

The Exiled Life: 1 Peter 1:6-9

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Date: 28 September 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Well, good morning, church. Good morning, church. There we go. It's good to be here.

! Beautiful fall day. Well, we are in a study. We're going through 1 Peter. And our discipleship classes have officially passed us up. So Scott and myself are working from behind. And we're never going to catch up. But we're going to go through and take a section at a time. And this morning, we're looking at 1 Peter 1, verses 6 through 9. I want to make mention, I know Melissa gave all the announcements and she was far better decorated than me. Like, it was good. We have a book that we're reading for our Dead Theologian Society that will gather in about a month. So if you want to participate with us, we're going to gather and discuss the end of the spear. And there's some copies out in the foyer if you would like to read that with us. It's a great missionary story. And you have about a month.

So that's your forewarning. And I would love as many of you as possible. And then we'll gather at the end of October and discuss that. So let me pray, ask the Lord's help and blessing on our study.

And then we will dive into the text together. Let's pray. Lord, we want to quiet our hearts this morning. We've come. We're here to not only meet with one another, your people, but to meet with you personally. Lord, we think of the words of the psalmist when he was just marveling at your creation. The work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, you've set them in place. And then to ask the question, what is man that you're mindful of him?

And Lord, we know what you were thinking because you sent your son and that you would pay the ultimate sacrifice to forgive us, to be able to call us sons and daughters. And Lord, we will forever be grateful.

[2 : 3 3] We've come here this morning to meet with you. Lord, we want to begin our week drawing near to you. You have promised to respond in kind. And so Lord, would you draw near to us as we submit our hearts to your word? Would you speak to us? Lord, would you give each of us something that we could leave with and we could meditate on today and this week? And so we thank you for the words that have been recorded, that Peter wrote, that you inspired. And would you accomplish sanctification in each of us, growth, because we've spent time considering your words.

So we commit our morning to you and we'll give you thanks for what you accomplish in Jesus' name and all God's people said. Amen. So we have begun this letter, 1 Peter. We know we've gotten a little bit of sort of context backdrop what's happening as Peter is writing this letter. We know that believers are scattered throughout the Roman Empire. They're in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey.

And these believers are experiencing persecution, suffering, pressure as a result of loyalty to Jesus. In fact, there is a growing Christian, anti-Christian sentiment spreading throughout the empire as a result of the empire as a result of Emperor Nero blaming Christians for the three or I would say nine-day, history is divided, six-day, nine-day fire that destroyed much of Rome. About two-thirds of that city burned. And Nero blamed the Christians. Scholars, historians are mixed in terms of whether Nero started the fires. It is not insignificant that he did have an entire rebuilding strategy already in place after the fires had been extinguished. But Peter is writing to encourage Christians at this time living during persecution, state-driven persecution. And according to Tacitus, who was a Roman senator, historian in the first century, he writes that Christians were being treated with extreme cruelty.

They were being sent to the arena. They were torn apart by wild animals. Some of them were actually crucified during this time. Nero used believers as human torches to light his gardens at night. And it was just, it was pure evil. And so Peter, he writes this letter. He's broken over what's happening to Christians. He's disgusted with the evil that's emanating out of Rome towards believers. And in fact, it's interesting because at the end of this letter, we'll get to eventually, but in chapter 5, verse 13, he says, I'm writing from Babylon. And we know that he's in Rome, but he uses this, I think, as a metaphor describing, maybe he's trying to keep it, you know, don't want to mention Rome and bring more persecution, but I think he's also using it as a metaphor of evil, just describing the debauchery taking place in Rome. And so Peter, he begins this letter with a giant run-on sentence. Verses 3 through 12 are just one sentence that are about five in the English, but not in the Greek. And so you have this long run-on sentence of encouragement that he is bringing to believers. And as we already looked last week, he's saying, hey, look back to your rescue and then look ahead to your future inheritance.

And then in fact, he describes how good the inheritance is. And Scott shared with us last week in verse 4, this inheritance that we have to look forward to, it's described with three different words. It's imperishable. It cannot be destroyed. It's undefiled. It can't be polluted.

[7 : 01] And then it's unfading. It will not decay over time. So we have a future to look forward to. And really, he's talking about our eternal home. He's talking about heaven. And it's interesting to me that when I served as a pastor over on the west side, there were a number of pastors at the time, a bit more progressive in nature, but they were chiding pastors who would preach heaven.

And they would say, why are you talking about heaven? You need to be engaged now. Don't preach heaven. And yet, what I want you to hear this morning, church, is that Peter is preaching heaven.

And he's actually in good company. Heaven's a wonderful doctrine. It's not about escapism, but it's our promise. It's encouragement. That's why he says, hey, look forward to this inheritance. It's imperishable. And I think we're in good company when we talk about heaven because Jesus talked about heaven. In fact, in John 14, a familiar passage to many of us, Christ says in verse 1, let not your heart be troubled. This is for your encouragement today. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms, if it were not so what I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. Church heaven is a place I can't wait to experience.

It's a place where there's no sin. This present life is not as good as it gets. This is a prelude.

Heaven is not an inheritance that we're unable to comprehend. It's not this ethereal, boring, strange thing that we can't sort of mentally grab onto. Jesus says, I go to prepare a place for you.

[9 : 09] And then I like how Peter puts it later in his second letter, 2 Peter 3.13. He says, according to this promise, we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

So heaven is actually described as something familiar to us. It's new earth. Oh, I live on earth. But it's a new earth. It's an earth 2.0. Okay, that seems more familiar than what I was thinking initially. It's not some fluffy clouds with, you know, cherubs and harps and like, it's described as a new earth. It's similar to what we're experiencing now, only superior in every way.

And in the center, there is a city that's unrivaled. In Revelation 21.18, it talks about this city, just a few descriptors here. The wall was built with jasper while the city was pure gold, clear as glass.

Let's get your imaginations a little bit. Jasper, what's that? Well, that's diamonds. What? Walls of diamonds? A city, pure gold, clear like glass. I mean, what's treasure on earth is just building material in heaven? And we have like these images, and I think, I don't think there's anything that rivals what heaven will be like. New earth, where heaven and earth meet. I don't think there's anything that rivals, but we have images. You know, you think of, you know, you Lord of the Ring fans like Rivendell. Oh, that's a beautiful place. Or, you know, you superhero fans, like, it's like Asgard, and you see like this beautiful, like, city. And I don't think those compare.

It's a place of incredible beauty. More colors than the leaves of autumn on a crisp, sunny day. It's a place of exploration and discovery, a place of incredible food and great friendship, and I think gut-splitting laughter.

[11 : 18] And it's a place where there's no mourning. There's no crying. There's no pain. There's no death. It's a place of inexpressible joy in the presence of King Jesus. Like, that's the best part. Like, Jesus is there, the one who gave everything for us to know Him. Like, we get God. We get to be with God. It's Christmas morning every day. We're finally home. And that's good news. And if you're in Christ this morning, then our King is at present preparing our home. So Paul says, look back to your salvation and look ahead to your inheritance. We have home to look forward to. Now, the fact that we look forward to home in the future means that at present, where are we? If that's home, where are we now? We are not home. In fact, Peter says in verse 1, you're exiles. So knowing that we're not yet home, what ought our expectation for this life be? Well, that's what Peter tells us this morning. So let's look at the text together. And hopefully this won't be a downer. It will end on a high note, but there are some troubled waters in between. 1 Peter 1, verses 6 to 9. Peter writes,

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. So Peter first begins here in verse 6 by saying, In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. So he first says, In this, what is the this that we're to rejoice in today? Well, we just got done talking about it. Okay? You have been forgiven. Your sins have been forgiven. The slate has been wiped clean. You stand clean before holy God.

And your past has been dealt with. Your future is secure. You have an inheritance that awaits. So look ahead to heaven. Man, that's great. My past has been dealt with. My future is secure. There's great freedom there. You rejoice in this. Okay? But then Peter says, But for now, for a little while, you've been grieved by various trials. That's the now. So what Peter is doing for us here this morning, church, is he's setting forth proper expectations for life in a fallen world that is in rebellion, that is hostile to the author of life. We are not home. And so if we are expecting in this life, or maybe I could use a stronger word if we're demanding, not out loud, but in our hearts, ease, comfort, comfort, that will profoundly disappoint, frustrate, and actually it will steal our joy.

One of our daughters, when they were younger, they never understood the sport of soccer.

[15 : 39] They excelled at a different sport called ballet soccer. And as a five-year-old, they were out picking daisies and then doing spins while a soccer game was occurring. And there was one early Saturday morning when all young families go to the soccer fields, and a ball was launched at their head, and it was very surprising. It was at that moment they learned that soccer is actually not ballet.

And it is a contact sport. As parents, we failed them. We didn't teach them correctly. There is a family member that I will not name, but as a youngster, she broke a girl's leg trying to score a goal.

It's a true story. It's a family secret. And we're going to move on. You don't want to play soccer with parents like us as a small child, because we play to win.

Peter is telling these believers in the first century, what's normal life is trials. It's suffering.

That's the normal life for the believer. Like our desire for permanence, it's not going to be met this side of eternity. He says, for a little while, you've been grieved by various trials.

[17 : 20] Okay. What sort of trials ought we to expect? Because actually this term, this word trial, it's a broad term that Peter uses, let me just mention three categories this morning.

Things that we ought to expect in this life. We're not home. First category of trials, we will experience suffering in our physical bodies.

It's simply due to our sin-marred experience. Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 5, 1. He says, For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. If indeed by putting it on, we may not be found naked, for we are all in this tent. We groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. What a great term. Not swallowed up by death. For the believer, death is like being swallowed up by life. We go from the land of the dying to the land of the living. And Paul, to the Corinthians here, he talks about our bodies as earthly tents, which eventually get torn down. They are temporary dwellings.

And it's a great metaphor because those in Corinth would have understood this. Every two years in Corinth, they would host the Ithmian Games, which were second only to the ancient Olympic in size.

So there were a lot of tents set up in the Roman Empire just to be present for these events. The event finishes, the tents are taken down. They're removed, just like man. It's a brilliant metaphor. Tents are temporary. But our eternal bodies, our glorified bodies, are described as buildings, that which is permanent, that which is not temporary. And I think we see this. We have a dear brother, right, in the hospital right now, Tom Doherty, who's waiting for a surgery, right? And we've seen people pass out of this life, still have images of a sweet Marie who is 91, 92, just at the end of life, and her body was so frail, so frail. It wasn't always like that. But that's what our bodies do.

[20 : 08] They're temporary. They're temporary. This is the reality that we all see, we all know our bodies are temporary. They experience sickness. They wear out.

I don't know about you. I'm pretty stoked to get a heavenly body. I mean, this one's doing okay, but man, it's going to be great. It's going to be wonderful. I can't wait. Since I was 12, I've had a colostomy bag. That's gone. That's wonderful. I'm not as tethered to this body as you think. I'm looking forward to my glorified body. So we will experience suffering in our physical bodies in the here and now. Second area of trial, just fighting the flesh, fighting against a real enemy. I love what Jesus says to his guys night before he's crucified.

Matthew 26, 41, he says, watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. The flesh is weak. Expect in this life the challenge of pursuing righteousness. We are constantly swimming upstream in this world as we pursue righteousness.

That is the expected normal for the believer. We have been saved from the penalty of sin and we have been saved from the power of sin, but we have not yet been saved from the presence of sin. And if we choose to cease to fight, and I think this morning in our discipleship groups, we talked about be holy for I'm holy, pursue righteousness, pursue holiness. If we cease to fight the flesh, guess what happens? Ministry diminishes in life for us.

We're less of a blessing to our families, to everyone. A great example is Moses in Hebrews 11, 24, it says, by faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

[22 : 34] And as a result of that, of being vigilant to fight sin in his life, God greatly used him to bless a nation. We are far more useful to the Lord as we battle against the flesh. But that's part of the suffering, that's part of the trial of this life. And then this final category, suffering trials in life, it's because we identify with Jesus. And really, this is the central issue that Peter is addressing in this letter. You're experiencing trials, you're experiencing suffering because of your allegiance in this life to Jesus. And he actually goes on then, a little bit later in the letter, he says in 1 Peter 4, with respect to this, they are surprised, the unbelievers are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you. You used to participate. You used to do all the same things.

But now you've gotten too holy, self-righteous, holier than thou. They're maligning you. Blasphemo, they're slandering you. You don't participate in the same jokes, the same carnal scene, the party, whatever it was. Something perhaps you once participated in, and now you are made fun of. You're called names you don't appreciate. It's isolating. It's hard.

I still remember a conversation with a young Christian man in Seattle whose friends, he was out with them, and then they all left him. That evening, they had found people to go home with, and he caught an Uber, and he got Pastor Jay. And we got talking, and he's like, man, it's hard to be a Christian in the city. And my friends, they make fun of me. They tell me I should go home with a girl, and man, and we just, I just encourage him. And by the end of the ride, it was so sweet, because he's like, man, Pastor Jay, I wish that you were my friend. And it was really sweet, because I'm like this middle-aged, teetering on old guy, and he was young and hip, and so it was very sweet. But man, it's isolating. It can be isolating. All those friends, they're not friends.

They're not friends. You guys all read The Great Gatsby in high school. You know they're not friends. They were there for what you provided. Man.

But I will tell you this. To suffer because of your allegiance to Jesus is far superior of a trial compared to suffering that we bring on ourselves because of our own sin. Amen? Amen.

[25 : 47] Peter says in 1 Peter 2, 19, he says, this is a gracious thing. When mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

And so what I want us to hear this morning, friends, is, I mean, in summary, trials are unavoidable. They're unavoidable. They're unavoidable in this life.

And as we align with Jesus, it doesn't erase trials. It actually increases them. I told you there were some speed bumps. That's kind of hard.

And in fact, Jesus agrees with this. Jesus always told the truth. In John 15, 19, he says, if you were of the world, the world would love you as its own.

But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you. And then he goes on to talk about, you know, a servant's not greater than his master.

[27 : 01] And so what is the proper expectation for the believer in this life? It's trials. It's suffering. That's the normal.

We don't want the normal. There's churches that have said, we don't want the normal. Because I can drive around and see some of these churches that have rainbow flags hanging from their building structures, hoping that the world's angel of death will pass over them and they will be loved.

What's the normal? I just read an article out of Gordon-Conwell Seminary. It's estimated that since the church's inception 2,000 years ago, there have been 70 million Christian martyrs for the faith.

That's staggering. About half of those occurring in the 20th century. That's shocking.

And I think as we hear these numbers, Christians suffering under fascist and communist regimes and losing their lives, I think there can be a disconnect for those in America.

[28 : 37] And I feel some of that. Because that's not been my experience. because I've lived in a nation of religious liberty and tolerance my entire life.

I haven't felt the evil of suffering in this regard like the rest of the world. Because America is actually abnormal in this regard.

And I sort of wonder, you know, as we've observed this last month, the assassination of Charlie Kirk, and I wonder if that's going to be one of those significant indicators for our nation that we are actually on our way to becoming normal.

That that that that that persecution for us for our faith is actually quickly moving beyond simply name-calling.

I'm not a prophet. I don't know, but I wonder. And I think maybe this morning you're hearing this and you're like, oh, Jay, I'm already stressed.

[29 : 45] Like, why are you sharing this? Well, it's because it's in God's Word. It's what Jesus said. It's what Peter recorded. Like, I can't deal with this. Jay, you don't understand.

Like, I got problems, right? I'm trying to pay my mortgage and I'm trying to figure out my health crisis and man, I've got I've got big problems already.

And what I want to encourage us with, here's the newflash for us, we actually have bigger problems than mortgages and health issues. Because there's people all around us on their way to eternity in hell.

That's a big problem. I don't think problems get any bigger. And if our trial, our suffering, persecution leads to another's eternal rescue, is it worth it?

Yes. It's a hard yes. It's a difficult yes. But yes, nonetheless. So there's purpose in that.

[30 : 55] There's purpose in the trial. Are there other purposes for our suffering in this life? Yeah. Well, Peter tells us actually there are. Because he goes on in verse 7 to tell us, he says, so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So trials in this life, they prove the genuineness of our faith. Trials sanctify. There's purpose.

Trials purify. Trials prepare us for home so that the transition home is less violent than it could be.

So that our lives that we're using life for ministry, we're walking courageously, we're identifying ourselves with Jesus in this life we're pursuing holiness so that the transition isn't as though we're escaping through flames.

Talks about in 1 Corinthians 3. Trials sanctify, church. Amen? Amen? Yes.

[32 : 18] Joni Erikson Tata after 40 years as a quadriplegic. Isn't that enough of a trial? Like she's dependent on everyone all the time.

And she says this. This is after 40 years as a quadriplegic. And she says, suffering for me is still that jackhammer breaking apart my rocks of resistance every day.

It's the chisel God is using to chip away my self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency, yes, in our hearts and my self-motivation and my self-consumption.

Trials are still doing that. God is using that as a chisel in my life. And Peter here as he talks about trials, he uses the analogy of gold being refined as the same process God is using to carry out in our lives of growing us, of sanctifying us.

It's a great image. It's not a new idea in Scripture. The prophet Isaiah wrote it this way in Isaiah 48.10. He says, behold, I have refined you, this is God speaking, but not as silver I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.

[33 : 36] Oh! Thanks for this passage, Scott. I appreciate it. Yeah. Gold heated in the crucible and then the dross is burned up, making the gold more valuable.

And I love the image of gold being refined as the believer goes through trials. The gold doesn't burn up regardless of the heat that's applied, only the impurities.

And I think there's a promise there that we can endure, church. We can endure today whatever befalls. We can endure. We can endure.

Think about Carolyn and Jack and Carolyn just still grieving over you. You will forever grieve, right? 47-year-old daughter, Sarah, hit South Hill.

It's brutal. Like, suffering's real, church. Trials are real. But God says, I'm still in it. And you can endure.

[34 : 52] You know, the refiner's art consisted of separating dross from pure gold, had to be reduced to a fluid state in a firing pot in the furnace. And note, the furnaces in ancient times were not always the same.

Okay? Some of you guys are spoiled with your traggars and your little, like, like, really? You're not manly. Come on.

Careful. I have one. Talking to myself. No emails. Some of these furnaces, they were holes in the ground.

Some were built above ground, but the success of the refining process, where did it rest? It wasn't in the furnace. It rested in the skill of the refiner. They had to be a master craftsman.

And I love what Malachi says about this because he actually tells us who the craftsman is. It says in Malachi 3.3, He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord.

[36 : 08] Who's the refiner? It's God. It's our God. He's the master craftsman. And the refiner would sit down at his work and watch the refining process very carefully.

His hands were not off. They were on. He would let the draught run off exactly at the right time. If it was a moment too soon or too late, the refining process was not a success.

And I think there's a massive promise in this image of God sanctifying us, refining us through trial as a master craftsman, purifying gold.

And the promise is this. Our God knows what we can endure, church. He's not a father who exasperates his kids, his work.

Even in a fallen, sin-drenched world, it's still perfect. And the outcome of maturity and growth is more valuable than even the outcome of pure gold refined.

[37 : 18] The world, they value pure gold. It's just a building material in heaven. But God's economy is different. He values faith that is genuine and refined.

It's beautiful. It's powerful. It's powerful. You know, we have the image of Erica Kirk nationally televised. This is what believers do.

I forgive that man. What in the world? Within this passage that we have, Peter has given us this major contrast.

We have home and we have today. We're not home. There's suffering and there's joy. We look ahead to heaven, there's joy.

Yes, as we consider this earthly life and those who identify with Jesus, a king that the world despises, there's suffering, so we have this contrast.

[38 : 22] And yet, the way that Peter ends this section is by not allowing life to be this hard dichotomy. It's not just suffering now and joy later. Listen to what he says at the end, verse 8 and 9.

He says, though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him, you believe in him and rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

And so what Peter is saying here at the end, you know what? Even in the present suffering, joy is not just there, it's also here. It can coalesce with suffering.

And it's not just small joy you can experience now, even in the midst of suffering. It's a joy, he uses this word that just sort of tripped me up all week.

I'm like, it's inexpressible, it's inexpressible. What? It's inexpressible joy? What's inexpressible joy? It's joy that cannot be, words can't actually describe it.

[39 : 27] Words are inadequate to express how good it is. You ever had a moment like that in life? When my girls were young and it was Christmas time, I don't know where the money came from, I don't know if there was a relative that died and we had a little bit of money, and of course, we all know my personality.

me and Scott are very different. Like, it's like Christmas time and Scott's like, give me undershirts and Merry Christmas.

He's pretty happy. I'm just like, so, the girls are little, I'm like, what do we do? I bought them, this is a pastor's salary, we don't have anything, so what do I do?

Let's go buy them a baby grand piano. And so, I did. I got permission, a lot of negotiations, brought it in, big red bow, like, just took over the entire downstairs.

We didn't really have a house fit for a baby grand piano, but man, it was epic. And I'm telling you what, my girls, they were just like, there was, it was joy that was inexpressible when they saw that.

[40 : 57] And there was some squeals and it was like, that was a moment that just, like, that was the image as I read this. That's, oh, it's that good. What?

What? What? Yeah. Since then, we did sell the baby grand piano, just, pay for college or something, I don't know.

the joy plummeted. Undershirts for everyone. Okay? Okay? I love that Peter uses this term and he's talking about this life.

It's just, how is this possible if there are trials of various kinds? there's great heartache in this life.

How can we have this joy despite? And I would say, twofold. Why? Because your sins, if you're in Christ, have been forgiven?

[42 : 01] You have a Savior who's wiped the ledger clean? You're, literally, you're bulletproof because death is transition home.

to stand right, clean, righteous before holy God. Additionally, to know that, man, it's joy because I know that my God's not distant.

Yeah, heaven is His throne room but the earth is His footstool. He's transcendent and in a minute He's involved. He's very involved. He's very hands-on in our lives.

which allows us to endure and even to celebrate. There's purpose. There's purpose.

It's sort of like the difference between a ship being lost and buffeted at sea versus a ship headed for a glorious destination through very tumultuous waters and then to know who's waiting at destination's end.

[43 : 11] It's huge. I love this promise that even in this life despite the hard and there is some very, very hard. I don't want to minimize that.

But God, you got this and you're good. We'll end with this example from church history.

there was a chap by the name of Polycarp who was born in 69 AD. He was a disciple of the Apostle John.

He became a pastor in Smyrna, modern-day Turkey. Wrote a number of letters to the Philippian church to encourage them. Those are not biblical letters but extra-biblical.

He is one of the earliest accounts of a Christian martyr outside of the New Testament. During his lifetime, Christians were told under the threat of death to renounce Christ, identify with Caesar, confess that Caesar is Lord, not Jesus is Lord.

[44 : 24] And so he was confronted at the end of his life. He's 86 years old. He's told to recant Jesus and I love his response and it's a famous response that we know in church history because he says this, four score, so 80 years, four score and six years have I been his servant and he has done me no wrong.

How then can I blaspheme the name of the king who saved me? He was then burned at the stake.

That cost him his life. But I love the resolve and the recognition of God's hand on his life every single day. 86 years in this life and he has done me no wrong.

And even in the face of the horrific for Polycarp, there was joy. Amen? Father, thank you for telling us the truth.

Lord, it's hard because we want the normal to be ease and comfort. And yet, Lord, you say that the normal is that people are going to hate us.

[45 : 42] We don't belong. We're not of the world. And Lord, we don't want to become a brash, obnoxious people. We want to be gentle and merciful, but we want to be courageous lions and lionesses.

We want to not shrink back from sharing the hope that we have for giving an answer and doing that in gentleness. Lord, we want to thank you for being involved in every single day, every single day of our lives.

And Lord, we thank you that you are using things that are of great heartache to many of us for even our good. And Lord, I do pray that in the midst of trials that you would use them to advance your kingdom.

We would see people come to know you. Lord, whatever you're doing in this nation, advancing your kingdom, we say thank you. Lord, whatever you have for our church in this place, in this time, we want to be faithful to that task.

We do want to say to you, Jesus, yes. So we commit ourselves to fresh and anew this day as we enter in this new week. And Lord Jesus, we just want to tell you we love you this morning.

[46 : 54] And it's in your name we pray. Amen.