

"Prepare To Suffer And Die"

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[0 : 00] God wants you to live your best life now. Jesus died so that we can be happy and healthy. Being a Christian is the way to riches. God wants to make you so rich that other people want to be Christians too. A suffering Christian is an oxymoron.

Those who walk with God have money and everything that they want. If you don't have health, wealth, and happiness, it's because you don't believe hard enough.

I hope you realize that these are all false truths. These are lies. Tony was getting ready to kick me out of the pulpit and revoke my pastor.

Five seconds. You know, we make you pastor and suddenly you start preaching heresy. These are all part of a false gospel that you will find out in the world.

[1 : 11] This is the prosperity gospel. If you focus on the words of the text we're going to study today, you will realize that the prosperity gospel and its promises of health, wealth, and happiness in this life have nothing to do with the real God of Scripture.

Look and see if what we read today matches those phrases that I quoted.

You need to know about the prosperity gospel because it is dangerous. You need to know so that you don't buy Joyce Meyer books or listen to Joel Osteen.

So that you stay as far as you can from televangelists who are trying to use the gospel to bilk you out of as much money as possible. But there's more.

I tell you that any gospel that does not include suffering is a prosperity gospel and is a false gospel.

[2 : 25] Anyone who preaches to you and does not warn you that there will be a cost for following Christ is preaching to you a prosperity gospel, a false gospel.

Don't think that you can have Christ without his cross. And don't be surprised when as a Christian your life sucks. You are broke and broken and alone.

Christ was broke and broken and alone. So today I will be preaching to you the Bible's clear promise that you will suffer.

Anyone who hides this suffering from you is unbiblical and does not actually care about you.

Proverbs 27 verse 6 says faithful are the wounds of a friend.

But an enemy multiplies kisses. That means the people who actually care about you will tell you bad things for your own good if they're true. But people who are your enemies will say sweet things to lull you into what they want you to do.

[3 : 42] I hope to be a good friend to you today. And to wound you with the honest bad news of how you will suffer. That's why today's sermon is titled...

Be satisfied. If you look in the bulletins you'll see the real title of today's sermon.

Which is not be satisfied. It is prepare to suffer and die. Be satisfied with that. Prepare to suffer and die.

Hopefully you're encouraged. God thought to add a little bit of levity into today's sermon. Lest it be too grim.

All right. Follow along with me in verse 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

[4 : 42] That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side.

Yet not crushed. We are perplexed. But not in despair. Persecuted. But not forsaken.

Struck down. But not destroyed. Always carrying in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. That the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. That the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

So then death is working in us. But life in you. Amen. What a beautiful passage. It's one of my favorites of scripture.

[5 : 42] Chapter 4 is actually one of the things that made me choose to preach 2 Corinthians in the first place. And I hope that these truths will be a blessing to you as they have been to me.

I have five Ps for you. They are all Ps of pain. They are from this passage. And let us work through them.

The first P. Pottery. Earthen vessels. This is your body. You are weak and fragile.

Like a jar of clay easily broken. There is not a single person who is so strong, so healthy that they could not be dead tomorrow.

We are made of dust in our weak vessels that are easily shattered. Psalm 62 verse 9 says, Surely men are of low degree, are of vapor.

[6 : 46] Men of high degree are a lie. If they are weighed in the scales altogether, they are lighter than a vapor. Or Isaiah chapter 50 verses 6 through 8.

All flesh is grass and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades because the breath of the Lord blows upon it.

Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flower fades. Know that you are pottery. You are hardened dirt that is weak and easily broken.

This is the first P of pain. Second P. Pressure. Paul writes, We are hard pressed on every side. Who here likes being stressed? Raise your hand. Even if you did raise your hand, Know that if the pressure is turned high enough, It will crush you.

[7 : 55] Stress is what we feel as that pressure increases. The Bible warns us here that even the apostle was pressed hard.

And he says he was pressed hard every way. You know, like your Luke in the trash compactor in Star Wars getting crushed in.

The Bible warns here that even apostles feel that pressure. There is no escape. Know that pleasing yourself is simple.

But running after Christ is hard, especially in a broken world. Count the cost. You will have more responsibilities and more troubles if you decide to follow Christ.

The second pain is pressure. The third P. Puzzles. Puzzled. Perplexed.

[9 : 00] At a loss. Sometimes life makes sense. We understand why things are happening and the path forward.

Other times we are dealt a series of bad cards. So bad that we can't even begin to wrap our head around what is going on.

There are moments in our life that lead us to say, Why is this happening? What is going on? How do I even get out of this?

If you are a believer, you will be perplexed. The Bible says that I am set free. Here's an example of confusion in the Christian life.

The Bible says that I am set free from sin in Christ. And then I have to fight every day against sin. If I'm set free, why does this keep happening?

[10 : 01] The Bible says anything that I ask the Father will be given to me. Then how come so many of my prayers are unanswered? The Bible says I am a beloved child of God.

So then why is everything in my life falling apart? Why am I sick? Why is the child I worked so hard to raise not walking with Christ?

If you are a Christian, if you are paying attention, there are many things that should leave you puzzled and at a loss for how to explain it.

The fourth P, persecution. Jesus says in John 16.33, In this world you will have troubles.

He also warns in John 15.20, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they also will persecute you. Peter warns, Beloved, do not think it strange when some fiery trial comes upon you, which is to try you as though it were something strange that's happening.

[11 : 19] And if that's not enough to show you suffering is part of the Christian life, look at John 3.13, Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.

It's no surprise that Paul adds persecution to the list of pains here. This apostle was chased from city to city.

He would be imprisoned, ultimately, and then executed for the name of Christ. Don't think to try to avoid persecution, that if you cut enough hard edges off of the word of God, you can skate by.

This is the promise of Christian life. Don't be surprised. You have been warned. This is part of our walk.

How is the world going to love you? You preach a gospel that tells them they are vile sinners who deserve death and hell because of their evil, unbelieving hearts.

[12:27] Who's going to love you for telling them that? Anyone who thinks they can avoid persecution is acting like they can preach the gospel better than Jesus can.

He preached it as best as anyone. And they hated him for it. A servant is not greater than his master. Persecution will come.

If all of that wasn't enough, Paul closes by repeating death multiple times.

Verse 10, Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord. Verse 11, For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. Verse 12, So then death is working in us.

The Christian life is filled with such sacrifices and pains that when done properly, it will feel like a personal death.

[13:33] Like the life you live, the things you enjoy, the dreams you had have been killed to make way for God's plans for you.

You will face betrayal. You will face failure. You will labor long and hard. And you will see any progress you made snatched away at various points.

Christ says, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

The cross is a torture and execution device meant to kill. Taking up your cross means dying to yourself and dying to the world.

It means losing so much of what you wanted and losing so much of what you wanted so bad, you would have said you needed it to be okay.

[14:39] Consider our brothers and sisters in the Middle East who have been beheaded for their faith. Who proclaiming the name of Christ have been slaughtered in the streets.

Consider the churches in China who have to meet in secret lest they be arrested for loving Christ. The Christian walk is hard.

Christ was misunderstood, taken advantage of, abandoned, slandered, ignored, falsely accused, betrayed, tortured, then crucified.

Is that the life you want? Do not be surprised when the same things happen to you. Five Ps, pottery, pressure, puzzlement, persecution, and perishing.

This is the Christian life. This is bad news. And it's bad biblical news. This is all true.

[15:50] Like it's from God's word. I'm not making it up. This isn't just my experience. So what are we to do in response? If this is what's laid out for us, what are we going to do?

I mean, it's a lot. I have three points of application for you. Application number one, prepare for difficulties.

Be spiritual doomsday preppers. Fill your basement with stockpiles of foods and weapons.

That means hide God's word in your heart. Amen. Amen. Amen. Find an ally, find allies for the fight and train with them.

When, when things go bad is not the time to start preparing for when things go bad. When trials and tribulations come is not the time to start growing closer to the Lord.

[17:02] The time is when it is comfortable to use that time to train, to link closely with believers and to strengthen yourself with them to be prepared for the battle.

Know your enemy. Stop focusing on comfort. If you struggle whenever something doesn't go your way, you're going to have a really hard time following Christ.

So waste less money on things you don't need. Waste less time on entertainment. And ditch casual friendships for meaningful ones.

Luke 14, 28, for which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost whether he has enough to finish it.

Application one, be spiritual doomsday preppers. Prepare for difficulties. Application number two, weep before God.

[18:17] Most of us don't know how to be around the things of God when we are suffering. If you are going to be able to make it through trouble well, you are going to need to know how to cry to God in your pain.

You're going to need to know how to weep in prayer to God. The saints of old knew how to do this. Read the book of Psalms, 150 of them.

You'll find a third of the Psalms are sad, tearful songs. We know how to process joy, how to sing victory in Jesus.

But do you know how to cry to God in tears? Do you know how to process pain before your God? Look at Gethsemane and see how Christ did it.

He knew the cross that was coming to him. He knew the sufferings he would face. And so he bowed his face in tearful prayers to his God. We need to learn tearful prayers where we break down before God because we need to know how to still relate to him when we are suffering.

[19 : 43] If you're only close with God when things are going well, then as soon as things go badly, your walk will start falling apart.

But if you know how to relate to God even in pain, then you will be able to walk even in suffering. Look at Psalm 13.

This is a tearful psalm. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God.

Enlighten my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death. Do you know how to weep before God? What will you do when suffering comes?

[20 : 46] Point number two, application two, weep before God. Application three, be unappealing to the world. If God wanted us to draw people in because our lives look so great, if he wanted that to be what makes the Bible attractive, he would make all of us rich.

He would make all of us beautiful and successful in everything we do. But Paul writes, verse seven, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

One of the reasons he allows us to suffer is so that when people come to him, it is not our success that draws them, but his power.

Be proud of your weakness because God is using it. Be willing to be ugly. Pretty Christianity is unbiblical Christianity.

Application three, be willing to be ugly. That does it. Sermon done. Reason I called it, prepare to suffer and die.

[22 : 09] Hope you're encouraged. Actually, the story does not stop there. There is more.

There is more than just that bad news. Everything I have said is true about suffering, but there is more to the story.

The Christian walk is clothed in this misery. Even enough to make you ask, is it worth it? And then you look at Christ and the answer is yes.

It's worth every moment. It will make you ask yourself, is there any hope? And then you look at the empty tomb and you think the answer must be yes, there is hope.

Christ was prepared to suffer and die and every bit of that promised suffering came true, but that was not the end of the story.

[23 : 20] Christ was prepared to suffer and die. He did suffer and die, but he continued hoping and trusting in God despite all of that, and yet he lives again.

So now for a different type of sermon. Point number one, hope. As we are in hard times now, we must not lose sight of the riches of glory that await us.

You must never forget what's in store for you. If you just look at this present time, it's all bad news. But if you look to glory, it's worth it.

Verse seven, we have this treasure in jars of clay. If you look on the outside, you see that things are weak and fragile, but on the inside are riches.

One day, every last pain will be passed. That vessel will break and yield way to riches of glory.

[24 : 29] Revelations 21, four. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.

There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Do you value the treasure you have in Christ? It's riches.

Philippians 3, 8. Yet, indeed, also, I count all things as loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For him, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish. that I might gain Christ. That's what's in store for you.

Now, don't look to the sufferings. Look past them to the riches, the hope of wealth. Will you focus on the present and fall into despair, or will you look to the future hope of the promised treasure?

[25 : 38] Paul writes in Romans 8, 18, for I consider that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

This is your hope. This is good news and do not forget it. Jesus hoped and trusted. Point number two, trust.

You cannot see the future. You cannot see all places. you cannot see what's in man's heart. You can't even see your own heart clearly.

So you must trust. Whatever God allows, no matter how painful it is, no matter how hard it is as you are going through it, know that he is doing it for your good.

even if you cannot see, there are so many things that you cannot see, he sees it all and he has chosen your path well.

[26 : 42] He is a good father. We are like young children who cannot understand why our parents care so much about being polite or sharing or not running into the road.

You know, why does that matter? We cannot see it all, but God can, so we must trust him. Look at how Paul sees God helping him through his difficulties.

Verses 8 and 9. We are hard pressed on every side, that's what he sees, yet not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair.

Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. See, in every place where pain meets Paul, God is there protecting him.

Trust God in your suffering, and he will make you come through it. He will bring you through the trials. Trust him. Jesus hoped and trusted, and now he lives again.

[27 : 55] Point number three, live again. Death is not the end. Our God is a resurrecting God. The tomb is empty, he is risen.

Our God loves to bring life out of death. Our Savior died for your sins. He lives now. When you are grieving loss, when you are grieving difficulty and pain, look to God, who is so life-giving that not even death can stop him.

Our God is so powerful that not even death can take away his good plans. See also that death is the path to life.

Paul wants Jesus' life and he is willing to die to get it.

There is one path to glory and that path is through suffering and death. It is worth it. The path to life, the path to save your life, doesn't actually work.

[29 : 26] John 12, 24, and 25, most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain.

He who loves his life will lose it. And he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Those who seek to avoid trials in this life end up dead and suffering.

But if you choose Christ and his cross, you will conquer death. John 11, 12, most assuredly I say to you, that's not the right verse.

He says, I am the resurrection and the life. he who trusts in me, though he dies, yet shall he live. Are you prepared for suffering? Is he worth it to you? Are you focused on the weak jar or the treasure hidden inside?

[30 : 41] Let's pray. Lord, we are weak and we have a plate of suffering before us.

We do not have the strength to choose to keep going. We are like the apostles who fell away in the face of persecution. salvation. So we ask you to send your spirit, the same spirit that ministered to Christ as he faced his death, to minister to us, that we might be able to look past the sufferings of this life and the sufferings of death and look all the way past into the riches of eternity.

Might we remember all these things as we take communion this Sunday. We pray all these things in your son's name. Though he died, yet shall he live.

May you be praised. Amen.