don Courville

The centrality of Christianity is the cross, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus Christ, and the power of Christ in our lives comes from suffering and death.

Duration: 46:58

Scripture: Isaiah 53:2

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of suffering and its purpose in the lives of believers. He suggests that God allows suffering to come upon individuals and nations as a way to awaken them from spiritual complacency. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having a genuine faith and warns against hypocrisy, as Satan can use hypocrites to destroy the church. He also shares the story of a man without arms and legs who overcame his suffering by relying on the power of Christ. The sermon concludes with a discussion of a particular worm that symbolizes the need for death and suffering in order to attain eternal life.

Transcript

We'll start off, we've already had one portion of Scripture to read, and this one has to do with the suffering of Christ, Isaiah 53. Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there's no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way.

And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shears is done, so he

opened not his mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, actually just to crush him.

He had put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

And by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoiled with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death. And he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Let's pray. Oh our Father, thank you for the suffering that you went through for us. And we know that this wasn't the end of the story, that he arose, the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the grave the third day in victory, given us victory, overcoming by the power of the blood of the Lamb.

Thank you for rising from the dead for us, Lord, dying for our sins on the cross. And we commit this time to you, this morning, that the Spirit of God would open up our hearts to the Word of God, and to the centrality and the reality of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

You may be seated. I'm going to do a little something different from what I said last week. We're going to do what I said last week, but I think since this was the time we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, whether it's the right time or not, there's some discussion about the dates and the times on this subject, but it's the idea that we're looking at anyway.

But I was looking at this, and meditating on this, and we're going through this series on how Satan destroys the church. And as I looked at the resurrection of Christ, it just dawned on me, it really hit me this morning, how the centrality of Christianity is the cross, the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ. But in this world that we live in, very few have entered into the resurrection power of Christ.

And why is that? Why is it? And so our churches, we fight, and we fume, and we sputter and spurt, and we argue, and we divide, and then if we're not doing that, then we're going to get over and we get all involved in our programs, and the programs are not necessarily bad, but we can just sort of get sidetracked from Christ Himself. Why is that? What is the core of producing the power in the Christian life? What is missing? If it's missing in your life, what is missing in the professing church? Because we know that we're very worldly, we're very selfish, we're very egotistical, and proud, very touchy, and all kinds of things. You know, you get in the wrong pew some places, you can really get in trouble.

Now, I want to just present to you something that I was meditating on yesterday and the day before, mostly yesterday, but the thought hit me on January 1st, and I wrote it down in my little notebook that I keep notes in. It was a verse that I hit, and it came from Isaiah 41, 14, and it's mentioned several places in the Scripture, but it's the word worm. In Isaiah 41, in verse 10, God is dealing with Israel as usual, and He's not speaking specifically of Jacob, and Jacob sometimes would be a reference.

His name was changed to Israel, so sometimes the nation of Israel would be referred to. But in verse 10, He says, Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God.

I will strengthen thee, and yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. You come on down, and He tells them in 13, to fear not again, and then 14, He says, Fear not thou worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel. I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Well, I did a little studying on that worm, and so I've titled this message, The Worm That Had to Die. Next week, we'll do The Frog That Could Fly in this series, but The Worm That Had to Die, and I did some studying on this. This was just not any ordinary worm.

If you could call it a worm, I'm not into bugs and insects too much, and frogs and spiders and all that stuff, but this is an interesting worm. And Henry Morris has a very beautiful description of this, and I thought I might read to you a little bit about this. The technical name for this worm, I don't even know if I can pronounce it right.

It's even almost, it might be a crime to try on this. The Caucasus elysis, and I'm sure I've just butchered it all to pieces. I didn't have time to find out the right way to pronounce it.

I've got the technical stuff about this worm here. The dried bodies of the females of a scaled insect allied to the Cochean aerial insect and found on several species of oak near the Mediterranean. They are round, about the size of a pea, contain coloring matter, analogous to carmine, and are used in dying.

They were anciently thought to be of a vegetable nature and were used in medicine. And just one little thing about it, so after slaughtering the name of it, let's look at this worm a little bit. Then we're going to come back to the Scriptures, because God said that Jacob was a worm.

And also, the amazing thing in Psalms 22, a messianic psalm, in verse 6, there's a reference to Christ being a worm. And coming out of the mouth, the inspired mouth of the pen of David, he says, you just read, let me read verse 1 of Psalms 22. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me and from the words of my ruin? And of course, we know that Christ said these words on the cross when he's being crucified.

Now, you've got to remember that many of these psalms, they're just coming from the heart of a man that is suffering deeply. And whatever he's going through here at this time must have been the most excruciating, painful thing that someone could go through. And he says in verse 2, O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not, and in the night season am not silent.

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee. They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

They cried unto thee, and were delivered. They trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man.

I reproach a man, and despise of the people. The suffering you went through must have been intense. Now, the truth of this worm, as Henry Morris said, I might read you a little bit about this.

That this spiritual, the truth that spiritual eternal life can only be attained on the basis of the suffering and death of the Creator of life is symbolized everywhere in the world of nature by the fact that even the birth of a new physical life must always be preceded by a time of travail and willingness to die on the part of the mother. Many, we know, that will give their life in giving birth. We know the salmon will swim up the rivers and lay their eggs, and then they'll die.

And so, this is one of the things of nature. And so, this particular worm will go and attach itself to a tree very tightly. And it will lay its eggs.

And in the process of dying, the juice, I guess, I don't know if you'd call it blood, but the juice of this creature is scarlet. Matter of fact, this is the word. I went and looked it up yesterday as I did.

And scarlet, 34 times, this same word for worm is used eight times, but scarlet 34 times. So, it's a scarlet color. She stains herself.

She stains the tree. And out of her death comes the little babies. And so, this thing was a very valuable thing because they would gather them and they would crush them.

And then they would use them for the dye. And he has all kinds of interesting, beautiful things to talk about this worm. But for just time's sake, I won't go into a lot that he said.

But the thing about this worm that I want us to focus on is that it died. It seems to go through a crushing, which would be a suffering. All of this is speaking of Christ.

And so, I want to just take some time to look at the lessons on the worm. The value of Christ, the value of Christ was that he was created to be crushed. And I saw this in this bug, if you can call it a bug or whatever, a worm.

It was created, it's created by God to be crushed, to give us the dye. Christ came into this world to suffer. The missing element in the church, and if Satan can move us away from the centrality of Christ, being focused in on the cross of Christ, if he can move us off the center, then he can destroy the church.

And how do we get moved off center? We get focused on other things than Christ. We get focused on the fact that I didn't get my way at the last business meeting. We get focused on the way that, well, the preacher didn't shake my hand.

Or so-and-so cut in front of me in the potluck supper, and whatever. And we are off center. The early church was on center, and what was the chief characteristic of the early church in being on center for Christ? It was their suffering.

Even if they saw them in two, it was their suffering. What was it that brought about the power in Christ's life? It was his death, his burial, and his resurrection, the suffering, the whole process. And I'm going to take you into this a little bit.

And so, what happened from there to here? It's happened all along the line. Any time the enemy can move us away from the centrality of the cross, and that's the being focused on Christ, and get us off on ourself, and on other things, whatever, it doesn't matter what it is, he can negate the power that is possible in our life. He can nullify it and cancel it.

And so, Christ, he came to die. What did the Apostle Paul say? For me to live is what? To die. And what is dying? It's suffering.

It's self-sacrifice. It's giving. That's what's the opposite.

It's getting, not suffering. Oh, brother, this is terrible that something happened to you. Oh, so-and-so did this to you.

Oh, we'll get him. We all know that no butterfly will ever fly if it doesn't come out of the cocoon through the process of suffering. You take a knife, and that'd be about the only way.

You can probably get it open from what I hear. It's a very tough little cocoon. But you slit it open, as one guy did one time, to help it out, and it just was crippled.

It couldn't fly. It just withered up and died. And so, the value of this little creature was that it was made to be crushed.

I went through and looked up all the words for scarlet. That's an interesting subject, because if you go to Exodus, especially, it's just over and over again. There's blue and purple and scarlet, over and over and over and over.

And it's used many times. What color rope did Joshua look for when they came to the city, and there was a rope hanging down the wall? It was a scarlet cord. It's the rope of life.

It's the color of life. It's the color of blood, I guess you could say. Interesting thing on that study, but I'm not going to go into all of that.

Now, I want to take you and go through a little bit of Psalms. Just yesterday, I was doing this, and I just started weeping. I just began to weep as I read through these things, and I looked at these things.

I actually went over to see what Spurgeon had to say on Psalms 22 6, and I went down, and these thoughts would just come to my mind out of looking at what he said, and I began to weep. Here was my Savior. My Savior saying, I am a worm through the lips of the psalmist, but I am a worm and no man.

Look, I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. And I thought on these things, and I just began to write them down. A worm, helpless, helpless, just to be crushed, powerless, and not only that, unnoticed.

How many of these have you seen? Well, we don't see them around here probably too much, but I lived over in the Mediterranean area. I lived over there for almost a year and a half, and I tromped around those countries. I wish I had known about this worm.

I would have looked for it, but I would see it. I would see the beautiful carpets in the markets. It just never entered my mind.

Unnoticed. You know, when Christ was crucified, there were crowds of people passing by probably. It just made me glance over there.

Some of them could care less that a man was dying on the cross for their sins. Three men dying up there, going down the road. Could care less.

The thoughtless crowds. Maybe some would look and jeer. Maybe some might stop and pick up a stone and throw it over that way, or whatever.

But just unnoticed. This worm might be unnoticed, but he was very important, or she, whatever it was. Despised, crushed, beaten, spit upon.

This was Jesus. And, get this word, rejected. This is the thing that brings out suffering, was the rejection.

You can suffer with honor. You know that. Many have suffered for our land in honor.

But if you suffer with rejection, that's no honor. He did that for me, and He did that for you. And when we forget that, we get off the centrality of Christ, and we move over on ourself.

And then, if you are focused on self, what do you got to watch out for? You got to watch out for yourself. But if we're focused on Christ, we're crucified with Christ, and nevertheless, we live, yet not us. It's Christ that lives in us.

Christ will take care of us. But as long as we're focused on ourself, then we're concerned about ourself. But Christ, because He was not focused on Himself, He was focused on the glory of God, and living for the power of God, and the purpose of God, He allowed Himself to be rejected.

And then, get this, He was a worm, and He says, and no man. Isn't that an interesting thought? He was no man. Wow.

And I wrote down these thoughts. Deserted by His Father. And that was what, my God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me? Deserted by His Father.

Deserted by His disciples. Betrayed by His leader. Sold as a slave for 30 pieces of silver.

As a man, He says, I'm no man. And no rights, no privileges, no representatives. There He was, being crushed on the cross.

Treated as an outlaw. Unjustly condemned. Emptied of all His glory.

No reputation left. But let me tell you, when He rose from the grave, it was all past. It was all worth it.

But He had to go through all that stuff to get to the resurrection power. And we, if we refuse to go through the suffering, if we refuse to go to the cross, we become a Christless Christian, if you can call someone like that. We refuse to be crucified, thus we will refuse to have the power of Christ in our life.

Is there any power in our churches, in our lands? Very little. Why? Because we do not understand the wonderful privilege of being crucified with Christ. And if Satan can get us off that, he can destroy the church.

He can destroy it. There's another thing. He says, a reproach of men.

He was a byword and a joke. That hurts pretty hard if you become a byword and a joke. And then, despised of the people.

One day they would crown Him. The next day they would crucify Him. You don't need to hang around crowds like that too much.

But that's the type of people Jesus has said that we're to go and minister to. Not those that just will pat you on the back and say, boy I really appreciate you. But those that will spit in your face.

Those that will throw down your tracks. Those that will curse you. I'll never forget one time, I don't know if Roy was there in Joplin at the tents when we were sharing the gospel over there one time at a circus.

But there were some kids into witchcraft. And this one kid, he just took my track. He just held it up and looked at me and just grinned and just tore it to pieces right in front of me.

That didn't bother me. I just went to praying for the power of God to work in him and save his soul. But you know what would happen? If that would happen to us and we're not filled with the Spirit, we'd get offended.

Why you dirty kids. That track, I paid two cents for that. No.

But what comes out of a crucified Christian is love and compassion for the kid. Because, but for the grace of God, I was in his place. And I was over in that other side of me.

Not a bit into the stuff he was in. I was in the other stuff. It doesn't matter what the devil gets you into.

Jesus is going to get you out. Despise of the people. I want to say this.

If you won't live for Him, you won't die for Him when it comes down to it. And if you won't live for Him, you will deny Him at some point. So if we won't live for Him, and so what do we have? I know of a church up in, as I said, I'm sharing this.

I got a lot of stories from around up in Nebraska. They split over the color of the carpet. And you go there and they got this beautiful purple carpet.

And I think maybe purple seats. And I've been in a purple church before too. I was in here one last year.

But it's not worth it for the cause of Christ. Somebody was not crucified. Or maybe the whole bunch.

I don't know. We will deny Him. And He was denied there at that point.

Now, I want to give you about three lessons. This worm was created to be crushed. And I got a lot of scriptures that I was going through.

And I didn't really take the time to mark out all of these scriptures. I had just lots of them. But Philippians 2, chapter 8 says, And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Can you imagine? If you were born, and God lets you be born for the sole purpose to be crushed someday. That was the purpose of Jesus. To be crushed.

And He had to go through the crucifixion so that the resurrection would come about. Obedient unto death. That's what this little worm is for.

Without the death, then there's no resurrection life. And without the death to self, there's no resurrection in power in our life. And let me tell you something.

It is not popular in our country to be a crucified Christian. But in some countries, that's the only type there is. Isn't it interesting? And so, is it any wonder if God would bring upon our land waves of things? Terrors, storms, whatever.

To say, you boys and girls have been too soft. There's not enough of my life coming out of you. And so, He lets us go through some suffering.

I serve a risen Savior. He's in the world today. There was a passage of Scripture.

I didn't mark it, but I'm going to turn over because I'm in the neighborhood. In 2 Corinthians 4, 7. If I've got the right one. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

Think about it. He said, For God and six who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. By the way, Satan can do a whole lot more with a hypocrite in destroying the church than he probably can do with anybody because that person doesn't have the power.

And so, if someone gets into positions of power, we're talking about leadership. Get into positions of leadership, but do not really have the power of Christ working through their life. It's deadly.

It's deadly. And then, so He says, We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.

We are perplexed, but not in despair. This is the life of dying, the suffering, the crucifixion that the Apostle went through. He said in verse 9, Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Cast down, but not destroyed. Always bearing a child in the body, in His life. What? The dying of the Lord Jesus.

Why? What's the purpose of that? That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Would it offend you if I called you a worm? Probably not now.

Yesterday it might have. They come up, Why, are you a worm? But that would be a term of honor. The psalmist said, I'm a worm.

I know a preacher who had been seeking to get close to God for years and years. And so God let him go through a crucifixion, a horrible crucifixion. And the Lord had told him he was going to go through a crucifixion, but he had been to God all the time.

Oh, that I might know you and the power of your resurrection, the fellowship of your sufferings. So God brought something into his life. Whoa! The whole world turned upside down.

So one day he's over there complaining to the Lord about all the woes and things that come along. And the Lord whispered into his spirit, What are you crying about? You've been asking for years to be crucified with Christ. This is what it is to be crucified with Christ.

You wanted the power without the process. And now that you've got it, what are you complaining about? No crushing, no power. You know, we'll be a worm for Christ.

And if we will not receive Christ and we die and we go to hell, we'll be eaten by worms. I was looking at the scriptures on that, where the worm doesn't die. Go to Isaiah 66, 24.

There's another lesson here. The first, the worm was created to be crushed. And the next one is, if we are crucified with Christ, we will suffer.

We will suffer. And I guess this is the thing about our Christianity. We're so smart.

We're so smart, we're just dumb. Because we think that we can manufacture the power of Christ in our lives, in our churches, and all over without the cross. But the Bible says, For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

And also it says, All that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. I may not have quoted that exactly right. But we will suffer.

We will. That's part of the process. And refusal to be focused with Christ on the cross is just refusing the power of the resurrection life.

And so we got padded pews, and we got padded crosses. You can probably get one in any kind of color you want. You could probably get one that has a compartment for your candy to store it.

You can just get any kind of little cross you want. With lots of padding, and with a wheel on it even. In case you want to carry it around, it doesn't drag down in the pad to keep it from cutting in your shoulder.

But that's not the type of cross that you're going to take up. And I want to tell you something. Jesus Christ gave His disciples the option of whether to take up the cross or not.

It's something that we choose to do. He gives us the opportunities by bringing us the suffering that comes into our life. And so what we do when God gives us the opportunity, we turn and look at the opportunity and get bitter at it.

And God has sent it our way. Or get bitter at him or her. God uses the natural occurrences of our life to bring about the opportunities to be crucified with Christ.

There's a book that's been sitting in our bathroom for months. And I had looked at it once before. And this morning I said, I wonder if he's got anything to say about suffering.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Meditations on the Cross. I opened this thing up and I said, oh this thing's just full of it. Wow.

And he's deep. I mean if you read something you've got to think about it a little bit. That German brain goes deep.

He said, Jesus, however, is the Christ who is rejected in suffering. Let me read back a little bit earlier. The call to discipleship occurs here in connection with Jesus' announcement of suffering.

Jesus Christ must suffer and be rejected. It is the must of God's own promise. And he has that for us too.

So that Scripture might be fulfilled. Suffering and rejection are not the same thing. Jesus could, after all, yet be the celebrated Christ in suffering.

The entire sympathy and admiration of the world could, after all, yet be directed toward the suffering. Isn't it amazing how we've got the whole world focused in on the resurrection of Christ? Most of the world anyway, professing Christianity. They make a big celebration of it.

We make a big deal of it. It's the biggest Christian holiday there is. And we even have, there are even groups that get drunk over it and all kinds of things.

All kinds of things to celebrate the suffering of Christ. But how many are willing to go through the whole deal? What is the whole deal? The whole deal is suffering and rejection. The reason we will not share Christ with the lost is what? We don't want to go through the suffering and rejection, do we? And let me tell you, you are going to get rejected somewhere along the line.

You're going to meet somebody that doesn't like you, that doesn't like your message, doesn't want anything to do with it. And he went on to say, the entire sympathy and admiration of the world could, after all, yet be directed towards that suffering. Suffering as tragic suffering could yet bear within itself its own value, its own honor, its own dignity.

Jesus, however, is the Christ who is rejected in suffering. Rejection robs suffering of any dignity. That old rugged cross, how many times have we sung it? And we say, I love that old rugged cross.

The suffering and the shame, do we? A church will be destroyed that does not practice what it sings and preaches. And so if the enemy can get in there and say, oh, just sing this song, it's great, but don't live it. Don't live it.

Don't live it. There's no honor in being rejected. And he went on to say, and listen to this, it is to be suffering void of honor.

Suffering and rejection are the summary expression of Jesus' cross. And so because he went through the suffering, as Philippians said, because he went through the suffering, he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, being fashioned as a man, he humbled himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He despised the shame.

He had the resurrection power. He was blessed with the resurrection power. Death on the cross means to suffer and to die.

As someone rejected and expelled, Jesus must suffer and be rejected by virtue of divine necessity. Any attempt at thwarting the necessity is satanic. What was it that Peter tried to get Jesus to not do? Oh, no, you can't go to a cross.

That's going to hurt. But this can do more than hurt. It's going to destroy you.

Have you ever thought about this? When the crowds went by, they walked down the road, and they jeered or they neglected. Have you ever thought about this? That when Jesus was dying on the cross for your sins and my sins, when he was suffering, when he was bleeding, his body was aching with excruciating pain. His back all lacerated, his body ripped apart, his face beat, thorns been placed in his head.

Have you ever thought about it? That he had feelings. This was his life being poured out. He was a person.

He had emotions. He had feelings. He had a will.

And so when we say, I love that old rugged cross, we're saying, I love Jesus enough to die with him. How do you know if you will die with him? You'll find out. And some have literally been given that opportunity to die on the cross.

One of the disciples who was it? Peter, I think, refused to be up. He had to be upside down. Was he the one? He was so ashamed of what he had done.

One thing we won't be able to do in heaven anymore is to suffer for Jesus. It's given to us. Have you ever thought about suffering as being a gift? We watched a man here a few weeks ago, a couple weeks ago or whatever, sharing his testimony.

He was powerful, sharing about Christ. Do you know this man had no arms and no legs? Showed him getting around, showed him going swimming and all kinds of different things. Showed crowds by the thousands coming to hear him.

Was it an accident? You know, he went through some suffering. He went through some suffering. But somehow or another, he plugged into the resurrection power of Christ and he overcame.

J. L. Frazier said, we can have victory anytime we want it. We can have victory because Jesus died on the cross for our sins. So any attempt at thwarting the necessity of suffering is satanic, even or precisely where such attempts come from being from the circle of disciples.

For it is intent upon not letting Christ be Christ. That it is. Peter, the rock of the church, who incurs guilt here immediately after his own confession to Jesus Christ, after his appointment by Jesus, means that from its very inception, the church itself has taken offense at the suffering of Christ.

Right here in the beginning, there's an offense. It neither wants such a Lord nor does it as the church of Christ wants its Lord to force upon it the law of suffering. Peter's objection is his unwillingness to accept such suffering.

With that, Satan has crept into the church. He wants to tear it away from the cross of its Lord. And I know you didn't catch all of that because I read through it pretty fast.

But I want you to catch that last part again. With that, Satan has crept into the church. He wants to tear it away from the cross of his Lord.

He wants to take away from the church suffering because if we will suffer with him, we will reign with him. Suffering means resurrection power if we go to the cross with Christ. How do you know? You won't be offended.

You won't be offended. How many offended Christians have we ran into? The church is to be a disciple-making machine, not just a padded pew place. We've got our movies and our pop machines.

We've got everything to make us comfortable. We've got air conditioning and heating. And if it doesn't, if it gets off two degrees, hey, go tell the deacon if he wants me to put more money in the offering, he better crank the air conditioning up.

I'm getting hot. Or I'm out of here, brother. Sick.

The devil is destroying our churches. We've got our little doctrines we'll fight for here and there. If Christ is present and if He is preeminent, He will be powerful in the heart and the life.

Brethren, the church is to be a disciple-making machine, not some kind of piccadilly where you go through and you can pick what you want and you can get this. No, I don't want that. It's too hot.

I don't eat hot peppers. No. Hey, you've got my chicken too dry.

I like it a little moist. I better keep on going here. We might hit on one of yours.

By the way, remember what he said to John? John sent his disciples and said, are you the Messiah or not? And Jesus said, okay, go back and tell John this, the lame are healed, the blind get their sight and they went down all these things. And then what did he say? And blessed is he that is not offended in me. John, don't let my ways offend you.

Wow. Is it any wonder the enemy has destroyed our churches? Bonhoeffer said this makes it necessary for Jesus to relate clearly and unequivocally to His own disciples the must of suffering. Just as Christ is Christ only in suffering and rejection, so also they are His disciples only in suffering and rejection.

In being crucified along with Christ, discipleship is as commitment to the person of Jesus Christ places the disciple under the law of Christ that is under the cross. Well, is it any wonder that there's no power in our lives? Do you want the power of God in your life? If you say yes, you're saying yes to the will of God for Him to do whatever He wants to with you. I've had a lot of complaints about what God's done with me.

Have you? Oh, I'm ashamed of it. I'm ashamed of it. It comes down to our theology.

Many times we just don't believe God is sovereign. I'll never forget as I was being discipled by my army buddy when I was in the Air Force when we were over in Turkey. I'll never forget Bill.

He taught me how to memorize Scripture and meditate on Scripture. And then he taught me how to suffer. You say he taught you how to suffer? Oh, many ways he taught me how to suffer.

I'd come over to his room early in the morning and many times I'd see him down on the cold floor with a blanket over himself with a flashlight and his Bible and a notebook so he wouldn't bother his roommates studying the Word of God. I've seen him week after week go witness to this big old bully of a brute. He'd share Christ and he'd come back grinning from ear to ear, beat up, bloody, his nose bloody, his black eyes.

He'd share Christ with this guy and they had a deal going and I guess he'd share Christ and then a guy would just beat him to a pulp. I just about will guarantee you that guy won't go to hell. Because there was power in Bill's life coming out of his being because he was crucified.

He'd come back rejoicing. What happens if somebody touches us the wrong way? I'm going to leave. You're not going to do that to me.

I didn't get my way. Whatever. You know what? When Jesus made disciples, he wasn't trying to gather crowds.

He was always trying to thin them down. That's the opposite of our churches today. We're trying to pack them in.

The more, the merrier. The more mess you got. No, Jesus Christ came to die on the cross for our sins and to be buried in the third day to rise again so that we could rise again with him and have power in our life.

And I believe with all my heart, God is trying to tune us up. He's trying to tune us up. Some are going to get on the cross and they're going to rejoice and they're going to suffer and they're going to reign with him.

And some are going to peel out. J. Vernon McGee, he said, there was the perseverance of the saints and the peeling off of the yanks. Let me tell you, if things get tough, and they very well may be getting tough in our country, we'll find a lot of crying.

But we're going to find also there's going to be a lot more compromising until if God would give us the opportunity, which we would not look for, to be like the other countries where we're heading for, where you have to make a choice. What is it going to be? Are you going to go with Christ and the suffering and the cross? Are you going to get over here where it's comfortable? When Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me, he gave us that option. Let's pray.

Lord, we've been going through this series on how Satan destroys the church. And it's just been a real, I've been learning so much about it, but I see how, and I hadn't even thought about the suffering aspect that so many in our churches are suffering. Many have to leave their churches because they will not take up their cross.

In the crowd that they're in, they just won't do it. And I guess that great lesson that you taught us in Judas is still around, that if you can't, if you don't get a man to the cross, he will take you to the cross. You didn't get Judas there.

It wasn't your fault. But Judas refused. And there's probably no man on earth had more opportunity than Judas.

And there's probably no more country in the whole world that's had more opportunity than America to follow Christ. Lord, I just pray that we will not deny you in any way. And that when you allow suffering to come our way, and some of us are suffering, that we will recognize that you are giving us a privilege to suffer for you.

And so if we don't have enough money for bills, we don't have enough money for food, we have health that you at this time have not chosen to heal us from, or we have persecution at work, or we have circumstances that are uncomfortable, we know that you can erase all of that. We know that you can take away the circumstances. That when we come to you for a healing, you can do it.

And I've seen you, Father, do amazing things in that area. But sometimes it baffles us when you say no. And you've let us go through some circumstances that have been excruciatingly painful, suffering.

And you've drawn out of our hearts sometimes and showed us what was really there when we got to having a pity party or whatever, Father. But I pray that you would be able, in this church, and Lord there's several of us families not here today, but for those that are here and listening to this, this message, that at least we will know that when you tell us to rejoice in all things and in everything to give thanks, that you have a purpose for it and you have a plan. And if you're going to let us be like the worm, just get crushed, it's that the life of Jesus might be resurrected in our life.

Thank you, Father, for speaking to us and ministering to us. Continue to speak to us if there's something in our life that we need to get right with you about. Thank you, Father, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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