

# Get Up and Grow: Suffering

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 19 March 2011

Preacher: Brian Tung

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Thanks, Ken. We're doing things slightly differently because Steve is sick this morning, so I'm stepping in and I'm going to step out to go to the Mandarin to preach. So it's a very interesting day for our church, I think. We've been looking at the sermon series, Get Up and Grow, and particularly from the letter that Peter wrote to the churches in Asia. And today's topic is growing in suffering, I think, which predicates a relationship between growth, Christian growth, spiritual growth, and suffering. I wonder whether you've thought about what that relationship might be. Is it growing by suffering? That is, you grow as a Christian if you suffer. Or is it growing in suffering? Suffering is to context the sphere in which growth is to take place. So slightly different, maybe is that. Or growing despite of suffering?

Could be that. Well, Peter certainly was concerned about growing. That's why he wrote this letter. And the context in which he was writing was suffering. But not any suffering, not suffering in general, not suffering because of sickness, ill health, economic downturn, because you've got a grating personality, not because of that you're a thief, murderer, or someone who can't keep his or her nose out of other people's business. Not suffering because of blown tires, a leaking roof, difficult children, tsunamis, flooding, nuclear disasters, none of that. The context in which Peter was writing is suffering as suffering as Christians, for being Christians, and always Christian suffering. Very specific context. Christian growth and Christian suffering. For you and I need to know that there is a great cost.

There's a great cost in being followers of the one who suffers, who has suffered. And as a corollary, there is a great cost in growing as a follower of the suffered one.

Growing and suffering. I just want to point out five things. Two things is to do with our thinking, and three things to follow is to do with our conduct. Come with me back to 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 1, to see what Peter has to say about growing and suffering. So 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 1.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. So the first thing that Peter wants us to know is that in our facing of suffering is that we should have the same mindset, the same attitude as Jesus.

[ 3 : 1 3 ] And it has to do with the changing of our minds, particularly about two things, which I will draw out for you. The first thing, the first mindset that we are to adopt is that death ends sin.

Death ends sin. At this point, I have to say I'm not a big fan of the NIV at this point, for there are two translations which doesn't really quite bring out what I think Peter's trying to say. Firstly, the word suffer. Suffer could mean suffering, going through stuff. But in the context, when he talks about Jesus, is talking about the suffering of death. And you can see that back in chapter 3, verse 18. If you can flip to it, chapter 3, verse 18, which I can't do on my iPad. Anyway, it is great stuff. Suffer, you know.

He talks about how Jesus died once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous. And the word that he used is actually suffer. Jesus suffer once for all. And in the context, he's actually talking about death. It's the suffering of death. But more importantly, NIV translates to a word, a phrase, that there is suffering in the body. He died in the body, which is an unfortunate translation, because it makes it sound like the contrast is between a physical suffering and a spiritual sort of whatever it is. So suffering in the body, raised by the spirit. That's how 3.18 is translated.

And here, he says, Jesus suffered in the body. So in the same way, I'd have the same attitude. See, I don't think that's the right contrast. The contrast isn't between the physical and the non-physical, you know, body and spirit. But rather, the contrast, the real contrast is between flesh. That's the word that is used, the word sucks, which is otherwise translated as flesh or sinful nature in Romans. The contrast is between flesh and spirit. The contrast is between two worlds. The world of flesh, this world, this age, which is a very physical world, but at the same time, a very non-physical world, this

world, and the world of the spirit, which is also a very physical world. But that talks about the world that is to come, the age that is to come. For 3.18 talks about the resurrection of Jesus. It's not a non-physical resurrection, but rather, it is a resurrection that's brought about by the spirit. The hand of the work of the spirit is in it. Jesus rose in the spirit, for that is the age to come. That is the world that is to come. There are two worlds. It is in these two worlds that we exist. What Peter is saying in chapter 4, verse 1 to 3, is that when you become a Christian, you are dead to this world, which is kind of like a funny idea because you and I are still walking around in this world. What he's saying is that because you are united with Jesus, you are dead to the world of flesh. And if you're dead to the world of flesh, you are dead to sin. How can you sin if you're dead? You know, temptation, if you're dead, you are, on the other hand, alive to God. [ 7 : 03 ] You are alive to the world that is to come. For the spirit has come upon you, has made you alive. You belong to the next world even now. And this is the attitude that you are to have, that you are dead to the world of flesh and alive to the world of the spirit. That is why you suffer.

For, in verse 2, have a look at that, there is a conundrum, a problem. As a result, he, that is anyone, does not live the rest of his earthly life, his life in the flesh, for evil human desires, for passions of the flesh, but rather for the will of God. You see, there's a problem for Christians.

We are dead to the world of flesh, but we are still living in the world of flesh. This is where the conflict, the dilemma, the war, the struggle comes. This world keeps pulling us, making us want to settle, become citizens of this world. And Peter says, resist it. You no longer belong to this world because you died in the flesh. So, so stop living like as if you belong to this world.

Have this attitude, have this mindset. The time has passed for you to be living for this world, to have his value. Put all the things of this world, his values, his priorities, his ambitions, all behind you. Be done with it. You don't live like people of this world, verse 13. That's why they find it strange. For in the rest of your time here, in the flesh, you are to live for the spirit world to do God's will. That is what he's saying. This is the mindset. So, it's a little bit like migration. Anyone comes from overseas here? Yeah, I did. Josh did. And a couple of other people.

If you migrated, he's kind of saying, don't keep trying to go back. It's not like other sort of migration. So, imagine if you come from a crazy place like North America or Europe or France or something like that, you've learned to drive on the wrong side of the road. So, when you come to Sydney, Australia, put that behind you. Don't drive on the wrong side of the road. Don't drink Canadian beer. [ 9 : 33 ] Don't watch hockey. Just change to cricket or something. You know, the tension is, you know, when you get into that car, you keep wanting to go to the wrong side of the road. And Peter says, no, come to the right side. Don't do that anymore. Put that behind you. You've moved to a new place.

Live like people of that place. You see, this is the Christian difference. Not that we've got a new set of rules. Christian ethics is applying applicable to everyone. That's not what makes us different. It's not because we try harder. We live differently because we are dead. This is why we live differently. We are dead. And we are born again. We've been made alive again. That's what Peter says in chapter one.

We are new people. We are born again. We've been created, recreated into new people. We have new lives. This is why the world doesn't understand you. So, this is the first mindset that we need to adopt, that we are dead to this world and alive to the age that is to come. The second mindset is in chapter four, verse five. Well, let's start reading from verse four.

They think it's strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they can hit abuse on you. But they will have to give an account to him who's ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might not judge according to man in regard to the flesh, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

[ 11 : 08 ] Note, this is the changing attitude. Verse seven. The end of all things is near. The end of all things is near. This is what we need to do to live differently.

We are to realize, to think, to put ourselves in the position of people who know that the end is, you know, when the end is near, it really focuses your attention. So, assuming that you're one of the poor people who lived in Japan in the last two weeks, imagine you're living right on the path of the tsunami, and you are told that you've got ten minutes before the tsunami comes and takes you and your family away.

What would you do knowing that? Would you go to your bookshelf and say, this is the time for me to read James Joyce. I've never managed to finish Ulysses, and I'm going to do it now.

Or, gee, you know, I've always wanted to work on my golf swing. So, I'm going to... Or, there's something I left at the office I need to do, so I'm going to call them up to fix this up. Or, you know, this tsunami thing is going to ruin the garden, so I'm going to start arranging for a landscape.

No! You've got ten minutes before the tsunami comes and takes you away. What are you going to do? You run. You will run for your life, and you will take your family with you to safety.

[12:36] When you know that the end is near, your mind focuses on things that are important. The people of this age, of this world, are ignorant.

They are ignorant of the end. They are ignorant of the nearness of the end. That is why they are wasting the remaining time that they have on their petty ambition and on their hobbies.

Imagine when the flood of judgment comes and they're found to have the best shell collection in the world. They'll be washed away when the judgment of God comes.

People of the next world, people of the spirit, are to have a different mindset. We know that the end is nigh. That is why we live differently.

We know that we are dead to the world of flesh, alive to the world of the spirit. We know that the end is coming very, very soon.

[13:49] I won't go through verses 12 to 19. We don't have time. But essentially, it's saying that, in saying that God begins his judgment with the household, his own household, it means that what we experience in suffering is what the world will experience, but how much more?

See, this is saying when Christians suffer, it's not a sign that we are weak or that our God is weak and he cannot protect us from suffering. This is saying that God is strong and he will bring about his judgment, the end, the accounting, and we can tell that because we as Christians suffer first.

Purification comes with us and because we experience purification, the world will experience it in a much greater way. The end will come and our suffering and purification guarantees it.

Well, what are we to do if we are dead to this world and that the end will come? Are we to lock ourselves away in a monastery?

Are we to vote the Christian Democrats so that they can go into government so that, you know, maybe not in New South Wales because it's too sinful, we can go and take over Tasmania? You know, we'll create a little Christendom in Tasmania, bringing our own laws so that we can live there.

[15:14] Is that what it means that the end is near? What does Peter say? Well, there are three things. Come back to chapter 4, verse 7.

He says, The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear-minded and self-control so that you can vote. No. What does it say?

Sober-minded, so that you have the right sort of thinking, focus, so that you can pray. That's what it means for people who are dead to this world and who knows that the end is near.

We are people who pray. We're prayerful people. Verse 19 says a similar sort of thing. We are to commit ourselves into the hands of our Creator. He is faithful. He will bring about righteousness and justice and our vindication.

That's what He will do. That's what the Lord's prayer is about. Remember the first two lines. Our Father in Heaven is all about the bringing of the nearness of the end, isn't it?

[16:24] And the same in Luke 18. You know, the parable of the widow and the unjust judge. You know, it's persisting in prayer. And Jesus ends that parable with saying, however, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?

What does He expect to see of His people when He returns? Faithfulness. Faith. Trust in the one who can save. Prayerfulness. We need to be clean-minded and sober so that we can focus our mind on praying.

That is what we do. But what else do we do? Are we to evangelize? Is that what we do? Is that what Peter says? Verse 8. Have a look at it. What do we do?

We love. I don't know whether you expect this. This is what we do because the end is near.

Because we don't belong to the world flesh.

We love each other deeply because love covers a multitude of sin. What does it mean to love? He goes on to expand on this. We are not to, you know, we don't love like the world.

[17:35] The people of this age, they love as well too. But what do they love? They love themselves. That's what 2 Timothy says. People will become lovers on this earth.

The people of this age, of the flesh, they take and they take and they take. They come to church and they take and they take and they take. But Christians, people who live belonging to the next world, they are people, we are people who give.

That's what love is. We give and we give and we give until we can't give and then we give some more. This is why we love one another deeply. This is what it means to be living in the light of the end, in the world of the spirit.

Love means, verse 8, forgiveness. Love covers a multitude of sin. That's a quote from Proverbs 10, 10-12.

Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs. That's what love does. It forgives.

[18:40] It overlooks. It does not keep an account. The reality is, in this world of sin, of flesh, there will be great suffering and injustice. Love forgives the hurt caused by sin and suffering.

But love also does another thing. Verse 9, what does love do? Have a look. You tell me. Hospitality. Ungrumbling, joyful, grateful hospitality.

Hospitality. Hospitality, the Greek word for hospitality is philosanos, philosanos. Zanos, as in xenophobic, is a fear of strangers.

Philo, as in Philadelphia, is love of strangers. That's what hospitality is. It's not entertainment.

It's loving people who are not one of us. You can see why it doesn't have to be done just at home.

You know, it's not just entertainment. Hospitality is when you invite people out for a cup of coffee, maybe, or accept their invitation to have a cup of coffee.

[19:53] Hospitality can happen even on Sunday mornings. How? By us being, Deb, welcoming.

That's what welcoming is about, isn't it? It's about hospitality. We love people who are not one of us. Churches that are not welcoming has no love for the strangers.

They live in a world of flesh. They don't know that the end is near. We are different. We have a different mindset. We love strangers.

We, you know, hospitality can, doesn't have to be, you know, it can be exercised right here this morning as we stay and talk to people. And, I mean, we can be hospitable at a social convention.

It's easy to do that. But Peter says, do it without grumbling. Don't complain. But do it with joy and thankfulness. So, forgiving, loving, hospitable, what else?

[20:59] Verses 10 to 11a. How else is love express, expresses itself in the last days? In, that's right, in a working bee.

Oh, shameless plug there. In teaching scripture. In tidying up after everybody else leaves.

Isn't that what love expresses? So, you know, each of us are actually gifted by God in some way.

Our resources, experience, abilities. The people of this age who don't know that end, they use this stuff for themselves to make their lives easier, to get recognition, to feel good.

But the people of the world to come, the world of the spirit, we use what we have for the service of other people. And it can be done whether in words or in deeds.

If we are to use it in words, we are to speak as if we're speaking the very words of God, which could mean in what we say, that is not just our opinion, but the words of God, or in the manner in which we say our words.

[22:09] For when God speaks, how does he speak? He speaks truthfully. He does not slander. He does not grumble. He doesn't complain. He doesn't lie. He doesn't gossip.

When he speaks, his words can be trusted. He's dependable. He has pure words. He has loving words. That is how our words are to be as we serve one another, but also in deeds.

If we serve, Peter says, we are to serve with the strength of God. In other words, whatever God has asked you to do, he will pay the bills. He will not assign you, he will not call you to do something that he's not prepared to equip you for.

If you think that your body is spent, you're too weak, you're too young, you're too old, you're too stupid, whatever it is, do you really trust that God will pick up the tap for you when you serve?

And the intention of all this, verses 11b, verse 11b, there's evangelism, isn't it?

[23:20] It's so that, you know, when people see how forgiving I am, is it so that people will say, gee, isn't Brian such a wonderful human being? No.

When we have this sort of mindset, when we love one another, when we minister to one another, when we welcome one another, it is so that people can say, you know, I know St. Paul's, I know these people, but you know what?

Jesus has made a big difference to this church, in these people's lives, so that Jesus might be glorified. See, as we wait for the nearest of the end, this is what we are to do, in words and in deeds.

Christian growth, Christian suffering. If you're a Christian, if you're living as a Christian, you will suffer. There is no question of that. In other parts of the world, the suffering comes in the form of violence and deprivation.

I think in our context is less of that, but rather, our trial, our testing, comes in the form of seduction. [ 24 : 31 ] That is our temptation. That is our trial in the West, in Sydney, in Chesford. Our trial, our testing, comes in the form of abundance, not the lack of.

This will come to us. How will we grow in this suffering? In the face of abundance and seduction, we are not to live as this world, the world of flesh.

We are to count ourselves as dead to the world, but alive to God in Christ, made alive by his spirit.

We are people who are deeply aware that the tsunami is coming in 10 minutes.

So we give up our petty ambitions for us and our children and we do things that are important. What are the things that are important?

We pray, we love, and we serve one another. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 25 : 32 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. So we are God's every single May could exhale without■tezings. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.