

Christianity Is Warfare

by Russell Moore

Russell Moore's sermon explores the theme of suffering in Christianity as a form of spiritual warfare, emphasizing Christ's victory over evil powers.

Duration: 50:19

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:18

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Perseverance"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor shares a personal anecdote about a friend who became paranoid about who was listening to his phone conversations. The pastor emphasizes the importance of not fleeing from suffering and encourages listeners to arm themselves with the same mindset as Christ, who suffered in the flesh. He urges American Christians not to seek out celebrities or catchy slogans, but to focus on the will of God. The pastor concludes by acknowledging the ease of becoming complacent and prideful in our faith, and highlights the perseverance and dedication of believers who face persecution around the world.

Transcript

Thank you very much. Would you please turn your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 3. 1 Peter chapter 3 beginning with verse 18 and reading on through verse 22. While you're turning there let me tell you how very honored and thankful I am to be here with you and already to have worshipped with you in the presence of our Christ.

1 Peter chapter 3 beginning with our verse 18 and let's read through verse 22. And would you please stand out of reverence for the reading of the words of our God. Apostle Peter writes in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. Let's pray.

Holy righteous Father, as we come to your word, Father, we ask you to have mercy on us, sinners, who come into your presence. And, Father, we know that the only reason that we are bold enough to come and worship to the heavenly Mount Zion is, Father, because we stand before you, hidden in Christ Jesus. And, Father, we pray that you would accept our worship.

We pray that you would accept our prayers. And, Father, we pray that we would hear the voice of our shepherd as we listen to his word. Father, we ask all things, Father, we ask in everything that is done here in the next several days.

And, Father, indeed, everything now and in the age to come, we pray would be to the glory of our Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen. You may be seated.

Several years ago, I called a friend of mine who was pastoring a church and was experiencing some trouble and some conflict in his church in a very small town in Alabama. I called him on the telephone and I said, How are things going at your church? And he said, Can I call you back on a secure line? And I said, Todd, I called you at your house. He said, I'll explain it to you later.

And he called back a little bit later and I said, What in the world is going on? He said, Well, you don't understand. He said, In this particular town, there's not a lot to do. He said, And the newest fad around town is for people to get police scanners.

He said, And they turn the police scanners on and you can pick up cordless telephone conversations on the police scanners. He said, So people sit around often at night and they'll turn on the police scanners and they'll listen to whatever telephone conversations happen to be picked up. He said, I didn't really feel like I could share with you what was going on in the church not knowing who was listening to the conversation.

So I shared that with a mutual friend of ours, also a pastor. I said, Todd's really in a difficult time. I told him what was happening.

And he called up. He said, Todd, are you at your phone? He said, Yeah. He said, Are you on your cordless phone? And he said, Yes.

He said, Would you please step back from the phone for a minute? And he said, People of this small town in Alabama, listen to me. Get a life. Find something to do.

And then he proceeded to go on and talk to them about gossip and about violating people's privacy on the telephone and preached a sermon right there. We realized the longer this went on, the more paranoid this pastor friend became because he never knew who was hearing, who had what information, what kind of context it was set in. And the longer that went on, the less effective he was in ministry.

He never knew who was really a friend and who was sitting there listening to him at night. In that situation, he wasn't all that unusual from those out there in this culture. You're going to find all around you conspiracy theorists, people who believe and people who have a deep suspicion that there is something going on behind the scenes that we just can't see, that we just can't understand, which is why movies and books such as The Da Vinci Code are so popular.

It resonates with people who don't have any historical basis for believing the claims of the book, but it makes a claim that there's a secret, that there is some type of a global conspiracy working itself out that is

hidden somehow from view, that everything is not the way it actually appears to be. You can see this with gatherings of people who get together to talk about UFO abductions or any number of wild ideas. Now, why do they do that? Why do people resonate with conspiracy theories, with all types of paranoid ideas? They do so, perhaps, because there really is a global conspiracy.

Perhaps because there really is something that is hidden back behind the way things appear to be and human beings are designed in such a way we know that there's more to life than this and we know that there are forces at work and beings at work that perhaps we can't even identify. It terrifies us. There's something about that that's deeply true.

Indeed, the Apostle Peter, as he is writing to the churches, in this passage that we have read, writing to churches dispersed across Asia, churches that were facing an increasingly hostile Roman Empire, an empire that is mighty, an empire that is unchallenged, that is unparalleled, that has spasmodic outbursts of anger and of power. You have synagogues that are increasingly, in places, upset and outraged about the early Christian communities. You have suffering.

You have persecution in the marketplace, in all kinds of places. And you have a little gathering of Christians, gathering around firelight, perhaps, to read from a fisherman's hand as he is outlining what lies behind their suffering, what lies behind their persecution. And what does he say? Peter shows them, he points out, as he moves through this letter, that yes, they are really suffering.

Yes, they are really persecuted. But he shows them that the roots of their persecution, the roots of their suffering, it lies behind what they can see. He doesn't say to them, things are not as bad as they appear.

He says to them, things are even worse than they appear. He says there are things that are going on that are ancient and old and evil. What he is showing them is that Christianity is about warfare.

Christianity is not about jihad. Christianity is not about taking over the structures of this world by the sword. But that does not mean that Christianity is not violent.

It means that Christianity is more violent than violence. Notice what he says. He shows them, talking about their suffering, he talks about in chapter 3, those who would harm them, those who would come after them.

And he says, I want you to make sure that those who persecute you always persecute you for doing good. That they are never persecuting you for doing unrighteousness. And then he points them to Christ.

It is better, he says in verse 17, to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. And then in verse 18, he immediately points them to Christ. Now, at first glance, it appears here, that what the Apostle Paul is doing, or what the Apostle Peter is doing, is simply giving them an example.

He is giving them a moral truth. And to say, after all, Jesus suffered. You suffer the way Jesus suffered.

And that is true. He is doing that. But he is doing far more than that.

He says, Christ did indeed suffer, but he then moves them into what seems to be the most obscure, the most difficult to understand passage that we can ever find in the New Testament. He says, Jesus suffered, but what Peter is doing here is not veggie tales. He is not showing them some moral principles that can help them to emulate.

Instead, he turns around and shows them what this warfare looks like. He shows them what the conspiracy actually is that they fear. He shows them how dangerous it is.

And then he shows them how they have already triumphed over it. The church has confessed from very early on, the Apostles' Creed, for instance, that Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate. He descended into hell.

And it seems like such an odd thing to confess as a church together. First of all, that you would even use the name of Pontius Pilate, this two-bit governor who handed over Jesus to execution. It's like including Lee Harvey Oswald's name in a confession of faith.

And yet we confess together he suffered historically under Pontius Pilate, and then we speak of his descent into hell. Notice what Peter is doing when he points them to this kind of warfare. Notice that Peter, first of all, is showing them the humiliation of Christ before the powers.

He says here, Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous. There's a sense in which there is no way that we can imagine the context of the early Christian communities. After all, you and I have just walked into this room today.

We didn't come through cursing mobs. As a matter of fact, we came out from this table back here with books that are published by Christian publishers that are able to print these publications, to sell these publications. They're able to put these things freely on display at Barnes & Noble or at any other bookseller.

We can't understand what it would be like to live in a world in which Jesus Christ is viewed in something of the way that we would have viewed David Koresh, a madman, someone who had messianic aspirations, someone who was executed. They are seen with this kind of reviling, with this kind of contempt. And Peter says, I know that you are suffering.

I know that you face the threat of persecution. But he points them to the crucifixion. Jesus also suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.

Why? That he might bring us to God. He shows them what the problem really is. He speaks here, notice in verse 22, all the way down at the end, when he sums up what is happening, he talks about angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Now you think about this for a moment. These are people who are facing authorities and powers. And there is always the threat that these authorities and powers who have the power of the sword will be able to turn on them in an instant, will be able to wipe them out.

Peter turns around and says, such has always been the case. The Lord Jesus himself faced authorities and powers. They are subjected to him, but it certainly does not seem that way as he is facing them.

After all, he is humiliated. Christ also suffered. This is someone who came before the Sanhedrin.

Someone who came before the Roman government. Someone who came before Herod, the governing authority. Someone that it seems had an indictment placed upon him.

Someone who had his beard ripped at. Someone who was ridiculed and mocked and laughed at. Someone who was sentenced.

Someone who was arrested. Someone who heard, crucify him, crucify him, crucify him. Someone who drowned in his own blood.

Someone who faced a vast right-wing conspiracy and a vast left-wing conspiracy. Who faced all of these political powers and all of these authorities. Someone who also, Peter tells us, faced the angelic powers.

Faced the fallen angelic element at work within this world. The principalities and powers. So that when we see the betrayal of Jesus, what happens? Satan enters into Judas.

We have much conversation these days about Judas. And whether or not Judas is a protagonist or an antagonist in the Gospels. And the Gospels make it very clear that when Judas is betraying Jesus, this is not just an act of human jealousy or of human ill will.

This is not just some type of a soap opera being worked out. This is the work of the evil one who is working in conjunction with Judas to hand over Jesus to the authorities. So much so that when Jesus is arrested, what does he say? I've been in the temple every day.

I've been out in public before you. You could have come to me at any point. You could have heard what I was saying at any point.

But this is your hour. And the power of darkness. He faces these angelic authorities and Peter says he also suffered.

What is Peter telling them? The same principalities and powers that were after him are after you. That's the point he's going to make later on when he says you don't resist in the way that a pagan resists. You don't resist in the way that an evildoer resists.

You resist in the way Jesus resisted without reviling, without cursing because the spirit of glory rests upon you. The same spirit that anointed Jesus, that rested upon Jesus, that would cause a demonized man in a synagogue to jump up and say I know who you are, the Holy One of God. That same spirit rests upon you.

So of course you are going to antagonize the authorities. Of course you are going to antagonize the powers. Of course you are going to antagonize the demonic strongholds.

You belong to Christ. Christ also suffered. This is something that we do not communicate in our churches in an American context in which we see Christianity as being the highest point of the American dream.

I mentioned veggie tales some moments ago. Have you seen the veggie tales episode where Bob and Larry, the tomato and the cucumber are martyred for their faith by Islamic terrorists? Have you seen that one? Where you have the cucumber pickled behind glass with cold dead eyes looking out. The tomato sliced apart Julianne for the faith.

Of course you haven't seen that episode. And you never will because that aspect of Christianity cannot be mass marketed in the way that we mass market Christianity in our Christian subculture. That kind of suffering, that kind of derision, that kind of mocking is not a commercial product.

It does not give you the kind of moral lesson that can be easily digested. It gives you something that is far more counter cultural than that. Peter turns to these churches that are facing the evil one and what he is showing them is exactly what the Apostle John sees in Revelation chapter 12.

He says, I see all of human history in this vision given to him by Christ himself. And what is this vision? It is of a dragon who is seeking to consume a child. A dragon who is chasing after this child, seeking to consume him.

A dragon who is faced, who is put down, who is defeated, who is thrown down from the heavens. Peter says, I want you to know Christ also suffered, but Christ is not a victim. Christ suffered once for sins.

He makes it very clear where this warfare is focused. That the evil one has a hold, he has a claim, and what is his claim? It is what John tells us in Revelation chapter 12. He is the accuser.

He has the power of accusation so that every child born of woman who stands face to face with the serpent receives the accusation, you share my nature, and you share my inheritance, and of every single one of these human beings he is right, with one exception. He suffers, he says, once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous. He doesn't suffer as a martyr.

He doesn't suffer as an example. He says he is suffering that he might bring us to God. He is humiliated.

He is standing here in a suffering that Peter says all of us are called to enter into as we share in his spirit. You think about the way that Luke tells us of the thief on the cross who as he is there being executed for crimes that are so vile probably they would cause us to shudder. We probably wouldn't speak of them in polite company.

Who is able to look over at this trembling, convulsing, naked man who is being laughed at and who is being mocked and say something that sounds so crazy that people probably thought he was delusional. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Nothing seems more ridiculous at that moment than Jesus coming into his kingdom.

This is a man who is utterly humiliated in the face of the authorities, of the powers, of the angelic beings. He even bears a mocking sign over his head. This is the king of the Jews.

Laying down on the ground are purple garments that had been placed on him as an act of ridicule. They are treating him almost like he is some type of a circus act, some type of a dancing ape for their amusement. And this thief looks in that humiliation and in faith says, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Peter says, remember this. He suffered in order to bring us to God. He did this suffering in order that he might once for all deal with sin.

Notice what he says. He says, he is put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. Now what Paul is not doing there, what Peter is not doing there, is not saying that the flesh, the body is that that is unimportant and the spirit, the soul is that which is greatly important.

What he is doing here is precisely the same thing that the apostle Paul will do to the Galatians for instance. And to say you've got this age of the flesh, you have this age of the spirit, he's able to say he became a life-giving spirit. He is able through the power of the spirit to be made alive.

He is part of this new order, this new age that God is bringing about. Peter says you need to understand even though he is humiliated, even though it seems that he is crushed, even though he has suffered, God is with him. It doesn't appear that way.

It doesn't appear that way when he is hanging there limply on that stake of execution. He is humiliated. So are you.

He also tells them, I want you to understand, I want you to confess the proclamation of Christ to the powers. He says something that is very difficult for us to understand. He is made alive in the spirit in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.

Something very difficult for us to understand as we read this. There are those who will say, for instance, Kenneth Copeland, who will say what this is referring to is Jesus going down into hell. And Jesus in hell is bearing the punishment for sin.

Yet clearly that is not what the scripture is teaching. There are others who will say, well what this is referring to is Jesus going to the Old Testament saints who are now kept in captivity. He is coming and he is leading them out of captivity into the very presence of God.

I don't think that is what he is talking about either. I think when Jesus is proclaiming to the spirits who are in prison, I think that Peter is referring to precisely what he is talking about in verse 22. To the authorities, angels, and powers that have been subjected to him.

Who are these spirits? This word is used elsewhere to describe angelic beings. The principalities and powers. I think Peter's readers would have understood exactly what he is speaking of.

What you will see, for instance, in 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 4 and Jude 6. These angels that are kept under gloomy chains of darkness. They are waiting for the day of judgment. Those angelic beings that have transgressed their original boundaries.

These spirits in prison, how is Jesus proclaiming to them? What is he proclaiming? He is not here proclaiming a gospel. The writer of Hebrews tells us there is no gospel. There is no atonement made for these angelic beings.

What is he proclaiming? He is proclaiming triumph. He is proclaiming victory. This has everything to do with the situation of the people who are being persecuted.

Peter writes and says to them, Yes, you need to understand that there are enemies standing against you. Enemies that are not only human. Enemies that are working against you.

That these vast conspiracies that we see, they are more ancient than humanity itself. But he says, that has been triumphed over. And how has it been triumphed over? Through the cross.

Through the empty tomb. I don't think what Peter is saying here is that Jesus is going down into anywhere. I think what he is saying is that this proclamation is being made.

Where is the proclamation being made? It's being made in the resurrection from the dead. In the triumph of Christ over all of these authorities that accuse him, that indict him, that sentence him to death. After all, Jesus, when he is looking toward the cross, he speaks of the cross not simply as an instrument of suffering.

He speaks of it not simply as an instrument of death. He speaks of it also as the place where he is going in John chapter 12 to meet with the ruler of this age who will be cast out. He is coming for me, Jesus says, but he has no claim on me.

He is proclaiming, he is speaking, Peter says, to the spirits who are in prison and he goes on to explain exactly what this means. He is confessing here, I think, redemption from these powers, from the power of the powers. Notice what he says.

He says the spirits in prison, they formerly did not obey. When did they not obey? When God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. You have something that is happening in Genesis chapter 6 and all the way through Genesis 9 when you have the account of the flood coming.

A passage that is very difficult for us to understand. The sons of God and the daughters of men. Many of us will have different interpretations of exactly what Moses is telling us.

I think he is speaking here of demonic beings. He says God's patience is waiting in the days of Noah. You have Peter pointing them back to judgment.

And he will do this consistently. God judges, God condemns the world through this act of the flood, through this wiping away of those who are standing in opposition to him. Peter uses this image and he ties it immediately to baptism.

He says just as God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you. It makes us nervous.

We read a passage like this. We read a passage like this and it sounds almost as though if we were to hear someone say it without knowing it is a Bible verse we would assume he is a heretic. He says this baptism, it saves you.

But Peter goes on to explain exactly what this means. He says not a removal from the dirt, dirt from the body, but what an appeal to God for a good conscience. Peter turns and speaks of baptism and he ties baptism with deliverance, with freedom from these powers, with freedom from persecution.

I'm here today before you as a Baptist, as a Southern Baptist who is deeply concerned about the way in my own community, in my own tradition, baptism is being wiped away. And I'll talk about this more a little bit later. But there are many communities, especially in the Bible Belt of this country in which baptism is just our version of a bar mitzvah.

You get to a certain age, you need to be baptized. And if one is not baptized, it's because something is wrong with one's parents. And so there's great social pressure that is placed upon baptism which means that you have some areas in which everyone is baptized and you may have people who will come through the waters two, three, four times.

Because as a four-year-old child, someone has walked up and said, do you love Jesus and do you want to go to heaven? And the answer is yes. And let me assure you, if you find a four-year-old child who will tell you, I hate Jesus and I want to go to hell, you have found a disturbed four-year-old child. Every four-year-old child loves Jesus and wants to go to heaven.

And I'm not saying that a four-year-old child can't repent and believe. But what I'm saying is when you have baptism that is disconnected from this appeal to God for a good conscience, you have baptism becoming something other than the momentous act that Scripture records, that Scripture mandates. Notice what he says.

You are in like manner saved through baptism. What is Peter doing? Peter is saying, I want you to realize God in the time of the flood with great patience, He bore with humanity through the construction of an ark. He will talk about later on how all of the citizens of Noah's ark were mocking and scoffing and laughing and saying everything has continued in the way that it always has.

And then suddenly God comes in judgment, in judgment with water. And what happens? God through His deliverance brings Noah, brings the people of Noah safely through the wrath of God, safely through water. He delivers them through to the other side to a new creation.

You have Jesus who will come later and will speak of His crucifixion specifically as a baptism. I have a baptism to undergo and now I am anxious until I undergo it. John will look to Jesus and say, I baptize you with water, He will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Spirit.

Peter stands and is speaking here to these poor persecuted peoples who are tempted perhaps to somehow raise the white flag, somehow tempted to say we believe that we are going to be extinguished by all of this suffering and all of this persecution. And what does he point them to? To their identification with Christ. He points them to a baptism that is an appeal to God.

What kind of an appeal is it to God? He tells you, He says it is an appeal for a good conscience. How is it an appeal for a good conscience? Exactly what the Apostle Paul will show to us in Romans chapter 6. You are united with Him in death, in burial, in newness of life. Exactly what Paul is going to write to the Colossians when he says you are buried with Him in baptism.

And what does that mean? That means that the church is announcing there is therefore now no condemnation. You are now already judged. You are now already condemned.

And the person who comes up out of the water, the person who stands before God, who has the pronouncement of the church together, we receive you as a brother, this is someone who is confessing I am already damned. I am already crucified. And I am already raised from the dead.

Peter says baptism, which corresponds to this, it now saves you. He says it is an appeal to God for a good conscience. And he sees this as being essential to warfare.

If you are going to stand against the enemies of God, you must stand against the enemies of God as one who is not condemned. I have two four-year-old sons. And when I leave to go to work in the morning, they'll come in and say, Daddy, where are you going? And my answer is I'm going to fight the devil.

They think I have a very exciting life. And when I come home from work at the end of the day, they'll always come up and say, Where did the devil hit you today, Daddy? And we'll talk about fighting the devil. And they'll say, I want to go with you and fight the devil with you.

And I'll always say, You can't fight the devil yet because you don't have the Holy Spirit. If you were to fight the devil without the Holy Spirit, Jesus says He would sift you like wheat. But I'm praying for the day in which you will be able to fight the devil.

And we speak about, as we move through the Bible, reading these passages of Scripture, I find that little boys resonate with exactly the same passages of Scripture that I resonated with when I was a four and five-year-old little boy. It's the sword going into Eglon. It's J.L. with the tent peg.

It's David and Goliath. And it's not the Veggie Tales version. It's the real severing of the head and holding it up on the stick and everything else.

And I realize that's not because little boys are any more depraved than little girls. It's because... It's precisely because little boys understand deep within them there's some kind of battle going on out there that I am called upon as a future protector to engage in. And one of the things that I am trying to communicate to these little boys is that I am raising them to be violent.

I'm not raising them to be gangsters. I'm not raising them to be jihadists. I'm raising them to be more violent than that.

I'm raising them to be as violent as Jesus was. Someone who, when he is being arrested and has the authorities coming to take him before a two-bit governor, when Peter takes up the sword and cuts off the ear of the arresting officer, Jesus turns and speaks to him, and Jesus says something very different from what I would say. If I were writing the Gospels, I would have Jesus say, You sissy, let me show you how to use a sword.

See, right here. But Jesus doesn't do that. What does Jesus do? Jesus sees that the warfare is deeper and more evil than this man can ever imagine.

It is more problematic than Peter understands. It is because Jesus understands that he could call legions of angels, he could call the armies of heaven, he could completely annihilate and wipe out Jerusalem and all of the inhabited earth, and what would he accomplish? Damnation and condemnation. He understands that in order to crush the head of the serpent, he will stand in the place of a sinful humanity, he will bear the wrath of his father, he will be raised from the dead, he will stand in the presence of the Almighty, and he will say triumphantly, Here I am and the children you have given to me.

When Jesus says put down the sword, it is not because Jesus is some kind of a tie-dyed pacifist. It is because Jesus understands that Peter is not violent enough. If your eye offends you, Jesus says, gouge it out.

And when you are facing an evil one who is holding humanity captive by accusing them because of a right condemnation before a holy and a righteous God, the way that you defeat him is to remove the accusation through the sacrifice of himself. Peter says, when you are facing these powers, when you are facing these principalities, when you are facing these authorities, when you are facing an enduring suffering, you are enduring suffering not because you are afraid of them. You are enduring suffering because you know they cannot hurt you, ultimately.

You know that if they cut off your head, Jesus knows how to reassemble it. He says, there is a redemption that is here and in the act of baptism you are confessing what you believe, you are appealing for a good conscience, and then notice finally what he points to. He confesses here the triumph of Christ over these powers.

Notice in verse 21, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And so often in our churches we act as though the resurrection is just God putting a happy face on the end of a sad story. And Jesus was raised from the dead.

We've had a difficult time in our house because last Easter when my boys were three, I was reading through the gospel accounts with them. We came to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. They

could understand death.

They've seen things that are dead. I was trying to explain resurrection and I didn't have as much success. And so we would be in the middle of the grocery store and my son Benjamin would look at a lady who walks by and announce, Jesus is dead.

And I would have to turn around and say, but he's alive now. He died, but he's now alive and he understands this. And he would see someone else and say, Jesus is dead.

Jesus died. Yes, but now he's raised from the dead. And I came home very despondent and said to my wife, we're raising him to be an Episcopal bishop.

And after great prayer and talking through him, he finally understood what I was saying when I talked about someone who was previously dead. And I realized, you know, it really isn't all that surprising that it should be more difficult to explain to him resurrection than death. And it really isn't all that surprising that we have in our churches people who may believe in resurrection, but they don't understand the centrality of resurrection.

So that when Jesus is speaking of resurrection and when the apostles are speaking of resurrection, Jesus is speaking of it in these triumphant terms. Psalm 68, you defeat your enemies and then you can go to Mount Zion. He is the firstborn, the one who is raised out of this captivity to death, the one who can come and show us, I am the resurrection.

Resurrection is not a thing. Resurrection is a who. And I am the resurrection and I am the life.

Peter says to these little communities here, you need to understand that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven is at the right hand of God, this humiliated person, this executed criminal, this one that everyone around you is saying is a cult leader, he is seated at the right hand of God. He has regal power and authority and it doesn't matter how the authorities roam. It doesn't matter how they stand.

It doesn't matter how they foment. The day is coming in which every foe will be placed under his feet and every tongue will confess those on the earth and those under the earth, Jesus Christ is Lord. He says angels, authorities, powers have been subjected to him so why do you tremble in fear when you see them coming? And why are you so desperately afraid of suffering? So many of us are so afraid.

Peter isn't here calling us to have some type of a martyr complex and some of us do. Some of us in pastoral ministry act as though it's a mark of pride to have difficult business meetings and we're able to sit around the table and we're able to speak about the troubles that we have and some of us believe that that actually is a mark of holiness. I've survived three special call business meetings in the past year.

Sometimes it is. Peter isn't saying here to seek after suffering. But what is he saying? When suffering comes why do you tremble? Why are you fearful? He says you need to understand that what you are living through, what you are going through is a warfare that was going on long before you ever arrived on the scene and will be going on long after you are gone.

It has been, they have been subjected to him. He says this is the way that you prepare people to face suffering. We've lived so long in this kind of an American context that we are not training people for suffering because it doesn't exist.

The suffering that we may face is so miniscule compared to the suffering that any other generation of Christians that they have ever faced. And yet the day may be coming when your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren will have to look into the barrel of an AK-47 and decide whether or not they can confess Jesus as Lord. Are we molding and shaping and conforming Christians who will be able to answer the right way? Do we have in our churches the sense of gravity? And I'm not talking about debates over contemporary music and traditional music.

There is sappy and syrupy traditional music. There is sappy and syrupy contemporary music. I'm talking about do we have a sense of when we're gathered together in worship that we are a band of brothers and sisters marching triumphantly through this present wilderness to Mount Zion.

Is that sense of gravity present? Is that sense of gravity present in our homes as we are training and equipping the next generation? Is that sense of gravity present in this Christian subculture that we have created in the United States of America in which we have all our own music and all our own television? Is that sense of gravity here that it's warfare? There was an article recently in GQ magazine, secular atheist who was sent to a Christian music festival, was told to write back and explain to the readers of GQ what American Christian culture is all about. He wrote back and said, I think I can explain it to you. It's like this.

He said, have you ever seen this off-brand cologne? He said, you know, you'll go into a truck stop or a gas station and they'll have a cologne thing set up there and it'll say, if you like Drakkar Noir, you'll really love Sexy Musk cologne. He said, not quite as good, but it'll kind of give you the artificial scent of what the real stuff is about. He said, Christian culture is kind of like that.

He says, what the Christians want to do is they see whatever is going on in the mainstream culture and they will try to find a Christian version of that that's not quite as good, but it still has a Christian message. So you've got boy bands. We've got Christian boy bands.

They're not quite as good, but they're able to at least sing about Jesus. You've got death metal. We've got Twisted Fisher or whatever it is that we're able to bring forward.

He says, and this is what Christian culture is all about. It's about it's about having a safe alternative to the regnant culture. I'm afraid the secularist may indeed have been right, but that is completely contrary to the message of the gospel that is seen in the New Testament.

The apostle Peter is writing and he is not saying find a safe alternative to the regnant culture. He is saying instead the regnant culture is held in captive in many ways to the God of this age and you should have hope. You should have triumph.

You should have no fear because the God of this age has already been judged and the sense that should be present in the Christian community is not a fleeing out from persecution. It is not a trembling in the face of the culture. It is a steeled confidence understanding we are going to speak with winsomeness and persuasion and power, but we will understand that ultimately at the end of the day all of these principalities and powers and authorities whatever their names they will crumble.

They will fall. Peter says do not flee from suffering. He says understand your arm yourselves in chapter four in verse one arm yourselves so that you can stand against this notice what he says in chapter four verse one since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh arm yourselves with the same way of thinking for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no

longer for human passions, but for the will of God the call for American Christianity is not to find another celebrity to follow the call for American Christianity is not to find another mantra to celebrate the call for American Christianity may be to stand before persecution may be to stand before suffering may be to look to our brothers and sisters who are confessing Christ in Sudan and say why are there no megachurches in Sudan and why are there no liberal Christians in Sudan Peter says you understand when you see the humiliation of Christ when you see the crushing of Christ when you see this Christ standing before the powers that it appears to the eyes of sight that he was extinguished that he was defeated says but you see with the faith you see with the eyes of faith something else you see a serpent twisting in the ground tail flapping back and forth but if you look up a little further you see a head that is thoroughly and completely crushed let's pray totally righteous father father we live in an age in which it is so easy to be fat and lazy in our faith father we live in an age in which it is so easy to become prideful even as we look around those who have gone before us who have suffered so much those who even right now may be gathered together in prayer meetings around this world father listening to the sound of boots in the distance father those who right now have hearts that accelerate when they hear groups of people confessing and chanting down the road from them there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet father it's easy for us to to act as though we are holier than they father we pray that you would pierce through our self-righteousness father we pray that we would be able to see that behind all of our comforts behind all of our self-sufficiency there is a God who is just as malicious as Allah or Molech and mammon can kill us just as easily and yet father we pray that you would give us eyes of triumph eyes of faith father eyes of a people who walk hidden in a crucified and yet a resurrected Messiah and father we ask that we would consistently and only look to him and we pray this in the name of and for the glory of our Lord Jesus He is Lord every knee shall bow every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/13/SID13059.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/russell-moore/christianity-is-warfare/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net