

Filling Up What Is Lacking in Christ's Afflictions

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the call to embrace suffering and martyrdom for the sake of spreading the gospel, drawing inspiration from the stories of martyrs like Martin Burnham, Graham Staines, and others. It highlights the concept of filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions by presenting His sufferings to those who have not seen or heard. The speaker challenges the audience to consider the purpose-driven death and suffering as a strategy ordained by God to complete the Great Commission, urging them to lay down their lives for Jesus and make radical choices to support missions.

Scripture: Colossians 1:24, Philippians 2:30, 2 Corinthians 6:10, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 5:12

Topics: "Embracing Suffering", "Radical Commitment to Missions"

Description

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Transcript

Let me pray with you once more. Father, we heard in the last hour about martyr missionaries and martyr givers. Martyrs don't come out of nowhere.

They come from places like this. They come from services like this. The Martin Burnhams and the Graham Staines, the Chet Bittermans, the Ecuador Five, the Bonnie Witheralls.

They just sat in ordinary churches, heard a call, and went, and then they died. They were killed. It's hard for us to imagine that connection, sitting in a room like this.

So it is. And so I do ask, Lord, for those ten, ten people called. Some of them have been struggling a long time with whether they should yield to this inner longing.

Others awakened for the first time in this conference. Maybe they just didn't even know there was a conference, and they're here, and you're going to touch them in a way they never dreamed. And then the

hundred, the radical martyr senders, who would make this church like that.

They were good to host this conference, bless them in that way, draw them ever more deeply into their own mission here in Austin and to the nations. Do exceedingly and abundantly beyond everything we could ask or think for the glory of Christ that we've been singing about so beautifully. In his name we pray, amen.

One of the things you do when you have lots to say that you can't pack into the text is you have several introductions. And I have three. I have three introductions to this message because of things I want to say that are piled on top of what I want to say.

The first one is, David Sitton said he got emails about the name of this conference, the purpose-driven death, and some people were bent out of shape about that. And I just want to say, stick it, you know, I just, what in the world? Bent out of shape? It's a magnificent title. I just think it's awesome.

Because it should, for every Christian, call text to mind. Texts. And one of my favorite, remember this is just an introduction, I'm just ticked.

One of my favorites is that ending of John, the Gospel of John, and Jesus is talking to Peter, do you love me? I love you. Do you love me? I love you. Do you love me? I love you.

And then he says, the day's going to come when you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and they will take you where you do not want to go. And thus, he showed him by what death he would glorify God. Why don't people think about text like that? That's a purpose-driven death.

And by what death you will glorify God. This is not Shenton's idea, this is God's idea. Of course there's a purpose-driven life.

Of course there's a purpose-driven church. And of course there's a purpose-driven death. Why wouldn't everybody read that and say, praise God, I'm going, I'm dying, I'm signing.

So that's introduction number one. Introduction number two, not mad at anybody here, except the devil. And it comes from Matthew 24, and it defines part of the way I think about my own going to conferences like this, to speak, why am I here, what am I doing here? Matthew 24, it's a very familiar verse, but we don't usually read it in its painful context.

This gospel, this is 24:14 in Matthew, this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. I love the absoluteness of that promise, don't you? This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all the nations, then the end will come. I mean, this is just sovereign prediction.

It's going to happen. Join up or miss out. That's going to happen.

However, verse nine, they will deliver you up to tribulation, put you to death. You'll be hated by all the nations for my name's sake. Then many will fall away, betray one another, hate one another.

Many false prophets will arise, lead many astray, because lawlessness will be increased. The love of many will grow cold. The one who endures to the end will be saved, and then comes the promise.

Now, that's a pretty bleak description of the future. Lawlessness will be increased, and the love of many, some in this room, will grow cold. Now, here's the link.

Cold people don't finish the Great Commission. It will be finished. Therefore, my eschatology, I'm an optimistic premillennialist.

I hope it doesn't alienate too many people, maybe makes a few friends. Maybe it's totally unintelligible to the rest of you. Basically, what it means is things are going to get bad.

But those who endure to the end will be saved. They're going to finish it. So I have a picture in my mind.

Don't know about Minneapolis, don't know about Austin. A glacier at the end of the age is coming over the world. The love of many will grow cold.

Many, many. The love of many will grow cold. A glacier starts to spread over the world, just comes over.

This is a spiritual glacier. It's coming over the world, the opposite of global warming. It's coming over the world.

Now, there is nothing in my eschatology, however, that says Minneapolis has to freeze, or Austin has to freeze, or this church has to be among that number, or that mission, or my church, or you individually. Nothing in the Bible says you've got to be among the number of the cold. You've got to be frozen in the glacier.

No way. There are going to be pockets of fire all over the place, and some of us are taking in our hand the Bible and trying to torch the glacier. That's my picture of how I live.

I'm torching the glacier like this. And I'm making holes in it so the glory of God can shine down through the glacier. So I don't know.

Just I hope here, Juan, I hope this church is going to torch the glacier as it comes over Austin, and here, and maybe pockets all over. Maybe the city will be set on fire, contrary to all expectations in Austin, and everybody will see the glory of God shining through the glacier. So there's my second introduction.

My self-concept as I come among you is I've got a little torch. It's not mine. It's the book.

I've got a little torch, and I'm going to try my best to stick it in your cold face and up into the glacier so that a hole is made up to the heaven, and the glory of God will shine through. And there will be a red, hot, warm, bright spot here and in the mission, and maybe 10. This is big enough for more than 10.

For goodness sakes, David, look at all these sphinx. Maybe 10. We'll go to the prayer room when we're done and say, would you just pray with me that God will confirm what I think he's doing.

So he'll do it. Risky to ask for prayers like that. That's introduction number two.

Introduction number three. And the message, I won't go longer than I was told to go, but you don't know how long I was told to go. And I'm not going to tell you either.

This is more experiential, personal, immediate. I was in England a few weeks ago talking to the UCCF, so kind of the University of Britain. And I did a many missions evening with about 700 students, and they assigned me the text, as the Father has sent me, so send I you.

And I spoke in the first half, and then we did a big missions thing in the middle of the second half. So as the Father has sent Jesus, talked about what did that involve, and then so send I you. And God showed up in a most remarkable way.

I mean, I had no idea what he would do among the students in terms of those who gave themselves to go. Then I began, what, two weeks ago preaching, it's three now, on the Gospel of John. And I'll be here till Jesus comes, probably, or until I die, because it's a long book.

And I got to verse six, and it says, there was a man sent from God, sent, sent, as the Father sent me, so send I you. There was a man sent, so you got the sending at the beginning. There was a man sent from God, his name was John.

He came as a witness, in order to bear witness to the light. He was not the light, but he came to bear witness to the light. And I was more moved in that preparation for that message than I have been moved in preparing a sermon for many years.

It was as though at my desk, the Holy Spirit came, and he, what should I say, warmed my heart to this word, sending. I felt it burning inside of me. So in my sermon, two days later, I paused in the middle of the sermon, and I said that to the people.

And I said, I think the reason the burning was there is because he means to do it now, at this moment, in this sermon. And then I prayed. Before I continued, three, now, I'm only in three of our, whatever number of services we have, eight, I think.

So I was there in three of those sessions, live. And after each of them, three couples came forward and said, we're out of here. That was us.

And you know, who was it this morning? One of you. Somebody prayed upstairs or down here about husbands getting on board with wives and wives getting on board with husbands. Because you know what happens in a missions conference like this.

You're sitting there as a couple. You kind of talk once upon a time about maybe you'll do something radical with your lives. And you're never quite on the same page.

She's way out ahead, or he's way out ahead. And one of the things God does in a conference like this is get you on the same page. And that's what was happening mainly in that service.

And so it became like that. And I'm not saying she or he just kind of be egalitarian. I've watched it both ways.

This wife is so radical. She wants to go to Bangkok so bad. And he's a businessman, and he's not on board yet.

And I've seen him get on board. And they're there now. And I've seen it exactly the other way around.

And the guy's just so out. She's nervous about the kids and all that stuff. And then she gets on fire and works.

So it doesn't often happen that nicely each is moved at exactly the same pace. And we need to be patient with each other. So that's my third introduction.

And maybe one of those three is for you. And now I have a message to preach. You mentioned Joseph Sohn, David.

There is another Romanian that we all are aware of, Richard Wernbrand. He's gone to be with the Lord now, Voice of the Martyrs. I've met him twice.

One of my heroes, I kind of want to get on my knees and bow down when I'm around him. And he came to speak to a group of pastors. And 18 of us showed up.

Can you imagine such a little teeny turnout for somebody like that? And it was in a room about half the size. So it was a big room. And he took off his shoes, as he always did.

And he sat, because of the torture that he underwent in his feet and other things that made him need to sit. And he was an old man already. And he sat.

And he just spoke to us, 18 of us sitting in the first three pews of this big room. And he asked questions like, will you choose to suffer? I'm not as squeamish as you are, David, about talking about that, Kamikaze, because he said things like this. He said, if you knew that God had appointed for your neighbor or you to be born, to have a child who's disabled, profoundly disabled, would you choose it instead of your neighbor? Would you embrace that for them and for the child? You're a Christian.

Maybe they're not. But you have the resources, emotionally, if they don't. And doing it for them might move them.

He went through a whole list of questions like that. I just sat there thinking, nobody's ever asked me a question. Would you embrace the suffering? If it were offered to you as a gift, Philippians 1, 20, 9, if it were offered to you as a gift, would you receive the gift? Or is your whole American mindset, pursue comfort, avoid trouble? It's just a total, that's what Richard Verbraant was for me.

He told a story in one of his books that leads me into the message. He said there was a Cistercian abbot. Now, that's a Roman Catholic order that doesn't talk all their life, except when they sing together and when they confess their sins to one another.

They never talk. They live in a monastery, and it's a vow of silence. An Italian television newscaster interviewed the abbot and asked him this question.

What if you were to realize at the end of your life that atheism is true, that there is no God? Tell me, what if that were true? And here's what the abbot said. Quote, holiness, silence, and sacrifice are beautiful in themselves. Even without the promise of reward, I still will have used my life well.

Be careful, I'm not going to make you raise your hand. What do you think of that? Sound noble, sound beautiful, sound self-effacing, sound right? Here's what Paul said when he was asked that question. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most of you people.

Now, here's my question. Whoa, why did the abbot say, if I found at the end, it's all a joke, it's all a hoax, there was no truth in what I believed and gave my life to, it will have proved to be a beautiful life of sacrifice anyway? That's his answer. And Paul says, if Christ is not raised, I have wasted it.

What a fool I have been. What a to be pitied, asinine fool to spend my life the way I have. Here's my question.

Why did Paul answer it that way and the other fellow not? Well, I don't know about him. Leave that aside. That's gone.

I think I do know why Paul answered the way he did. Because his life was a life of consciously embraced suffering. That's why.

You might want to turn your Bible with me to 2 Corinthians 11. This is not my text, but I have to read to you enough so that you feel the force of what I just said. 2 Corinthians 11.

You've probably read it many times. I can hardly read it each time without a sense of wonder and awe at this man's devotion. Maybe start in the middle of verse 23 as he's beginning to list what I mean by saying a life of consciously embraced suffering.

So 2 Corinthians 11, verse 23. I'm talking like a madman, meaning he's listing off his accomplishments because he's being accused of being such a self-serving person. And here are the accomplishments he's talking about.

With far greater labors, far more imprisonments, countless beatings. He couldn't count them. He had been beaten so many times.

I'll tell you, if I've been beaten, if I've been beaten for Jesus, it go in my journal. I'd number them. And I'd blog.

Get some attention, for goodness sakes. With countless beatings, often near death. Not once or twice, often near death.

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 40 lashes, less one. Pause, let it sink in. 39 lashes on your back with a trained executioner with leather straps.

Maybe or maybe not with little pieces of shell in the straps. Doesn't really matter. Passion of Jesus Christ type movie scene.

Your back at the end of 39 lashes is open. It's open, it's laid bare, it's cut, it's lacerated. There are no antibiotics.

Nobody knows anything about germs 2,000 years ago. When they're done, throw you on the ground. You hit the dirt, covered with dirt.

Gets infected. Big pustules for weeks on end. Heals after months.

Heals all wrong. Can hardly move your back. Because the scar tissue is all knotted up.

And then it happens again, and again, and again, and again. Inconceivable. There is a whole chapter in one of Walter Wangren's novels on the Apostle Paul called The Back.

And he describes as the chapter begins, oh, oh. And he's an old man in Rome, and he's being awakened by a young woman who's rubbing oil in his back just so he can get, because he can barely move his back. Something like that.

Three times I was beaten with, in verse 25, beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked.

A night and a day adrift at sea on frequent journeys. Danger from the rivers. Danger from robbers.

Danger from my own people. Danger from the Gentiles. Danger in the city.

Danger in the wilderness. Danger at sea. Danger from false brothers.

In other words, he was never out of danger. Every night he went to bed wondering whether the turning of the latch would be a mob. I've had my life threatened one time by a phone call.

Easter Sunday morning, 1983. The emotional framework of that day. I'm taking you out to probably a crank call.

It never happened. But the emotional framework of that Easter was very different than all the others. What if I lived like that every day? And I knew it wasn't crank.

Don't you love this man? Don't you love the Apostle Paul? I'm a Christian very largely because of the Apostle Paul. You know, a lot of people, they use the C.S. Lewis, either he was a liar or a lunatic or he's Lord. Well, I say either Paul was a liar or a lunatic or a faithful apostle.

I can't, I've got a lot more writings of Paul than I do of Jesus. Jesus didn't write anything. I know this man.

I'm banking my life. He was not crazy. I don't know if he has that effect on you, but one of the reasons I'm a Christian is because of the Apostle Paul.

In toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, I can imagine. In hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold, in exposure, and apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who's weak and I'm not weak? So that's what I mean when I say Paul, when told, if told at the end of his life, there is no resurrection.

It's just grave, worms. It's over. Paul would not have said, it's been a beautiful life.

Would you? That's a really disturbing question for Americans. Me, me, mainly me. Really disturbing.

I think most of us here define the benefits of Christianity in terms of how it makes life better now, your best life. Psychological benefits, relational benefits. Why would anybody want to be a Christian, whether it's true or not? Maybe true, it's just groovy.

So Paul embraced suffering. And the question is, why? And there are a lot of answers to that. But I'm only going to deal with one.

And it's the text that was read to you. And so I invite you to go back there. This is Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1, and we'll look at one verse.

Verse 24, now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh, this suffering flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church. So Paul suffers.

He suffers. And in his suffering, he says he fills up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Now what does that mean? It almost sounds heretical, doesn't it? Fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Complete what is missing in Christ's afflictions. What is missing in Christ's afflictions? Nothing is missing in Christ's afflictions in their atoning worth. Paul can't add anything to the atoning value of Jesus Christ.

The beauty, and the wonder, and the value, and the worth, and the merit of Christ crucified to cover sins is infinite. You can't add anything to it. There's nothing missing from it.

There's no lack in it. Paul taught us that. He knows that.

So what does he mean when he says, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? That's the question. I'm filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Now, the answer to that, I think, is this.

I'll sum up the answer, and then I will give you the text that is the basis for my summary. The summary goes like this. What's missing in Christ's afflictions is the presentation of those afflictions to the people for whom He died.

The personal, touchable, visible, seeable presentation to those for whom He died of His afflictions. There are people all over the world in all the people groups of the world, as well as some in this city, who've never seen the afflictions of Jesus Christ. And Paul says, I'm going to fill up that lack, not by adding anything to their merit, but by making a presentation of them to others in my own suffering.

My suffering will become the visible reenactment of the suffering of Christ for others, so that when they see me suffering to reach them, to touch them, to love them, they will have a visual enactment of Christ's love for them. Now, where do I get that idea? I get it from Philippians chapter 2. And I'll just say this for you. You can look it up if you want to.

It's in chapter 2 and verses 27 to 30 of Philippians. But here's the situation in Philippians. There was a man named Epaphroditus.

Epaphroditus was the emissary of the Philippian church over in the northern part of Greece, the Macedonians. And he took some gifts, love gifts, from the people of Philippi to Rome, where Paul is in prison. And he brings them to Paul.

And he risks his life doing it and almost dies. Now, Paul writes a letter back to the Philippians, perhaps sends it with Epaphroditus, at least he tells them, this man you should receive has an amazing man. And he tells them why.

And it's the wording that he uses that relates to Colossians 1, 24 about, I fill up or complete what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. Verse 30, he came close to death. This is Philippians 2, 30.

He came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete. Same word. What was lacking? Same word.

In your service to me. That's unusual. That combining of those two words, fill up or complete, what is lacking, what is missing, however you translate it in the Greek, same words.

When those two come together there, just like they came together down in Colossians 1, 24, I say, that's going to be helpful. What does it mean here? Because it probably means the same thing over here. So, what does it mean when he says, Epaphroditus risked his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me? What was lacking? Well, what was lacking was there was some distance between them.

Here they are over in Philippi. They love Paul. Oh, how this church loved the Apostle.

They loved him, they wanted to serve him, they wanted to bless him. That's like Jesus dying for sinners at a place and at a time in history. I love you sinners.

I die for you sinners. I want you to be saved sinners. And then there's these big gaps of time and distance between him and them.

Just like there's a big distance between Philippi and Rome where Paul is, and they want him to be the beneficiary of their love and all their gifts and the books and the clothing and whatever they wanted to give him, sent by Epaphroditus. And so they chose a representative. Epaphroditus.

And they sent him so that their longings for his blessing could be filled up. So that the love that was felt and expressed in Philippi for the Apostle could be complete in reaching, in the person of Epaphroditus, Paul in Rome. I think that's what it means.

In fact, I'll read you another commentator, lest you take my word for it only. I think it's obvious from the text, but it sometimes helps to have several people point to it. Let me read you what the commentator from over a century ago, Marvin Vincent, said about the Philippians text.

Here's what he said. And he didn't even have Colossians 1.24 in his mind. It's not even in his commentary.

The gift to Paul was a gift of the church as a body. It was a sacrificial offering of love. Notice the sacrificial offering like Jesus.

A sacrificial offering of love. What was lacking was the church's presentation of this offering in person. This was impossible.

And Paul represents Epaphroditus as supplying this lack by his affectionate, zealous ministry. I think that's exactly what Colossians 1.24 means. Let's read it again.

Now, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction. So here's Christ being afflicted in Gethsemane and on Good Friday and dying. There it is.

And I'm going to fill up what's lacking there just like Epaphroditus filled up what was lacking in Philippi. And what was lacking? Christ did this for someone. He means to save people and bless people and have people from all the tribes of the world with Him in heaven someday because of these afflictions.

And just like David's sitting and said, He could have appointed angels to complete what was lacking. And they could have gone everywhere with photographs and videos and DVDs or proclamations or flannel graph boards or whatever. They could have gone everywhere and He didn't do it that way.

In fact, He chose to come into the world before there were DVDs or tapes or internet and appoint people like Paul to fill up what is lacking, namely to take the sufferings of Christ to the world, to take the afflictions to the world. The afflictions are there for someone, but they don't know it. And He means for them to be taken, completed by being taken somewhere.

Now here's the purpose-driven death, the purpose-driven suffering piece. I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh, my suffering flesh I am filling up. So this is more than John Piper coming to Austin saying, He suffered for you.

That's a good thing for me to do. Gospel preachers should say that to everybody they can say it. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Nobody gets saved just seeing. We're saved by hearing an interpretation of what we see. But oh, to see a lover die for you.

That's what He was doing. He was adding that. I fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

Therefore, I infer, I conclude, and this is simply a footnote to David Sitton's talk because I totally affirmed his thesis at the first session this morning that persecutions are increasing in the world and they are by design of God a strategy for the completion of the Great Commission. Suffering is not an accident. Suffering is not a mere result of faithfulness to the Great Commission.

Suffering is a strategy of God to complete the Great Commission because Paul said, in my sufferings for your sake, I am filling up, I am completing, I am spreading, I am taking, I am bringing the sufferings of Christ to you. So yes and amen. So David Sitton and I and Rod and Brad and whoever else has spoken here are not looking to make it easy for anybody to volunteer.

When Jesus bids a man follow him, he bids him come and die. Richard Bonhoeffer put it that way. And then he was hanged in 1945 as an engaged lover of Maria.

We have plenty of time in eternity to enjoy the benefits for our bodies. You know, marriage, this comes to mind. It's not in my notes.

I just wrote a book on marriage called A Momentary Marriage. I've been married 40 years this December. I named it The Momentary Marriage just because Jesus said, in the resurrection, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.

You get a little window here and it's all about a parable of something more permanent, which means that singleness, by the way, can have massive significance in its witness to that later marriage rather than absolutizing the one that we can enjoy here for a moment. This is a momentary marriage, which means if you risk one of you dying, you have an occasion like Graham Stain's wife and his 13-year-old daughter Esther, who after he and his two sons, one six, one ten, burned alive in the back of their SUV in India, were asked, you're going home now to Australia after 30 years working with lepers in India? And she said, why would we go home? We've given our life here. We love India.

We hold no grudges. And then they turned to the 13-year-old daughter. Some of you are 13.

Okay, heads up, 13-year-olds. Your dad's just been burned alive. Your two brothers are just killed.

What do you think about your dad's murder? And I think these are her exact words. I'll have to paraphrase. But it went something like this.

It is an honor that my dad was counted worthy to die for Jesus. Something like that, she said. 13 years old.

These are heroes, aren't they not? They will rejoin him very quickly. It will be as nothing. The marriage is over.

Forever. It's just going to be better in the age to come. You think marriage is good? You think sex is good? It is.

It's a parable of what's really good. So every time it happens, or you just dream of it happening as a single person, remember, it's all about something else. Something else a thousand times better than sexual intercourse is coming. And this little window here where we had these tiny little earthly pleasures of eating and drinking and sex and all that stuff, we'll look back on and say, how could we have gotten so excited about this? How could we have overeaten so much? How could we have done fornication and adultery? How could we have made gods out of those pitiful little pleasures, knowing what we know now? Speaking of pleasure, did you notice the word in verse 24? Now I rejoice in my sufferings.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings. Oh, I don't take that lightly. There's a 17-year-old girl in our church in a coma, broadsided by an SUV.

Two weeks ago, when she came out, beautiful, young, everything in front of her, unconscious for two weeks. I don't lightly say to her parents, rejoice. I don't lightly say it.

I'll preach it. I'll talk about the kind of joy it can be and is for them. But you don't blather away about praise God, anyhow, kind of theology.

Paul has this beautiful phrase in 2 Corinthians 6:10 that we say over and over again at our church is sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

In this world, that's the way it will be. Always. If it's not that way for you, always, you're not connected to enough people.

You're in a little cocoon of pain or cocoon of pleasure. It's both always. We weep with those who weep and we rejoice with those who rejoice.

And there are always people weeping and there are always people rejoicing. So Christians have this miraculous life of crying all the time and being happy all the time. That's a miracle.

Unbelievers can't understand it. They don't get it. They don't know.

It's just mumbo-jumbo to them. Because they don't know what it is to weep, but not as those who have no hope. So, Paul says he's rejoicing in his sufferings as he completes this work.

And therefore, I simply want to say, I'm drawing to the end now, I simply want to say, when we call you in this conference to the Calvary Road, to use Roy Hefstian's old book title, the Calvary Road, we're not calling you to a joyless road. Painful? Absolutely. You can't escape that anyway.

Have a kid. Let him grow up. You can't escape it.

Why not make it meaningful? We're not calling you to the Calvary Road that is joyless. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. It was joy in Gethsemane.

Sweating blood. It was joy at the bottom that carried Him through. The joy of the future was streaming into the present.

There's a miracle there. Yes, it's way out there. It's not pie in the sky.

It's just over the horizon. It is infinite and growing and lasting and better than anything you've ever known here. And it comes over like the dawn into your pain-filled heart and holds you.

It's present joy streaming from the future fullness. So please don't hear us beckoning you to anything other than the deepest, longest satisfactions the world has ever known. Every missionary in this room will testify to the pain and they'll testify that when they put their head down on the pillow after a long, faithful day with no fruit yet, they sleep well.

How you sleep after the stock market and your vaunted securities. One illustration to close to try to put meat on it. David Sitton can put the real meat on it.

I have to just tell stories. When I was in, I think it was 90, oh, I can't remember, 90, 91, 92, somewhere in there, I went and spent a little month-long writing leave at Trinity Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. And I was hit away in an apartment.

I wanted to be by myself to write for a month. Sneak over to the library, sneak back, nobody knows I'm here. That's the way I wanted to be.

And I got word that J. Oswald Sanders was going to be in the chapel. J. Oswald Sanders, kind of the head of OMS for years and years. Am I right? No, you're not.

Am I right? I may have been wrong. China. China.

China mission, yikes. One of those. Forgive me, people, I'm one of those.

Set me straight afterwards. At any rate, long-time missionary statesman, old man, pushing 90. He's died since.

And I snuck in the back of the chapel, just wanted to be exposed to missionary glory. I just, oh, I love faithfulness. I love people who hold on to the end.

I love this 83-year-old guy who's learning his fifth language in Ukraine. Oh, crazy people like that are my kind of people. So I snuck in the back just to hear it, and he gave one illustration about himself and one that he told a story of that he knew, and I want to tell you both of it, and we'll be done.

The illustration about himself was, he said, he was 89 at the time, now I remember. He said, since I was 70, I've written a book a year. Cool! Just wait until you're 70.

Collect all of life, and then start writing it down. For 19 years, a book a year. Unbelievable.

You know what most people are doing at 70? Crossword puzzles. Yeah, golf and crossword puzzles. Other people, tell them what to write.

That's the first illustration, so I just, I sat there saying, God, please, please, I'm 62. I get these things in the mail from the IRS that tell me if I quit now what I'd make from all the Social Security I've paid in over the years. Those are horrible.

Those are horrible documents. Get behind me, Satan! I'm tired of 62, tired of 64, tired of 66, this much and this much. I don't want to think about it! Get out of here! Really, I mean, it's dangerous.

It's dangerous. Everybody's brother's telling you to think like that. Almost nobody's saying, never, never, never, never, never stop serving Jesus.

Pour yourself out for Him. So here's the other illustration. He told, and this one illustrates Colossians 124.

Told the story of an indigenous missionary who walked barefoot, I wrote it down, barefoot from a village to village, preaching the gospel in India. His hardships were many. After a long day of many miles and much discouragement, he came to a certain village and tried to speak the gospel, but was driven out of town and rejected.

So he went to the edge of the village, dejected, lay down under a tree and slept from exhaustion. When he awoke, people were hovering over him. And the whole town was gathered around to hear him speak.

The headman of the village explained that they came to look him over while he was sleeping. And when they saw the blistered feet, I would add the beautiful blistered feet, they concluded that he must be a holy man and that they had been evil to reject him. And they were sorry and wanted to hear the message that he was willing to suffer so much to bring them and so the evangelist filled up in his feet the afflictions of Christ.

So I'm done and I'm just going to talk to the ten of you for just 30 seconds. God is here. The martyrs of 30 years from now are made today.

They're made in a room like this. This room doesn't look dangerous. It looks comfortable.

It is comfortable. We're all dressed nicely. Nobody's horrible to look at with a slit throat or anything like that.

But Bonnie Witherell was. There's a picture of her on the internet after her murder. That seems so far away.

It's not. It's just as far away as a commitment. So we who love doing this conference invite you to pray for us, that we wouldn't waste it, that the older I get, I wouldn't fall more and more in love with comfort, need more and more securities, and that you would join us in that and lay your life down for Jesus.

I think the best way to make connection to every tribe mission would be sometime after we're done here in a few minutes to make your way to that prayer room and just say, I'd just like to pray here about what might be going on in my life. And then the hundred of you who are martyr senders, that means some pretty radical new choices about lifestyle. You don't need a lot of the stuff you're spending money on.

And so give some thought this afternoon, as couples, as singles, to what you might do to multiply your giving to send out those ten. Let's pray. Father, we're going to worship you.

Worship you in giving. Worship you in singing. We're going to worship you in praying.

And someday we will gather around the throne and say, worthy is the lamb that was slaughtered. And that is the word. Slain is a nice, clean word.

Slaughtered is an ugly word. It's what you do to sheep and pigs and cows. Slagizomai in Greek is slaughter.

It's what you do to pigs and cows and sheep. And it's what they did to Jesus. They slaughtered Him.

He hung like a piece of meat, saving the world. Christianity is not mainly a beauty on this earth. It's mainly suffering on this earth.

And I pray, oh God, that you would help me mainly here. I feel so vulnerable, so close to hypocrisy as I stand here. I have a house.

I have a car. I have a church. I have clothing.

Food is in my shelf. I have a refrigerator. I have indoor plumbing.

I drink water right out of the tap without filtering it at all. I have 911. I have a fire department and a police department.

There's order on my streets. There are no mobs threatening me. I feel so close to the brink of hypocrisy.

And so I'm praying for myself, Lord. Would you take me, take me out of my comfort reality into whatever it takes to spread a passion for your supremacy in all things, for the joy of peoples who've never heard the gospel. In Jesus' name I pray.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/3SleHtAHk1Q.mp4>

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