

Disciples of Suffering

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Preacher: Jon Moffitt

- [0 : 00] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.
- And now, today's sermon. You may not know this, but I do title my sermons. That's what goes on the podcast. I don't ever tell you my title, but I am this morning because I think it'll be helpful.
- The title of the sermon is Disciples of Suffering. The definition of the word disciple implies a devoted allegiance to the teachings of one chosen as a master.
- That's what a disciple is. So the moment we give ourselves the title of Christian, which is another form of saying we are a disciple who is devoted to the teachings of Jesus.
- And Peter, one of the 12 disciples, one of the apostles, is giving us the teachings of Jesus as he learned them and carried them out and is now passing them to the church.
- [0 : 59] I introduced this idea of suffering last week just in preparation to get us ready for today. So this morning, we're going to spend the entire time walking through these verses, helping us understand what Paul, I'm sorry, what Peter means by them.
- I don't have a very long introduction this morning because we have a lot to cover, and so we're going to go ahead and jump into it. And we are going to be looking at it from this perspective, that Peter is preparing the church with six disciplines of suffering.
- To discipline oneself is to train, to refrain, and to prepare. And so this is exactly what he's doing with the church. He's presented them the gospel of hope.
- He has warned them about the attacks that's coming their way, and now he's preparing them for life. And so we're going to look at the six disciplines for suffering.
- They're pretty obvious. They come right out of the text. So we're not going to be shocked by the outline this morning, which is probably good. We always want the text to drive the outline. If you read verse 12, 1 Peter 4, 12, it says, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.
- [2 : 15] That's the first discipline he's warning us about. He says, do not be surprised. We could reword it this way as point one. We should expect suffering.
- We should expect suffering. It's hard to feel the weight of Peter's words here, being distant from his context. He isn't telling the church that it is this city at this time that will experience the suffering.
- It may not happen anywhere else in the world. If you turn with me to John chapter 15, Jesus warns us that suffering travels his name. That's why it's called the disciples of suffering.
- In John 15, Jesus is warning his disciples about his departure. And when he leaves, he's the one who's receiving suffering, but then it will be transferred to those who follow his teaching.

Look at John 15, 18. By the way, I was gently and lovingly and graciously rebuked this week by a particular grace group that I will not mention, but they happen to be older than me.

[3 : 16] And they said, I used too many passages too quickly, so I will give you time to catch up. We could start doing sword drills.

You guys remember those? Spine up, man. Spine up. All right. Here we go. This is what Jesus ruins his disciples with.

If the world hates you, know it has hated me before it has hated you. If you're of the world, the world will 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. Remember, the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

[4 : 25] We pretty much saw some of this, if you have been aware of what's going on with the Olympics recently. I don't know if it's a direct attack, but there's definitely allusions to Christianity.

And Satan has very much influenced our world, and at times it's been subtle. You've had to look for it. But not anymore. The confidence has risen.

The rebellion has gained traction to mock God. When churches move from preaching the gospel, and they move it over to preaching acceptance of culture, or we preach moralism and we're not fighting back against sin, with the relief of the gospel, this is what happens to a world that is out from underneath the influence of Christ's power.

In countries like ours, where the gospel used to be heard throughout all of the country in churches every Sunday, instead we hear moralism, how to become a better person, removed from the power of the gospel.

We hear acceptance. We hear about just outright embracing the culture which is embracing sin.

[5 : 47] And we call it love, but it's not love. It's not ever loving to embrace and promote slavery, which is what the Bible describes it. I want you to turn with me real quick to just one other passage before we continue in 1 Peter.

Turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter 4. Paul is warning this young pastor about what's going to happen. This was 2,000 years ago, so it's not even today.

This is 2,000 years ago. He was afraid of what might be the pressures to young Timothy. And so in 2 Timothy chapter 4 and in verse 2, he warns him of how his ministry should be and what will come in obedience to this ministry.

This is 2 Timothy 4.2. Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

[6 : 53] As for you, always be sober-minded. Enduring suffering, do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. So he equates the whole preaching of God's word and the obedience of God's word to encourage and rebuke, to fulfill the ministry.

He says, in doing so, you will have people who will leave or rebuke you or mock you or move on to another church because they don't want to hear the truth. It's because they've been lulled away.

And then he warns them, you must keep your mind sober. Do not become intoxicated with the lies of the world. And in doing so, you will endure suffering. The reason so many churches today, I think, have backed off preaching the gospel is because of the wrong intentions that they are just trying to reach the culture.

But if our aim in this church is attendance, to try to get the church to be accepted by the city of Spring Hill, then we are removing hope. Sure, we might provide a really great social club, but I'll tell you right now, Christians are really bad at social clubs, man.

We're mean, we're nasty, we judge. You know, I would rather join a country club rather than this because, you know, at least I could play golf, right? But when the gospel is at the center of the church, there's something that is here you cannot find anywhere else, including your own home.

[8 : 17] You can't find it there. And this is what I think Peter is warning the churches for. Paul warned the churches, and even our own king warned us that this is what's going to take place.

So Peter warns us not to be surprised about what we are going to experience. Don't be shocked by it. It's a normal outcome for those who uphold the gospel. Now, is the experience going to be different?

Because some of you are sitting here going, I don't know if I've ever really experienced this. I don't think it's the constant at 100% experience all of the time. But where you stand for truth and purity of the gospel, you will experience this.

Which kind of moves us on to, I do want to make a point about this, though. Because I've, once in a while, I use social media because I'm curious about what people say. So I hopped on social media yesterday to see what everybody had to say about the Olympics, which I thought was fascinating.

And I'm not going to tell you what I read. It's embarrassing. But I will tell you this. If we choose to respond, and I think it's appropriate to respond to our culture, we need to always do it in light of who we are.

[9 : 31] So these are the two points that I walked away thinking with. If all of us want to engage, which I think is fine, we need to engage in this way. First of all, we are always to speak the truth in love.

In every situation. I can't think of a situation that I would find myself in where I wouldn't speak the truth in love. I am not the judge. I am not God. I am not righteous.

Therefore, I am always obligated not to speak out of anger and hatred, but I'm always to speak out of love. And what is love, according to the definition we learned a couple weeks ago, is to lay our lives down out of compassion for the lost.

This means we do not mock them. We do not kill them. We do not speak against them. We are the priests, as what Peter said earlier. We are a kingdom of priests, which means we represent God with our voices.

Therefore, we don't refrain from the truth. We speak the truth. We speak the truth because the truth is what? Sets people free. But we always do it housed and governed with love.

[10 : 31] And if they're going to be angry at us, may they be angry not in how we said it, but in what we said. And number two, it is never loving to withhold the truth, to refrain from speaking that which would set them free.

See, sin is always slavery. And to keep silent about what brings God's wrath is not loving, and it's selfish and cowardly because we're afraid about the consequences that come upon our own life.

But to love someone is always to do what is best for them and to express to them what they are facing. So to withhold the truth is not loving, but condemning them before God.

So we always must speak the truth, but we do so with love and compassion, realizing they need to be set free and that they are blinded by their own sin.

So as we seek to free the world from this course that they're on, according to Ephesians chapter 2, we will be faced with opposition. Many times they won't embrace us with a hug, but they will approach us with a fist, being physical or verbal.

[11 : 47] So this leads us to point number two. One, the first discipline that we face, Peter, is that we should expect suffering when we stand for the truth lovingly and graciously. But number two, we should see discipline, or sorry, we should see persecution as refinement.

We should be refined by it. Look at verse 12 again, 1 Peter 4, 12. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial. He uses this phrase for a reason.

When it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. This experience is normal. Turn with me really quick to 1 Peter chapter 1.

This is how he starts the letter. This is not the first time Peter is using suffering as a reminder, and I think he does it a little bit more full, explaining what does he mean by fiery trial, and he's referencing it again, just kind of tipping the hat back to what he's already said.

But listen to how he words this. This is 1 Peter chapter 1 in verse 6. This idea of refinement. In this you rejoice, 1 Peter 1, 6. 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 perish through it, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[13 : 08] So in chapter 4, Peter is reminding us of this calling them back to the fiery trials, where you put precious metals into the fire to burn off the dross, to burn off the impurities, so that what comes out of that is which is strong and pure.

Many, including myself, become scared, thinking that God is using trials to weed out the weak and the frail. This is how you could read this.

Only the strong warriors will survive, right? This is what it sounds like. This is not what Peter is saying. God's not bringing trials to find the fakers, or for those of you that are weak in your faith, and he's just going to get rid of the weaklings.

This couldn't be farther from the truth. If you look at verse 5, we have to see what started this idea of trials. We're not going to read the entire section of the first five verses, but he concludes with this.

1 Peter 1.5. This is all related to our salvation and the future hope that we have. Who by God's power, who by God's power, underline that, circle it, highlight it, are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last times.

[14 : 36] In this you rejoice. Do you see the flow now? It's God's power that gave you faith, and trials test the faith so you can see what? Not your strength.

Whose strength do you see? God's. God says, I'm in you, and I'm working through you, and when the trials come, you get to see how strong your faith is.

That is God's power in you. Do not read this verse and be afraid to think, oh man, I'm weak, I'm frail, and when I'm met with a trial, I probably won't make it. Well, if you're living in your own strength, and in your own righteousness, and in your own faith in yourself, you have much to be afraid of.

But if you believe and rejoice in the power of Christ in the gospel, you will look at trials and say, oh, God's about to show how powerful he is in me. The trial can be met with confidence, going, he will not fail me.

I may fail. My flesh is weak. My body and my mind are weak, but he will not fail me. And then he says, and what are we rejoicing? We're rejoicing in God's power is the source of all of our strength.

[15 : 47] So then read verse seven again. So that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, what does it do at the very end? The result is not for you.

See, this is how I know he's not talking about the genuine of your faith produced by you. Because at the end of the verse, who gets the praise? You for making it through or Christ?

Read it. To result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Christ. It's Christ's power in you. Therefore, he gets the praise. It's disheartening when people use this verse to turn it on people and use it as a fear tactic for their obedience.

We don't need to obey out of fear. We can obey in rejoicing in the power of God's power in our life. So that faith given to us by the means of the spirit is tested by these trials.

And at the end, when we find ourselves still believing in the gospel, Christ will be praised. So Jesus' faithfulness, not our faithfulness.

[16 : 54] So this leads us to our third point in this disciples of suffering. We should expect it. We should be refined by it. We've already mentioned this, but we're going to elaborate on it a little bit more.

He says we should rejoice in it. Look at verse, so 1 Peter chapter 4, turn back there with me, 1 Peter 4, and look at verse 13. We should rejoice in it, which is a strange thing to think about, to rejoice in suffering.

But that's what he says. 1 Peter 4, 13, but rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Turn with me really quick. I want you to read this. It's a fascinating story to Acts chapter 5. Peter often writes his epistles based upon some of his own experiences.

But in Acts chapter 5, we have a story about the disciples who are being flogged, as it says, beaten by rods for one thing, preaching the gospel.

[18 : 14] And after they got done being beaten, they were sent out and said, do not do this anymore. Don't do this anymore. Look at verse 41. They ran, listen to this, Acts 5, 41.

Then they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer the dishonor for the name. The name of what? Their king. They ran out of there going, we got beat for Jesus.

It's very, very strange, right? You have to have a unique perspective in order to hold that. But what they realized is that if the message isn't causing damage, then they're probably not going to be paid attention to.

But if the message is causing damage, which it was, people were getting saved, then they understood this is totally worth suffering for. This is totally worth suffering for. But what did they do?

I mean, you'll notice it's not revenge. They didn't want to regain some dignity or fight back. When they were publicly shamed, this is what flogging was. It was a public shaming.

[19 : 20] Acts 5, 42. And every day in the temple and from house to house they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. They weren't seeking for protection or seeking to protect their reputation.

Their suffering was seen as something special to them because they understood the mission. Christ came, suffered for them so they could be saved and now they're going to suffer like Jesus, not because they're going to save people, but they're going to suffer like Jesus because they're upholding His message.

the message that you can be set free by the Messiah and they found it an honor and a glory to rejoice in the fact that they would suffer for the sake of the advancement of the gospel. Look at verse, go back to 1 Peter chapter 4 and look at verse 14.

1 Peter 4, 14. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

That is a flippant statement we just pass over. But you need to understand that is such a kind and precious God who says, in the midst of you being insulted, you being mocked, He says, dear believer, remember that God's glory and His presence rests upon you in that moment.

[20 : 45] He's not absent, He's present. I think it was C.S. Lewis, he says that God whispers in our enjoyment and shouts in our pain.

I think this is the idea of be reminded that God is present in the midst of our suffering. that if we're all honest, this one can be hard for our hearts to fully embrace.

We enjoy our lives. We are filled with fun and entertainment and happiness and comfort. We don't want to be the one who's making waves.

We just want to go about our lives minding our own business and raising our families, you know, being a good citizen. We don't live in a world that allows us to live this way though.

That's the problem. This is why Jesus says if you hold my name and you proclaim my truth, you will be faced with opposition. The only way to oppose that is to not live for the truth. So Peter is preparing us for this moment, for the whole church, for the existence of the church for 2,000 years, to embrace it and to see it as a means that we, our lives, have purpose and meaning and that as we are setting people free and when we suffer for it, that is a purpose to rejoice for.

[22 : 03] If you try to remove the suffering from your life, you will only be left with living the lie of shame and regret because to remove the suffering is to be silent about your faith.

So if we're under the rule of the king, we are under, if we're not under the rule of the king and we don't live for his truth, you do not have a neutral ground where you could go and say this is the no war zone.

Unfortunately, there is no neutral ground in our world. You are either under the rule of the king or you're under the rule of Satan according to Ephesians chapter 2. So suffering, according to Peter, reminds us that our life actually still matters.

We aren't just enduring until he comes back, but we are proclaiming truth that sets people free. We are fighting. We are fighting for something that is far more significant than just our bank accounts and our health or our voting records.

We are fighting for people's souls. Suffering is a way for us to see that our little lives in this world are causing real and eternal changes and that's why we rejoice.

[23 : 20] See, we may never have the world notice us for what we do as far as an invention or some great act of humanity or famous for some kind of entertainment.

But as for Christians, we realize we work for the king of kings and his truth is setting souls free.

And what more significance is there than that? This leads us to our fourth point in the discipline. So we should expect it. We should be refined by it. We should rejoice in it.

And we should repent because of it. Look at 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

This is a very interesting warning at first glance. I actually don't have any worries about you murdering anybody. I thought about like in the outline, all right, so let's talk about murder for a little while.

[24 : 21] But I don't wake up in the mornings thinking about you and we as the elders are shepherding thinking, man, I sure hope they don't kill somebody this week. I think Peter is helping us understand something though.

When we face enough suffering and we watch the death of a loved one which happens during this time of suffering for our faith, Peter is saying don't retaliate with murder.

Don't retaliate. We will all be suffering for our faith and he says at times you will suffer at a point where you will watch your loved ones die. And in the face of that, we're not to fight back.

He tells Peter to put away the sword. You're not understanding the work of the kingdom, Peter, not yet. There will come a day when judgment comes but today is not the day. Today we suffer even unto death for the sake of those whom we are rescuing.

When you think about this story of Paul's transformation from Saul to Paul, Saul was very famous. We know the story, most of us, right?

[25 : 34] And when they saw Saul going town to town and they knew he was coming to their town, they didn't get together an army to take him out which is fascinating. At times they tried to avoid him as best they could and then when Paul became the preacher of the gospel, he would go into cities and they wanted to kill him and at times he would have to sneak down a wall and get out of there.

Paul wasn't bringing an army to retaliate against the Romans who were trying to kill him. We never know what God is doing to draw people to himself. You see, Saul witnessed Stephen being stoned to death and he's watching this man, the proclaimer of the gospel and right before the man dies and Saul is watching this who becomes Paul, this is Acts 760.

Listen to what Peter, listen to what Paul heard Stephen say. And falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, this is Stephen, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And that is just a different perspective on life. The pressures of this life, including suffering for our faith, can lead us at times to snap.

It's hard. And Peter wanted to remind us of these temptations. We may not be able to find work at times. I experienced this when we lived in Utah.

[27 : 05] We would see people leave the Mormon faith and become Christians and they would have to leave the state because word would get out. And the cities that we lived in was 98% Mormon. So this is just south of Salt Lake in the Provo area.

And they would have to leave the state because they couldn't find work because word got out. And the Mormon community is very tight. There are times where we may experience that we can't find work because of our faith.

He says, don't result to stealing. He says, don't be a murderer or an evildoer. If evil is done to us, we don't respond with evil. Or when he's talking about being a meddler, where we're trying to get involved into the affairs of others so that we can manipulate them for our own benefit.

Don't be a meddler. Suffering for our faith is hard, but it's a good reminder that at times when our heart wants to respond in the flesh, Peter says, let God be the judge.

Let God be the judge. So this is the point five, which is a healthy reminder because at times it's like when, God, are we going to be done?

[28 : 15] So we should expect it. We should be refined by it. We should rejoice in it. We should repent because of it. And number five, we should remember it is temporary. Look at verse 16.

It's 1 Peter 4, 16. Yeah, if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him do, let him not be ashamed, but let him glory, sorry, but let him glorify God in that name.

I think there's a, there's a, he's leading up to this concept of temporary. When enduring suffering and he says, let us not be ashamed, there's a moment where there's weakness put upon us.

If your God is powerful, then why does he allow this to happen for as long as, if he was strong and powerful, what did they say to Jesus on the cross? If you are who you say you are, then get down.

And Peter says, listen, we are not going to be put to shame at the end when this is all done. Glory will be brought to God's name and we will be justified.

[29 : 15] Our faith will see sight. So Peter reminds them that whatever is suffering is only just temporary because the real shame of eternal guilt is coming upon those who are attacking us and will not repent.

Look at verse 17. Verse Peter 4, 17. For the time of judgment to begin at the household of God and it begins with us. What will be the outcome of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Just to bring clarity here, to obey the gospel simply means to believe it by faith. The command of the gospel is to believe. So this call is the good news of what Christ has done and for those who don't believe, he says, what's it going to be like when they face judgment?

He quotes a proverb here. This is Proverbs 11, 31. And the idea of it is that it's not that somehow our righteousness is going to relieve us from our judgment that is to come because the only reason we're not going to be judged is because of what Christ has done, but he's creating a comparative contrast.

These people are not only sinning but then they're mocking the very God to which they're sinning against. So he says, if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

[30 : 31] Meaning that our punishment and our suffering is temporary, but when this moment of grace is over, when the gospel is no longer free to believe and has been removed and judgment day comes, what will happen then?

Their suffering, which what does Paul say? Ours is a momentary, theirs is forever. And it helps us remember that as we suffer for a very short amount of time, we are suffering so that they might receive.

It's a good reminder that their suffering is much longer than ours if we give in and we don't want to give in. So Peter isn't saying those who produce righteousness, we don't want them.

See, I've been hearing, I've been seeing a lot of things on the internet. It's like, we want people to become morally good and stop dressing up like, you know, men as women and all this kind of stuff. So if they start acting different and they face God on judgment day, they're still suffering.

So they act morally good. Yay, we live in a country where everybody acts morally good, but they're all still under the wrath of God. So we lived a good life.

[31 : 43] We lived a utopian life as much as we could, but they suffer for the rest of their life. So we're not trying to convert them to moralism. We're trying to show them the truth of Jesus Christ sets you free.

Stop worshiping other gods. Stop worshiping yourself. Worship the king of kings. And they won't ever do that unless they have the power of the gospel, right? So we give them the law.

You are. Clearly violating the Creator's commands. And so am I. And guess what set me free? I have good news.

And then they will mock us for that good news. But some, but some may not. And that is what we hope for. And this leads us to our last point.

point. We should expect it. We should be refined by it. We should rejoice in it. We should repent because of it. We should remember it as temporary. And lastly, we should be comforted through it.

[32 : 42] Now, I repeated that so many times. If you didn't get it, I apologize. But we should be comforted through it. Look at verse 19. At the very end, he says this, therefore let those who suffer according to God's will. Now, that is important.

Suffering is not accidental. You catching this? There are times where we go through things and we say this question. We've all done it. Ready? Why God? Why me? As somehow God got busy doing something else. And it's like, oh, sorry, John. Forgot about that. I'll get you when I can.

No, no. No, no, no. He says it's according to God's will, which means your suffering isn't outside the sight of God. And this is so important. Listen to this. It's not outside the purpose of God.

How is this comforting to us? Keep reading. Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. Where are we finding comfort? God's sovereign control who is always faithful.

Faithful to what? Never let us go. So while we are doing good, he sees it. He approves of it. He empowers it. And he reminds you it's not your faithfulness as you do good that at the end that will comfort you. It's my faithfulness to protect, guide, and comfort you. Turn with me to John chapter 16. I love these words from Jesus. You probably hear me quote John a lot because I preached that book to start this church. And I just love that book. It has so many good phrases from Christ in there.

[34 : 41] But John 16, 33, right before Jesus goes to the cross, I love this. He says this to comfort them in the midst of the war they're about to face.

John 16, 33. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.

Man. You see what we want is peace in the world. Is that fair? We want peace in the world. And Jesus warns us there is no peace in the world. There is only tribulation.

There is only suffering. But if you want peace, I've sat down with some of you this week and I asked you, what is the purpose and goal of your life? What do you want? They said they wanted joy and they wanted peace. And I was like, good news.

Both of those are achievable in Christ. But outside of Christ, according to Jesus, the God who created you in the world, he says, yeah, outside of me, you will only have tribulation.

[35 : 51] But in me, in my words, you will have peace. I think that's, if every single person is honest at the end of the day, it's not the amount of money or relationships or safety or health.

At the end of the day, they just want to have joy and peace. And we would give anything for it. And Jesus says, well, I already did. I gave everything for it.

And I freely give it to you. Come to me and you will have rest. Right? And the yoke that you will carry, it's nothing like the yoke if you try to carry it on your own in the world.

So in Christ, this is why we preach Jesus from all of Scripture. This is why we preach when he says, I say these things to you. He's talking about the truth of the gospel that he came, the goodness of the kingdom.

Do not place your heart and affections in the world. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things that we want will be added to us through joy and peace. All of us have experienced the destruction of our life.

[36 : 56] We have had regrets. We have sorrows. We have scars because we tried to find fulfillment outside of Christ. So I'm speaking literally to the choir here.

We all have this, but it's good and healthy to be reminded that it is through Christ in the midst of these trials and tribulations that we're not without joy and we're not without peace.

It's just the two will not be connected until he returns. In our souls and in our hearts, we can have peace. But when he returns, guess what? But we will taste and we will see and we will experience in all reality.

But until then, we wait. I was thinking about this. We got concepts of, I was reading all these stories about suffering, all these stats about it this week.

I finally got to the point where I'm like, I can't put these in my sermon. It's just hard. And I even had a moment where I thought, I remember sitting in my office going, I don't know, man, would I burn to death for Jesus?

[38 : 00] That's a hard one to think about. I mean, beheaded, fine. I don't mean to be like gruesome, but burn? I don't like having a splinter. I had a sore throat this morning.

I don't like that either. You know, I'm like, oh Lord, oh God, help me. You know, my throat is burning. Oh, not my whole body. I think we probably have all faced those moments of, would I really, would I really suffer for Jesus?

No, you won't. And neither will I. We won't. We will give in. If you're thinking about suffering for him in your own strength, 100%.

These people who suffered death in gruesome ways, they never did it in their own strength. So don't give them praise.

Don't be impressed by John Huss and all these people who did miraculous things. Paul's like, I'm the weakest person I know, and yet I'm pretty sure no one's, you ever read the list of things that Paul suffered?

[39 : 06] I'm like, I think someone made a really angry comment on YouTube once against me, but he's like, I've been beat like nine times. I said, whoa, dude. I don't know if we carry the scars in heaven, but homie's gonna be like walking, you know, like.

I think as I am, when I look and see what our world is doing, look at the Olympics, look at just the news, and as we start to speak the truth to set people free, I think we are gonna probably face persecution in ways we've never felt before.

And this is where I am reminded and comforted by Paul in Ephesians 6.10. He says, be strong in the strength of the Lord and the strength of his might.

Right? Ephesians 6.10. You see, you're not gonna stand against the attacks of Satan and his army in your own strength. This is why he says, put on the armor of God, which is Christ.

I do wanna read this to you. This is Ephesians 6.10. Verse 12. There's like a weightiness to it when you connect to what Peter's saying and just thinking about what's going on in our world.

[40 : 25] He says, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. This is why we're not gonna murder people. We're not gonna steal from them. We're not gonna meddle in their affairs because the people aren't the ones that we're worried about. For we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers and against authorities and against cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.

But they end up manifesting themselves in the people. Right? That's why we have a temptation to do this. I mentioned this earlier about the Olympics, but what was really going on, if you do some history or just listen to what they're saying, this was a worship to the goddess Dionysus from the Olympic Games, if you see some of the grotesque images that are there.

This goddess is pretty famous, especially in the area of France, historically. It was known for wine, vegetation, pleasure, festivities, madness, and wild frenzy.

I think those last two was a great description of what we experienced at the opening ceremonies. Madness, wild frenzy.

And we're not hiding it anymore. We could mock it, turn it off, say it's ridiculous, or it could be reminded what we're called to.

[41 : 49] Strengthen our children. Strengthen each other. Be merciful and kind and gracious. And then remember, we are the ones. God didn't set angels. God didn't set himself.

God set us as the ones who will set them free. So let us, our hearts, be tender and soft and embrace the suffering with joy and realize that such were some of us, right?

We were once rebellers and haters of God. Let's pray. Our Father, thank you for your kindness this morning.

You have only reminded us of your strength, your faithfulness, your capacities to carry us through. So Lord, by song, word, prayer, confession, we seek your strength and your grace.

May you take the preaching of the word this morning and bring it upon our souls in Christ's name. Amen. Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where everyone is in equal need of grace.

[43 : 02] To plan a visit or to learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org. Thank you. Thank you.