

# You Must Suffer

by Robert Ketcham

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of suffering through surrender to God's will, trusting that He will replace what we give up with something better.*

**Duration:** 35:59

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5

**Topics:** "Suffering"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by telling a story about a little girl playing in the kitchen and almost getting hurt by a knife. He then criticizes the popular image of God as someone who punishes and causes fear, saying that it is no wonder young people rebel against it. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus Christ will never ask us to give up anything permanently unless it will harm us or there is something better in store for us. He shares the story of a young woman who had her heart set on serving the Lord but died at a young age, and he reads a poem she wrote about surrendering to God's will. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the need for constant surrender and submission to God's will in our lives.

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## Transcript

We're on the high cost of writing paper. Jesus Christ bought the standing timber, millions of you, all across the ages, and he wants to make a writing paper out of you so that you can be his epistle. Now, there's a cost to you and to me in this process.

I said yesterday there are four processes through which a poetry has to go before it can be a writing paper. And the first we dealt with yesterday morning was, it must fall down into the place of death, it must die. And so we dealt with that yesterday.

Reckon yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin. If you're going to be a writing paper for Jesus Christ, you're going to have to settle this sin business in your life and quit fooling around with it. Just quit fooling around with it.

And excusing yourself on saying, well, you know, we're all human. That is the silliest excuse I ever heard in my life. Of course we're all human, but you're supposed to be born again, and you're supposed to have a superhuman nature in you now.

The nature of Christ. And if you yield your members to that nature and not to the only, you won't have any trouble in this matter. Know you not that to whom you yield your members to obey his servants you are? Okay, you reckon yourself to be dead to the old man and alive to the new one, and you yield to him.

And we showed you yesterday that you have a mighty helper, a heavenly undertaker, the mortician, the spirit of God who mortifies and puts to death and keeps in the place of death all of the functions and uproars and how-do-you-do's of the old man. Now the second thing that has to happen to that tree before it can be writing paper is it must surrender. It must surrender.

As it lies there now in the place of death, sharp axes and saws go up and down the sides of it, cutting off every limb and every branch, cutting off all the things that made it a thing of beauty as it stood upright in the forest, all of its lovely foliage and beautiful branches, all of it chopped away, and leaves the log lying there naked and bleeding. That's the way it's going to have to be if that log is ever going to be writing paper. And so with you, and so with me, there must be a life of constant surrender and submission to the will of God, whatever that will may be.

And whatever the cost to you and to me may be, there must be a constant and perennial submission to it. You can't be good writing paper and be yielded today and rebellious tomorrow. You can't be good writing paper and run along a nice, clean, smooth sheet and then all of a sudden run into a bunch of little pot marks and holes that will catch the point of your pen and squirt ink all over the place.

If you're going to be writing paper for Christ that he can write on, this business of surrender and submission to his will must be a perennial affair. It must be constant. It cannot be spasmodic and periodic.

Now, in this matter of surrender, I think we need to get that down out of the fog. I tried to get this business of dying out to sin out of the fog yesterday by getting it down in language that you and I can understand. And if I can get it down where I can understand it, you sure can.

That's for sure. So let's go to work on this troublesome, bothersome thing called surrender. I'm afraid that right here our young people, and they're not to blame for it because the old Jews have taught them that, have got a wrong image of Jesus Christ on this matter of surrender.

I think the popular idea, although it's not a good idea, but it's the one that's popular amongst people is that Jesus Christ, after he saves you, does nothing else now but stand right at your shoulder and looking over your shoulder constantly and the minute he sees a child of God with anything in his hand that that child of God gets pleasure out of or has any kick out of it, an enjoyment out of it, the minute the Lord Jesus Christ sees a child of God with anything in his hand that delights him and he has pleasure in it, Jesus Christ will say, give me that. Give me that. Give me that.

Give me that. Give me that. Give me that.

Give me that. Give me that. And that's the image that most people have of the Christian life.

That once he saves, from then on out, it's give me, give me, give me, give me, give it up, give it up. Everything, anything at all that you get any personal pleasure or profit out of, that's out for Christians. Jesus Christ is just standing there and saying, give me that.

Give me that. Give me that. I'm afraid that that's the popular image.

And it's no wonder that young people rebel against it. I'd rebel, I'd kick the stalls down and tear the horror off my head and go out into the big wide open spaces. If I had to have a vision of my lovely Lord like that.

Now, here's a man who has been preaching 51 years and walking with the Savior for 54. I want to tell you something. And I want you to remember it and write it down in your little black book.

Let me give you a basic proposition on this matter of surrender to the will of God in your life. Now watch what I say carefully. Jesus Christ will never ask you to give up permanently anything except that which he in his omniscience knows will either hurt you if you keep it or rob you of something better.

Let me say it again. Jesus Christ will never ask you to give up permanently anything except that which he in his omniscience knows and sees will either hurt you if you keep it or rob you of something better. You can just put that down as a working proposition.

You see, you and I can't see an inch beyond our nose. But we're dealing with a Savior who loves us and gave himself for us, who sees all things from the beginning. All the tomorrows of your life are as plain as day to the omniscient Son of God.

And it's not an easy thing. I'll grant you that. It's not an easy thing to have to give up that which you think is your cheapest desire, your cheapest need.

You look at these lovely branches and you say, well, I must have these, I've got to have something. And I just can't be expected to give up everything, my greatest joy, my greatest ambition, my greatest hope. Must this all be lopped off and gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme and surrender it all to him all the time so that I just go around and might as well go into a memory somewhere and lock myself in.

Now, let me tell you, my friend, let me say it again. Jesus Christ will never ask you to give up anything except that which he in his omniscience knows and sees will either hurt you and harm you or keep you out for something better if you keep it. If he's taking something away from you, he's doing it in order to put something better in your hand or he's taking it away from you because it'll kill you if you keep it.

It'll wreck him. Young man, give up that girl that you've set your heart on marrying. Young lady, give up that fella that you've set your heart on marrying.

Why? Because the omniscient Christ knows that if you marry him or you marry her, you'll live in a hell on earth. Now, wait a minute. That boy was created in heaven and wrapped up in cellophane and went down and landed in my lap by an angel.

Oh! Okay, gal, go ahead and marry him. You'll discover that it was a fallen angel that brought him and he was wrapped up in the other place. The fella said, now, look here, doc, you can't slander my girlfriend like that.

Won't you tell me she'll wreck my life? She was just a lovely thing dropped right down out of the sky. Okay, boy, you go ahead and marry her and see what you get. I'm not talking nonsense.

I'm talking out of 51 years of experience as a pastor. I've had them come by the scores in these 51 years into my office and lay their head in the crook of their elbow and sob their life out, they reckon they win. Because they just ran their own little love affairs without ever asking the Lord about it.

You go to be a dentist, you go to be a doctor, you go to be a schoolteacher, you go to be a lawyer, you go to be an accountant, you go to be a preacher, you go to be this, that or the other, and the Lord's saying, give it up. Just put it down in your little book, friend, that he'll never ask you to surrender anything permanently, except that which he sees will wreck you if you keep it, or rob you of something better. Now, that's hard for us to see, but if you're going to be a writing paper, you're going to have to be constantly pliable in the hands of the Lord so that he can take away from your life that which would leave a flaw in the page of writing paper, so that he can make that a perfectly smooth piece of paper upon which his image can be reproduced to friends around him.

You see, I say we don't know. We don't know what God is doing sometimes when he removes things from our lives. Let me illustrate it.

Here's a little, oh, say, 20 months old little girl, golden hair, eyes as blue as the heavens, cheeks as pink as a rose, beautiful little thing. And she's playing around the kitchen, and she has inadvertently left the cutlery drawer open, and the little thing is moving around, and she looks in. Oh, boy, what she sees.

Oh, pretty, pretty. Nice long black something here, and a nice long shiny something here. Oh, that's the prettiest thing she ever laid her little eyes on.

Isn't that a nice little plaything? Mother happens to look over and sees what's going on, and why, instead of screaming, she tiptoes around behind the little darling and waits until the opportunity arrives, and she reaches down over her shoulder, grabs her hand, and shoves the blade away from the little one. Then she breaks its fingers and drops the pair, and you know what the little darling is saying? Hmm? Want me to tell you? You want me to interpret it? You know what the little thing is saying? She's saying, my mother is an old bear. My mother is an old dutch.

My mother is an old drag killer. Every time I get something in my hands that I like to play with, she'll give me that, give me that. She's an old bear hanger.

Now that's what she's saying. Well, ten years have come and gone, and a little twelve-year-old lovely girl is looking at her lovely hands, and she remembers the day that mommy took the knife away, and she realizes that had she not done so, all the tendons could have been cut, all her fingers could have been drawn in, and her now-beautiful hands could have looked like bird's claws, and she goes to mommy and puts her arms around her neck and says, Thank you, mommy, for taking it away. Don't be afraid to surrender.

You will live to see the day when you thank God over and over and over again for taking that nice shiny thing that you thought was the joy of your life. You will live to see the day when you thank him from the bottom of your heart. You say, but these things are so important to us.

May I give you my own personal testimony? And please don't think that I'm putting on a front now, that I'm just saying empty words. What I'm about to say to you, I never was more sincere in my life, and the only reason I'm giving it to you is because it's out of my own experience. I've had to live to see the day over and over and over again with many things that I thought was tearing the heart and life right out of me when it happened, and now I live to see the day when I saw what God was doing.

He was taking something away from me that would hurt me if I kept it, or make room for something better, one or the other. As you know, I have fought through these 51 years with a very limited eyesight, and it is

my sober testimony to you today that God took that eyesight. And after all these years, I can thank him for it.

People sympathize and say, what a tragedy and what a handicap. No, no. The tragedy and the handicap would have been had he let me keep my eyes.

I know the fellow that lives down in this carcass. I know him better than anybody in the universe outside of God himself. And I know, I know that if God would let me keep my eyesight, I wouldn't have been here today talking to you.

I know where I would have been, but I'm not going to tell you. I wouldn't have been here, I'll tell you that. And God knew it.

So he just put a blinding on my eyes to keep me from going into the thing that I would have gone into, head over heels, and kept me close, close, close to himself. And if I had been a blessing to anybody, if I had been a blessing to these countless thousands down through these 50 years of ministry, one of the big reasons for it, beloved, and I'm not just saying a bunch of empty words. If I had been a blessing to thousands down through these years, most of it's been due to the fact that a pair of blinded eyes have kept me so close to the Savior that I can do nothing but radiate him and tell you what a wonderful Savior he is.

There are some things, my friend, worse than blindness, and that's having a good pair of eyes that lead you into paths that are forbidden for Christians. There are some things worse than losing a basketball game, my friend. I don't know how you feel about it, but I personally feel that God was in that business last night.

These boys had one great victory. I'm not so sure that God could trust them with their pride. There are greater calamities than victories.

Let me give you an illustration of what I'm talking about. When I was pastoring Gary, dear girl, Dorothy Burroughs, was saved. Under our ministry, one of the most talented girls I've ever known.

She excelled in every cultural art. Music, instrumental and vocal, literature, prose, poetry, elocution, any cultural art you put her in, anything, she excelled. She was way above and beyond everything else.

Poetry, it was terrific. She's the girl who wrote the poem that is now being stolen by some guy, and rather than put anybody's name to it, they're writing down underneath it, select it. This is the poem she wrote one morning after I had preached on knowing the will of God, knowing it to do it, and doing it because you love it, know, do, and love.

She wrote this poem in her Bible. I ask the Lord for some model sweet, some rule of life with which to guide my feet. I ask and pause, he answered soft and low, God's will to know.

Will knowledge then suffice, dear Lord, I cried, and ere this I question into silence, died, no, this remember too, God's will to do. Once more I ask, is there no more to tell, and once again the answer sweetly fell, yea, this one thing, all other things above, God's will to love. That's poetry, as well as something else.

Everybody was watching her, and she was driving through. Her father was the second in command of the great steel empire of Gary. Her mother was a butterfly, nominal, professed Christian, but a butterfly in all

the society.

Dorothy had to blaze her trail against the traffic like Enoch of old, and she had her heart set on service for the Lord. In her sophomore year in school she was stricken with what they called in those days quick consumption, and in 18 months she was dead. I asked her mother if I could use her Bible to find something for the memorial service, and that's when I found that poem that she wrote the day I preached on, Knowing, Doing, and Loving the Will of God.

Way over here on the back fly leaf of her Bible, scribbled in a hand almost, very difficult to read, and dated four days before she died. Listen to this. God, let me lose triumphantly.

What's that? Let me what? Lose how? Triumphantly! God, let me lose triumphantly. This is my prayer today. I who have always prayed to win along a glorious way.

God, let me shun all bitterness of envy or despair that I have run the race and lost while others have gotten there. God, let me get my breath again. Then, Lord, my head's still high.

Quite unashamed, I did not win, but I had dared to try. That's victory. Amen? That's victory! Let me lose triumphantly.

And you do. I wish I had that basketball crowd right down here in this front seat this morning to tell them that. Well, I don't have them, so you tell them, will you? Lose! Lose triumphantly! Don't come home dragging that tail between your legs, down on your heels, with your lips down to the bottom of your walking arm.

Get your head up! There are things worse than losing. And it could have been the worst thing for them to win, and for this school. God will never take anything away from you except that which he sees will hurt you if you keep it permanently.

Something. And he will take it and put it in his hand and hallow it and sanctify it and bless it and give it back to you. Hallowed and sweetened and sanctified by his touch.

If it won't hurt you, he'll give it back to you. Abraham! Abraham! Yes, Lord, here am I. Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest. Take him out to a place that I'll show you and sacrifice him.

I'll lay him up for the sacrifice to me. And you know, I like what follows. And Abraham rose early in the morning.

Man, I like that. Hear me, young man, young woman, if you've got an unpleasant job to do for the Lord that's going to really hurt you and cost you something, get at it early and get it over with. The longer you play around with it, the harder it's going to be.

If you're going to surrender, get it done! Don't play with it! Get it done! Abraham! So here he is, there he lies, and the knife is on his downward flesh. Abraham! Here am I. Now you can have him back. Now I know.

Now I know. And you mean to tell me that as much as Abraham loved that boy before that, as much as that boy meant to that father Abraham before that, that he didn't mean a million times more after that? Joseph of Arimathea, you rich old rascal, you weren't going to leave your resting place to some unloving son or daughter or some pretty old widow after you were gone to make you a hole in the rock over there

and stick you in. You'd go to fix that up before you died, and you've got a nice big tomb.

We'll all fix a new one over there. Boy, you could move a house in the thing. And it's all polished.

Boy, when you lay out, you go to lay out in style, Joseph. I rather suspect that everybody came to see that fellow. He said, I want to show him a tomb.

And one day, in effect, Jesus said, Joseph, give me your tomb. And he gave it to him. Now, keep in mind, my friend, that so far as Joseph of Arimathea knew, he was given it up forever.

He didn't know anything about the resurrection any more than his microphone did, or does. When he gave that tomb to Jesus Christ, he said, that's it. I'll never see that again.

Three days later, the Lord gave it back to him, sweetened and perfumed with the perfume of the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. Not all stunk up with a decaying corpse. Oh, hear me this morning, young men, young women, don't be afraid, don't be afraid to surrender.

Though it may be the dearest thing you ever laid your eyes upon and you set your hopes upon, if the Lord's axe is coming along this morning and saying, chop it off, chop it off. Get on with it, and that right early. And if it won't hurt you, he'll give it back.

And there'll be a thousand times sweeter. You give up that fella, and then the Lord gives him back to you. You give up that girl, and the Lord gives her back to you.

You give up that ambition to be this, that, or the other, and then the Lord gives it back to you. Oh, it'll mean a million times more to you and for you in the days that lie ahead than it could ever have been had you kept it selfishly in your hand. And in the giving up and in the returning process, God will have smoothed out a sheet of writing paper that men and women can see his Son on.

Our Father God, teach us this lesson this morning, that there are a lot of things, a lot of things worse than defeat. God let us lose triumphantly. Triumphantly.

May there be such a yielding and a surrendering of every fond ambition, every earthly hope and desire to thy Lordship this morning. And then we'll just sit quietly and wait, Lord, for you to do one of two things. Give back to us that which we surrendered, hallowed and sweetened by thy touch, or remove it from us so that it can never hurt us.

Make it so for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.

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