

Example

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[0 : 00] So we're in the third week, right in the middle of our series called The Crux. We're looking at the cross of Jesus coming up into Easter time.

And the last couple of weeks we've looked at different aspects of what Jesus' death on the cross has done for us. And the first week we saw that Jesus' death on the cross, in His death He died as a substitute for us.

That all of us are deserving of condemnation and God's just wrath ought to be poured out on us. But Jesus substituted Himself for us.

That He took God's wrath upon Himself instead of it being poured out on us. And last week we looked at the fact that Jesus is our ransom. In fact we saw that Jesus really is three things for us. Our mediator, our redeemer and our ransom. That He has done everything that needs to be done to pay our spiritual debt. And tonight we're going to look at Jesus as our example.

[1 : 07] I'm just going to be honest with you. Our church has been accused in the past of being kind of an unemotional church. So just let me lead in this and open up to you.

This has been a brutal week for me. It's just been brutal. Probably the hardest week, certainly in recent memory for me.

I might not go into the details, but... Just going through some really tough stuff. Got some really bad news from a good friend.

And also, this week, 14th of April, marked the anniversary of my mum's death. So for those of you who don't know, my mum died when I was 8 of cancer.

And left four kids under 10 for my dad to raise. Man, it was the saddest anniversary of that date that I can ever remember this year.

[2 : 22] And I think it's because I'm a dad now. I kind of understand the pain that she must have gone through.

To leave four kids. It's hard. It's hard. So it's been a tough week.

It's been a really, really, really brutal week. And I'm not much of a crier. But I've cried more this week than probably ever. I had an hour break between the two morning services and the Anzac Day service.

And I just cried the whole time. I didn't think I was going to stop. It's just a good thing that red eyes are kind of appropriate at an Anzac Day service.

There are other people crying there. And I could just... It's been a really hard week. And so tonight... Tonight I just want to change our tack a little bit when we're starting to talk about the example of Jesus.

[3 : 45] Because normally when you talk about the example of Jesus, Jesus' example set for us on the cross, we normally talk about His example of loving kindness. Of sacrificial love.

That's important to talk about. But... With the week I've just had, what I'd really like to talk about, and I think what the Bible talks about most, when it refers to the example of Jesus, is His example of suffering.

How do we suffer like Jesus did? When you've had a week, like I've had, how do you... How do I... How do I suffer like Jesus suffered?

That's what I want to talk about. So what we're going to do is just do a little bit of theology, real quick. And I've got four points. I'm going to sit down. Because I really want to sit down. Alright, I'm going to pray for us.

God, we need your help. So, Father, please, please be with us tonight, as we look into Jesus' death on the cross again this week.

[4 : 47] And we come up to Good Friday, this Friday, and Easter Sunday, this Sunday. we remember His death for us. We remember His suffering as a man, the suffering that He embraced.

I please show us tonight how to suffer like He did. So be gracious to us, please God.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Just do a little bit of theology with you first. There's a reason that this doctrine of the example of Jesus, also called in the Latin, Christus Exemplar, the example of Jesus doesn't get talked about a lot in churches like ours.

Here I'm talking about us as an evangelical church, as a, you know, someone who, a church that really holds the Bible in high regard. And the reason is, as is often the case, is because we are reacting against what we don't like about other people's theology.

In this case, we're reacting against the theology of liberal Christianity. If you don't understand the theological terms, that's okay, but just try and get a grip on what I'm saying here in broad terms.

[6 : 04] The big idea is this, that for liberal Christians, and these are people generally who don't have a high view of the Bible, okay, tend not to read the Bible as God's Word.

For them, what I've said about, over the last couple of weeks, about us being sinners in need of a Saviour, us being sinners who deserve condemnation and death, for them that makes no sense because, generally speaking, in liberal theology, humanity is not sinful, it's just lacking inspiration. So for them, the example of Jesus is all about us as generally good people who lack the motivation to live like Him, having a perfect example of how to live in Jesus' life and in His sacrificial death, and that being the motivation for us to live godly lives.

That's what the example of Jesus is to them. Every one of us, and I got a conversation with a guy just at this service, just gone, the Ainsact Day thing, he's a Catholic guy, liberal theology, and we started talking about this because I knew I was going to talk about it tonight.

And he was saying to me that everyone on earth is in the family of God, doesn't matter what religion they're from, what they call God, he said, these were his words, doesn't matter if you call Him Allah, doesn't matter if you call Him Yahweh or Jehovah, doesn't matter who you are, all of us are in the family of God, all we lack is the motivation to live godly lives.

[7 : 49] And for them, the example of Christ is the motivation. So you see Jesus' ministry, His life, His love, His death, and that provides the motivation for you to live a godly life.

Now we have learned over the last couple of weeks that it doesn't matter how godly you are or how good you are or how motivated you are. No one is going to ever be good enough to pay off that spiritual debt that they owe to God on account of their sin.

The Bible is like, this is just a no-brainer as far as the Bible goes. Black and white, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So, what we've done is, we've seen that they've made this big mistake in saying, you know, Jesus' death is just an example for us and a motivation and like good Protestants, we have reacted against that and just thrown it out altogether where, to the point, we don't talk about Jesus' example nearly enough and how to follow Jesus' example nearly enough. And so, where they've got the humble Galilean peasant Jesus who loves people and heals people and dies an unjust death as an example, we go to the other extreme and we think about Jesus as this kind of Superman figure who, yeah, he was a man but really underneath, it's like Clark Kent and Superman, right?

Like, Jesus appears to be human, he appears to have struggles, he appears to have temptation, he appears to kind of have these experiences of humankind but really, underneath it all, he's got the Superman cape on and he can just overcome anything on account of his divinity.

[9 : 41] And so, for us, the example of Jesus has come to mean not much at all because we can't relate to that Jesus. We don't have that divine aspect that he has.

We don't have this red S underneath our shirt and so we don't relate to Jesus as the man that he was. Speaking to some of you guys during the week and you even remarked on this, you know, I know I should imitate Jesus but it doesn't really make sense because he was God.

so we can't relate to one another on the same level. Where we need to be is at neither of those extremes.

The Bible and Christian theology affirms that Jesus was fully God and fully man. Throughout the Bible you find references to Jesus' humanity, very earthy human experiences that he had.

The Bible says that when he was young he grew in stature just like a human. That he grew in obedience just like a human.

[10:54] That he hungered and thirsted and struggled and was tempted. Hebrews chapter 4 says that Jesus was tempted in every way that we are yet without sin.

Jesus was very human. A very human man with very human emotions, very human experiences.

So I say all that so that you understand and are motivated to follow the example of Jesus.

Not because it can motivate us to become godly or righteous or on our own account, but because in Jesus we have the perfect example of how to live.

And tonight I want us to see that we have the perfect example of how to suffer. So I want to say four things tonight. Four things about suffering, how to suffer well, how to follow the example of Jesus in suffering.

I want to say suffering and humility, suffering and eternity, suffering and maturity, and suffering and sovereignty.

[12:17] Alright? Suffering and humility, suffering and eternity, suffering and maturity, suffering and sovereignty. Those four things. I'm just going to say a few things for each of them.

And then we're going to pray. So first of all, suffering and humility. Suffering and humility.

If we're going to suffer like Jesus, we need to suffer with humility. The enemy of suffering well, the enemy of suffering like Jesus is pride.

It's pride. God. I got to talking with a guy just the other day. He's a really good, good mate, old family friend. He's not a Christian.

And he always remembers when this anniversary is coming up, when it's kind of marks when my mum died. And he's a great guy, but he was so off the mark and so unhelpful.

[13:18] Because the way that he tried to comfort me when he was talking about this, about what has happened to my family, is he said, you know, this is so unfair.

unfair. This is so unfair. He said, your dad is such a good guy. Your family has done so much good in the community.

This is not right. I've got to tell you, the first time in a long time, and probably for the first time since I got converted, I felt like that too this week.

I was really, really just wringing my hands and saying, God, why?

Why? I could do a better job than you could, God. I would punish the unrighteous and reward the righteous.

[14:32] I could do a better job than you could. You know what's at the heart of that? It's pride.

It's pride. I'm righteous enough that I should not have to suffer. I'm better than those other people who do those evil things.

Those evil people who have mothers. It's pride. all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All of us stand condemned before God. What we need if we're going to suffer like Jesus is humility.

And the key text, if you want to learn more about the humility of Jesus, is Philippians chapter 2.

This is counted by many scholars as the first hymn that was ever written, the hymn of Christ. And it's what Paul writes about Jesus and about Jesus' humility. Just let me read it to you.

[15:47] If you want to look it up, it's 954, but I would suggest just closing your eyes and listening to this beautiful hymn. He says, let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

The humility of Jesus is astounding. It's in two parts in that first part of that hymn. First of all, Paul talks about the humility of Jesus to even become a man, to be incarnated, that is, to be come into the flesh, to take on a human form, required incredible humility.

If you think about it, Jesus as the eternal Son of God, perfect in every way, co-existent with the Father and the Son for all eternity past.

He was never made, He was never created, He has eterned in glory, He has existed in glory for all eternity. He took the initiative to save us, and in order to do that, He had to humble Himself from 100% to zero to become one of us.

Not only that, He didn't just humble Himself to become a man, but Paul says, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, and not just death, but death on a cross.

[17:50] The most humiliating, the most excruciating death that you could experience. We have to make up a word to describe the pain that He went through in dying that death.

The word excruciating literally means out of the cross. an excruciating, humiliating, public death. That's the humility of Jesus.

If you want to suffer well, if you don't want to be the kind of person who shakes their fist at God when you're going through a period of suffering and says, why is this happening to me? You're going to need humility. It's the antidote to pride. So Jesus is our ultimate example of humility. Suffering and humility.

That's one of the biggest keys and I'm still so far off being a humble person. Suffering and humility. [18 : 56] Let's talk about suffering and eternity. If you want to go to Romans chapter 8, there's no bad time to go to Romans chapter 8. It is truly one of the best chapters in all scripture.

And here at verse 13, we see that Paul encourages us to suffer well by keeping our eyes fixed on eternity.

So he says this, Romans 8, 13, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. You find this throughout scripture. For the most part, the letters that were written in the New Testament were written to Christians who are suffering and not with bad colds, right, or financial distress.

I'm talking about proper suffering, being dragged off, being killed, being torn apart, mother from father, child from parent, hauled off to prison, and not a nice prison with a TV, but a pit in the ground where if you didn't have people come and feed you, you'd starve to death, that kind of prison.

[20 : 13] That's what they were going through every day. And this is the context in which we have most of these letters. And Paul writes to these people saying, I consider that the sufferings of this present time, these brutal sufferings, are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

He says, fix your eyes on heaven. Fix your eyes on eternity. The picture in Revelation, I think it's chapter 21, is of a place, an eternity, where crying will be no more.

Sickness and death will be no more. Sin and Satan will be no more. If you want to suffer well, you need to fix your eyes on heaven, on the joy that's waiting for you there.

What's that got to do with imitating Jesus' suffering? Hebrews 12, 2 says this, Hebrews 12, 2, 2, why did Jesus die?

He died for our sins, he died to take the wrath of God, he died as our example, but he also died for the joy that awaited him.

[21 : 58] It's a great thing when you're suffering to get some eternal perspective, to realize that we have a short, painful life here on earth, but there is an eternity of happiness, of fulfillment, of satisfaction, and of joy in heaven.

And it's waiting for anyone who would put their trust in Jesus. Suffering and eternity. What about suffering and maturity?

If you go to the reading from tonight, 1 Peter 2, and just flick back a page, you'll see 1 Peter chapter 1, and I'm going to read just a couple of verses from verse 6.

Peter, again, speaking to Christians who are suffering terribly, says this, In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, being more precious than gold, that though perishable is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, and glory, and honor, when Jesus Christ is revealed.

The metaphor he's got here is that each one of us is like a lump of gold out of the ground. I don't know if you've ever gone to Sovereign Hill or somewhere like that and seen a gold nugget, but when they come out of the ground, they're pretty dodgy, like they're full of dirt and rocks and just less precious metals.

[23 : 37] And so what we've done to purify gold for thousands of years and even in Peter's time was if you just chuck it in over a flame, gold melts really easily and what happens is if you heat that up a whole bunch, all the impurities, all the dross, like all the rubbish that's in that gold will float to the surface.

You can scoop it off, cool it down and you've got pure gold. And that's what Peter says about our faith. He says your faith is like an unrefined gold nugget.

And these trials that you might have had to experience, he says if necessary, if directed by God's loving will for you, if you've experienced these trials, they're just like the fire.

fire hurts, fire is painful, but fire purifies. Fire purifies our faith.

Trials purify our faith. So that the more you suffer, the more mature you become as a Christian.
[24 : 56] It's incredible, it's what the Bible says. This is why if you visit countries, third world countries, countries that are in the midst of war, persecution or poverty, you will find the most mature Christians, the most content Christians, the most dependent Christians.

And while you're generally finding countries like ours, slack, lazy, ineffective, disobedient, stiff-necked Christians. Christians. We don't have enough fire.

I had this great quote this week from a Romanian pastor. Talked to the Romanians. Man, those Christians have suffered. And he said this beautiful thing, he said, Christians are like nails. The harder you hit them, the deeper they go. Christians are like nails. This is a guy who's suffered. He's saying this. They're like nails.

The harder you hit them, the deeper they go. Suffering and maturity. Finally, I want to talk about suffering and sovereignty.

[26 : 13] You can't have the other three without this one. You will not be able to endure throughout your Christian life without this one. This one is so key.

So we look at a few passages. First of all, you've heard all these really tonight. But first of all, 1 Peter chapter 2, our reading from tonight, I'll just read a couple of verses.

Verse 20, he says, if you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. When he was abused, he did not return abuse. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

[27 : 25] That's our Father in heaven. Peter says, you've been called by God to a life of suffering. You ought to follow Christ's example of suffering well, and you ought to entrust yourself to God who judges justly.

That means trusting him, trusting that he is good, that he is wise, that you could not do a better job. Old Testament reading was Isaiah 52 through to 53.

Let me just read a couple of lines out of that. Amazing, amazing passage about this suffering servant, Jesus, who dies for us. This was written some 600 years before Jesus came on the scene, and yet it speaks so accurately of his death.

It says, by a perversion of justice, this is from 53 verse 8, he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

They made his grave with the wicked, and his tomb with the rich. Although he had done no violence, death, and there was no deceit in his mouth, yet, listen to this, yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain.

[29 : 03] the greatest evil that has ever been perpetrated on the face of the earth was the murder of Jesus.

The greatest suffering that anyone has had to experience was the crucifixion of Jesus. He humbled himself from heaven to earth, and then was put on a cross for an excruciating death, death, and a separation from his father in heaven on account of our sin that was placed on him.

The wrath of God was poured out on him, and yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. Your suffering is not outside of the reach of God's sovereign, loving hand.

Romans 8, 28. I told you Romans 8 was good. Romans 8, 28. This is the promise that I hold on to day by day, dearly.

Remember, he's just talked about these suffering people who are suffering terribly at the hands of evil men. Romans 8, 28. We know. Do you know?

[30 : 40] Do you know this? We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

God, all things work for good, for those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

Why did my mum die? A brutal death, a long, painful, almost excruciating death, and leave behind four children to be raised by a single dad.

Why? It was God's will. Furthermore, it was God's good will.

Furthermore, it has worked for my good. Jesus says, not a sparrow falls from a tree.

[32 : 03] Not a sparrow falls down dead apart from God's will. will. And if you can apply it to death, I believe you can apply it to all suffering.

Nothing happens to you apart from the will of God. God's loving, wise, sovereign will.

Jesus understood this. Jesus came to earth with one eye on the cross.

He came to die. He knew it was the will of the Lord to crush him, and he embraced his suffering with that in mind. God's love.

God's love. I tell you what, that is so much sweeter than any alternative that you can come up with.

[33 : 15] Random chance, Satan demons, right? Retribution for my sin, or the providence of a wise, loving, heavenly father.

I'm going to take the Bible's option. I'm not saying Satan's not active, I'm not saying that sin doesn't have consequences, but all of it is overseen by a wise, loving, heavenly father.

if we're going to imitate Jesus, and if we're going to follow his example of suffering, if daily we're going to do what he commanded us to do, and take up our cross, it's a tool of execution, right?

Take up our cross, forgiveness, then we need to understand how to suffer in humility, how to suffer with one eye on eternity, how to suffer so as to grow in maturity, and how to suffer knowing the sweet sovereignty of God.

That's all I've got for you. I know we're going to have an extended prayer time later on in service, but I'd really like to pray for us now, just as a family, that we could come together and really ask for God's help in how to suffer well.

[35 : 10] So, would you bow your heads with me and pray for us. Father, we thank you for your word which reveals to us the person and the work of Jesus, that we see in the Bible the example of how to live well, how to die well, of how to suffer well.

Lord, we have so many people hurting in this congregation. Every one of us will encounter severe suffering at some point throughout our life. love. And so I pray that through this message tonight, through these passages from your word that we've heard, that you would encourage us to suffer well, knowing, knowing really how to suffer in humility, knowing how to suffer so as to increase our maturity, knowing how to suffer with eyes fixed on eternity, and knowing how to suffer trusting in your sovereignty.

Father, for us to be able to live this way, we are going to need some serious help. So I pray that as a church, we would encourage one another in how to live this way. I pray that you would work through our community groups to really work on this together, encouraging one another to suffer well.

Lord, when we see brothers and sisters coming up against tough times, I pray that we would be the first ones there encouraging them with these four things, with your word, with Jesus' example of how to suffer well.

So I pray that for each one of us now, I pray that we would this week as we approach Easter, look to the cross and see Jesus there, dying that excruciating death for our sin in our place, and giving us a great example of how to suffer well.

[38 : 16] I pray this in Jesus' beautiful name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.