

The Role of Suffering

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of overcoming and growing in our relationship with God through suffering, and it highlights the proper order of creation and our relationship with God the Father.

Duration: 1:18:00

Scripture: Romans 5:3, 1 Corinthians 3:22-23, Hebrews 12:11, 1 Peter 4:1-3, 1 Peter 4:12

Topics: "Suffering And Trials", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the various situations that can keep us imprisoned and prevent us from getting what we want. He emphasizes that when we face these challenges, our gods (our desires and expectations) start to act up and insist that we are not in the right place. The preacher highlights the importance of how we respond to the prisons that the Lord allows us to be put in. He references Bible verses such as 1 Peter 4:12 and Hebrews 12:11 to explain that suffering and chastening can lead to the peaceable fruit of righteousness and purification from sin. The preacher also mentions the attacks and challenges that Christians are facing, emphasizing the need to be prepared for spiritual warfare.

Transcript

All right, we'll ask the Lord to help us in. Amen, Lord. As we come unto you tonight, Lord, as with praise and thanksgiving, oh, Lord, you're so good, so wonderful, and we just give praise to you, Lord.

Thank you for your goodness, getting us here safely, Lord, and in health, praise you. Thank you for each family represented here, Lord, and I pray your hand on their homes and their relatives, Lord, and keep us in this time, I pray, in Jesus' name. I need your help, Lord.

Bless out the nursery there, the little ones, and help us, Lord, to pursue what you would have pursued tonight. Open our hearts and minds, Lord, and speak to us, I pray, in Jesus' name, amen. We went pretty thoroughly into the tree of life, and I'd like to move on in Revelation 2 to the churches of Smyrna.

I think that's what the Lord's talking to me about tonight, is the church of Smyrna. For those of you that weren't here when we went into the church of Ephesus about the tree of life, that's very important. You'll get the tape.

For Revelation 2.8, to the angel of the church in Smyrna, these are the words of him who was the first and the last, who died and came to life again. Boy, you've got to know that when you're in Smyrna. I know your

afflictions and your poverty, yet you are rich.

I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.

Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

It's not obvious at first why these two are related, the second death and the prison, but we'll get into that God willing. So the first reward to the overcomer was eating of the tree of life, getting the body and blood of Jesus. How do we get a right to eat of the body and blood of Jesus? What gives us the right to do that? I'll help you get that instantly.

Oh, Gabriel says you have to overcome, and that's in Revelation 2 verse 7. He that overcomes will have the right to eat of the tree of life. It's not he who believes, but he who overcomes. We've got believing out of balance in Christian doctrine.

It's necessary, but it's out of balance. It's too much just in the head and not enough in the doing. Why did Adam and Eve lose the right to the tree of life? Yes, that's right, Anthony.

And with relationship to what we just said about getting the right to it, what do you have to do to get the right to it? And what did Adam and Eve not do, precisely? To be overcome, you have to be presented with a challenge, which we all are every day. Anybody that was not challenged along some line today? And if you overcome, how do we overcome? And we pray, some things you have to do a lot of prayer, some you have to exert what will power you have and ask the Lord to help you. You have to keep yourself from temptation.

Sometimes people go into things they know, I guess they're trying to see how close they can come and still not fall in. That's not a good idea. It's good to keep as far away from temptation as you can get.

Lead us not into temptation. Don't fool with it. Keep away from it.

And sometimes prayers of other people help us to overcome. So whatever God is, help. Help me to keep my peace and make this stand in victory.

Randy? It's one of the things, Lord, I know you've spoken and I'm sure other people have heard it, but I know, Lord, the urge in it, more and more in my heart, is to seek, not just on Sundays or Tuesdays, but to really enter into His presence as if like in worship. Amen. Amen.

Yes, Sandra? Well, I guess I want to make an example of what I went through today, because today I was getting some warranty work done on my car. And the first time I took it in, they ordered it a little apart, and I had to go back and have it a second time. And they asked me to fill out a questionnaire that was rating them on their services, and they wanted me to put in a little perfect, when I didn't have to come back, so that they would get a perfect score.

And they were telling me they were giving me a \$20 auto change for putting in that mark. And it was like nonsense, and everybody thought of that, and I just said, sure, fine, and I just thought about it. But because of your preaching of righteousness, it was like, please say it, that's not righteous, and that's not

the way.

And so I'm going to write a letter to the person in charge of me, because I feel that I'm just a nut, because that's not teaching me how to live a righteous life. And it's so easy, and it was something I really didn't have in my confidence. Well, that sounds great to me.

Amen, Larry. You guys don't do that, do they? Hand out a rating sheet, and then stand over you to see how you fill it out? That's not kosher. I'm not in it for it.

Jack be nimble, Jack be quick. All right. So if you want to keep eating, if you want to keep fellowshiping with Christ and partaking of his personality, you have to overcome.

And when you don't, you don't get to eat of the tree of life that day. You don't get to eat of the body and blood of Christ that day. And it's really not, I guess the reason that's the first thing on the hip parade here is that tree of life is because it's so totally important.

That's why he says, I hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans. And I don't know what they were. I told you last time, didn't I? Some scholars say it was, they thought it was Nicholas of Antioch that was trying to get the local church to conform to the community.

And others say it was the priesthood, the Catholic system of having priests and people breaking up the body of Christ and the priests and people. And others say it was early Gnosticism and antinomianism that we're all saved by grace. So there's three different scholarly viewpoints.

But see, you can't find Bible truth by going to commentaries. So the fact that the Bible doesn't explain what the deeds of the Nicolaitans is, the practices, it says in NIV, tells me that it's something that the Lord hates. He says, you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans as I also do.

And I think that's important for us. Because in America, the value is on being bland and cool about it. You don't hate anything.

You keep real mellow. But the Lord said approving of you because you hate it. And I hate it too.

And I'm not mellow about this thing. And I think it would be something that would keep you involved in some way so that you weren't really interacting with the body and blood of Christ. You weren't in a daily, intense interaction with Jesus.

Whether it was priests and people, whether it was antinomianism, whether it was trying to conform the church to the local community or some other practice. Whatever it was, whatever they were doing, it was robbing them of their first love of Jesus. That intent, I want to be with him all the time.

I've got to walk with him and everything. And that's number one on the hit parade. Okay, so when we come to the next church, Smyrna, what we're talking about is the role of suffering.

And each one of these represents a part of our land of promise. And the part of the land of promise of the first one is to eat the body and blood of Christ. And now it's to have the crown of life, which means that you are in control of your surroundings.

You're ruling instead of being ruled. Now, one of the main things that goes on in our Christian life is getting the things that are ruling us under our feet. And it is painful because these are gods over us.

And they've held us and enthralled them for a long time. And we're used to them and we don't like a mess with. Now, the role of authority is God the Father's on top.

And Christ is in subjection to him. You know, I'll throw out something for you guys to think about. I don't know why, but in evangelical doctrine, there's a tremendous emphasis on making Christ equal with God.

And that's not a Bible emphasis. That's not a Bible emphasis. I don't know where that's coming from, but whenever anything is wrong, it's because it's going to produce bad results.

And it's like a pseudo exalting of the Lord. But you can't exalt the Lord by going against the Scripture. And we know that Jesus is God's Son.

He's not another God in heaven. There are three gods in heaven. Jesus is God's Son, God's Servant, God's Prophet.

And according to 1 Corinthians 15, when God has put everything in subjection to Jesus, then Jesus will be in subjection to the Father. And again, we find twice in Hebrews that Christ learned obedience. He learned obedience.

Obedience. And I like where he said, Go tell my brethren that I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God. The Father is Jesus' God, and your God.

Again in Hebrews, he says, In the midst of the church will I, Jesus, sing praises unto thee. Now, the Father doesn't sing praises to Jesus. Jesus sings praises to the Father.

Christ died as a sin offering that God's would be pacified. His wrath would be pacified. And again, we find that Jesus said, No man knows the hour of his coming, not the Son, but the Father only.

Again, he said, There's none good. Why do you call me good? There's none good save one, and that is God. Again, he said, My Father is greater than I. And yet, for some reason unknown to me, theologians have an answer for every one of those things to show that Jesus is coequal in coexistence with the Father.

And that simply is not scriptural. Yes? I'm taking a shot at why Satan would over-exalt Jesus like that. To therefore take the creature that kind of own feeling on it.

That's what's behind that thing. Because the greatest thing in our Christian experience, the apex, the ultimate, is to become one with Jesus as he is one with the Father. That's the highest form of righteousness that there is.

And we do that by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. That's John 6, 55, I think it is. You can't go higher than that.

But you see, by putting Jesus up there to make him another God like the Father, we can't relate to that. And one of the real objections that has been voiced concerning my teaching, and I'm sure others who teach as I do, is that you're making yourself equal with God. And therefore when the Bible says that they shall be one as we are one, which is only a quotation, you're saying that you're equal with God.

And I said to people like that, I'm not saying anything. I'm only teaching what the Bible says. I don't have anything I'm pushing here.

But I'm not going to be pushed off the Bible. And so when you say, and people are bothered by that, they say, well, God is greater than Jesus? Could anything be greater than Jesus? Yes, God is. The reason that Jesus is Lord and Christ, according to the first sermon in Acts 2, is because God made him that way.

So then they say, well, yeah, but in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. That's true. But the Father was not in the beginning.

There is no beginning with the Father. He doesn't begin. He always is.

And our poor brain can't even comprehend that. We're not made mentally to comprehend infinity or eternity. We are simply unable.

We can talk about it, but we cannot imagine it. You cannot relate to it. And we cannot relate to the fact that God always was.

Well, doesn't it say he was with God and he was God? Yes, he is God. Jesus is God because God has made him God. And we worship him because God has said for us to worship him.

Now, when you're saying that God is greater than Jesus, you're saying that something is so far beyond anything we can imagine, is greater than something else that is so greater than anything we can imagine. In other words, you're comparing quantities that we cannot grasp. That it isn't even realistic to say one is greater than the other because Jesus is so high and lifted up that for our purposes there's no sense in trying to lift him any further because he's been lifted as high as it is possible to go.

But by the same token, according to Ephesians, we are with him at that same spot, far above every name that is named. And as Mark said, that's precisely what's behind that. You know, sometimes when they're dealing with a troublemaker in a corporation, you know what they do? They kick him upstairs.

Did you ever hear that expression? They get him up to where he won't mess up the situation anymore. And I think that's exactly what that teaching does. It kicks Jesus upstairs in what's a pseudo sense of worship and reverence, and it isn't that at all.

What it does, it destroys the whole practicality and feasibility of our tabernacle experience where we enter in with Jesus and become part with him and with him together worship God. Yet, none of this takes away from the fact that Jesus is our Lord and we worship him because that's what it says in Psalm 45. He is thy Lord, worship thou him.

So, the only problem that we have is when we leave the Bible and begin to philosophize. Then we begin to argue about philosophy, and that I refuse to do. If someone wants to point out a verse, I can learn from that verse, but I will not philosophize because it goes nowhere.

And then we have a private interpretation of the Scripture. If we take what the Scripture says, we have no problem with it. It exactly says what it means and means what it says.

And the book of Revelation starts off by saying the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him to show to his servant John. I mean, it's all over the place. It robs something, you know.

We don't even know the Father. In salvation, we are apprised of Jesus Christ. In Pentecost, we are apprised of the reality and the Godhead of the Holy Spirit that he is God, not just a fuzzy feeling in church.

The Holy Spirit is really God. And then, now in the Feast of Tabernacles, we are being apprised of the Father, and we have never known the Father. And in Matthew 11, and I didn't mean to get into this, I don't know the subject.

Matthew 11, maybe it will help somebody, I don't know, maybe it will help me. Matthew 11, listen to what Jesus said. You ready? You got rid of all your philosophy? Okay.

No man knows the Son, save the Father. And no man knows the Father, save the Son. And he to whomever the Son will reveal him.

So there is such a thing as having the Father revealed to you. And I don't think we have to make a big thing out of it and change our sign out there in the name of the church and leave the four-square. It's just something that you experience.

It's like Christ is helping you to worship your Father. That's my Father up there. Hallelujah.

I was not raised in a Christian home. My Father, and I respect Him, and I believe God saved Him. I know the time He was saved in a mission.

Because He was a drunk and He was saved in a mission in Los Angeles. I remember the night He got saved. And I come back from the Bible school outing we had, and He says, take a look at your Father, I got saved.

Well, He'd been a drunk most of His life. He was a merchant seaman, and He was on His way up to a third-max license, and He lost that because He was a drunkard. I mean, at home He had His quadrant, He had a sextant, and He had that, what's that seaman's manual? Is it a BOW, B-O-W something? Bowson? Huh? Bowson? No, it's a manual.

It's a seaman's manual. Merchant seaman's manual. Anyway, He had all this stuff, and He was studying for His third-max license, and the drinking did Him all in.

So I was raised in a, you know, I mean, my Father was just not there for me. And, uh, but now I've got a Father. I mean, I've got a Father that I love, and I want to be just like Him.

I mean, He goes along, and here I go along behind Him. And Jesus is my brother. And we have the same Father.

And that's Hebrews 2, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, because they have the same Father that He does. And so it doesn't lessen Christ's glory in any way, but it makes it possible for us to relate to Him as a friend and a brother and a Savior and a Lord, and then He brings us to God. Jesus is the door to God.

We've lost that somewhere. Yes, Colleen? I'm just going to say that it's accurate. I hadn't even thought of this.

It's accurate that He's exalted with God. I, for seven years, went to an evangelical church, and the way overcoming is presented is something like overcoming a drug. It's presented as something you can overcome.

So I came here, and I actually asked my pastor about it. Like Mark said, if Jesus is up there with a Father or something, He can't even touch it. And Revelation 3.22, I believe it is, says, He that overcomes shall sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father in His throne.

That's one of the most powerful verses in the Bible given to the worst church. Glad to see you. Isn't that God's way? So Mark is exactly right.

That's what it does. It kicks Christ upstairs to get Him out of the human business. And we don't have Him walking with us or anything.

He's so far up there, there's no use of this. Three gods up there, you know, and there's no dealing with them. Well, as I said, Jesus cannot be exalted any higher than He is because God has exalted Him above everything, and we worship Him.

But we are sons of God, not like Jesus is, and that Jesus was from the beginning with God. We're not Lord, and we're not a sin offering for anybody. And nobody's going to worship us.

Jesus is different from us in those things. Nonetheless, Jesus has been born again by the resurrection from the dead, and that's the beginning of the new creation. We have been born again from the dead, and He's the first of the new kingdom of which we are a part, and God is over all, and that's absolutely scriptural.

So, why do they do this? But Mark has got it. That's exactly right. He put into words what's been in my craw.

All right, now, what's going on here? What does this mean to rule? He said, I'll give you a crown of life, and I said that, oh, I see how I got into it. The proper order of the creation is this, and I think it's expressed in 1 Corinthians. God is above all.

Under God is Christ. Under Christ is the church, and under the church is the whole remainder of the creation of God, angels and everything else. You get that? The Father is above all.

Under the Father is Jesus. Under Jesus is the church. Under the church is everything.

Let's see if we can find that. Can somebody find that? Isn't it in 1 Corinthians? And you are Christ, and Christ is God, is the way it finishes. Is that chapter 3, that last verse in chapter 3? And you are Christ, and Christ is God's? Belongs to God? Belongs to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Where is that? 3. Alright, read those last couple of verses there, where he says, neither Paul's anything, nor Apollos is anything. To them, let know, no one knows to men, for all things belong to you, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all things belong to you. And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

We are. By the way, that's Cephas. That's a Greek term for Peter.

Okay? Everything belongs to the church. Everything. I didn't say that to embarrass you.

You're my student. I'm taking you under my wing. Okay? Everything belongs to the church.

Life, death, the world, everything. And the church belongs to Christ. And Christ belongs to God.

See that? See that there? Now, when we get saved, there's still an awful lot of personalities that are between us and Christ. They're idols. You can call them bondages.

Sins. You can call them whatever you want to. But they're anything that rob you from your freedom to rule under Christ.

Now, read that verse again, if you will. Go ahead, read that once again, please. Would you look at that verse again? I forgot how to pronounce what he said.

Perfect. See, God doesn't want any of those things to rule you. He doesn't want things to rule you.

He doesn't want people to rule you. He doesn't want anything between you and Jesus. Now, one of the most painful things that we experience is... I'm glad to see you, Jeannie.

Glad to see you. One of the most painful things that we experience is God removing those things that are between us and Jesus. Now, you'd think we'd be glad to get rid of them.

You see? But when we have a strong bondage of a relationship to a person or desire for a thing or a position or whatever it may be that's in the world, it is governing us and we don't realize it. It keeps us in an uproar. And God does not want us in an uproar.

He wants us in absolute peace and He doesn't want anything... I told you how I was really bound with classical music. I wasn't serving... It wasn't serving me. I was serving it.

And now it's serving me. I can take it or leave it. It's been taken from up here and put beneath my feet.

I can enjoy it, but it doesn't govern me. Okay? Okay? But you don't get that done in a moment. So what God does is He allows you to suffer.

He allows Satan to put you into prison of some kind. Something that you do not enjoy that keeps you from doing what you want to do. Now, if you take that incarceration in the right way, you don't blame people because very often Satan will, as he's putting it in there, will use people, he'll use sickness, he'll use all kinds of things.

He used sickness with Job. Okay? He used all kinds of things. Domestic situations, marriage situations, poverty, loss of something maybe that should have been rightfully yours, maybe something that you had worked hard for, and somebody else came in and took the credit for it.

That's hard to take when that happens because you want to say, he didn't do it, I did, you know. There's all kinds of things that happen that keep us in a prison where we're imprisoned in a situation. We're not getting what we want and we're compelled to do things we do not enjoy.

Now, when we get in these pressure cookers, all our gods begin to act up. They all begin to insist that we're not in the right place. And how you respond to the prisons that the Lord allows you to be put in.

And he has control, that's why he says ten days. He knows how long it is. He lets Satan do it.

And that's another thing that troubles us. If we could see it with God doing this, we'd have no problem. Well, if the Lord did it, that's okay.

You ever have anything like that in your family? If so-and-so does it, it's okay. Have you ever said that to your brother? You can't tell me to do anything. If mother says it's okay, but you're not going to tell me.

You never did that, did you? If we see it with God, no problem, because if God wants it, well, fine. But we can't see it. And he uses bad people and bad things like are going on in our government today.

And if we knew that God was doing that, which he is, because he's working something, we wouldn't have any problem. But we can't see it, and all we can see is wicked people, and we get mad. And our gods begin to jump within us.

We want to get even, we want revenge, we may want to swear, want to start writing letters, do something, vote Republican, or do something. And that's when we have to go to God and find out, why am I losing my peace? Why am I losing my cool here? Why is the fruit of the spirit being arrested here? What is it that's causing me to do this? And of course we feel righteous about it, I have my rights, we all have our rights, but this is an unjust world. Okay? This is an unjust world.

And so many times you won't have your rights, and if you've got to have your rights, you're going to be in an uproar from now on. And if you've got to have people speak well of you, you're going to be in an uproar from now on. And if you've got to defend your testimony, you're going to be in an uproar from now on.

Because all these, these are the sufferings of Christ. That's what he suffered. And so, here we are, in a prison.

Now, you do have a couple of options here. You can kick and scream and make everybody around you miserable, including the Lord, and throw a tantrum, and wrench yourself out of the situation. Usually, to get yourself out of the situation, you have to break God's laws in some way.

Or you have to betray someone who trusts in you. Not always. Now, sometimes, Now, I have to throw in a disclaimer here.

Sometimes the heat gets on us because God wants us to make a move. We don't get a spirit of masochism where we just enjoy taking punishment. That can happen.

That's an occupational hazard. You know, let them beat me some more. Well, that's not mentally healthy.

It's not psychologically healthy. So, you've got to pray. Lord, is it your will that I'm being beat around the head like this? Am I really in your will? Or are you telling me that I'm doing something wrong? So you have to, don't take anything for granted.

Don't take any kind of a hell you're going through for granted. Pray. And even in the deepest pit that you get in, always let your request be made known to God.

Always pray and tell God what you want. It's fine to be in prison. Don't become a prisoner.

And it's easy to do. Joseph never became a prisoner. I mean, he was in the jail one night, and the next night he was lured over Egypt.

And he had no problem making the transition. He could have come on and said, I'm not worthy. And, you know, the sun hurts my eyes.

Choose somebody else, you know. Because he's feeling so sorry for himself. And prisons can make you feel sorry for yourself.

Prisons can make you hate God. So, there's live bullets there. So it's a dangerous business.

So when you get in hard straits like that, that's no time to be a fool. You get serious with God. Lord, I'm not a happy camper at this point.

Things are going wrong. Lord, is this you? Sometimes Satan will fill your house with dread. I mean, just fill your house with dread.

Something to worry about will open the door, and in comes the dread, and first thing you know, your whole house is full of gloom. You've got to kick it. It's not God's will for you to have a gloomy house.

I don't care what in the world is happening. That's not God. See that? The door was open through your worry and your concern about something real.

But, you can still be burdened, and you can still be concerned without getting gloomy. Because once you get gloomy, nothing's being done. You just feel rotten and everything's dark and down and depressed, and that's not God.

So there's skills you'll learn there. But in the meanwhile, all your gods are acting up. And the purpose of keeping you in there like that is so that you can deal with these gods, because that heat will cause the stuff to keep coming up to the surface.

And even though you're in a constraint, even though you're in a box, you're shut up and you can't come forth. You don't kindle sparks and walk by your own fire, as it says in Isaiah. You don't do that.

You wait. And you say, Lord, why am I in trouble? Am I afraid of dying? Very often, like this year, 2000, that people get on and up, roar about, they're going to move to another state, and they're going to stockpile rice, and they're going to do this and that. That is seldom God.

If anybody in here is doing that, you ask the Lord if He's telling you to save your life in this way. Say, Lord, where do you want me? Do you want me to be off hiding with my family? Or do you want me to be where I can help people? Ask God and see if He tells you to be terrified of the year 2000. Because I'm going to tell you something right now.

If you go running away from danger, you're going to run right into the line of fire. Right into the line of fire. There's a famous poem about that.

Anybody remember it? In your classical studies? It's a Persian poem. Bill, maybe you remember it. I'm trying to think of the name of the city.

The name of the poem is probably Rudyard Kipling. But anyway, it's this guy that was prophesied that he was going to die or something like that. So he fled his city, and he went to another city.

That's where he got killed. And that can happen. We're not to panic about the year 2000.

We may very well be heading for a severe recession. We're not to panic about it or stockpile gold or anything else. You're to ask the Lord what you should do.

Your responsibility and my responsibility is to take care of the body. To see to it that our brothers and sisters are taken care of. Not to go fleeing somewhere with me and my wife and my kids.

It's us four and no more. Well, that's not what God has called us to do. What did Jesus say about saving your life? You're going to lose it.

So keep away from these people in the year 2000 thing. I'm not talking about playing the fool. I'm saying you go to God.

And what's behind these things is the fear of death. And God doesn't want us to be afraid of death. Okay? God does not want us to be afraid of death.

It's a bondage. So clinging to this life is one of these gods that's up here. And God wants it under our feet where we're happy.

So we're going to die tomorrow. I remember reading a story about a missionary family during the Boxer Rebellion. And they knew they were going to die and they had their little children around them.

And the kids were scared. They said, oh boy, we're going to be with Jesus. That's the way the Lord wants us.

And that's true. They were killed and they went to be with Jesus. The kids were tickled to death.

God doesn't want us afraid of death. And when that's motivating us, it's something to be put beneath our feet. That's a God.

And so all these things come popping up when we're in prison. Okay? Now, I said that it's not obvious why this He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death. It looks like it's not related, but it's directly related to the prison.

Because the second death has authority over all these bondages. And if the prison sets you free from them, the second death can't hurt you. Let's take a look at some of the things that the second death has authority over.

In Revelation 21.8, and I think there's eight of them, aren't there? In Revelation 21.8, there's eight things. And you can ramify these out. They are things that have to do with our behavior.

And they are God's. And God puts us in prison. Now, one thing we need to understand as Christians is that the Father has given the second death, the lake of fire, authority over certain behaviors.

And it always has authority over those behaviors. And when those behaviors are in a Christian, it still has authority over them. Okay? So the only way that we lose our fear, now listen to me, the only way that we can be set free from the dread of the torment of divine judgment is by overcoming sin.

Because until it's overcome, we stand in clear danger of the torment of divine judgment. And grace does not cover that. If it did, why would Jesus say to the church, he that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death? It would make no sense.

If the church could not be hurt by the second death, then that wouldn't be in there. It would make no sense. But it can, and we all can, suffer torment until we are set free and the prison we're put in sets us

free.

See the connection? Not quite? The prison sets us free from the behaviors that can cause us to be hurt by the second death. Let's look at the first one. We were just discussing it, weren't we? It's not what you'd expect.

The cowardly. You wouldn't expect that to be first. In behaviors that are governed by the second death.

That second death can hurt. The second death can hurt you if you're cowardly. And you see, being in that prison, that prison could be a literal prison in which people were being shot every day outside the casement of your dungeon.

And you would have to, through Jesus Christ, be getting victory over the fear of death and cowardice in order to escape that torment. Nespah. Simple as that.

Alright? So, cowardice. Sometimes, you know, we say, in our human personality, we say, that's not a bad sin. God hasn't given it to us to say what is bad and what is good.

He's done that in the Bible. And it was cowardice that drove the Jews back into the wilderness after they could have been in Canaan to spend 38 more years there. Cowardice will keep you from overcoming.

And I've heard more than one person say that my teaching made them afraid. And they'll quit. You know, they just, I don't want to hear about Satan, I don't want to hear about overcoming, I just want to hear about nice old Jesus.

And it won't wash. It's cowardice. And God has not given us the spirit of fear.

Courage. Christ would never have made it to Calvary if He was a coward. I mean, the Christian life takes courage.

You know, I'm preaching some of these things in kind of a vacuum because we don't know what's going on in the world. We don't know what's going on in Sudan. We don't know what's going on, you read about where, is it Indonesia now that they're killing Christians and burning churches? The worst one I've heard about happened a couple of weeks ago and Neil Konashek sent it, forwarded it from Coulson, Lee Coulson of the prison ministries, and told about what has just happened within this month of the Coptic Christians in Egypt.

Because we never hear of that. Because our government wants to keep everything nice in Egypt so that Egypt will help us against Iraq. So we're sending them billions of dollars.

And in the meanwhile, the Christians are being slaughtered. The Coptic Christians in Egypt are being slaughtered, crucified, literally. The women are being raped.

And when the bishop of the church went to the government, now this is from Charles Coulson, I mean, this is a former aide to President Nixon, this is not some evangelist trying to pump up something for a new meeting. I mean, this is the real stuff. The bishop of the Coptic church went to the government of Egypt and complained, and the government accused him of promoting dissension.

And I guess he's in prison now, and the penalty for that in Egypt is death. That was the response of the government to what's going on now to Coptic Christians in Egypt. Right now, they're being crucified,

they're suffering the same as the ones in Sudan.

We know the same thing is true in China. We know the same thing is true in Peru. And it's happening now in Indonesia, where the women are being raped, and the churches are being burned, and Christians are being shot and dragged through the street.

Now that's the way Christianity has been through the centuries. That's the normal. What we are experiencing in America is not normal.

It's abnormal. It's abnormal. It's not normal.

And so, when I'm talking about prisons and talking about fear and all, it's kind of in a vacuum. But it could be within 15 years that we'll be there. There's a strong sentiment in America now about the right-wing fanatics, meaning all Christians.

They're the right-wing fanatics. They're against abortion, they're against the gays, they're against everything decent and good. They even are concerned that the president commits, you know, what he does and lies about it.

They're even concerned about that. These crazy right-wingers. And they're sentiment building.

Now let me tell you why this recent uproar in Indonesia. It's because they've had an economic collapse. They're looking for scapegoat.

Now we very well may be heading toward a major recession. It's not just Christians that are saying it, but other people who are into money management are saying watch it. Watch it.

It seems a little too hot to be solid. And it could, you know, once this thing starts to go down and all the big money people pull their money out and they sell all their stuff and get out. And what happened in 1930 was it got so bad from this kind of thing that many of the banks failed.

I mean, the banks just closed up. They had no more money to operate. And people were down screaming in the streets because their savings.

They had nothing. I mean, doctors were trying to get jobs driving taxi cabs. They had nothing.

Women were leaving their children out in the street to be picked up by somebody with a note on them. I can't afford them. I have no food.

I'm starving to death. That was America. 1931, 1932.

When the stock market got hot like it is now. Well, Indonesia caused a return against the Christians. I don't know what's triggered the latest thing in Egypt.

I think it's mainly Muslim fanaticism. It's the Muslims that are doing it. Same in Indonesia.

The same thing in Sudan. Yeah, it's all coming from the Muslims. I think in Peru it's the communists.

And in China, it's the Chinese. But these other places, it's the Muslims. They're on a rampage.

But see, I told you about nine months ago now, the Lord spoke to me in my office, and he said, the drums of hell are beating to the attack. And about four months later, I was reading, somebody gave me, Larry gave me Dudaman's stuff to read, his prophecies. The Romanian.

And right in there, he had the very same thing. The drums of hell are beating to the attack. Wow! You know, I must have been the Lord.

And I'm telling you, Audrey and I, we keep getting phone calls from Christians, good Christians, people that love the Lord. And they're being attacked. One woman, her daughters disappeared.

17 year old daughters disappeared. Others, a husband ran off. Others, oldest boy, star student, now is in problems.

And it's just, Christian people are getting hit all over the place. Drums of hell are beating to the attack. See, we're not used to this.

We're used to nice, everybody's nice and lovely, my family's intact and everything, my daughters are all home and in bed, and you know, my husband's here, and everything's nice. But boy, that can bust up in a minute. And we've never had real persecution.

I've never been really persecuted, where I was afraid of my life. And probably most of us haven't. So, we're not, when you're reading Bible here, you're talking about people that are living in the time of the Roman Empire, Nero and Caligula, and some of the others, they never knew from one day to the next where they were going to be.

So, God is no cowardess, so they knock on the door, and they take your family and everything, we're not to fear. So, we're not to fear. We have to overcome it, or we can be tormented by the second death.

We can be hurt by it. Because, God will not tolerate fear. Because fear and faith cannot dwell in the same heart at the same time.

Fear is the opposite of faith. So, we've got to buckle up. Like I said, prepare yourself to stand the evil day.

Okay, so we've got to do it. Alright, and then we see the unbelieving. Now, that's a God.

And we're in prison. And it tries our faith. Are we going to believe God or not? And let me tell you, when you get in one of the prisons, the temptation is to say there is no God.

If there was a God, He wouldn't let me be unhappy like this. God wants me to be happy. That's why that prosperity movement was the opposite of God.

Because it was telling people that you were always supposed to be happy. That if you weren't, it was the devil. And the reason the charismatic movement went downhill on that thing was because they don't read their Bible.

They're going into emotion and sensation and not go into the word. If they read the word, they find that it's normal for Christians to suffer. But when you're suffering, it tries your faith.

It tries your faith. Would God really let me suffer? C.S. Lewis covered that pretty well in A Grief Observed. I mean, he really nearly lost it over the death of his wife.

Calling God a monkey imbecile and I don't know what all. Blaming God because Beethoven went deaf. All these things.

He hadn't been a Christian all that long. All this came flooding back on him. How am I going to reconcile the loss of my wife with a loving God? Unbelief.

Unbelief. That's up here. God wants it under our feet so that no matter what happens, we love God and we know He's good.

And there's nothing there between us and Jesus. He'll do as He will. I end up in great pain.

Lose everything like Joe. It has nothing to do with God's goodness. Amen? Well, let's just tell ourselves that every once in a while.

The vile. Now, we have a lot of vile stuff goes on in our culture. You know, weird things, obscene things, unjust things people do to each other.

You know, killing your son for the insurance. It's kind of crazy stuff. Vile stuff.

Teaching. Some of the teaching that's taught in the New York public schools to little children is absolutely vile. It's supposed to teach all the children that being sexually perverted or being a homosexual or something like that is normal and we should really appreciate these people.

Embrace them. You don't pray for them like they're sinners. They're not sinners.

They have another way of life that you're supposed to love. That's vile. That's vile.

What else can you say about it? That's vile. Teach little children that. And we've got a youngster here.

I'll tell you some real things that are going on in the curriculum in New York. Unbelievable. To children.

Little children. I don't doubt it. They teach things to children I never heard of.

I never heard of it. You can go to stores and buy hardware to help you. That's weird.

It's vile. And as long as that's controlling us and it controls people. It controls some Christian people and they get to slobbering over the internet you know, two o'clock in the morning.

It's controlling them. It's up there. God wants it under their feet.

Prisons will bring this kind of thing out. Alright. The sexually... the murderers.

Now that's all forms of hatred and rage. It includes gossip. It includes slander.

It includes things you do to people to hurt them to advance yourself. Things you do to people that hurt them to advance yourself. That's common.

Gossip and slander are as common in the Christian church as ants in a hill. In fact, I think the churches have got so used to it they figure that's the way it is. Did they do that in your church, Colleen? Gossip and slander and the minister figures that's the way people are.

I come down on that. Three-fourths of the people leave. Well, that's a worse sin than drunkenness.

Slander and gossip. It'll divide the church. It divides Christians.

There's no place in the Christian life. Gossip has no place in the Christian life. It's an evil thing.

And it's spoken of several times in the New Testament. Is forgiveness a form of murder? Sure. Revenge.

Get even. Bitterness. All that's form of... Where we want to hurt somebody regardless of the reason.

The lake of fire has control over that. See, you have to think would that fit in the kingdom of God? Anything that will not fit in the kingdom of God. The second death has authority over it because that's where it's going to end up.

That's why God wants it out of us. That's why he puts us in prison. We suffer.

Suffering gets it out of you. Those who practice magic arts of any kind. Any kind of prediction.

And I'm not talking about David Wilkerson. Somebody said he's talking about David Wilkerson. No, I'm not talking about David Wilkerson.

But anyone who does tea leaves, reading palms. There's a spirit. And I think sometimes it affects women more than men.

But I've seen it in men too. I've seen it in men. That there's a drive in them to want to be regarded as having magic powers.

They want to be regarded as having powers of magic. And you see this can easily get mixed into the gifts of the spirit. They want to be people's guru and give them words.

Or they want to have control over some way. They want to be known as the person that has the spiritual power. That's not God.

That is not God. But it does afflict some people terribly. They want to be the one that is known as the spiritual one and has the power.

And they know. And they roll their eyes and stir their pot. Leave their broomstick parked outside the door.

God doesn't want us to be a witch. He doesn't want us to be mysterious. There's nothing mysterious about the gifts of the spirit.

They're as plain as your shoes. They're as plain as your show muddy shoes. And they've got to be kept that way.

There's nothing... The wizards that peep and mutter. But this gets into Christian people. And it gives them a sense of being spiritually superior.

You've got to watch it. You've got to watch it. All forms of witchcraft.

The lake of fire. Christ hates that thing. And the idolaters.

The things that we idolize. You say, Oh no, what is my idol? Anything that if the Lord took it and would give you such a bad time you'd have a hard time praising the Lord after that. It's an idol.

You don't want anything to have a grip on you like that. Okay, prisons will bring that out. And all liars.

All forms of lying. We have evangelistic liars. They tell things, evangelistic.

They make up stories that move people to give money and to cry and to come to the altar. But they present them as something that happened. That's why I don't trust Christian literature.

And I don't trust Christian literature that has anecdotes. Because I think some people have a gift in making those things up. And they're tearjerkers.

And people accept them as the truth. You know what actually happened. It never happened.

That's why I said Charles Colston was not an evangelist or something. He was someone who really knew what he was talking about. Because you can't trust evangelism.

It's sad to say there's a spirit of lying in the church. The idea is the means justifies the end. If I'm accomplishing something good and I gussied up a little bit and make it work better.

But Jesus didn't do that. Jesus never sold the gospel. Did you ever notice that? He never sold the gospel.

In fact, he was given to insulting people to their face. Woe unto you lawyers. You're worse than the Pharisees.

He was not easy on people. He never sold. You're going to leave? Well that's your problem.

I'm the only show in town. If you want to leave that's your problem. We've got to get some of that.

Because otherwise we get to selling. When we get to selling we get to lying. Isn't that right Larry? It's in the trade.

It's hard to tell people the absolute truth. Yes, it leaks oil. You're trying to sell a car.

Not anymore because they got that all cool where Larry works. In time past that's the way it was. You didn't lie.

You just kind of didn't tell it. Does it use oil? Well it may use a quart between changes. Well it does but it also uses four gallons of Kendall motor oil.

You get it serious. Tell them about that. You just told them about the one quart between.

I mean there's ways of saying things. Well I didn't actually lie. Yes you did.

It reminds me of President Clinton. You know this thing he went around. It was interesting that the Supreme Court made a rule that perjury is not perjury even though the thing you said implied the opposite.

If it was technically true it's not perjury. Can you imagine a law like that? Whoa. Well that's the law and that's what the President will get by on.

I didn't really lie. But technically he was true. His is his.

All right now. That's not for us. We're to tell the truth.

Tell it plain and out and straight. And I don't mean by that to pride yourself on being candid to where you hurt people. Now there are people that get afflicted with that.

They're so proud of their candidness. And they hurt people. But I've noticed these same people if you're candid with them they absolutely die.

I guess there's something about this type of person that they can give it but they can't take it. So it's best not to be candid with them at all. All right now.

And don't be candid about their being candid either. Just leave it if you're a lover of peace. All right.

So we see the relationship there. And now just a couple of scriptures and we're through here. Let's take a squint at Psalm 105.19. Someone have that read it.

105.19 See if you can beat Yvonne. Okay. Now that happens to us.

Now we may be hot to trot in the ministry. But look at what happened to Joseph. He sent a man before them.

Joseph sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with shackles. His neck was put in irons.

Till what he foretold came to pass till the word of the Lord proved him true. Then the king sent and released him. See how God moved by the secular king.

We don't have to worry about the world. Christians sometimes get in conflict with the world. We're not in conflict with the world.

We're in a conflict with principalities and powers in heavenly places. After 70 years God was ready to restore the temple in Jerusalem. You know who he moved on? Cyrus the Great.

One of the greatest. I studied about him in ancient history in high school. Cyrus the Great.

He wasn't circumcised. God spoke to him. Go build a temple for me.

And he did the same thing with Nebuchadnezzar exalting Daniel. Our conflict is that the world cannot hurt us. The reason the church doesn't get further than they do with the world is because the world can see the hypocrisy.

I read one time about how the Chinese government got so disenchanted with the Christians. They were having Christians come over and teach in their colleges and everything. And their behavior was so immoral they kicked them all out of the country.

That happened in China. That wasn't an evangelistic story either. That actually happened.

They kicked them out of the country because of their behavior. How many know that America has a reputation for being an immoral country? We have a reputation for being a Christian country and an immoral country. And the Muslims got a thing about immorality.

And that feeds their natural rage and off they go. They've got a cause celeb which is the immorality of the Christians. And the sad thing is it's true.

But when you do God's will the Cyrus's will speak. Remember that. When you do God's will the world will speak.

Your conflict is not about the world. It's God testing you as He tested Joseph. He had in mind Joseph even got the birthright and he wasn't the oldest boy.

The oldest boy lost it because of a little immorality going on there. And it came to Joseph. He even got the birthright.

He was by no means the oldest son. By no means. He was one or two sons of Rachel.

He got the birthright. He was lord over the whole thing. Lord over Egypt.

Nourished his brothers and everything else. But he had to be tested until he was 30 years old. Just like Jesus was tested until he was 30 years old.

Because 30 years of age is the beginning of the priesthood. And Joseph was tested until he was 30. Okay.

Let's see if someone can beat Yvonne finding. Are you ready for the sword drill? Daniel 3.27. Doesn't sound right but it must be because I wrote it down. Raise your hand.

We had a tie. So David you get to read it. Go ahead.

3.7. Now that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were in the fire with Jesus. And when you're in the fire you're in the fire with Jesus. Don't forget that.

Now they didn't smell a smoke which is a miracle. There was no singeing. There was no evidence of the fire on their clothes.

There was only one thing burned. What was it? Their bondage. Because if you read back Priest says they were bound in their clothes.

But they walked out. They were carried and thrown in but they walked out. And I tell you you get in some of these fires with the Lord you'll swear your life is over.

Your ministry is over. Your life is over and everything else is over. But you'll come out and you'll find you didn't lose a blessed thing.

Larry? I saw a video recently in which they had uncovered the actual furnace that was used in Babylon for this Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And when they took the brick that was inside of it and analyzed it the glaze that was on the brick from the intensity of the fire was identical to that which was on the brick in Jerusalem. Same thing about the stones up on Mount Carmel where Elisha where the fire came down and licked up the water and licked up everything around and there's evidence of fusion.

Yep. Alright. You ready? Yvonne? Dave, you ready? The rest? Okay, here we go.

Whoever get it first, raise your hand. First Peter 4, 1 and 2. No help, Andrew, no help. David won.

Go ahead, David. 1 and 2? Yeah, first Peter 4, 1 and 2. 1 and 2. That's what suffering does for us. It gets at those things over which the lake of fire has dominion.

Suffering purifies us from sin. That's what the Bible says. Okay.

Let's see who gets this one first. You ready? On your mark. Get set.

Romans 5, 3. Dave? You got it already? Why, you little electronic wizard over there, show your notes. Did you peek at my notes, Dave? Romans 5, 3. Therefore being justified by faith, we have the peace of God through our faith and studies. By whom also we have access by faith into his grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

So for the glory of the tribulation of hell, none other than tribulation works in patience. Amen. See, good comes out of it.

Good comes out of it. Patience. Okay.

Ready? Set. 1 Peter 4, 12. Does anybody else have that one? 1 Peter 4, 12? Okay, go ahead.

1 Peter 4, 12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you. Okay.

Now. Ready? Hebrews 12, 11. Dave has it right.

Jeannie, what do you have? Okay, so chastening gives us what? She just said. Peaceable fruit of righteousness. If you're a real driver and drive everybody nuts and you're abrasive in your personality, after you're in prison for a while, it will mellow you.

Peaceable fruit of righteousness. Alright. Okay.

So we talked tonight about the role of suffering and redemption. Are there any questions or problems with what has been covered here? Okay. Everybody seems there.

Okay, so. Alright, just to sum it up then. Remember, each of these rewards to the overcomer is a part of our land of promise.

There's two parts of our land of promise. Two parts that we gain by... Well, let me ask you this. What part of the land of promise do we gain by overcoming leaving our first love? The Tree of Life.

The Tree of Life. Access to the Tree of Life. And see, this is an eternal thing.

These mark great changes in what we are. Alright, now. What two aspects of the promised land do we gain by being put in prison? The Crown of Life.

How do you interpret that? That's true. I was thinking in terms of what we were discussing is that it gives you rulership. So the things that had you are put beneath your feet.

You're no longer subject to them. You're crowned with life and through eternal life you now can rule your circumstances. And what was the second thing from prison? The fear of the torment that comes from divine judgment.

The fear of being afraid. Isn't there a saying in 1 John that he that fears is not made perfect in love and there's something about not being afraid of judgment. Isn't there something like that in 1 John? The perfect love casts out fear.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love. So as long as we God wants us to be in such a state that we know that divine judgment can no longer harm us in any way. Of course Christians in this country just take it for granted when they do the four steps of salvation but that's not biblical.

You have to overcome in your prison and get rid of your bondages before you cannot be harmed by the second act. Lose all fear. That's a part of our land of promise to be free of the fear that we can approach our father knowing that there's nothing between him and us.

Okay? Okay, shall we stand then?

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