

# Suffering and Dying - Our Supreme Weapon

by Emanuel Esh

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*The sermon explores how suffering and dying can serve as powerful means for Christians to glorify God and strengthen their faith.*

**Duration:** 1:31:00

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 11:23

**Topics:** "Suffering"

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## Description

In the sermon, Aggie visits a squalid apartment where she finds a seventy-three-year-old man who turns out to be her father. He expresses regret for giving her away, but Aggie reassures him that God took care of her. The man, however, feels abandoned by God and turns away. Undeterred, Aggie tells him a true story about a missionary who planted a seed in Africa, leading to the conversion of six hundred African people. Aggie reminds her father that Jesus loves him. The sermon also includes a reference to a visit to the Museum of American History and a story from The Herald of His Coming. The speaker concludes by discussing the importance of sacrifice and the need to follow the example of Paul and Peter in living a faithful life.

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## Transcript

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A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Yes, Lord, you alone are our desire and we worship you. For they that worship you must worship in truth and in spirit.

That's our desire, Father. So we come to you through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Thank you for each soul who has come out this morning to come here to worship together, to fellowship one with another, to glorify God.

Thank you, Lord, for those who are listening on the phone this morning. May you touch them in the very same way that you desire to touch us, Lord. We ask you, Father, to minister to our hearts the words of life.

That we may walk in the path of God, the path that you have shown us. That we may follow in the steps of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Bless the word of the Lord, bless your words, Lord, to our hearts.

Grant us open hearts to hear. Father, would you minister life to us. This is our prayer and desire in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. I was imagining this morning that the church house would be half full or so this morning.

With the parting of the fellowship, the Joy Christian Fellowship, it's a blessing to see the house so well filled. What a joy that is. I've been pondering recently the effects of suffering and dying.

And I'd like to share a message on that this morning. Many years ago I heard someone mention in a sermon about the Christian religion that it's a very bloody religion. They talk a lot about the blood.

And amen for that. We have a wonderful thing to talk about. It's the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed for our sins and so on.

In one sense you could say Christianity is a bloody religion. But I'd like to talk today about suffering and dying a little bit. And so some might think that's a negative subject.

And in one sense it might be a negative subject and might be kind of a morbid subject. But I would like to say it's not that. It's actually a subject of life.

Because in Christ Jesus when you die there will surely come life forward. And so let's not be afraid of dying or of death. I'd like to read a little excerpt in the beginning here.

Tell you a story about a man. I'd like to give you one verse first. And that is in Luke 14.

It says, Except a man lay down his life. For my sake and the gospel he cannot be my disciple. We're going to be talking about laying down our lives.

And you might want to look at that and think of a life of self-denial. But we also want to talk about actually laying down our lives and dying for our faith. Suffering is something we don't like to talk about.

And most of us run from it like a deer runs from a lion. And we do almost anything to avoid it. But suffering is an inescapable part of the Christian life.

And God does not even spare His most faithful servants from it. And we are told to expect suffering in the Christian life. Yea, and all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Whether that be an emotional persecution of pressure from your family or so forth. Or whether it be actually physical persecution. If you were to ask people who have gone through both.

I think they would say that the emotional persecution is probably worse than the physical persecution. There's a story told of a man named Iosif Tsitsan. A Romanian pastor.

In the days of communism in the 70s, 1970s. This man was captured for his faith and taken to prison and was interrogated for about six months. Up to ten hours a day, five days a week.

Simply because of his faith in Christ. The goal of his interrogators was to break him. Cause him to fear and to make him their slave and hopefully he would renounce his faith in Christ.

They wanted him to abandon his faith and to become their allies in destroying others who also believed the gospel. One of his interrogators shouted at him and said, You're going to be shot. But first I want to torture you so you will curse all that you hold sacred and holy.

And this is exactly what Satan wants to do to each one of us. When we encounter suffering, he wants us to give up on God and to distrust God in the midst of our darkest hours. Like Job's wife, she told her husband, curse God and die.

But Satan is defeated when we humbly trust God with our lives and resolutely determine that we will proclaim his glory no matter what it costs us. In the return for his cooperation, this pastor, Joseph, was promised safety and freedom. He was faced with the choice to remain faithful to Christ or to do what his captors wanted and avoid suffering.

What was his highest priority? Saving his life or glorifying God? Pastor Sohn responded to the promise of safety and freedom this way. He said, what you offer me is spiritual suicide. I would much rather accept a physical death.

To tell you the truth, I don't see any reason to save my own life. Just go ahead and shoot me. He then reported and said, I cannot fully describe to you that man's fury at that moment.

He suddenly realized that his whole plan to break me had failed. Why did I say that I did not need to save my life? Here is why. During an earlier interrogation, I had told another officer who threatened to kill me.

Sir, let me explain to you how I see this issue. Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.

Here is how it works. You know that my sermons on tape have spread all over the country. If you kill me, those sermons will be sprinkled with my blood.

Everyone will know I died for my preaching, and everyone who has a tape will pick it up again and say, I'd better listen again to what this man preached because he really meant it. He sealed it with his life. So, sir, my sermons will speak ten times louder than before.

I will actually rejoice in this supreme victory if you kill me. Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.

Why does God allow suffering? Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Hereby I perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren. And in 2 Corinthians 4, let's turn to there for a scripture.

What does God want us to do? I've pondered some of the recent devastations in Haiti. The masses who are suffering and have died and are still dying there as it's difficult to get aid into that country. I wonder what God is wanting to do.

I have some thoughts about that, but let's read these scriptures here. Chapter 4 in 2 Corinthians, verse 7. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. Yes, they're just simply vessels of clay.

Why do we think so highly of them? That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We're troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We're perplexed, but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed. Look at verse 10 and 11.

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. Verse 11. For we which live, we which are alive in Christ, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

I believe, brothers and sisters, this is a secret. That if we will bear about in our mortal bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, then the glory of God will be resting upon us according to 1 Peter chapter 4, and then they will see the glory of God, and by that they will come to believe in Christ. By that they at least have an opportunity to see the glory of God in someone's life.

Verse 12. So then, death worketh in us, but life in you. Death worketh in us, but life in you.

When I think of this principle, I believe this seems to be a universal principle of laying down a life for something else. Even it says that Christ was, the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. And I believe, according to that, that this is a universal principle.

That of one thing must die for another. Just think about the food chain with me. In Genesis chapter 1, verse 29, God gave directions and instructions to Adam and Eve what they should eat.

They were to eat of the herbs of the field and the fruits of the trees. Later on, after the flood, God gave them new instructions and told them that every living thing that is on the face of the earth shall be for their food, shall be for their meat. In other words, up to the time of the flood, the people before the flood were given instructions to eat of the fruits of the trees and the herbs of the field.

The animals, they ate the grass and so forth. The animals were created to also eat the grass and so forth. In the beginning, the animals were not created to eat one another.

Evidently not. Because there was no death in the beginning. And I don't know when the animals started eating one another.

But if you think about the food chain today, we know that in order for one thing to live, something else must die. This is the universal principle. From the beginning it was that way.

Think of the grass that grows out there in your lawn. Think of the grass that grows out there in the meadow. The cows come along and they eat that grass and that grass dies and it becomes food for them.

And most of the things that we eat, we eat it because something else dies. I looked in the pot last night while my wife was cooking. I saw some meat floating there and I said, Oh, something has died.

Amen? You ever think about that? Just think about the cycle of life. You know, I've seen this in a dictionary or a world book or something, how in the sea you have the very little minute things that grow in the water, like plankton and so forth, and then something else comes along and eats that, and it's a little bit bigger, and then other fish come along and begin to eat that, and other fish eat those fish. It's just the cycle of life.

And so God has somehow ordained that life be given through death. Amen? That's the cycle. That's the Word of God.

I've wondered already why the heathen are so caught up with sacrificing. Why is it that the heathen almost all over the world are caught up with sacrificing animals or whatever it may be? I think there's a universal law deep in the heart of man that says, Life comes out of death. Life comes from death.

The sailors on board the ship that Jonah had taken, when the storm came up, they found out the cause of the trouble was Jonah. So, what did Jonah say? He said, Throw me out of the ship and it'll be calm for you. Well, they did not want to be guilty for that man's blood, yet at the last they decided they would because they were so near to drowning.

They finally took Jonah up and cast him out of the ship, and the storm stopped and they were fine. And then they made sacrifice to God. Even Jonah, by dying in a sense, by laying down his own life, enabled them to believe in God.

So, there's principles there. I don't know if you've ever pondered the passage in 2 Kings 3, verses 26 and 27, where it says that the king of the Moabites, when the Israelites came against him there, Israel and Judah were fighting against the Moabites. The Moabites had been tribute to them, and the Moabite king rebelled against them, and they would not pay their taxes anymore, which was like 100,000 sheep or something like that a year.

And so, they went after the Moabites to punish them. And there were some miracles happening there. They were dying of thirst, and Elijah came and said, there's going to be water in the morning, and in the morning there was water flowing down through there, and the enemies, the Moabites saw the sun coming up and they saw the reflection on the water, and it was red, and they said, oh, it's blood.

They're all dying. They all killed one another. They went in to take the spoil, and the Israelites rose up, and they took them by surprise, and they went into the Moabite land and overtook the land, threw stones in their fields, stopped up the wells, they did all those kind of things, and they came to the chief city there where the king lived, and they were coming in around that city.

They were about to destroy that city, and then that Moabitish king did an unusual thing. He took his firstborn and oldest son, maybe his only son, which was supposed to be king in his stead, and up there on the wall in front of everybody, he sacrificed his son. And the Bible says that indignation broke out against Israel, and they turned back and went home.

I don't know what all that means, but something happens when there is a very unique sacrifice made. And I think of also when Samuel, when the Philistines came, and it says Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered that lamb as a sacrifice. It says a sucking lamb.

It was a special sacrifice that he took, and he offered that to the Lord, and by that the Lord came against the enemies and just drove away with a storm or a hill stone, whatever it was. So this issue of sacrificing is a universal law. And of course, we know that Jesus Christ is the supreme example of sacrifice.

God gave His only begotten Son that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. And God sent His Son to the earth, to the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. And it was by Him willingly laying down His own life on the cross, and suffering and dying there.

It is by that suffering and death that life was given to whosoever will. Amen? So we have that example there. So to willingly lay down your life for others is the greatest sacrifice that you can make.

And many have offered themselves at the altar of God, and they live a sacrificial life. For one that lives in this manner, whether he die while in active duty in the field, whether he be a missionary, whatever he be, one who lives a sacrificial life, I believe that if he die, it will glorify God. While he lives, he will glorify God, and in his death, he will be able to glorify God likewise.

And when he dies, many will be encouraged by the life that he lives in the hearts of those who knew him, and they will be encouraged by his life and by his death. The world knows this likewise. Oh, I can't think of some of those rock music stars.

Elvis Presley. He has become very, very famous since the day he died. He's become a legend.

While he lived, they found lots of fault with him, and he was a very popular man, but when he died, he became king of rock music, basically. The world knows this principle, it seems also. Suffering and death.

Let me say it this way, still Satan's supreme weapon to those who are lost. To the unsaved. But to the Christian, through faith, through faith, suffering and death can become our supreme weapon.

And I think of it this way, I think of the story of, not world war, but maybe there are two, but especially civil war, the north and south armies would fight against each other, and one of their main objections was to try to capture the enemy's artillery. If they were advancing brigade coming up against the enemy, the enemy had a cannon that was shooting cannon balls down, destroying, their main objective was to try to overtake that gun, and if they could somehow overtake that big gun that they were using against them, then they could take that gun and turn it around and begin to shoot at them, at their enemies. They would use the enemy's guns against them.

And in a sense, this is exactly what I see, the opportunities that we as Christians have by faith, we can take this big gun that Satan has had for many years, he has held it over people all these years, it is that gun called death. And by Christ on the cross, Christ playing right in the hands of the devil and laying down His life, willingly sacrificing it, dying for a whole world, now we have opportunity to use that same gun against the enemy. In two ways specifically.

The one way is that through Christ's death we also become, have this glorious opportunity to become dead to sin. Think about that one. Think about that one.

What if you couldn't be dead to sin? You would continually be plagued with sin just coming and working and driving at you, but you know, the Bible makes it very clear that we are to be dead to sin. Hallelujah! I get to use that same gun against the enemy and I can say I am dead to sin and sin has no more dominion over me. Isn't that a pretty big gun for you? Amen? I think so.

The second one is that we can use this same principle of death that Jesus used against the enemy to wrestle the souls from the hand of the enemy. Jesus did. He just laid His life down and by shedding His blood He gave life to whosoever will.

Now, in one sense we also can do that similar thing. We know that through sin death passed upon all men. But then we read in Corinthians where it says O death, where is thy sting? What a blessing! We can face death right in the face and say You know what? I'm not afraid of you anymore.

You have no more sting for me. I'm just simply not afraid. And if we can walk in that then we have conquered death.

It must be done by faith. By faith we can say that. The fear of death has been removed.

Has it? Has it? Has the fear of death been removed from me? Or am I still afraid of dying? Am I afraid of suffering? We all kind of shudder. We don't even like to talk about that. But I think you are well aware that most Christians suffer.

Most Christians know what suffering really is. Dying can now become my supreme weapon. By living a sacrificial life a self-denying life and especially by dying a sacrificial death life works in others.

Laying down your life for others. Now we also can do this. Let me give you some examples.

I think of our early Anabaptist forefathers Felix Mons when they drowned him in public in the river there in Switzerland. They had a public drowning as a warning to everybody around there. People came by the droves.

They lined the river banks. They lined up on that bridge to watch this public drowning. But do you know what happened? This man went to his death with joy speaking words of encouragement to his mother or to his wife and so forth.

And the people who were around there were listening and they were confounded. They did not understand. How could this man be so joyful in death? And that was the seed that was sown in their hearts which brought them life in Christ in due time.

Peter says that if you suffer persecution with joy then the glory of God will rest upon you. Many others were burned at the stake and they would go up to the stake singing with joy and great gladness and the glory of God rested upon them. And the people saw it.

In the Roman amphitheaters as the thousands sat in the stands all around watching they would send Christians in there. They would put these captured Christians in there. They sent one man Ignatius in there.

He stood there alone all alone in this big arena with all the crowds standing around him. He stood there alone and he prayed to God until a lion came out and ate him. And the glory of God rested upon him.

Others, they would take groups of Christians out there. They would take ten or twelve of them put them out there and they would get down on their knees and they would begin to pray and they would begin to sing and the sound of the singing just rose up all around and all the people could hear them singing. And the glory of God rested upon them.

I think of those five men in Ecuador. Jim Elliot and his four friends. Forty years ago Forty-five years ago they had such a burden to win this one tribe to Christ the Guaroni Indians.

And they spent days laboring in prayer and fasting and begging God to save those people. And God did save them. That tribe came to Christ.

How? They laid their lives down for them. They had guns on them when they landed there on that sandy bar along that river. They had guns along.

They could have protected themselves but they allowed these men coming out of the woods with their spears to just spear them to death. Every single one of them. Those five men.

And they died. And they shed their blood. Did God hear their prayers? Yes, He did.

They laid down their lives that others might live. And those men those men with those spears they saw the glory of God. The testimony that they gave later on was that they saw something some kind of apparition in the heavens.

They saw something in the heavens. As they killed those men they saw the glory of God. The universal principle.

This principle was not only being used by the Christians. In fact, Christians seem to not understand it very well. At least in America.

The Communists, they understood it. They were willing to die for their belief in Communism. Said one young Communist soldier when given a difficult situation where he knew he would die.

These were his words. I am willing to lay down my life so that Communism may be advanced one more step. That's what he said.

The Muslims they know this principle. They are taught that to die for their cause is the only sure ticket to heaven. And they're exercising it.

They're not afraid to give their lives. They're not afraid to die. They're not afraid to strap on those explosive belts and walk into a supermarket and blow everyone else up.

They're not afraid to do that. What has happened since they blew up the towers or brought the towers down? What has happened? Islam is spreading across the U.S. like never before. Islam is spreading across the world in ways like it never did before that.

Islam is recognized by every nation these days. Hadn't been before that. This is a universal principle.

Brothers and sisters, I believe it is. It's so hard for us American Christians. We would rather run away from suffering and death.

The Western consumer-driven culture is designed around satisfying our every desire and avoid suffering. Generally, we have a health and wealth and prosperity theology but not a theology of suffering. We've been taught to live for the things of this world and it has infected our lives and our churches.

I think I also need to have my theology straightened out a bit, don't you? Many, if not most, Christians in other parts of the world have suffered and are suffering their persecution. No, we don't seek the suffering, but we should embrace it when it comes. Knowing that we have been there unto call, Jesus said, follow Me.

And I'll say, yes Lord, I'll follow you. But in suffering, physical suffering, emotional suffering, normal Christian life. Yes, we suffer hardship in order to meet the needs of the hurting people around us so that they can see the glory of God and find salvation for their souls.

Why should the people of this world believe anything if we say... Why should they believe anything we say if we're not willing to suffer for Christ? Why should we expect the people of the world to live for Christ if you and I are not willing to die for Him? Christ's suffering was for our propitiation. Our suffering is for propagation. Are you with me? Our suffering is not for propitiation.

Propitiation has been done. It's been finished. It's been complete.

He suffered once for all, it says. And our suffering is not to redeem. It's not to shed our blood that others may be redeemed by our blood.

No, but our suffering is for the propagation of the gospel. And when we're not willing to suffer, the gospel really doesn't go forward. These sufferings are, however, a factor in overcoming the spiritual powers that blind the people from the gospel.

What happens, we tell our missionaries that we send out that if they ever get taken for hostage, we plan to not rescue them. We plan to not pay ransom for them. Missionaries, in general, do not pay ransom for their people.

Why not? One of the reasons is because they don't want the people out there to learn that missionaries have money. So, missionaries, in general, do not take ransom. Do not pay ransom.

The other issue I see there is that missionaries who are true in the spirit of Christ, their desire is to lay down their lives for others. To live for others. That's what it's all about.

I just heard yesterday, someone told me it was on the news. Maybe you heard it too. I only heard bits and pieces.

This Baptist pastor from the U.S. gathered a group of his church people together, went to Haiti to help the poor, the needy, the suffering down there. Landing in DR and going over there. But the reason that it hit the news was because they all took their handguns along to protect themselves.

May God have mercy on us. What do we do when our missionaries get caught or when someone suffers in a foreign country? Let me give you a quote taken from one of these missions in Missions Periodical. Rescuing brothers and sisters from persecution, on one hand, and planting churches, on the other hand, may not be compatible.

Rescuing brothers and sisters from persecution and trying to plant churches is not compatible. May not be compatible. Let me say it that way.

Many well-meaning Western-based organizations have an agenda for the persecuted Christians in other countries. They want to stop the persecution, they want to punish the persecutors, or they'll raise funds that will aid in rescuing the believers from persecution. Whereas the Scripture teaches us to expect persecution and to rejoice when it comes.

Yes, pray for those who are persecuted, but how do I pray? How do I pray when I pray for them? Lord, stop the persecution? No. Pray for endurance. Pray for strength to stand.

And pray that God would be glorified and souls saved through it. When an ambassador of Christ speaks the truth in love and meets death with joy, then eyes are opened to the Gospel. And Christ's own death had this same effect on one of His persecutors, one of His executors, which was the centurion.

When he saw all of that, he said, truly this is the Son of God. And when martyrs meet their death without fear, they demonstrate to all the principalities and powers in the heavenly places that Satan's ability to control by fear is broken. In other words, when a martyr dies without fear, he demonstrates to everybody around and to all the heavenlies that the power of Satan is broken and that fear has no power over him.

Paul echoes this purpose when he says that he was a spectacle unto the world and both to angels and to men. Do you realize, brother and sister, that you are a spectacle in the world, to the world, to angels and to men? And I suppose that means both good and bad angels. They're watching.

In 1936, the Herbert Grings family, missionaries to African Congo, this is Darrell and Louise Chapman, Louise's parents, and recently a little book came out that I got this out of, their life story of their traveling through the interior of the Congo and going from village to village preaching and teaching and his wife, Ruth, was the white woman. She taught the Bible to many, many young people and to children. Taken by the Blackwater fever, a mosquito-borne disease, ended wasting her life away and dying there in the middle of that village.

The natives were petrified as they watched the process of the burial of the first white woman's death they'd ever seen. They had no way of dealing with death themselves. And many Africans are still at the same place.

When someone dies, there's a loud, loud wailing, screaming, crying, throwing themselves on the floor. They absolutely have, their greatest fear is death and death has come again and they're just petrified. It just, it just, it takes everything out of them because they fear death.

That's their greatest fear is death. And here they observed this white woman and this family. They watched the family when this woman had died.

And they saw the father dig that grave, lay his dear wife in that box and watched, they all gathered around to watch to see how this family handles death. And as that father and the children put their mother in the grave and buried her, singing praises to God, they watched and were terrified. They had never seen anyone die like that before.

A couple of days later, five young men who she had been teaching the Bible, they came and they said, missionary, we want to become Christians. And he said, why did you wait so long? Why did you wait so long? They said, what you preached all these years, we knew it was good for living, but now we know it's good for dying. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. But before all these, they shall lay hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And Jesus said in John 15, 20, remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord.

If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also. Let's look further in 2 Corinthians 4. In chapter 6. Let's go to chapter 6. Oh, may we be like Paul.

Chapter 6, verse 3, giving no offense in anything that the ministry be not blamed. Verse 4, for in all things, all things, what are the all things approving ourselves as ministers of God? What are the all things that approve us as ministers of God? In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes. That means whippings, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love on fame, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand, on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown, yet well-known, as dying, and behold, we live, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things.

Paul is saying, in all things, approving ourselves as ministers of the gospel. Is anyone called to preach the word? Is anyone called, specifically called, to preach the word of God? Here you are. This is your assignment.

In one sense, we're all called that very same thing. Chapter 11 of 2 Corinthians, verse 23, Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool. I am more, in labors, more abundant, in stripes, above measure, in prisons, more frequent, in deaths, often.

Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods. Once was I stoned.

Thrice I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness, painfulness, watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, cold and nakedness.

Besides those things that are without, that which comes upon me, the care of all the churches. And then in chapter 12, he talks about his visions and glory in them. And he says, he was taught not the glory in those things, but rather, verse 10, he said, verse 9, when he asked the Lord three times about the thorn in the flesh, he said, God said to him, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Oh, that we would grasp the power of a sacrificial suffering and death, a life in Christ. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong.

So many times, I do believe that this American culture has programmed us, has affected us and our churches that of ease. Ease. Easy life.

Pleasurable life. Health and wealth and prosperity. It's a lot stronger among us than we would even dare to realize probably.

Compare this. We look at what Paul's example is. And so forth.

Let's turn to Peter chapter 4. What Peter has to say here. And then I want to finish with another story from the Herald of His Coming. It's an article.

I want to read the whole article. So I'm going to bring these Scriptures here. And then I'll read the story after that.

What then shall we do? How then shall we live? Arm yourselves, he says in chapter 4 verse 1, for as much then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. In the same way that Christ suffered in the flesh, so arm yourselves likewise. So prepare.

What does it mean to arm ourselves? What does it look like when a soldier picks up his armor? He picks up his armor, that which he needs to be in the war, in the fight. And here Peter is saying in the same way that Christ suffered in the flesh, now I want you to prepare yourselves to do the same thing. Be prepared for it.

It's going to come, he says. Arm yourselves that way. So that if you have a soldier, I heard he has no armor on, he's very easy to overtake.

He's very easy to surprise. He's not prepared for battle. He's probably at ease, just like many of us also are.

But if you are armed and prepared, then when that thing comes against you, you will be able to withstand it. You'll be prepared for it. You'll be able to walk through it without falling.

By God's grace. Verse 12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you. It doesn't say that it might try you.

It is going to try you as though some strange thing happened. And so Christians don't be surprised when trials and things come as some strange thing happens. You know, sometimes we think, boy, I really have it tough.

This is really unusual. I don't know if anybody else here went through this. No, no, no, no.

Don't think it strange. It's going to come. But what does it say? Here's the instruction in verse 13.

But rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. Now, I have been hammering on this verse for quite a while. I don't know if I've shared it here or not.

But I know I've shared it other places. The glory shall be revealed. I used to think years ago that when the glory of God be revealed, that then we'll get our rewards.

Then we'll have exceeding great joy. That when the glory of God is revealed, you may have exceeding great joy. And I thought, okay, that's when I get to heaven.

That's when I'll have exceeding great joy. But that's not the context. The context is suffering here and now.

Rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering, that when His glory shall be revealed, and remember that when His glory comes, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. Look at verse 14. If ye be approached for the name of Christ, happy are you.

Why? For the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part, if you will spoken up on your part, He is glorified. And this is what we're looking at.

When you suffer for Christ's sake, when you suffer for Jesus' sake, when you give your life a sacrifice for Him, then the glory of God rests upon you if you do it with joy. What would it look like to be led out there to the stake with a crestfallen face, with a fear of that fire getting you and shaking, and everybody around you can see that you're afraid of death. You're afraid of suffering.

What kind of a testimony is that going to be? No, but the glory of God rests upon you when you do it with joy, when you rejoice and so forth. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief or an evil-doer, a busybody. Yet if any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.

We've not yet been tested, have we? I thank God that He has graciously given life to the missionaries for these many years. But what would our response be if someone would die on the field? May the Lord guide us and direct us. And I pray that we can all make the applications that I have about.

I've got a story here to read. I've read this story to our family and maybe you've read it too. It's very special.

It's a story of a missionary couple back in 1921 and it's a story of David and Spia Flood, missionaries who went to the Congo from Sweden. Swedish couple. They met another missionary couple, Scandinavians, the Eriksons.

And together, the four of them sought God for direction on what they should do. They were in a mission station in the Congo which is now known as Zaire. Is that right? I think so.

In those days of youth, they were very energetic, much tenderness, devotion and sacrifice. They felt led of God to set out from the main mission station and take the gospel deeper inland to a remote area. This was a huge step of faith.

At the village of Nduledo, the chief rebuffed them. That's the village. Here the chief would not allow them to come into the village for fear that it would alienate the local gods.

These two couples rather, they opted to go up the slope half a mile and build their own mud huts. They prayed for a spiritual breakthrough, but there was none. The only contact with the villagers was a young boy who was allowed to sell them chickens and eggs twice a week.

Spia Flood, a tiny woman of 4 foot 8 inches tall, decided that if this was the only African she could talk to, she would try to lead him to the Lord. And, in fact, she succeeded. But there were no other encouragements.

Meanwhile, Malaria continued to strike one memorable little band after another. In time, the Eriksons decided they had had enough suffering and left to go back to the central mission station. Dale and Spia Flood remained alone near Nduledo.

Then, of all things, Spia found herself pregnant in the middle of the primitive wilderness. When the time came for her to give birth, the village chief softened enough to allow a midwife to help her. A little girl was born, whom they named Lena.

I don't know if that's spelled quite right, or I don't know if I pronounced it right. The delivery, however, was exhausting, and Spia Flood was already weak from bouts of malaria. The birth process was a heavy blow to her stamina, and she lasted only another 17 days.

Inside David Flood, something snapped at that moment. He dug a crude grave, buried his 27-year-old wife, then took his children, the two children, back down the mountain to the mission station. Giving his newborn daughter to the Eriksons, he snarled, I'm going back to Sweden.

I've lost my wife, and I obviously can't take care of this baby. God has ruined my life. And with that, he headed for the seaport, rejecting not only his calling, but God himself.

Within eight months, the Eriksons both were stricken with a serious illness, and they both died within days of each other. The baby was then turned over to some other American missionaries, who adjusted her Swedish name to Aggie, and eventually brought her back to the United States at the age of three. This family loved this little girl, and were afraid that if they tried to return to Africa, some legal obstacle might separate her from them, so they decided to stay in their home country and switch from missionary work to pastoral ministry.

That's how Aggie grew up in South Dakota. As a young woman, she attended North Central Bible College in Minneapolis. There she met and married a young man named Dewey Hurst.

Years passed. The Hurst's enjoyed a fruitful ministry. Aggie gave birth first to a daughter, then a son.

In time, her husband became president of a Christian college in the Seattle area, and Aggie was intrigued to find so many Scandinavian heritages there. One day, a Swedish religious magazine appeared in her mailbox. She had no idea who sent it.

And of course, she couldn't read the words. But as she turned the pages, all of a sudden, a photo stopped her code. There in a primitive setting was a grave with a white cross.

And on the cross were the words, Svea Flood. Aggie jumped in the car, and she sought out a college professor who she knew could translate the article. What does it say, she demanded.

This man summarized the story like this. He said it was about missionaries who had come to Noledo long ago. The birth of a white baby.

The death of the young mother. The one little African boy who had been led to Christ. And how, after the whites had all left, the boy had grown up and finally persuaded the chief to let him build a school in the village.

The article said that he gradually won all his students to Christ. The children then led their parents to Christ. Even the chief had become a Christian.

Today there were 600 Christian believers in that one village. All because of the sacrifice of David and Svea Flood. Then for the Hearst's 25th wedding anniversary, the college presented them with a gift of a vacation to Sweden.

There, Aggie sought to find her real father, an old man now. David Flood had remarried, fathered four more children, and generally dissipated his life with alcohol. He had recently suffered a stroke.

Still bitter, he had one rule in his home and in his family. Never mention the name of God, because God took everything from me, he said. After an emotional reunion with her half-brother and half-sister, Aggie brought up the subject of seeing her father.

They hesitated and told her, you can talk to him, they replied, even though he's very ill now. But you need to know that whenever he hears the name of God, he flies into a rage. Aggie was not to be deterred.

She walked into that squalid apartment with liquor bottles everywhere and approached a 73-year-old man lying in a rumped bed. Papa, she said. He turned and began to cry.

Ina, he said, I never meant to give you away. It's alright, Papa. She replied, taking him gently in her arms.

God took care of me. The man instantly stiffened. The tears stopped.

God forgot all of us. Our lives have been like this because of him. He turned his face back to the wall.

Aggie stroked his face and then continued undaunted. Papa, I've got a little story to tell you, and it's a true one. You didn't go to Africa in vain.

Mama did not die in vain. The little boy you wanted to the Lord grew up to win that whole village to Christ. That one seed you planted just kept growing and growing, and today there are 600 African people serving the Lord because you are faithful to the call of God in your life.

Papa, Jesus loves you. He has never hated you. The old man turned back to look into his daughter's eyes.

His body relaxed. He began to talk. And by the end of the day, he had come back to God.

The God he had resented for so many decades. Over the next few days, father and daughter enjoyed warm moments together. Aggie and her husband soon had to return to America, and within a few weeks, David Flood had gone to eternity.

A few years later, the Hearst were attending a high-level evangelism conference in London, England, when a report was given from the nation of Zaire, the former Congo, by a national from there. That man from the national church representing some 110,000 baptized believers spoke eloquently of the gospel's spread in his nation. Aggie could not help going to ask him afterwards if he had ever heard of David and Svea Flood.

Yes, madam, the man replied in French, his words being translated to English. It was Svea Flood who led me to Christ. I was the boy who brought food to your parents before you were born.

In fact, to this day, your mother's grave and her memory are honored by all of us. He embraced her in a long, sobering hug. Then he continued, you must come to Africa to see because your mother is the most famous person in our history.

And that is what they did. They finally went there. When they got to the village, they were welcomed by cheering throngs of the people.

She even met the man who had been hired by her father many years before to carry her back down the mountain in a hammock cradle. The most dramatic moment, of course, was when the pastor escorted Aggie to see her mother's white cross for herself. She knelt on the saw to pray and give thanks.

Later in that day in the church, the pastor read from John 12, verse 24, I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. Then he followed with Psalms 126, verse 5. He says, those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

Suffering. Suffering and dying. Our supreme weapon.

Our supreme weapon by faith. Suffering and dying. Am I willing to live that kind of a life? Let's kneel for prayer.

Just give you time to talk to God. Father, I confess that we were lovers of pleasure, Lord. We're lovers of ease.

Forgive us, Lord. Forgive us for our narrow mindedness and our low living, Father. Forgive us for being afraid of pain, suffering and death.

Lord, would you raise us up to not be afraid of the enemy in any way? Would you raise up the testimony of your people, Lord? So that the glory may rest upon them and others may see and come to taste of the living bread, that living water. Lord, be gracious unto us. Thank you for your Word.

You told us to prepare. I don't know what all it means, Lord. But guide us, we pray.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for your Word, Lord. I pray your blessing upon the congregation.

I pray your blessings of grace upon them. Not a protection from suffering or death, but rather strength to stand in the face of evil, to stand in the face of worldliness, to stand in the face of pure pressure. Oh God, would you give grace to our youth, give grace to our mothers, give grace to our fathers, give grace to each one, Lord.

To live, to live for Christ, but also to be willing, seriously willing to consider suffering and dying for you, Lord Jesus. And Lord, would you receive all the glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

Reminds me of the songwriter who said, Am I afraid to die? That might have been speaking more in a physical sense. But am I afraid to die? Am I afraid to take up the cross? And I have to say with Emmanuel that I shrink from suffering. I don't... I need my heart tuned with God's heart.

And when we hear stories like this, it really challenges us. And it's right, it's good. Thank you, Brother Emmanuel, for bringing that to us.

And the Word of the Lord. Maybe God would have some in this room to go to a place where they will give their life in a way like that. I think of the hymn, Faith of Our Fathers.

And there's a verse in there that says how sweet it would be if their children could die like our fathers died. And I know many times that made me cringe. Lord, not that.

But it's because my theology or my mind needs to be renewed into what God says and what His heart is. I think I'd like to open it up here this morning for a time of testimony. God has laid something on your heart.

Think of the verse there that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And our persecution as I believe Brother Emmanuel shared in the beginning, whether it be a mental or emotional or whether it be physical, they're real. Those things are all real.

And am I willing to die that others may live. Also in this account that Emmanuel gave, I just had to see the long-sufferingness and the mercy of God on David, was it? Yes, David. That his daughter was able to come back and share with him and he be saved from what the devil wanted to do to him and take him into the pit of hell for him to be saved at that last hour.

Oh, the mercy of God. But just think that one seed falling in the ground and dying of the thousands, right? Thousands of souls that heard the gospel and were saved. Could God do that with me if we're willing to die? I'll open it up.

Anyone feel free to share as God leads you. Is there anyone that would want to share? There's a hand in the back. Yes, I do thank the Lord for meeting with us this morning and specifically speaking to me and showing me again my need of Him.

Thank you, Brother Emmanuel, for laboring and love there and also Brother Tim. I was amazed thinking over the opening message and the main message how well they flowed together. Please bear with me.

I hope I can get my thoughts out clearly this morning. But Emmanuel, you made a comment about when a martyr dies without fear, he is demonstrating that the power of Satan or the power of darkness is truly destroyed in his life and Jesus is reigning and being able to get the glory from his life. The Lord gave me a verse at the beginning of this month that I've just been meditating on throughout the whole month.

And it's a common verse, but it's the verse that He said to His disciples. He says, If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. And that is the very essence of salvation for them in faith.

And truly when you're walking in faith, it means you cannot see before you. It means you do not understand before you. It means it's God only and not you.

And truly if you can do that without the fear of the flesh, you are demonstrating the true power of Christ and the true broken power of Satan in your life on an everyday level as well. Then I was thinking about that verse in Matthew and how closely it related to the verse that you read in 1 Peter 4. For as much then as Christ have suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind. Put that mind on you today, every day.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And I think I'm only beginning to grasp a small fraction of what he said there on an everyday level. But it rang true in my heart and God spoke to me this morning and I acknowledge that.

And I do acknowledge that I have a lot of flesh in me. And I do desire God to just continue to grind out and break out and that I can live this kind of life that He can be glorified through me. Thank you.

Amen, brother. Thank you. God bless.

Does someone else want to share? Raise your hand. The ushers, we've got a microphone to you. A hand on the brother's side.

Go ahead, brother. The highest privilege that God has given us is to be a son. That isn't just a figure of speech.

We are really sons. And if we suffer with Him as a son, we will share the glory of His only begotten Son. The highest duty of a son is to do the Father's will.

And that leads to the greatest suffering of all. The suffering of self-denial. That's different than denying self.

Jesus was a man just like we are. And to do the Father's will cut across His human needs and desires many times. Paul said that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings be made conformable to His death.

I don't think we can know Him without knowing Him and His sufferings. And there's something about Isaiah 53 that almost, in what I say, I almost hesitate to say because it has such potential impact on me. I like to read about this Jesus.

He should grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness and when we see Him there's no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we did not esteem Him. That describes the sufferings of Christ.

Surely He has borne our griefs, our sicknesses, and carried our pains, or literally our sorrows it says, or literally our pains. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we turned every one to His own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as sheep before it shears is dumb, He opened not His mouth. In verse 10 it says, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. That's a scripture that makes me tremble, but it's also one that just makes me rise up.

That's Jesus. That's our calling, we're sons. Thank you, Divine.

Amen. A hand on the brother's side in the front here. This past Thursday we went to Washington, D.C. We went to the Museum of American History.

We were at the section on America going to war and we saw different old videos. One of a D-Day attack. We watched the Americans take the beach and we watched some of them die right before our eyes.

Then we saw a kamikaze pilot flying into a ship and he died. And I meditated on those things. I also was touched upon about the Muslims and how they are suicide bombers.

And I thought, well, what does it take to die? What does it take to die? There has to be a cause that you believe in with all your life so you can die. When I was thinking, I was downstairs with Janita, I was thinking about this verse in Philippians. It says here, Paul speaking, he says, For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

According to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain, but I live in the flesh. This is the fruit of my labor, yet what I shall choose I want not.

For I am in a strait betwixt the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Did you ever think about that? To leave this earth, you'll see Jesus. You'll see Him.

It's far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. These are thoughts for all of us, myself included.

Our natural tendency is to survive. It's to live. And I wonder what we can do if we can just put our eyes on Jesus every day, focus on seeing Him, how we can advance the kingdom and give our glory to Him.

Amen. Thank you, brother. Hand in the back.

Other side. I stand up because you heard the story about the Romanian persecution. I am from Romania.

I can tell you in 1945 to 1965, a lot of brothers, sisters, boys and girls, they were killed in Romania and in Russia. But the persecution and the suffering had something good in. In that time, the brothers and sisters, they prayed together.

They loved each other. They took care of each other. They helped each other.

Because the persecution kept them together, much stronger than liberty. And that was the good part, the persecution. Because keep the church together, close to God, pray with all the heart to God, and love each other, and help each other.

That is the good part in the persecution. The other part, you know, is not good, to be hit, to be tortured, to be killed. It is not so easy.

But they suffered. They died. But they win.

They believed the communists will fail. They were killed, but they win. They win.

They win. But they are alive. But they are safe in God.

They win. I encourage you. We suffer here in the United States.

Very little. Very little. Some people, they suffer in the United States too, you know.

They have no money, no food, no. You saw that on the streets. Some people, they are on the streets.

They live in a house, do nothing, you know. But we, like a church, we suffer very little. God bless us so much.

We have the food, yes? We have the clothes. We have the house. We have everything.

Give thanks to God with your whole heart. And God bless you to do that all the time. Be good Christian.

Be strong in the faith. Thanks God all the time. Because He gives you the faith and the liberty here in the United States.

And God bless you. Thank you. Thank you, dear brother.

Reminds me what Brother Tim was sharing in the opening. That when you are full, you're eating vineyards, fruit from vineyards you didn't plant. And all those good things.

Then beware lest you forget. The Lord your God, forget. Is there a hand somewhere else you would like to share? I think again of the verses here in the 2nd Corinthians.

He speaks about, 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. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. How do we apply this to our lives today? And I really appreciate what was shared.

I don't want to distract or anything from what was shared. Those are beautiful testimonies. But lest we walk out of here and think, Oh, I'm not in that situation.

I believe if we're honest before the Lord and open, God will show us areas in our lives where we can die that others might live. Denying self. Not pleasing myself, but pleasing the other person.

Seeking to win others to Christ. And that may be very simple. For me it may be rather than taking my own thing that I'd like to do, taking some extra rest or whatever, and go speak to a soul that God is laying on my heart.

Knowing I might get rejected. Knowing the story might be spread abroad. And I may be misunderstood.

It can be very simple things. But am I willing to die to my reputation? And many other things could be shared. Is there anyone else yet that would desire to share? God has laid something on your heart that you feel you'd like to maybe confess or ask for prayer? Yes, over here.

Brother Robert. Yes, I was praying to God and asking him, God, do I really know what suffering is? And at my age, I'm not a, I don't know, maybe I am. I'd rather be in heaven than be down here.

But I don't know what it is to suffer because only Jesus does know because he suffered for each and every one of us. And I just think what Brother Emmanuel was talking about, my heart was hurting because there's so many people that don't even know Jesus. And that breaks my heart.

I don't know how you feel about it, but it breaks my heart to know that we can have Jesus in our life. And if we do die for Jesus, we know we're going to have eternal salvation. But Satan's out there deceiving so many people.

This whole world is just full of deception and darkness that we have an obligation. And if we're afraid to step out, what kind of Christians are we? Do we really honestly, please, I'm not here to judge. I'm just asking the question.

Are we afraid to step out? We're stepping out for eternal salvation that has never changed as long as God has made this earth. And I want to step out, and I pray that you want to step out. Why do we come to church Sundays? Why do we come here to hear sermons? I'm just asking the question.

I mean, I love Jesus, and I know you all do. You wouldn't be here. Just pray for me, and I'll pray for you.

But that's what it's about. The gentleman just said it from Romania. We've got to love each other.

Before I was a Christian, I always talked about somebody. I don't have that right anymore because Jesus will be the judge. Remember that.

He's the judge. We're not the judge. And we have the best judge.

There's no other judge but Jesus Christ. And I love coming to church. I love my brothers and sisters, and I love Saturday mornings.

And it's an honor to say I love Jesus, but I want to stand for what he stands for. I don't want to stand for my flesh. I want to stand for what Jesus stands for in the Bible.

In the Bible. Only in the Bible. So thank you very much for allowing me to be your brother and your sister, and I pray for you.

Amen, Robert. God bless you. A hand in the back also? Yes.

Yeah, my thoughts went where yours did, Brother Aaron. We've heard and read numerous examples of just what Brother Emmanuel shared with us today. Of how an example or how someone laying down their life wrought light in others.

Apostle Paul talked about that on a practical level in his ministry. Death worked in him and life in them. And I had to think, you know, most of us probably will never find ourselves in a place.

In fact, probably few of us will ever find ourselves in a place where Svea Flood was. Literally gave her life to death and life came out of it. However, I did think there's one place that every one of us, that our parents, can die.

Do we want our children to lay hold of the things that we teach them? When we sit down and have devotions or however, whenever we do. Do the words we speak to them live in us? Are we living examples? Or is death working in us and life in them? Thought I'd share in addition to what you had said there, Brother Aaron. Amen, thank you, Tim.

You know, in this thing of suffering, I'm trying to learn what all God has for us. But I think of that verse that says, of a song somewhere that says, Choosing to suffer that others may live. Sometimes in my mind, I think that I need to be content or accepting when suffering comes upon me.

Sometimes suffering is a choice. We can choose to go the low route, choose to go the route that will take suffering. I guess that's just some of my thoughts in answer to your question, Brother Aaron.

How do we make this practical? When I look there in 2 Corinthians, some of the things Paul mentioned are stripes and imprisonments. I pray that I'm faithful if those would ever come. But some of the things he mentions are in fastings often, by watchings, in labors.

And those things are a choice. Choosing that road of suffering. And pray for me as we all learn to do that as Christians.

Thank you, Tanner. That's well said. Reuben? Yeah, I was thinking too, just that choice of suffering.

Even the children's lesson, the aspect of forgiveness. It's a suffering choice to absorb the hurt and the wrongdoing that was done to me. I just was also in 2 Corinthians 4 this week.

That same thing just struck me, the need to choose suffering. I want to be in that place where, by faith, Reuben chose suffering. Knowing, as Moses did, that he rejected the wisdom and riches of Egypt to suffer with the people of God.

It's a daily choice. It's not just a big thing that we do once in our lifetime, but it's a daily choice. And I appreciate the messages this morning.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you all for sharing.

That brings beautiful balance and encouragement to our hearts.

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