

The Mystery of His Suffering

by Jim Cymbala

Jesus' suffering in the garden of Gethsemane reveals the gravity of sin and its consequences, and highlights the importance of striving for holiness and taking sin seriously.

Duration: 31:59

Scripture: Matthew 24:35, Mark 14:27-30, Mark 14:32-34, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:38-39, Revelation 5:12

Topics: "Suffering"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the everlasting nature of God's word, stating that while heaven and earth may pass away, God's word will never pass away. The preacher also highlights the incredible love of Jesus, who willingly died for those who crucified him and even for his disciples who were not fully committed. The sermon then focuses on a passage from Mark 14, where Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to the Garden of Gethsemane and expresses his deep distress and sorrow. The preacher concludes by inviting the congregation to accept Jesus as their Savior and commit their lives to him.

Transcript

Now I want to preach about the unpreachable. I want to explain the unexplainable. I have such a task this morning.

I prayed and just told the Lord in the end, Lord, I'm going to do the best I can, but you have to come and help me because what I'm going to speak about, no one in the world fully understands. But it's in the Bible, so I feel drawn to speak about it and then try to not only understand it, but what are the lessons of it? And in Mark, the 14th chapter, after Jesus had instituted the Last Supper, the Lord's Supper at the Last Supper, when he had given the bread and given the cup, Peter says, I'll never leave you. And Jesus tells him, no, before the cock crows twice, you'll disown me three times.

And then we come to verse 32. They went to a place called Gethsemane. And Jesus said to his disciples, sit here while I pray.

And he took Peter, James, and John along with him. And he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, he said to them.

Stay here and keep watch. Going a little further, he fell to the ground and he prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him. Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you.

Take this cup from me. Yet, not what I will, but what you will. Then he returned to his disciples and he found them sleeping.

Simon, he said to Peter, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Once more, he went away and prayed the same thing.

And when he came back, he again found them sleeping because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. Returning the third time, he said to them, are you still sleeping and resting? Enough, the hour has come.

Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go. Here comes my betrayer.

And then Judas approaches him. You know that part, right? Judas kisses him as the way to identify him so the soldiers can arrest him. I'm not gonna do the whole passage.

I'll tell you where to stop. But let's just look at this again. They went to a place called Gethsemane.

And Gethsemane means oil press. And it's probably because in that garden, there were a lot of olive trees. And Jesus said to his disciples, sit here while I pray.

Now, he's facing the cross, ladies and gentlemen. And he's gonna go now to the hardest moment of his life on earth. And notice what does he do to prepare himself, to get himself through it.

What does he do? He prays. Isn't that a lesson for all of us? Think of the trouble a lot of us would have avoided in our life if we just watched and prayed more. Because there's something about spending time with God and talking to him that not only strengthens you, but it prepares you for the next thing in life.

Someone once said that if they would have only obeyed that, they wouldn't have all fled when he got arrested. But alas, they slept. He took Peter, James, and John.

Now, there were 12 disciples. Judas had already left to do his evil deed, so they're down to 11. But these three were the inner circle, which he took into certain places he didn't take the rest of the disciples.

He took Peter, James, and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

He said to them, stay here and keep watch. Now, what I'd like to talk about is the emotional and psychological life of our Lord Jesus Christ. I'd like to talk about his emotions, his mind, his psyche, in a way that possibly we don't ever think about it.

Doing a study of these words, which are very strong words, where Jesus said to them, I gotta go and pray, but something happened as he went into that garden to him. He's not the same person now that was in the Last Supper. He says, I'm deeply distressed.

He began to be deeply distressed. That word means literally he was stunned. He was amazed with deep distress.

He became uneasy. He became full of dread. Literally, that word means away from home.

He began to feel this uneasiness and this dread that he was being pulled away from where he was used to living and being. He was struck with terror and his innermost soul spirit began to be troubled. Mark says here, he began to be deeply distressed and troubled with inner agony, deeply troubled, weighed down and heavy.

He became agitated. And what strikes us there is we have to ask, why? Because there are no nails in his hands. Nobody has put a spear.

He hasn't been beaten, hasn't even been arrested yet. He had been many times to Gethsemane. One of the other gospels tells us in John that this was a place that he would meet with the disciples and pray.

I met with two Palestinian believers, former Muslims, in a secret grove of olive trees when I was in Israel with our missionary, David Ortiz and his wife. And we sat, not in Gethsemane, but I sat on a rock and heard their testimony and we were hidden because right up in the town there, they fired rounds of ammunition out from the town, sometimes anybody passing by. Jesus had been there many times and prayed.

No nails are in his hands. Nobody has slapped him yet. No one has hit him.

And yet he's so distressed and agitated that he's beside himself with this distress, this inner distress. It's as if he can't make it. A terror, a darkness starts to come and cloud his soul.

Most times when we think of what Jesus Christ did for us, we think about the cross. We think about the fact that he was stripped naked, unlike what the pictures do. Pictures out of decency do not portray crucifixion the way it really was.

The Romans had perfected it. It had really begun with probably the Assyrian empire hundreds of years before. And it was the slow, most agonizing way to kill a person.

And you did it in public and you stripped them naked and you nailed them to the cross and the beatings that came before that. But none of this has happened. And yet we identify his sufferings with what he went through on the cross.

We know that our sins are forgiven by the shedding of his what? His blood. We know that his body was given for us. That's why we celebrate communion.

And we remember his body with the bread. We remember his blood with the cup. But none of this has happened.

None of this has happened to Jesus. The Bible tells us in the garden of Gethsemane, he becomes so agitated that the sorrow and the heaviness, he feels he won't make it. In other words, the most inner part of us, we have body, we have a mind.

But inside is your human spirit. And the Bible says, what good is anything if your spirit is crushed? You know what that is, right? Have you ever had your heart broken or your spirit crushed or something happened? And even though your body is fine, you feel sick. This cloud that was coming on his spirit was so horrible that he didn't think he could make it and live.

He wasn't exaggerating. He wasn't using poetic language. He says here clearly, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death so that it almost kills me, the Amplified Bible says.

Literally, the word means he's surrounded by sorrow. He's grief to the point of death. This is Jesus in the place that would have sacred memories to him, a place of prayer, a place of fellowship with the disciples.

And I want to ask you now, no one's touched him. No one's nailed anything in his hands. He's not up on a cross.

No one's beat him yet. That's all coming in the future. And yet it seems like he almost can't make it.

And something is so repulsive to him that he begins to pray, Father, I know you can do anything. If there's any way that I can escape drinking this cup. Cup in the Bible means to suffer the outpoured wrath of someone upon you.

When the Bible in the Old Testament talks about the cup of wrath, the cup of wine of wrath that's going to be poured out on Israel. And God says, because you've rejected me and because you've turned from me, you will fully drink the cup of judgment that I'm going to bring on you. And now Jesus is saying, the son of God who never did anything wrong.

He never did one sin wrong, never thought one thing wrong. Never said one thing wrong. Never gossiped about anybody.

Never did anything wrong in his life. And now it's as if he can't make it. He can't make it.

And he's asking in this mystery of his human and divine nature together, which we don't fully comprehend. I'm talking about a lot of things today we don't fully comprehend. But as if his human side is so repulsed by what's heading toward him that he says, is there any way out? If there's any way out, get me out, but not my will, but your be done.

Well, let's not make this thing go on and on. Let's find out what it's all about. What it was, of course, that so terrorized Jesus was sin.

His holy nature had never known what it was to be guilty. Come on, you and I know what the pangs of conscience are like, don't you? Am I the only person who's ever sinned here? You're a bunch of liars if you're gonna say that. So you've sinned again.

No, we've all sinned. Doesn't the Bible say, we all sin and come short of the glory of God? And we've all sinned since we've been Christians. Do you know how that feels sometimes when your conscience torments you? Do you know what it is when God chastens you? Whom the Lord loves, he also chastens.

Don't you know the feeling of grieving the Holy Spirit? Anybody here know that feeling? Oh, no, you don't have any concept. I have no concept what was coming on Jesus. For the Bible says, he was made sin.

He didn't sin, he never sinned. But for us, he was made sin, again, in a way that we don't know. So every sin my son James and I have ever committed and ever will commit, and all the other people in the world, in the history of the world, all of that sin, every wrong word, every vicious thought, every adulterous affair, every homosexual activity, every curse word, every bit of hatred, every bit of prejudice, every bit of everything was laid on his own soul.

And now in the garden of Gethsemane, it's moving toward him, and he doesn't think he can make it. And he's deeply distressed, and he's agitated. You know, it's one thing to teach to the multitudes.

It's another thing to heal the sick. It's another thing to give them the beatitudes. It's one thing to walk on water, but to become sin, when you've never known what it was to do one thing wrong, not sin, become sin.

Not only that, the Bible says, he became a curse for us. It is written, cursed is everyone who's hung on a tree. He became a curse.

He went from son of God in perfect fellowship with his father, and now he's cursed for you and me. He's sin and he's cursed. He's cursed because he's sin.

So every violation you and I have ever done is laid upon him. And now he's not on the cross yet, but it's coming, and he is agitated. He is deeply distressed.

He is sorrowful to the point where he doesn't think he can make it. Someone once said, and I think it's well said, the real sufferings of Christ were not the nails in his hands. The real suffering of Christ weren't the nails through his feet.

All kinds of people were crucified. In fact, you'll find in the Bible, Jesus never once says a word about his physical sufferings. He never goes, ow, that hurt, or oh, relieve the pressure in my hands.

He never mentions that. He never mentions one thing about his physical suffering. But in the Garden of Gethsemane, he goes, I don't know if I can make this.

I don't know if I could do this. And yet this is what he came for. You see, this distress, this agitation, it's something beyond what we can comprehend because later on, there were Christian martyrs in especially the first 300 years of Christianity, and some of those martyrs went happily into the fire.

They went happily into the Roman Colosseum to be fed to animals. They went happily. They were praising God when they did it.

Jesus is not weaker than them. Jesus was strong. Jesus was used to not having a house to live in.

Birds have nests, foxes have holes, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. His body had been trained by fasting and living a hard life as a carpenter. No, it wasn't anything physical.

It wasn't anything about like, oh, they're going to put nails in my hand. They're going to beat me in the crown of thorns. That was horrible.

That was horrible. And that shed the blood that redeems us. But this other thing, as someone said, the real suffering of Christ was totally inside of him, which is something we don't even understand.

If you and I make a little sin and we feel horrible, what does it mean when God puts the sin of the world on you and then punishes you for it? You know, when they took the lamb in the Old Testament, they would take the lamb, the way to atone for your sins. It was just preparatory. It was just a symbol of what was to come.

The spotless lamb would come and he had to be examined that there was no defect in him. You couldn't put any bad lamb, any sick lamb, any dirty lamb, diseased lamb. No, had to be a perfect lamb.

And then the person who had sinned would put his hand on the head of the lamb as a transfer. I have sinned. The lamb has done nothing.

And then they would come and they would cut the lambs. And you know about the lamb? No other animal is like a lamb. The lamb will look at you while you're slitting its throat.

I saw that in Argentina. I saw them pull. They had five cows.

A friend of mine, Pastor Reuben Crow, was going to shoot one of the cows to provide meat for this camp meeting. Someone had donated three or four cows. It was amazing.

They got the cow out of the pen and just started to lead it. In fact, the cow knew. The cow knew.

I'm not going, they're not taking me to a Bible study. This is bad. This is bad where I'm going.

A cow was docile. The cow started fighting against it. I've seen pigs killed down there.

And if you don't do it right, and I'm talking about out in the country now, poor people and just not doing it what we're used to seeing. And if they don't get it right, that pig, oh my goodness, it'll bleed like a pig. But a lamb, he'll look right at you.

Never opened his mouth. Like a lamb, he never opened his mouth. And when you put your hand on his head, that was the transfer.

Now the lamb is killed as a substitute for me. I deserve to die. But the lamb will die in my place.

And that was just to prepare us for the ultimate lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. So I preach about the unpreachable today because I don't understand this. I read the words.

I read the alternate translations. He was stunned. He was amazed with deep distress.

He became uneasy and full of dread. Jesus, full of dread. He was struck with terror.

His spirit became troubled. He had an inner agony. He was weighed down and heavy and agitated.

And finally, he says, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. It's almost gonna kill me. That's what Jesus did for us.

And that suffering, when God finally, the culmination in moments we can't understand, when he hung on the cross and he became now perfect sin, he became cursed. Cursed by God. His loving father, as it were, cursed him because as it was, he, a holy God, and here's sin embodied in his own son.

And now all the wrath, all the punishment that you and I deserve was somehow mysteriously poured out on him. God punished him for your sins and my sins. And he knew it at some moment when he said, what? My God, my God, what? Why hast thou what? Why have you turned away from me? Because I can't look at you.

You're sin, you're cursed. So that we could come and lift our hands and sing worthy is the lamb. No wonder in heaven, the Bible says in Revelation, on and on around the throne, they sing worthy is the lamb who was slain.

Nobody in heaven is walking around saying, look at me, I've lived such a good life. Are you kidding me? We're all on our feet saying, worthy is the lamb. Come on, let's put our hands together and tell them, worthy is the lamb.

Worthy is the lamb. And they're sleeping. So what's this all mean, brothers and sisters? If the Bible's inspired by God, why would God put that in about his son? Why would Jesus open up and say, my soul is so heavy with sorrow, it's going to kill me.

What's the lesson? Why did God put it there? So we would read it and say, wow, that's heavy and mysterious. What are the living lessons for it? I just want to give you a couple. Number one, could we all agree, how many are Christians here? Just say amen.

Could we all agree on this? If he went through that for you and me because of sin, let's not sin. Let's not sin. Let's not say anything that's sinful.

Let's not look at anything that's sinful. Let's not do anything that's sinful. How in the world can you read this and then say, oh, I don't care.

Everyone has some faults. Are you and I going to do that? Are we going to deal lightly with sin when he went through hell for us? Literally hell. All the punishment that was due you and me, we should have been punished with whatever went on there.

We should have suffered that. And now we're free and our conscience is clean and we're children of God and we're going to just be casual about sin when Jesus went through that. No, it makes me want to be holy.

Anybody here with me? I don't want to say anything wrong today. And I only have one day to be holy, by the way. You can't be holy yesterday.

Tomorrow, you don't know if you'll wake up. So you only have one day to be holy. How many want to be holy today? How many? Come on, wave your hand at me.

I want to live like Christ today. I want to talk like Christ. Holy Spirit, if I ever get even near something that would hurt you, warn me.

Stop me from it. In word, in deed, in thought. What be sacrilegious would be to read that and say, I'm a Christian.

I'm going to heaven because Christ died for me. And then be loose with sin and be involved with things that are sinful. We all get trapped.

We all make mistakes. But in our hearts, we got to say, oh God, lead me in the path that I should go. How many are with me today on this? Lift your hand if you want to just go on a different path.

Now, I don't want to like the, you know, pursue holiness and peace with all men without which no one will see God. Pursue holiness without which no one will see God. Listen again.

Pursue holiness without which no one will see God. Pastor Cymbala, if you want to build a large church, don't tell people about stuff like that. It sounds negative and they just need reinforcement.

Reinforce nothing. I'm telling you about Jesus now. He died for our sins.

Come on, can we say amen to that? He died for our sins. And nowhere does God tell me to have a large church. Nowhere does God say have a large church.

He says preach the word. And then the people who really are serious about him, they'll follow. I don't want to sin.

I don't want to sin. Pastor Cymbala, you're talking like crazy. I said I don't want to sin.

Can God keep us for one hour? Can God keep us for an hour? How about two hours? Can he keep us for two hours? I'm not hearing you. Can God keep us for two hours? How about one day? Could God keep us till the sun goes down today? Choir, can God keep you till the sun goes down? Just don't sin. Say God, I want to please you.

After this, what you went through, it almost killed you. And I'm not even talking about the cross. I'm not even talking about the blood and the nails and the crown of thorns.

I'm just talking about the man almost went down for us in the garden. Why? Because of sin. God has to punish sin.

God is holy. Sin will all be judged. Either now through faith in Christ we're free or you're going to pay for your sins if you're here today and you're not a Christian.

You will pay for your sins. Oh no, I don't believe that. What would it matter what you believe? God said it's going to happen.

You believing something doesn't create reality. If you say I believe two and two is five, you can believe it all you want. It's four.

And heaven and earth shall pass away but my word God says will never pass away. Oh, if there's anybody here who's not been washed in the blood, how much does he love us? What kind of love is this? He was dying for people who were crucifying him. He was dying for disciples who were sleeping on the job.

What kind of love is this? Most of us have a love. You stroke me, I'll stroke you. You be nice to me, I'll be nice to you.

No, God commended his love toward us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We didn't want Jesus. Jesus wanted us.

Come on, how many know the truth today? You're here not because you wanted Jesus but he followed you, he surrounded you with love. Come on, wave your hand at me if you know that's true. He brought us here.

If he loves me that much, man, I want to love him back. I want to praise him more. Greater than a love of a father or a mother, a sister, a brother, they can fail you sometimes.

I have a great brother, great sister, great sister-in-law and brother-in-law, great mom but they don't love me the way Jesus loves me. Are you kidding? Jesus loves me despite who I am. I can be real always with Jesus and he loves me.

How many have gotten so sick with yourself sometimes you thought nobody could love you including yourself but you found out that his love endures, his mercy endures? Lift your hand if you know what I'm talking about. It's like you run to that love. You hide yourself in that love.

Let's love him back. Let's praise him back. If some of you are a little shy, lift up your hands and praise him.

Trust me, when you see him on the throne, you will lift your hands up and you will praise him. Why not start now? Are you a little self-conscious what people might think? I don't care what anybody thinks. I'm not standing before them at the end of the day.

They didn't die for me. Why in the world do I care about them? Come on, can we put our hands together? Come on, everybody tell him, I love you, Lord. Tell him, I love you, Lord.

Say it out loud, I love you, Lord. We love you, Lord. We love you, te amo, senior.

Te amo, senior. Te amo, senior. Lastly, if he would do that for us and cares that much, can we not trust him now with whatever our situation is? If he took us through being our substitute, if he brought us out, if he saved us, if he paid the price, if he was the ransom, if he was the substitute, there's a lot of theological terms.

But if he would do that for us, not only does it show his love, but is he not going to take care of business for us? What are you worried about today? Before you were formed in your mother's womb, Christ died for you. You think he's going to drop you now? Come on, you think he's going to drop you now? No, he's going to pick you up. He loves to pick you up.

Oh, something just comes to me today. He loves to pick us up. Did you know that over the holidays here, I was with my grandson Levi, my adopted grandson for those of you visiting from Ethiopia, he'll be two years old on December the 14th.

Buy him a present, it'll bless you. He's tall though, get a big size. We were near a pool and there was a jacuzzi.

You know jacuzzi? And the jacuzzi has a ledge down just a foot or so. Why? Because adults can sit on the ledge and put their feet in and the jacuzzi's bubbling up and the water's hot. Warm.

Every day I was there with him, he would walk on the ledge. He was so careful and he was playing with oranges and toys and he would just walk around the edge of the jacuzzi because he knew down below, he just something told him that's not a good place to go, that's deeper. Not deep for you and me, but deep for him.

He's only this big. He's walking around the ledge and I would watch him. He was so careful, he would look at me and then he would try to get something to himself.

So I'm dressed and ready to travel and I'm sitting just a few feet from him and he's leaning over and he loses his balance and he falls. And he goes in the water and the water comes up naturally to right below his eyes, covering his nose. And he's like that and I'm just a few feet away.

I jump in the thing. I'm ready to travel. I have sneakers on, socks, pants.

You think I cared? Are you kidding? And it just dawns on me, I love the privilege of rescuing him. And he was like that, you know? And he was so shaken and I grabbed him and I said, Papa has you, Papa has you. And I brought him up and he's, I mean, remember when you're little, you can't stop crying, right? I didn't look at him and say, hey, didn't you know you shouldn't be near the ledge? Love, loves to rescue.

Why are you here today? Have you not fell in the deep part of the pool? Come on, how many have fallen in the deep part of the pool? I have fallen many times in some deep parts of some pools. Let's just lift our hands up. The Lord is here.

Come on, Jesus is here. He's walking up and down these aisles. Let's just praise him right now.

Just lift up your hands unashamedly. Just praise him out loud. Tell him you love him.

Tell him you praise him. Thank him for his mercy. Say something to him.

Thank you for going through that pain for us, Lord. Thank you for bearing the curse that we could be free. I'm saved.

I'm not under the curse. Jesus became the curse. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus. You may put your hands down. Thank you, Jesus.

Just keep praising him. Thank you, Jesus. While every eye is closed, we're going to start to sing this song.

Then we'll dismiss. If there's anybody here in the building, balcony or downstairs here, who say, Pastor Cymbala, it's not right between me and Jesus. That's all.

I don't want to know anything more. I'm not in the proper relationship. Maybe you've never put your trust in him as your savior.

Maybe you have, but you've drifted. Maybe you love him, but you've been living in a way that hurts him, and now you're convicted of it. And yet you're made glad that he loves you so much that his love is greater than your mess up.

And I can assure you, his love is greater than your mess up. I don't care how you've messed up. His love is greater.

He became cursed so that we would be saved. He who knew no sin became sin. What sin? Our sins.

And God punished him for my sin, which sets me free. Because God can't punish twice for the same sin. He bore the cross.

He bore the punishment. He bore the curse. If you're here today and just say, Pastor, I want to start right now.

I want this to be a new beginning in my life. You just come up out of your seat and stand here. Anybody want me to pray with them? Just get up here and walk right to the front.

Everybody repeat after me. Dear God, forgive me of my sin. I believe in Jesus, the Son of God, born of a virgin, crucified under Pontius Pilate.

He died for me. He bore the curse that I should have borne. He died for my sins.

And I put my trust in him. He is my savior. And today, I make him my Lord.

I will live for Jesus. I will trust in Jesus. I will serve Jesus.

I give my life to Jesus because he gave his life for me. Everybody repeat after me. Dear Jesus, cleanse my heart.

Sanctify me. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, everything I say and do, everything I say and do, let it be pleasing to you. let it be pleasing to you.

Cleanse me of all sin. Cleanse me of all sin. Make me like Christ.

Make me like Christ. By your power. By your power.

By the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit. I put my trust in you.

I put my trust in you. And Jesus, I love you. And Jesus, I love you.

All that you've done for me. All that you've done for me. The price you paid.

I don't fully understand. I don't fully understand. But I love you.

But I love you. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Can we just put our hands together one last time? Come on, just 10 more seconds loud. Mas fuerte.

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