

Suffering and the Kingdom of God

by Zac Poonen

The Kingdom of God is not about ruling the earth or living a comfortable life, but about living a life of faithfulness in the midst of suffering and trusting in the sovereignty of God.

Duration: 49:05

Scripture: Matthew 3:2, Luke 24:25, Acts 1:3, Acts 14:22, Romans 14:17, Philippians 1:29, Philippians 3:10, 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 1 Peter 2:18-24, 1 Peter 4:1

Topics: "Kingdom Of God", "Christian Suffering"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and embracing the concept of the Kingdom of God as highlighted in the New Testament. It delves into the significance of suffering, both in the flesh and externally, as a means to enter God's Kingdom. The message challenges believers to endure tribulations, follow the example of Jesus in suffering unjustly, and seek righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit as the essence of the Kingdom of God.

Transcript

I was seeking the Lord about what we should share for this coming year. And there is something on my heart which is not something we have spoken about very much at all, but which is spoken about a lot in the New Testament and what Jesus spoke about a lot. And that is the subject of the Kingdom of God.

We have hardly ever preached on the Kingdom of God and what the Bible speaks about it. And I was looking through the Gospels and the Kingdom of God is mentioned more than a hundred times in the four Gospels. And Jesus spoke about it all the time.

And when John the Baptist came as a forerunner of Jesus, his first message was, repent because the Kingdom of God is near and you must enter that. And Jesus spoke about entering the Kingdom of God as a little child. And after Jesus died and rose again from the dead, we read in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1, that, notice here in Acts, chapter 1, verse 3, To these apostles he also presented himself alive after his suffering by many convincing proofs and appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke of the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

So for forty days he was speaking about the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God, every day for forty days with those disciples. And they misunderstood it. There are a lot of people preaching about the Kingdom of God today among Christians.

In the health, wealth gospel, preachers. They mean something completely different from what the New Testament teaches. And that is what I wanted to make clear.

These disciples also misunderstood it. When Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God for forty days, they thought, oh, we're six. Does it mean that Israel is now going to be the Kingdom of God that's going to rule the world? And that's the false understanding that those disciples had when Jesus spoke about it.

Because man's mind always thinks about earthly authority. And today also you find there are a lot of people in many charismatic groups who preach about the Kingdom. It means that Christians must begin to rule the world and only then will Jesus come.

Are you going to restore, not to Israel, Lord, is this the time you're going to restore the Kingdom to the Christians? So we're going to have authority in every nation and influence governments. You know that the apostles of Jesus Christ were the most godly. Those eleven people who had given up everything and whom Jesus, who walked with Jesus, were filled with the Holy Spirit and were faithful right up until the end of their lives.

I think all eleven never backslid. They were faithful right up until the end of their lives and all of them suffered. They never ruled the world.

They never controlled any nation. So, Rome was the great ruler in the world. And they persecuted the Christians.

And every one of those apostles were killed. And John also perhaps lived. He suffered a lot.

We don't know whether he was killed. But all the others were killed. Even Thomas who came to India was killed.

Why did God allow that? Is that how the Kingdom of God is established? Was the Lord helpless to protect his apostles? These representatives of God going around the world preaching his gospel who were a hundred times more faithful than you and I. I feel ashamed when I compare myself with the Apostle Paul. I think I'm a tourist compared to Paul. Let's none of us have any conceited ideas of our own spirituality.

If you want to come down quickly to zero, just look at the lives of these apostles. And see where you stand. A lot of us think we are pretty good Christians just because we've done something for the Lord or sacrificed some little thing here.

I'm just humbled the more I read about these apostles, how they suffered because they understood that there was only one way to enter into God's Kingdom. Notice the connection between suffering and the Kingdom in verse 3. He presented himself alive after his suffering. And told them about the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

You remember when he was walking to Emmaus in Luke chapter 24. And those disciples couldn't understand. Why did this person who we thought was the Messiah suffer? We read in Luke 24 and they said we couldn't understand why he suffered.

And Jesus replied to them in Luke 24 and verse 25. O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Wasn't it necessary for Christ to suffer and then enter into his glory? Jesus spoke a lot about suffering in relation to the Kingdom of God.

We don't hear much about that today. Turn with me to Acts of the Apostles and chapter 14. And see what the apostles preached to encourage believers.

How did they encourage believers? It says in Acts chapter 14 and verse 21. And after Paul and Barnabas had preached the gospel in Derbe. And they made many disciples.

They returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch. And everywhere they went to these churches. They strengthened the souls of the disciples.

How did they strengthen them? You know a lot of messages we like to hear are messages of comfort. Don't worry, I'm with you. Don't worry, I've got a great plan for you.

A lot of people live with these words and words and words. And they never seem to come to an overcoming life in their personal life. They are still grumbling and complaining and getting angry and upset.

It never seems to make any difference year after year after year. 2015 will be no better than 2014 and 13 and 12 and all the years gone by. Just remember this.

Because there is something in the Christian message we have missed. Acts 14, they encouraged him to continue in the faith saying. It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God.

That's not a message the health wealth gospel preaches. The health wealth gospel is an old covenant message. God will bless you and you'll have a lot of money.

I am the Lord your healer. You'll be healed. But there was no promise in the Old Testament that they would become Christ like.

Or that they would overcome sin. Nothing like that. It is only I will bless you and prosper you.

And you'll be healthy and you'll be wealthy. And you'll never have any earthly need. And whenever Israel suffered, oh that's because God had forsaken them.

Then they suffered and the Philistines ruled them. But when God was with them, they were triumphant. That is old covenant.

And there are many people who believe that Old Testament gospel. And I want to say to you, even though we preach the New Covenant, I fear that there are people sitting in our midst who believe that Old Covenant gospel. In the New Covenant, it is not like that.

The eleven apostles were killed. They didn't live a comfortable life. None of them became wealthy.

Many of them were not healthy. The apostle John was so weak and old. When he was 95, they had to carry him in a chair.

And make him sit. He couldn't stand up properly. He probably had trouble with his back and his spine.

And he was an old man, 95 years old. He couldn't even stand. And he would sit in a chair and preach to people.

It was no health wealth gospel that the apostles preached. It was a life of faithfulness in the midst of suffering. Tradition tells us they put the apostle John in a pot of boiling oil.

What all things they suffered. When they wanted to crucify Peter, He said, please, I am not worthy to be crucified like my Lord. Please put the cross upside down.

And they crucified him upside down. These are the greatest servants of God. Where do you and I stand compared to them? We get little mosquito bites and we complain, Oh, I'm suffering so much.

We haven't understood anything. Through much tribulation, we must enter the kingdom of God. We think because God prospers our life.

Some of us were very poor when we started. And financially we are well off today. So is the king of Saudi Arabia.

So is the sheikh of Abu Dhabi. So are the Hindu businessmen in India. Many of them started poor.

They are wealthy like you. They worship other gods. Is that the mark that Jesus Christ is with you? If so, Jesus Christ is with them too.

Why preach the gospel to them? And some of us can look over that and say, See how well it's gone with me. Really? Have you overcome your anger? Have you overcome complaining? Have you overcome dirty thoughts? Have you overcome bitterness? Have you got a forgiving spirit towards others? Are you always in a good mood? Can you say that I can never get offended? No matter what people do or say? Then I'd say God has blessed you. Otherwise just to say, Oh, I had so little when I came to CFC.

Now it's gone so well with me. God has blessed me. My brothers and sisters, Don't let Satan deceive you.

Don't let Satan deceive you. The greatest saints on earth, the apostles, You are richer than them. Wow! Imagine, you're richer than Paul.

And Peter. You really think so? They were a million times richer than you. You've got a wrong idea of wealth.

We enter the kingdom of God through tribulation. And we can very cleverly avoid tribulation. By compromising here.

By being a little quiet about our faith in Jesus. I could have avoided a lot of reproach from the Christian world if I'd kept quiet about many things. But I decided I'm not going to keep quiet.

All the Christians think I'm a false Christian. I'm a false teacher and a heretic, like many others who do think, even today. It's fine.

But those are all mosquito bites compared to what the apostles went through. You know, we saw this illustration last Sunday about the zeros. And we say, yeah, I want to be a zero.

I'll tell you how you'll be a zero. Through tribulation. Affliction.

And when you welcome it, God will allow so many trials in your life to crush you. And you accept it. But if you complain and you question, you'll never become a zero.

Some trial comes in your home, perhaps. Maybe you have a difficult husband. Or a difficult brother.

Or sister. Or brother-in-law. Or some neighbor.

Or some boss. And you think you're suffering. God's trying to reduce you to a zero.

You said, I want to be a zero. But you don't allow God to make you a zero. That's how these apostles became.

You know, Jesus said in John chapter 16. John chapter 16 and verse 33. These things I have spoken to you so that in me you may have peace.

In the world, you will become rich. No. That is another gospel.

You will have tribulation. But in me, you will have peace. I have overcome the world.

The world sent tribulation my way, Jesus says, and it could not crush me. I forgave them. Learn to forgive your enemies.

He loved them. He couldn't fellowship with them. Jesus couldn't fellowship with his enemies.

And I can't fellowship with my enemies either. But I can forgive them. And I can love them.

I don't have to go visiting their homes. Jesus didn't go visiting the homes of the Pharisees. But he loved them and he forgave them.

He overcame. You overcome and you remain in love. No matter what people do to you.

Whatever people may do to you. They curse you, you love them. You have become an overcomer.

Whenever you face any trial, from anyone, in your office, in your home, on the street, in the road, in a train, in a bus, and you can remain in love, you are an overcomer. If not, we are just singing songs here about the New Covenant. I don't want to suffer.

Because it is a suffering. You know, not to talk back, not to answer back when somebody is upset with you. To die.

To speak a gentle word. It is easier sometimes to keep quiet. But the Bible says a gentle answer puts away wrath.

It is more difficult to give a gentle answer. Try that. So if I am willing to go, if I recognize my calling in life is to go through tribulation, what type of tribulation he determines, that is not for me to choose.

I am not going and choosing it. Peter didn't go and say, hey, hey, crucify me. That is not what he did.

No. Paul didn't go to Emperor Nero and say, come on, cut off my head. No.

We don't choose suffering. But when it comes our way, we accept it. Jesus didn't go around saying, hey, kill me, kill me, kill me.

No. So, what I mean is, when it comes your way, you accept it. And you don't complain, you accept it.

You say, that is my calling. How many of you have seen it as your calling? Through much tribulation, you will enter the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, by the way, is not ruling the earth.

Will you restore the kingdom now to Israel? Will you restore the kingdom to Christians? No. The kingdom of God is within you, Jesus said. He said that once in Luke.

The kingdom of God is inside you. And we read also in Romans chapter 14 what that kingdom is, really. All these charismatic, health, wealth people who preach about the kingdom have not understood Romans 14, 17.

They always go into the Old Testament. They live under the old covenant. In Romans 14, 17 it says, the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking.

And I might even say, it's not health and wealth. People who have a lot of money can eat and drink a lot, according to their choice. The kingdom of God is righteousness.

And peace. And joy. And the church that preaches righteousness, that is freedom from sin, all sin.

That preaches that Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity. And the church that preaches that we must rejoice always. And the church that preaches we must always have peace in our heart, in our conscience, and peace with all men.

That is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And I want to say to you, there are very, very few churches in the world today preaching the kingdom of God.

And this is not possible in human strength. It says here, in the Holy Spirit. That's why there was no kingdom of God in the Old Testament.

Because the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost. And here I find so many people say they are filled with the Holy Spirit just because they babble a few words in tongues. I've spoken in tongues for 40 years.

But that is not the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit enables me to hate sin and love righteousness like Jesus did.

When the Holy Spirit makes me full of joy in His presence, there is fullness of joy. Rejoice in the Lord 24-7, which means I'll never be in a bad mood. That is the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit brings peace in my heart that I never have a disturbed conscience. Never. If a thorn pricks me, I pull it out immediately.

And always seek to pursue peace with all men. Then I know I'm filled with the Holy Spirit. That is the kingdom of God.

The man who is pursuing righteousness and peace and joy in the power of the Holy Spirit, he is seeking the kingdom of God first. Seeking the kingdom of God first does not mean doing missionary work and giving to missionary work. All these wrong ideas which are not found in Scripture.

It sounds very reasonable but God says my ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. And yet so many people believe all this rubbish that is being preached in the name of Jesus Christ.

I always say show it to me in Scripture. I'll believe it. I wish people would say that.

Show it to me in Scripture. Where does it say missionary work is the kingdom of God? I see in Scripture the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. I see in Scripture that it is not through health and wealth we enter the kingdom of God but through much tribulation.

Turn with me to 1 Peter and chapter... You know, I don't know if you ever find a preacher who quotes Scripture as much as I do in one message. Most of these people, I'll tell you, they quote one verse and then keep on airing their own thoughts. Here's a verse that may surprise you.

What is our calling as Christians? Let me tell you what Peter says is our calling. Who are the people who can suffer in the world? Those who have to submit to somebody else. A boss doesn't suffer.

Those who work under the boss suffer. You know that. So it says in verse 18, 1 Peter 2.18 First of all it says in verse 17 honor all people, love the brotherhood and honor the king.

Can you honor the Prime Minister of India if you feel that his party is anti-Christian? I can. I can honor the Prime Minister of India. Because when Peter wrote to honor the king, the king in Rome was Nero.

One of the most wicked emperors that Rome ever saw who persecuted Christians. And Peter says honor that king. Because there's no authority.

Paul says that in 1 Timothy 2. Pray for the king. For those in authority. For there's no authority except from God.

All these wrong ideas we get from Christians who don't know the Bible. Listen to them my brothers and sisters. Read the Bible.

If you don't know the Bible yourself at least listen to somebody who knows the Bible who is telling you what the Bible says. One of the two. Either study it yourself or listen to someone who has studied it.

One of the two. Honor the king. And then you'll suffer from that same king.

Because he's a wicked man. But God is sovereign. He will not allow one hair from your head to be touched without his permission.

That is the proof that we believe in a sovereign God. That not a sparrow falls without his knowledge. Nobody can touch me without God's permission.

They cannot touch a hair on my head leave alone cut off my head. If you have that faith then you're a Christian. You know that was the difference.

In the Old Testament they would throw Daniel into a lion's den and God would shut the mouths of the lions. Couldn't touch Daniel. Because he had not experienced Pentecost.

In the second third century the Romans would throw the Christians to the lions in the big amphitheaters and the lions would eat them up. What happened to the God of Daniel? Couldn't he shut the mouths of those lions when they came to eat his children? Daniel was an old covenant Jew. These were new covenant Christians.

And God was going to show the devil. These are not like Old Testament people who are happy only when I bless them and prosper them and make everything nice for them. These are people who will be faithful to

me even when the lions eat them up they'll be praising me.

And they would sing the praises of God when the lions were eating them up because they had known many of them would be crucified. I have two pictures in my home. One is of Daniel standing before the lions and the lions are unable to touch him.

And I have another picture of Christians kneeling down and praying as the lions are coming to eat them up. And in the background some Christians are crucified on the cross. And I say that's the difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant and I am a New Covenant Christian.

I don't want to say God shut the mouths of the lions. I want to say I sang the praises of the Lord when the lions came and ate me up. In the Old Covenant they threw three people into the fire Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Jesus was in the fire with them. And when they came out the fire didn't even touch the hair on their hand. But in the first, second, third centuries and many times later even in the 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th centuries even Roman Catholics they tied them up set wood around them and burnt them.

And there was no Jesus walking with them in the midst. They burnt, they suffered, they cried out and their soul went to be with God. There are so many cases like that.

Christians have been persecuted for years in prison. It's not only Paul and Peter. In communist countries in Romania, in Russia, in China Christians have suffered because they were faithful to the Lord.

They were not healthy, they were not wealthy but they were faithful to Jesus. They entered the kingdom of God through much tribulation. They believed what Jesus said in the world you will have tribulation but in me you will have peace.

I want to say to you my dear brothers and sisters 2015 be prepared for it. I want to prepare you for it. I want to be a watchman I've sought to serve this church for 40 years tried to give it the word that was needed at each occasion.

And I say Lord I want to be faithful I don't want to be popular. I have no interest in being popular. I want to give people the word that will prepare them for the future.

I'm your servant. I'm your mouthpiece. I've only got to tell them what you tell me to tell them not what I feel like telling them.

Okay, so he says in verse 18 1 Peter 2 18 Be submissive to your masters with all respect not only to those who are good that's a word for those of you who have got very bad bosses in your place of work. Be submissive not only to those who are good but to those who are unreasonable. Do you have an unreasonable boss? What does the Bible say? Be submissive not just be submissive to them with a grumpy face but with all respect this unreasonable boss who yells at you yes sir I've done that in the Navy when I was there I had unreasonable people because they knew I was a Christian because when you submit like that this finds favor for the sake of conscience toward God.

You as a Christian bear up under sorrows when you are suffering unjustly you don't deserve it you've done what is right and that boss treats you unjustly for the sake of your conscience you bear up and then it says what credit is there verse 20 if when you sin in your office and then you are harshly treated you endure it

with patience you did something wrong in the office and you suffered for it that's not suffering of Christians and a lot of people in the world suffer like that there's no credit there because you deserve it but when you do what is right and then verse 20 when you do what is right and you suffer for it not just suffer for it patiently endure it this finds favor with God do you want to please God Christianity is intensely practical because now here's the reason you have

been called for this purpose now many people if you ask them what have you been called for they'd say well I'm going to heaven or a little better than that I'm called to become like Jesus right ok here's what it means to become like Jesus one aspect of becoming like Jesus which we don't usually think of to be merciful and to be generous to them that's not all here's another aspect of becoming like Jesus you've been called for this purpose because this Christ you want to become like suffered for you leaving you an example to follow in his steps and suffer unjustly Jesus suffered unjustly he didn't get justice in the court many Christians when they go to court many have come to me asking me for some property or rubbish I say don't come to me go to Moses ask him to pray for you for all that

I'm not Moses he suffered unjustly he didn't get justice in the courts he left you an example to follow in his steps who it says in verse who did not do any sin that's one thing there was no lie found in his mouth when they got angry and yelled at him he just kept quiet have you learned to keep quiet when somebody got angry with you and yelled at you even though what you did was right we all have experience of that you did what was right you were faithful in your work and somebody who didn't have control over his temper yelled at you got angry with you maybe a Christian maybe a Christian boss what did Jesus do he just kept quiet and when he was suffering he didn't utter any threats he didn't say wait till I come back in the second coming and see what happens to you he never said that he

uttered no threats but all the time he kept on entrusting himself to the father who judges righteously he didn't just do it once he didn't realize it's not enough to do it once I have to keep on entrusting myself because I am living in a world where somebody or the other is going to be upset with me somebody is going to yell at me somebody is going to get angry at me I just got to keep entrusting myself to the one who judges righteously and then it speaks about wives wives are the other group of people who suffer just like servants chapter 3 verse 1 wives be submissive to your husbands but mercifully it's amazing it says in James chapter 1 consider it all joy my brothers verse 2 when you encounter various trials because it's through the testing of your faith James 1.3 that it produces

endurance and finally when endurance has had its perfect result you will become perfect lacking in nothing look at this expression perfect and complete lacking in nothing that means you completed your earthly education and that is going to come through trials and suffering that is God's way in the new covenant turn with me to 2nd Thessalonians and chapter 1 Paul writes to the Thessalonians in verse 4 we speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure so it's not only the apostles the Christians in Thessalonica had a whole lot of persecutions and afflictions and this is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which you

are suffering it's exactly what Jesus said it's exactly what the apostles said you know these are verses that we don't look at much we always want some comfort oh the Lord is with me the Lord will take care of you don't worry brother the Lord will take care of you he is alright we want all this and we become soft Christians we are not able to endure some brothers who have gone on to be with the Lord suffered so much we are going to meet them we are going to meet them in heaven some brother will tell me how a lion

ate him up and he sang Jesus' phrases some other person will say they burnt me at the stake but I didn't give up my faith they'll ask you what did you suffer oh brother I didn't get an increment when I was expecting it because I was a Christian they gave me only 300 rupees

increment you say that's what you suffered for Jesus anything else scratch your head and say what else did I suffer oh yeah one teacher didn't give me marks properly in my maths exam think of it what is going to be your testimony I was ashamed to admit Christ so I didn't suffer much the world is full of preachers who do not preach the whole counsel of God just tickle people's ears to collect their money and never prepare them to be godly men and women like the apostles of old I can't guarantee that all of you will become like that because I don't know if all of you will respond to the message you hear I don't know whether all of you are going to live another way in 2015 that you have lived in the past not always looking for some comfort oh don't worry the Lord says I've got a great plan

and purpose for your life in the world you shall have tribulation and thus you will enter the kingdom of God that's how Jesus entered look at Paul's words to Timothy you know he writes to Timothy in 2nd Timothy chapter 1 verse 8 therefore don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me his prisoner he is writing from jail but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God suffering for the gospel according to the power of God chapter 2 he says in verse 3 suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ and because I preach this gospel verse 8 verse 9 I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal imprisonment as a criminal this was the greatest man of God walking on earth in the first century have you tasted anything of that so far have people

ever looked down upon you as a criminal I had a little taste of that very little mosquito bite of it when some religious people took me to court a few years ago criminal court I stood there for a crime I never committed and there were all these other criminals brought from the jails with their handcuffs and they would call Narayanaswamy Abdul Qadir Zak Poonen and I said Lord what an honor what an honor it says in Isaiah 53 the last verse Jesus was numbered among the criminals one of the prayers I prayed many years ago I said Lord every experience that you went through on the earth please give me the honor if I am worthy to have a little taste of that he was numbered among the criminals my brothers and sisters it was only a mosquito bite it was nothing for me but what I want to say is we

have heard too much of a soft gospel and it is possible that things may be different in the days to come for us in India in our place of work it will be easy to hide the fact that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ and to try and cover it up so that I don't face any loss of increment or loss of promotion I don't even want the mosquito bite there are many verses like this that we could look in scripture suffering and tribulation enter into God's kingdom Jesus spoke so much about it to his disciples we want to seek the kingdom of God which is righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit and in conclusion let me say the first part of that suffering is what we have often taught in the church suffering in the flesh 1 Peter chapter 4 Christ suffered in the flesh arm yourself 1 Peter 4 verse 1

arm yourself with the same mind because the one who suffered in the flesh has stopped sinning that is the first suffering we must go through before we come to this external suffering of being imprisoned and being beaten and numbered among the criminals and maybe eaten by lions or thrown in a jail for the gospel sake or some false accusation they made against you because they knew you are a Christian and accused you and everybody thought aha this fellow called himself a Christian and he was doing this terrible thing do you know that some Christians have been accused in order to put him in jail in China and the communists took over they falsely put charges on people that he committed adultery they did that to

many godly people so the preparation for that is to suffer in the flesh today

today we are not facing being thrown to lions or even imprisonment but there is another type of suffering we can have everyday that when I am tempted and I have a choice to enjoy that temptation or to deny myself and that is a suffering when I am tempted to be upset with him and I don't get upset that is a suffering he is denying myself he had no right to yell at me I did what was right but I will not have a grudge against him I love him I will forgive him and I will not say anything I shall speak respectfully to him and love him I shall die that is suffering in the flesh he has given me to enjoy that and I say no self you are going to die I am going to suffer the only reason you enjoy pornography is because you don't want to suffer in the flesh no other reason the only reason why you

want to look at a pretty woman and lust after her is because you don't want to suffer in the flesh that is why you never stop from sinning and you will never stop from sinning as long as you don't decide that I am going to suffer in the flesh like Jesus in His own will so that we can live the rest of our life in the flesh because the flesh doesn't go away from us no longer for these lusts that tempt us but for the will of God that is the little suffering we can go through now that will prepare us for lions and fires and beheading and all that or whatever it is God chooses for us and Paul said in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10 my great longing he says this is towards the end of his life that I may know Jesus better we have heard about that not knowing about Jesus but knowing Jesus

don't you all want to know Him yes I said Paul I agree with you I want to know Him too there is another thing Paul says I want to know the power of His resurrection in my inner life ah Paul I want to know that as well he says hang on there is one more thing I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death oh I got to pray about that I am not so sure I want to follow you there but it all comes in the same package it comes in the same package you will never know Him if you don't know the fellowship of His sufferings you will not know the power of His resurrection if you are not willing to die because there is no resurrection without a death Philippians chapter 1 here is a gift God gives us Philippians chapter 1 verse 29 for you it has been granted or given as a

gift for Christ's sake 1. to believe in Him 2. to suffer for His sake you say Lord I want to believe in Him I don't want the second gift it is a gift it has been granted it is like a promotion granted to believe in Him and to suffer for His sake may the Lord help us we cannot do it without the power of the Holy Spirit and remember in every situation not a hair on your head can be touched without God permitting it that is number one and secondly He will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability I have often asked myself I have said this openly to the Lord I say Lord I am not one of these brave people who just walk in and say okay do what you like to me I am a coward if they start pulling out my nails and say deny Christ Lord I am a coward and the Lord says my grace is sufficient for

you at that time when they pull out your nails you will experience my grace in such a way that you will not deny me so my strength is not in what a brave person I am I am like a little child who clings to daddy says dad my safety is clinging close to you you don't have to be a brave person brave people are the ones who will deny the Lord first they are so confident in themselves they say I won't deny you he is the first person who is going to deny the Lord but the one who says Lord I am weak I am weak I am helpless I am a coward but if I cling to you I never want to deny you I believe you will never allow me to be tempted beyond my ability I believe you will not allow a hair on my head to be touched without your permission I believe your grace is sufficient for every need when the need is

little when the need is trials every one of us can be overcomers that's the message of the gospel we have a sovereign God who runs this universe Jesus Christ said all authority in heaven and earth is given to me Jesus Christ has got all authority in India not the president or prime minister Jesus Christ has got all authority in India that's why we are not ashamed to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in this land not ashamed to admit that I follow him I believe in him I believe in the bible as the word of God dear brothers and sisters join me in being a bold witness for Christ in 2015 let's pray Lord do all that is necessary to bring us to zero we talk so lightly about it but we don't understand what it means we don't want to play games with you we don't want to talk spiritual language

saying oh I want to be a zero Lord do all that is necessary to bring us down to that sense of nothingness so that you can be everything in our lives for Jesus Christ will be everything in our lives not comfort or ease or money or anything or the opinions of men help us to honor you Lord we don't boast in ourselves we boast in Jesus Christ our Lord who will never allow us to be tempted beyond our ability who will never allow a hair on our head we follow you Lord we trust you we will be more than overcomers in every situation we believe that thank you fill us with the Holy Spirit and help us to walk with a very sensitive conscience and help us to build fellowship in this church as the body of Christ that we stand together for you in this coming year we pray in Jesus name Amen

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/ptf5j88SV9U.mp4>

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