

THE HOPE IN SUFFERING

SERIES: PAUSE | WEEK 6 | 5.17.2020

Good morning. We are glad to be here this morning; glad to bring the Word of God to you. If you are watching from your living room, if you're watching from your phone, I would invite you to take your Word out as a family, just to take your Word out and turn to 1st Peter. We're in a book of 1st Peter for last couple weeks.

If you don't know, my name is John Lawley, I'm one of the pastors here at Calvary and it's my honor to bring you the Word of God as we gather here this morning. And so before I do so I wanted to just kind of mention a few things that have, that's really always on my heart when I bring the Word of God and what's on my heart are a couple of things. One is this, when I teach the Word of God I teach as the Lord calls me to kind of bring conviction as best I can with what the Word of God teaches us and kind of how we're living and what's going on in our lives. And so my prayer is that we would maybe find conviction in what the Word of God has to say this morning. And I also would pray that our affections would be stirred for the Lord, that we would take next steps of faith as we study the Word.

So again, if you could turn with me to 1st Peter I want to just give you a little bit of a context here, so we're gonna be in 1st Peter Chapter 4, but the background is Peter is talking to a church of believers that are really dispersed throughout the world and in large part they are under intense persecution. And so because of that what we see is that Peter, understanding persecution himself, Peter is beaten and threatened and punished and jailed for his faith, understanding that persecution Peter is talking to the church and he's embracing this idea that, listen, don't be bitter towards the suffering that you face. In fact, keep your eyes on Jesus, keep your eyes on the Living Hope that we have in Christ Jesus so to endure the suffering that's ahead of you.

And so Peter's speaking of this issue of suffering, this topic of suffering, and he's actually saying listen, the Great Commission is not going to happen unless suffering occurs. Now church, I don't know about you but that is a convicting, challenging statement. Like, I had this thought this week that just has been wrestling in my mind as I'm looking at the world, as I'm thinking through how as a believer am I to navigate this world of disease and isolation and government restriction? What does it look like to balance kind of liberty, this love for liberty? I grew up as an American, right? Loving freedom, loving the idea that it's **[UNDISCERNIBLE]**. How do I balance my love for liberty which, by the way, is not a bad thing, it's a gift, with the call to suffer? What does that look like in my life as somebody who says, "Jesus, I love you; I am a cross-bearer for Christ"? What does it look like to balance this need for justice and liberty and the call to suffer? To lay down my own needs, my own wants for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Because as we read 1st Peter these people in large part were martyrs for the Gospel but they were willing to give up their own flesh for the sake of Christ. This is the context in which we read. But I want us to wrestle with this idea of what do we do with our call as believers to suffer and our need to have rights and freedom, all these things that we love and for the most part we've always had. What if God is calling us as a church to step out of comfort and move towards suffering? Man, what does that look like in application?

So a couple things here, again, the biggest thing I want to kind of prove in Scripture is that the Great Commission, it will not be completed without suffering, so just to kind of bring some context here to this point. Peter, Andrew, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Simon, Thomas, Paul, I mean, I could go on and on; these men and women of the early church were either crucified, they were beheaded, they were speared for the Gospel. And I say that to say when we read the New Testament we see these words on these pages written by faithful followers of Jesus and their resume is not they lived wealthy and comfortable and then they died at an old age, that's not their resume. In fact, most of them gave their life in kind of a painful way for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the Great Commission, to go to a world that for many of them hated their message knowing that their message

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could go above the hate and penetrate the heart. And so they were willing to sacrifice their own bodies for the sake of the spreading of the Gospel. This is the Gospel we read. This is the faith that is built upon by the early church. This is what we are called as believers to understand and embrace and believe.

Another reason why we see that that, really, the Great Commission can't come without suffering is because the Gospel is all throughout, Jesus talks about in Matthew 29¹ – you will be hated by all the nations. In fact, when Jesus was alive He said listen, they will hate you because they hated me,² but blessed are you who still live out this call. We also see in Scripture, Paul, he's an evangelist and he literally says in Colossians Chapter 1, he says that we are going to fill what is lacking in Christ's affliction.³ So Paul's call of evangelism is hey, listen, do you know how our Savior suffered? We are to take His place in the suffering. We see in Scripture all over.

We also see that the reason the Great Commission is not going to be fulfilled without suffering is because Jesus was sent the first evangelist, in Chapter 20 of John He says as the Father sent me, so I send you.⁴ And so Jesus is saying as the Father called me to step into this world and though I was all-powerful and all-knowing, I walked into suffering for the sake of those I loved and I wanted to redeem. He calls us to continue that mission. Paul says to Timothy in Acts,⁵ he says don't be ashamed but share in the suffering for the Gospel and the power of God. He says to Timothy take your share of suffering as a good soldier for Christ, endure suffering, do the work of evangelism.

Okay, why am I, like hey, Pastor John, this isn't a good message. Listen, it's not a good message maybe to the ear at first but it's really good for the soul to receive what this Word of God is challenging us with; to understand, okay, the Great Commission, which is what as believers we are called to do, is not going to be accomplished without suffering. Listen, this won't fill seats. This is not a comfortable thought in a world where you and I grew up with a lot of comfort. Man, I can live out my faith without persecution. I can live out my faith still loving the fact that I can be comfortable while doing it. Well, church, here's the challenge that I believe God is laying on the church: What if the future is not as comfortable as the past, will you still follow? Will you still walk in obedience if the things that we have enjoyed, these good things are taken from us? Are we still trusting in the Lord even if our tomorrow isn't known?

You know, I'm reminded of a story, there's a famous story that actually I kind of grew up on. I read a book in the '90s and then they came up with a film in I think in mid-2000s called *End of Spear* but the story is about this missionary called Nate Saint. And so he was a missionary and there was this operation [Operation Auca] to kind of go into kind of the rain forests in Eastern Ecuador and to reach the Huaorani (Waodan) people. And so the story is that this man Nate, um, kind of was an airplane pilot. So he was building a small airplane to kind of go in and witness to the Waodani people. And in the movie and the book there's this famous scene where his son is talking to the father, and he's talking to Nate and he says, "Daddy, when you go in and you meet them, can you bring your weapons with you to protect you?" And the father turns to his son and he says, "Listen, the Waodani aren't ready for Heaven, we are." And man, what an example of what Peter is saying here. The mindset of this man to say to his son, "Listen, I am ready for Heaven, my eternity is sealed, my flesh in this place is not my

¹ Transcriber Correction: The phrase "hated by all nations" is found in Matthew 24:9 (not Matthew Chapter 29 as stated in the video); the phrase "you will be hated by all for my name's sake" is found in Matthew 10:22, Mark 13:13, and Luke 21:17; and the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:16-20.

² See John 15:18-27.

³ See Colossians 1:24-29.

⁴ See John 20:21.

⁵ Transcriber Correction: "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in the suffering for the gospel by the power of God," is found in 2 Timothy 1:8 (not the book of Acts).

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home. And so if God calls me to go into a dangerous place for the sake of the Gospel, I'm gonna do it because I'm ready for Heaven and they're not."

And so the actual testimony of this man and five other missionaries is they actually landed a plane in the Waodani forest and they were actually killed by the Waodani people. But then God's faithfulness actually brought his family and his sister to the tribe, and later the tribe and the man who killed his father came to the Lord and there's this brilliant testimony of God's faithfulness; but it wasn't pretty, it wasn't always clean, and a life was laid down for the sake of the Gospel. But here's a man that had the choice between following after the Lord and walking in obedience. And I think Paul and Peter and all these early testament saints are trying to show us that listen, when you say you're a follower of Jesus, you are saying that if God is calling you to suffer you are a willing servant. That's why when we see in Scripture we see these things called "take up your cross" and be cross-bearers and die to self. We have these terms that are uncomfortable but are true if we're gonna live out our faith.

And so how do we do that? So the question I have is how can we be like Nate? How do we have the mindset that, ok, Lord, all the things You've given me are good, but Father, if You want me to use them for your glory, if You want me to have those things be taken away, I am willing to be a suffering servant for the sake of the Gospel—how do we do that? And so Scripture and Peter is gonna tell us in 1st Peter Chapter 4 what armor to put on to prepare ourselves for this type of obedience, this type of faith. And so look at Chapter 4, verse 1, with me in 1st Peter, here's what he says. He says the first thing:

¹ Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose,

– 1 PETER 4:1 (NASB)

And so he's talking about this idea of, ok, first thing you need to do is remember that Christ Himself suffered. That's a comforting thing. When you think about Christ dying on the cross you have to understand that we are called to be what? Christ-like in our actions. And so [AUDIO BREAK] is saying and Peter is saying, listen, if you want to be like Christ you have to have the mindset to step into suffering. He's saying this is the first thing you have to understand, that the God of the universe who controls all things chose to suffer. That it's okay to look at this world and not to have anything in this world that we cherish over our obedience to the Lord because even Christ Himself could have overcome this world in His flesh, but He chose to suffer for the next; He chose to sacrifice for the Kingdom of God. He says in John 10:18, and I love this thing, 10:18 He says no one takes my life from me, I lay it down on my own accord.

¹⁷ "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

– JOHN 10:17-18 (ESV)

Man, this is, this is a powerful truth that our Lord and Savior chose to be a cross-bearer. He chose to look at His life and look at the higher calling, the eternal home that awaits, and He chose to live His life in light of eternity. So He was quick in the moments that He was called to be uncomfortable and He was called to suffer. What did Jesus do? He was quick to be in prayer. He was quick to call out to the Lord, not to be rid of suffering but to give Him strength to endure it—if it was the will of God. So what does it look like? This is a question that I've been asking all week in my life, what does it look like to be a cross-bearer? So let's be honest, maybe we can talk about this in the chat, let's be honest, if I would look at your life, would I write down, *Man, they are a cross-bearer; how they treat people, how they look at*

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the opportunities they have, how they look at their family and their finances, and their time, and their energy, and their resources, they are cross-bearers. All of those things they're willing to give up for the glory of God. Would I see that? — because this is the call that we have in our lives.

And listen, church, if we are heading towards tribulation, as I study the Word, listen, it's not promised that the church is not going to experience greater persecution than we've ever seen. If that is our future, man, we gotta be cross-bearers. We gotta understand that it's going to take the church to truly believe, truly walk because here is the fear that I have as somebody who's a pastor of a church, that when our faith gets uncomfortable the church will become empty. That we love the lights and we love the singing and we love the comfort, but we were not comfortable with the call, and I don't want that. I don't want that in my life, I don't want that in your life. I mean, what a great opportunity right now in this world to challenge our comfort. Just saying, "Why are we here? What are we called to do?" And so one of my prayers is that we would—and I'm joining you here—that we would get in our heads the purpose that Christ is worth suffering for because I believe Peter believed that, I believe the church that Peter is writing here believed that, and I'm calling us out: Do we believe that? Do we believe that Christ is worth suffering for?

Look at verse 2, he says this:

² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer

— he says —

for human passions but for the will of God.

— he says, okay, if that's true, if you are in Christ Jesus, you are no longer to live for the pleasures of this world, and he goes on to talk a little bit about that and what that looks like. He says in verse 3, and I love this, he says all these sins in the past are enough—listen to what he says in verse 3:

³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do,

— and the Gentiles here are the people who are unbelievers, who are not following the Lord when it comes to what He's calling you to do, that's what the Gentiles are. Okay? It's not the church, the church is made up of past Gentiles and Jewish people but they are Christ followers. So he's talking about the unbelievers. He says don't do what they do:

living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

– I PETER 4:2-3 (ESV)

So he's just listing all these behaviors. He says there was a time in your life—if you are a believer—there's a time in your life where you have sinned. And so for some of us we look back and we're like, "You know what, I grew up in the church and I didn't really have a lot of sins but there were some sins," and Peter's saying okay, that's enough. And for some of us it's, "Man, I didn't grow up in the church and my resume is filled with sin." And Peter says that's enough. That all of that, so whether you're somebody that's like, you know what, I didn't see some of the things in this world. I didn't have the experience that other people had, Peter says don't you dare think that you've missed out on something because you didn't run down the passions of the flesh. He says as believers we look at all the passions of the flesh that the world chases after—drunkenness, temporary joy, temporary pleasures, and we have no desire for those things. That all of the chasing that we had before we knew Jesus was enough chasing. That the sin in our lives is over, it's done with. Man, that is a powerful, powerful call for us that we are to no longer desire any of the things that the world desires. And in fact, he's going to go on

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to say that we are to make a break from all of those things and, in fact, be mocked because the world's going to look at us and say why in the world are you not treasuring those things anymore? Why aren't you doing the things you used to do? Why don't you care about the things you used to do? And he's also going to talk about how in verse 4 it's amazing to see that they will actually be drawn to the Lord by your call to live in obedience, to be uncomfortable for the Lord because the call to do that is not going to make sense to the unbelieving world. It's gonna leave a lot of questions which leaves a lot of room for the Gospel. Look what he says in verse 4:

⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;

– I PETER 4:4 (ESV)

So Peter, again, he's talking to a church. Let me put this in context, okay? In the home I want you to understand the weight of this, he's talking to people that we know were hung in the air, lit on fire as torches in Rome, this is some of their history and their futures here. And so he's looking at these people and he's saying you are not only going to be mocked, you're gonna be laughed at, you're gonna be tormented, and he's saying but you are going to be right with the Lord and that is enough. Like, that's not what you want to hear. Right? You want to hear no-no-no, God will protect you from that suffering. He says no-no-no, they will mock you and you will suffer for your faith, but that's okay. And he's calling them to say be of sober mind, have the mindset that Lord, even if that happens to me I care more about what You think than the people around me. So Peter is saying church, listen, if you really want to live this Christ thing out, if you really want to be a Christ follower, you're probably going to lose your friends, you're probably going to lose opportunities but it's worth it. Hey, you might be in a situation where you're in unjust, he's going to talk about this later, you might be in a place that's unjust, that's unfair, and you don't deserve it, but Peter says but that's okay, be of sober mind, this isn't your home, be a testimony with how you respond, not for your need for justice, but your love in that moment.

Listen to what he says when he talks about this armor. He talks about the idea of the adversaries, the people that are gonna hang you up, the people that are gonna persecute you, he says justice will be God's. Look what he says in verse 5:

⁵ but they will give account

— these people that mock you, these people that will kill you, these people that will put you in front and mock you for your faith and say that this God that you serve, look what He's allowing to happen to you. Peter is saying those people will be judged and they will give an account, and he says God is ready to judge the living and the dead —

to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

– I PETER 4:5-6 (ESV)

And so he's resting on this idea that listen, you don't have to be the judge as believers. You don't have to look at this world—let me make this real—you don't have to look at this world and see all the injustices that are happening to you and to your family and to this country. You don't have to be like angry at that, he says no-no-no, justice and judgment is God's. You have a purpose and a mission here that's greater than your ability to get angry. He says listen, if you're angry at that then we're gonna fail to accomplish what God has for us.

And I'm so grateful, aren't you, that the early church didn't stop their mission to spread the Gospel

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because of suffering, that they endured and they carried on. I'm so grateful for that. That the Gospel spread around the world; that because even though they suffered they didn't turn to the government in revolt, but they were faithful in their obedience and God used it for His glory. And then he goes on to say this, and I love how he takes this concept of suffering and he says, yes, believers, this is a call that God has placed on our life but it's worth it and it's okay if the world's gonna mock you and the world's gonna turn on you. But then he goes on and he and he gives us a lot of comfort, a lot of comfort when he talks about okay, here's how God is gonna meet you in that suffering. He says He's going to rescue you from the bitterness and he's gonna replace it with joy; that when you're enduring this suffering that not only will nothing be swept under the rug but God is going to give you a supernatural ability to endure it in a way where you would never experience that joy and that presence if you didn't suffer. And so we see this concept that suffering is a gift because it allows us to understand God's grace more.

And in the light of eternity, and he's going to talk about this later, that—by the way, everyone that was hung upside down, everyone that was speared, everyone that was killed for their faith, they're in Heaven right now, they're with the Lord in glory. And really, all throughout Scripture they say don't you dare pity them. Don't you dare mourn them. They're in glory, they accomplished the mission here on earth, that they are good and faithful servants. They didn't miss out. They didn't lose out on this world—they gained through obedience. Man, what a different mindset than what maybe you and I have right now.

Like, man, when I see some things around this world that come through our social media pages, don't you even as a believer, don't you just want to scream sometimes? Why is this happening? This is unfair. What's going on in this world? And you have this call to kind of be caught up in the fears and the anxieties of the things that are happening around you, and Peter is saying to the church be of sober mind. That when you have those feelings and you have those fears run to prayer, run to prayer.

Church, if we're not praying more now than we ever have, what are we doing? What are we doing? In the midst of the unknown the church should be on their knees saying, "Father, You are still in control." Yes, I want to scream out for the injustices of the world. Yes, I want to scream out for the politics and all the things that are happening that are not in my control. But instead of doing that, I'm gonna fall on my face, fall on my knees and say, "Father, You are sovereign. You are coming back. You have been victorious on the cross. I trust You. I walk in that truth. I live in that truth. Help me to be of sober mind and watch for opportunities in this time for your glory and your Gospel."

Listen to me, this is not our home. If you and I have the mindset that it is, we're gonna miss the opportunities that God has for us right now. If you are worshiping and cherishing the things you have rather than the hope you have, turn your mind upside down to the things that are eternal because if we have the same fear as the world does, the same anxiety the world does, we're not going to be able to spread the Gospel of grace. We're not going to be able to use this as an opportunity to point people to Jesus if we're caught up in the same fears as the world.

You know, he goes on to talk about this idea of being triumphant over death in verse 8 and it's kind of a hard passage to understand, but I believe he's referring to like I said earlier, he's referring to the people that had died for the sake of the Gospel and he's talking about the idea that listen, they're with God. That that they are victorious over death and that you can be okay with stepping into suffering because you have life after death. And so I want to call out some applications before we get to verse 7 here.

There's oftentimes, working with a lot of young people in discipling, there's this mindset that is embraced a lot in this postmodern kind of everything is meaningless but everything is meaningful culture that we live in, and it goes like this: Live your life with no regrets. Have you guys ever heard that? Just chat in the comments if you guys ever heard this term, live with no regrets. This is kind of

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the mindset that comes from this idea that, *Listen, when you die you're warm food, you're just kind of in the ground.* And so if that's true, when you're living – live with no regrets. So if your friends are partying then you better party because that's an opportunity, and when you go after that house and you go after that job, live with no regrets. Do whatever you want to do so that when you die you don't look back and say, "I wish I did *this*."

And I look at kids all the time and I say this: "That is in direct opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is a lie. And as believers don't you dare take that mindset because here's what the Gospel says: If you live this life chasing after the things of this world, trying to say I want to run after everything in this world and then you get to Heaven and you're before your Judge and He looks at you and He sees your life and He sees nothing of eternal value, no obedience, no trust, I promise you you're gonna look at your world and think nothing *but* regrets." If I chase after the things of this world and I'm comfortable and then I meet my Savior and I'm face-to-face with my Lord, if this was not for the glory of God I'm gonna regret it all.

And so I would challenge you to live the opposite of that; to look at everything eternal and say this is what I'm building, this is what I'm focused on, this is what matters to me. And so my rights, I love them, but man, that they're not greater than the Kingdom. My comfort, man, I enjoy it, but that's not greater than the call. Man, my future, I want it to be safe, I want it to be protected, but it's not as important as me being obedient.

Listen, I look around and I have children and I'm afraid that I would set them up to cherish this world over the Kingdom and I don't want to do that. And so how I talk about the things happening right now, how I respond to the things that happen right now, is gonna leave a legacy of either teaching my children to look up when there's times of suffering or to look at self to try to fix it. As believers we are called to die to self. We don't have to do that anymore.

So here's how he says we are to live. So he says, okay, remember that it's worth suffering, it's worth it because Jesus suffered, that there's victory over death, that there's justice for suffering, and he says so, too, this is how you are to live. He says:

⁷ The end of all things is at hand;

— Peter says the end is coming, and we know in the end there's going to be a battle, there's going to be a fight and it's not always going to be good, but we have victory in the end. He says because of that:

therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

— Peter says make sure you praying right now during this time. And he says:

⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

– 1 PETER 4:7-11 (ESV)

Here's what Peter says here's how you live: You are sober minded. You are self-controlled. Church, this is the call that God has laid on our lives. Right now you be self-controlled and sober minded and you're quick to pray. You're quick to pray before anger. You're quick to pray before being vengeful to the people around you. Quick to pray and you're quick to act in love towards them. You're quick to

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serve them. You're quick to use your gifts to build them up. And you do all of those things for the glory of God, not for you.

Here's how I came to know the faith. If you are new to the faith and you're checking out our church, here is what came, this is what God rocked in my heart. I read the Book and said it is not about you. And everything I'd built up in my life at that moment God tore down only to build back up a huge Kingdom that He is inviting me into, that's not mine but it's His. A huge hope that is not mine, but it is His. A huge grace and now I'm entered into that I don't have to earn, but I can receive. This is the Gospel, we are to change our mindset so that our actions follow.

So Peter is preparing the church, he's preparing us to say are you ready, are you ready for this? And listen, for some of us we have suffered by losing our jobs, we have suffered by having a child go astray, we have suffered by being persecuted by people around us. But listen, the church has seen greater suffering, greater persecution, and God has been faithful all throughout. There's a great quote that I love, as I'm wrapping up, by C. S. Lewis and he's written this book called *The Problem of Pain*. And I love C. S. Lewis; I love his books. This book is actually really unique for him. So he's lost his wife and he responds by just kind of talking through this idea of pain and suffering and he has this quote that I love, it goes like this:

"For you will certainly carry out God's purpose, however you act, but it makes a difference to you whether you serve like Judas or like John."

— C.S. LEWIS, THE PROBLEM OF PAIN⁶

And what C. S. Lewis is saying in that quote is this, that when you look at the Gospels and you look at the disciples, Judas chose to sacrifice his belief in Jesus for silver, for the things of this world. He chose to cherish the stuff of this world rather than the Hope of the world that was right in front of him. And he says but regardless, Judas will bring glory to God, but John chose to trust in what the Word of God said, to live out in obedience, to sacrifice the things of this world for the things to come. He says both heard the message, both responded very differently. And so as we reflect on what it looks like to arm ourselves with the purpose of suffering, church, I just want to remind you that there are so many things right now in our lives where we have to ask this question: Are we running from the things we are to run towards? Are we afraid of the things that God's calling us towards?

I mean that. What are the things in your life that you are not willing to give up? As a believer we are to give up everything including our own lives if it's for the glory of God. That's a call in our lives. That should bring a conviction in our lives. You should look around in your living room right now and say, "What am I not willing to sacrifice? What has my heart that I gotta give to the Lord?" And Peter says it's worth it because, remember, Christ, the One we love, suffered; that when we suffer we make a clean break from sin. That it's a sign to the world that our old self is dead. He says that when we think about the amount of past sin that we've accomplished, he says it's sufficient, it's enough. He says that the adversaries in the midst of our suffering will be brought to justice and whoever embraces the Gospel will triumph over death. And he says it's all for the glory of God.

And so as we take some time here to give and to pray and to reflect, I'm gonna ask this question: Are you a suffering servant? Are the things in your life that you worship, that you're not willing to give to the Lord—and listen, Peter's just simply saying to the church it's worth it. You have the freedom to choose, but in the end your life will bring glory to God. I say this often to the people around me that

⁶ Lewis, C. S. (2002). *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics: The Problem of Pain* (1st Ed., p. 413). HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. (Original work published 1940).

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don't believe in Jesus. I just had this conversation online with this young teenage boy who was an atheist and he started a conversation with me and I just started to talk about how much God loves him and how I understand that he could be angry towards God, but God is greater than his anger. But I always end my conversations saying this: You and I will bring glory to God no matter what we think in this chat.

The reality is that they will bring glory to God whether it's through His judgment upon your life because you are not good, no one is, or because of His grace and mercy upon your life because you've built your life on the trust of Jesus Christ. That's your choice. And if you follow Jesus there's a price to following Jesus and it's not a price, it's not a works thing, it's dying to the things of this world because you are changing your allegiance. So the price is to take a back seat to your old self and to put on this new armor; an armor that's willing to step into suffering for the glory of God. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And so here's my challenge this week: Follow Him. Follow Him. When He calls you to do something don't say no in your mind, in your heart, say yes. Wherever it leads, whatever it costs you, will you follow Him? Let me pray:

Lord,

We invite You and your Spirit to grow us in this. Lord, as I started out this message, Lord, when we read your Word sometimes it's hard. Sometimes as we read about who is writing and who he's writing to and that we are called to see this as living and active even today, Lord, what does it mean for us right now? Lord, as Pastor Lee shared, what does this mean for the church? What are You doing right now in the world? How do You want the church to respond? Lord, help us to understand what You're calling us towards.

Lord, forgive us for worshiping the things of men over You. Lord, let this be a great reminder that this isn't our home. Lord, help us to walk in obedience every day of our lives. Lord, help us to understand what this looks like as we talk about this in our communities, as we brainstorm what does it look like to be a suffering servant. Lord, help us understand this.

Father, I pray right now for our offering time as we have sent our offering digitally. Lord, I pray that You would help us understand how to be sacrificial in our giving; not for the sake of being prideful, but to know that as we give, Lord, your Kingdom grows and there's nothing more valuable than to build your Kingdom. So help us, Lord, have the mindset of being generous in our giving for your glory. So we lift up our giving; we lift up this time to You.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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