

Slavery, Race, and Unjust Suffering

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[0 : 00] All right, good morning. Today, as we continue our preaching series in the book of 1 Peter, we come to a passage where Peter gives instruction to Christian slaves on how they are to live as Christians under unjust masters.

The passage surfaces important issues for our church to look at with clear eyes and humble hearts, issues of slavery and freedom, issues of suffering and injustice, of power and authority, and it shows us how Peter points us to the gospel in the midst of these discussions.

This is not an easy topic. I was talking with Katie last night, and she gave me permission to share her comment. She said, wow, must be pretty controversial to be worse than telling Americans to submit to the government.

If you were here last week, that's what we preached on. That was meant to be funny, lighten the load a little bit. Okay, here we go. So, I have two things to say as we begin this.

One, I want to acknowledge I'm a white male who has been born in a world and in a life where I have not been the recipient of any hatred or discrimination because of the color of my skin.

[1 : 18] And I have enjoyed material blessings and advantage that others have not had. And so, I come to you this morning in some ways feeling deeply unqualified to preach about the topic of suffering and slavery.

Secondly, I want to acknowledge that we as a church are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Church, have been for the entire history of this church. The Southern Baptist denomination was founded in the 1850s by men who were slave owners and who defended as Christians the institution of slavery.

And the history of the SBC is that since its beginning, it has accommodated or promoted racism in many ways. While there has been recently a recognition of and statements of repentance from this sin, this history still has effects in our present.

I want to humbly acknowledge that this morning. So, how do we approach a text like this given these things? Well, with humble hearts, with repentant hearts, with a recognition of unworthiness, but also a hope.

A hope that as we have always done here at Trinity, as we come to the Bible, as we come to see what God's Word has to say to us, that with compassion and courage, with humility and conviction, that God might use me to direct you to the truth of God's Word this morning.

[2 : 52] With that, let's pray. God, our Father, the Father of every family on earth, and Jesus, our Savior, who came to redeem sinners from every tongue and tribe and nation, have mercy on us this morning.

May we sit under your Word this morning with humility. May you open our ears. You give us a soft heart. And may you, by your Spirit, show us your truth this morning.

Lord, call us to a life that reflects that truth. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So, with that, we're going to go ahead and read the passage.

We're in 1 Peter chapter 2. That's page 954 in your Pew Bible, if you're reading along in the Pew Bible. 1 Peter chapter 2, starting in verse 18, is where we're going to start this morning.

So, let's read the passage, and then we're going to dive in with what we're going to talk about this morning. So, let's read this together. Servants, which could be also translated slaves.

[3 : 58] The ESV often uses bond servant. Be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if, when you do good and suffer for it, you endure? This is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin.

Neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sin in his body on the tree.

[5 : 26] need to address some issues. There are broader issues that may affect how we think about and how we come to this text. So as with last week, this week's sermon is going to be slightly more topical.

We're going to get to the text, but as opposed to last week, we're going to have the text at the end of our message. We're going to try to clear our way so that we can think clearly about what this passage says by talking about some of the bigger issues that probably are raising in your mind as they do in mine as I read this. So we're going to spend a few minutes talking about things we don't usually talk about. We're going to be talking about slavery and race in the United States, and we're going to be talking about slavery and race in the Bible, and then we're going to come back to this passage and seek to address it. So that's where we're going. Hang in there, buckle your seatbelts, as I've told you a couple times. Here we go. First of all, we need to recognize that the issue of slavery in U.S. history is a particularly fraught and difficult one. And I recognize because of our church, not all of you are U.S. citizens or come from the U.S., and this is foreign to you. This is outside of your experience. But we need to be able to speak the truth about these things. And I am not an expert here by any means. But we need to acknowledge these things publicly because often they have been hidden or they have been diminished and made small.

And I also want to say this is also not the whole history of the American country, but this is a particular history of how slavery has been a part of it. So let's look at that together. In 1819, the first ships that brought slaves from Africa arrived in the United States. The nature of slavery in America has been race-based chattel slavery. Race-based, that is, Africans, because of their black skin, were taken from Africa and brought over here. And then them and their descendants were held as slaves.

And they were chattel slaves, which means that they were property of their owners. They were not treated as people. They were treated as commodities. In 1776, America became a nation. And yet, even during that time, many founding fathers were slave owners. Some of them were even Christian slave owners.

And slavery continued to be supported by the law and grew increasingly as central to the economy of our nation, particularly in the South. This led to, ultimately, a crisis in 1861. The Civil War was fought primarily, although not exclusively, over the issue of slavery. In 1863, President Lincoln passed the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves. And in 1865, the 13th Amendment was added to the Constitution.

[8 : 18] And yet, even when the legal support of slavery ended, during the period that followed Reconstruction, the establishment of principles in our country, whereby Jim Crow laws that supported a separate but equal legal standing in our society continued for the next 100 years. The Civil Rights Movement in 1954 to 1968, led by Martin Luther King and others, sought to address this in a new way. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1865, seeking to abolish those separate but equal laws and creating a platform for legal equality in new ways. And yet, the problems of race relations and racism continue in our world.

Hasn't taken a lot to see this in the last five years, whether it be the death of George Floyd at the hands of police, whether it be sociological studies that show the ongoing ways in which racial profiling and disparity of application of law continues to be an issue. Now, I say this, and I want to acknowledge something else that's really important here. The conversation of race in America has primarily been on the axis of black and white. But there are a lot of other axes upon which people have discriminated against others from Asian, from Latin American, and Native American backgrounds.

So we want to recognize this isn't just this, but this has been the primary narrative, one of the primary forces in American society that we need to focus on and we need to recognize.

We need to see that this has been a part of our American society for a long time. And lest you think that I'm sitting here saying, what a terrible society we live in, thank God that the church is different. It's not. The history of defending, or at least accepting, or being passive in the face of slavery, has been a hallmark of the American church since the beginning. In early days, slaves were often forbidden to attend church. They were not allowed to by their masters. This created a clandestine black church that slaves would meet in secret hiding places in the middle of the night, and created a culture that developed a black church tradition with spirituals and hymns. And we need to recognize that many theologians and slave owners use the very passage that we are looking at this morning to defend the institution of slavery, preaching that their slaves were bound to obey them based on this passage.

Furthermore, many, even abolitionist Christians, that is, those who fought against the institution of slavery, say in the 1850s and 1860s, did not actually support an integrated church.

[11 : 35] Northern churches did not welcome blacks into their white churches in the Civil War and post-Civil War era. If you haven't read Martin Luther King Jr.'s letter, famous letter, the letter from a Birmingham jail, you ought to read it. He laments the lack of support for civil rights among white pastors. And while there have been counter examples along the way, and this is not the whole story of the church, this is broadly and predominantly the reality and the history.

And so we come to our present moment today. And friends, I was heartbroken as I spent time exploring and reading and thinking, preparing for this sermon, as I heard some of my black brothers and sisters express the pain and the frustration that they feel even today, even within the church, even with people that I know and trust and respect, seeing them torn apart because of these issues that continue to feel unaddressed.

Tensions and divisions and factionalism are growing in it. And my fear is that this issue will tear us apart as a church if we don't grow in how we respond to it.

We have to recognize this history because it shapes our presuppositions and our values and the questions that we bring as we come to a text like this.

And this is normal. Everyone brings their cultural perspective to a text. Everyone brings questions that are going to come out of how they have lived and what they've experienced.

[13 : 28] We need to be honest about our past. We need to recognize the reality about our present and see how it might affect us.

And then we need to go and listen to one another who come from different perspectives and different backgrounds. Not because any perspective has a privilege or more right perspective, but so that we might refine one another in our understanding of the Bible.

So we might listen to one another so that we can ultimately get closer to a clear understanding of the truth of God's Word. So if that's the backdrop of our cultural moment, let's then look at the Bible broadly to see what does it say about slavery and race.

I'm going to start with race. We're going to go fast. Daniel's going to try to keep up and put some slides up so you can see some texts. This is going to be kind of like last week.

We're going to go through it quickly. First of all, principle, the dignity and worth of every human life is affirmed as being made in God's image. So Genesis 1, 27 says God created man in his image.

[14 : 40] In the image of God, he created them, male and female. He created them. And every human being is descended from Adam and Eve. And all of us have this image of God.

And so we see even after the fall and after the flood and the judgment on the Word, in God's interaction with Noah in Genesis 9, 6, God reminds Noah this, whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

He reaffirmed this principle. But then we see in the Bible storyline, the second principle, which is that we live in a world where division over race and culture is a part of the fall.

In Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel talks about how God scattered the people and diversified them in their race and in their culture.

And the racial part there is not exceedingly clear, but what it seems is that from there, from a unified humanity, there's then a diaspora, which then creates this mosaic of human cultures.

[15 : 46] Every tribe and tongue and nation is the language the Bible uses for it. Right? We often read the Bible through the lens of the culture we've come from, through a monoculture.

We need to recognize there's this diversity of culture that God allowed to happen and in fact meant to happen because as we keep going, we see that God's redemptive purpose has been for all people, always.

As we shift from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we see that in the Old Testament, there were certain people who were brought into the nation of Israel. But as we get to the New Testament church, the New Testament church becomes a transnational reality of people not based on anything except for a single criteria, faith in Jesus Christ.

And in Acts 2, we see the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit poured out on people from at least nine different nationalities and ethnicities, spoke different languages, and God called them to faith in Christ that day.

And so we see the principle laid out in a place like Galatians chapter 3 verse 28, for as many of you were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free.

[17 : 05] There is no male nor female, for you are all one in Christ. And in Ephesians 2, Paul even breaks this down even more.

He's talking about the division between Jew and Gentile, which was a racial and religious division. And he says this, for he Christ himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in the place of two, so making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And friends, all of this is headed towards a future glory that we see in the book of Revelation, chapter 7 verses 9 and 10, where the apostle John talks about this vision of the throne room of heaven.

He says this, after this I looked and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb.

So friends, this is the sweep of God's perspective that even as God created the diversity of peoples in the world, including racial diversity, his desire is to bring people together through the person of Christ so that there might be a unity of worship with this amazing diversity that gives greater glory to Christ, that gives greater glory to God.

[19 : 01] And this is the, so if this is the purpose that God has, for us to treat others differently based on race or on the privilege of my own race and culture denies God's creative and saving purposes.

To the extent that the church has done this, to the extent that the church has been racist, we must repent of it.

We must call it wrong. We must say there's no excuse. We must find a way forward. The Bible calls us to forsake it and to celebrate racial diversity in the body of Christ as an expression of God's glory.

So if that's what the Bible says about slavery, or race, then what does the Bible say about slavery? Well, slavery in the Bible is referred to in a wide range.

I'm really thankful. We have an early Christianity scholar, Tom, who's on our eldership. He gave me some great help in this, thinking through this. There was a lot of different kinds of slavery that were expressed in the Bible.

[20 : 12] Some of it was similar to what we talked about in American slavery, race-based chattel slavery. But there were also indentured servants. There were prisoners of war who became slaves. There were household servants, right?

And it was a wide range of people. The Old Testament law seems, in the law in particular, seems to address mostly indentured servanthood or household servants, rather than the more harsh forms.

But it doesn't mean that it was true freedom. It was still slavery. There was real issues there. In the New Testament, we're now under Roman law, and we see that there's a Roman slavery that was pretty hard.

Often slaves were the spoils of war. They were the result of kidnapping. Some were born into slavery. And there was a provision or a way that people could sell themselves.

This is indentured servanthood. Sell themselves into slavery. And there was some opportunity to buy yourself out of slavery, particularly if that was the case. So first century slavery, though typically not race-based, was still pretty brutal.

[21 : 22] As one New Testament scholar says, ancient slavery was not more humane than modern slavery. So we don't want to make a huge distinction, but we do want to say, let's think a little bit with a little bit of nuance about it.

So what does the Bible say about slavery as an institution? There are places where the slavery is referred to as an institution. So in Exodus 20, in the Ten Commandments, it talks about households.

It talks about you and your children and your servants or slaves. We see this as well in the New Testament in these what are called household codes.

First Peter 2 is one of them. We also see them in Colossians 3, 22 through 4, 1, and Ephesians 6, 5 through 9, where it refers to the relationship between slaves and masters.

Now while these are references to the institution, there is not a strong support of or command to be involved in this.

[22 : 27] And in fact, the overwhelming pattern of the Bible runs the other direction. It runs away from slavery. And so even as in Exodus, God reveals himself in the Ten Commandments and explains and refers to slavery, he starts with this, Exodus 20, verse 2.

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. And the Exodus is this monumental theme in the Old Testament.

This was the greatest work of God's redemption to free people from slavery. And we see other places in the Old Testament law, in the Old Testament, where we have senses of this.

So Deuteronomy 25, 15 and 16 says that if an escaped slave comes to you, don't turn him back to your master. Let him live freely with you. So we see in Leviticus 25, 50 and following that there's this pattern of jubilee freedom where people weren't going to be slaves forever, that within the kingdom of God, they were meant to be set free during the jubilee, which almost never happened.

No, it never happened in the Old Testament time. Isaiah 61, a vision of a future playing, a servant who will come, who will bring good news to the poor and declare freedom for the captives to break the rod of the oppressor.

[23 : 56] And then we come to the New Testament. We come to a passage, maybe most clearly, 1 Corinthians 7, 21 through 24, where Paul is talking to the Corinthian church.

It's thinking about how they live in lots of different ways. And he says this, were you a slave when called? Don't be concerned about it. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.

For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed man of the Lord. Likewise, he who is free when called is a slave of Christ.

I've retranslated the ESV to put slave rather than bond servant just so you all know what the word is. You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men.

So brothers, in whatever condition each was called, let him there remain with God. Now, some people read this text and they think, well, Paul's saying you should stay.

[25 : 02] But he doesn't. He says generally the principle is stay. If you're single, stay single. If you're married, stay married. But if you're a slave and you can get your freedom, take it. And then we have the book of Philemon, which probably isn't on your top 10 books of Bible books.

But the whole story is that Paul is returning a slave who'd run away to his master. So Onesimus is returning to his master with this letter. And Paul encourages Philemon, the master, receive Onesimus, as he says in verse 16, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother.

So with all of these patterns, we see this strong pattern of moving away from slavery, that slavery is antithetical to the gospel and to the path of redemption that God is doing in the world.

And yet, we also need to see, and we saw this in 1 Corinthians 7, that Jesus and Paul and Peter all call themselves slaves. Slaves of God.

So we need to recognize this is the big picture of what the Bible says. So what does it mean? A few final thoughts as we think about this. So what this means broadly is there is a strong biblical place for us to seek to overturn slavery, to bring societal transformation such that slavery does not happen, such that racism and racial inequality does not happen.

[26 : 40] These are good things that are consistent with the overall picture of Scripture. and we're thankful for large pictures. If you don't know the work of John Perkins, you should read about John Perkins and the work that he has done.

Locally, some of you I know have been involved in this. There are places like Borden House. Some of you have engaged in foster parenting for the sake of overturning some of these structures and coming alongside of it.

Bridges of Hope seeks to bring churches together across what would normally be divides. As we think about these things and as we think about engagement, we need to be careful to be gracious for one another.

Not to demand that this is the way you must respond or this is the way you must respond to a particular situation or a particular thing or this is the way that all Christians ought to be active in this pattern.

There are various means and some are more public and some are less so. And what we need to do is to be gracious and encouraging to one another rather than critical and divisive about how we go about being a part of what God wants to do in this world.

[28 : 04] Racial reconciliation, I believe, is a necessary part of the gospel because of what it says in Ephesians 2. That God has made one person and we need to work towards reconciliation as we have opportunity to.

We need to pursue this and there's a lot to be said there. That's a different sermon for a different day. But I hope you see that the biblical pattern, there's strong support for us to be engaged with it.

But just as we saw with politics last week, with government last week, as we see the biblical picture, it embraces two different principles. One is we work to transform our society that we live in towards righteousness.

But the second one is how do we live with Christian character in a fallen world under fallen authorities? And both of these things are in play.

And right now, our cultural wave and our cultural moment is very strongly on the second. We want to fight for justice. We want to see the world changed. And amen, may God do it.

[29 : 09] May God change this world to be a better one. But in 1 Peter 2, he addresses more of the first. How is it that we live with Christian character even when we face unjust suffering?

He addresses people within the institution of slavery. He's speaking to those that he knows. And he knows this because he himself, right, he understands what it's like to live under authority of others.

Though it's not clear that he was ever actually a slave, he understands and knows what it's like to be a slave of Christ. And he writes to people who he's called already sojourners and exiles.

And he's calling them to figure out how can they live distinctly as Christians in their context. Peter has, therefore, two points. Let's finally close by looking at our text and seeing what it has to say to us this morning.

1 Peter 2, verse 18. Verse 18 through 20. The message is very clear. Submit to your masters even if you suffer unjustly for doing right.

[30 : 27] Peter says you're supposed to serve them even if they're, what's the word he uses in verse 18? Also to the unjust. It's a great word. It's scolioi. Like scoliosis, you know, you have like a curved, a bent spine.

He's saying these people have bent morals. They have bent character. And you are called to submit to them even when they are like that. How are we supposed to do that? He says you're supposed to do it respectfully, not coweringly, not belligerently, but with dignity.

You're also supposed to do it mindful of God, not because they intrinsically deserve your submission because of their character or goodness. Clearly, that's not true. But because you are mindful of God who is the ultimate master and who is the ultimate Lord over all of us, because of him you submit.

And recognize that this includes enduring sorrow. That word includes both emotional pain, physical pain, grief, and trouble. But Peter says, to do this is grace in the sight of God when you endure these sorrows.

God looks upon this and he's pleased with the way that you bear up under unjust suffering. When you look to God and you seek his praise and when you depend on his grace as being greater than the evil that you are enduring in this moment.

[32 : 00] Why did Peter give this command? Well, in the flow of the context of the book, he gave it because his concern was for Christian witness. How would Christians respond even to injustice?

If they sinned, if they did evil in response to injustice, then what credit do they have when they get punished for it? None. But he says, if you, for doing good, suffer unjustly, this is grace.

Peter is looking into our hearts and he knows, he knows that in our hearts when we suffer injustice, our greatest and our most human response is to strike out in return and to sin in word and deed in an attitude of bitterness, rage, and spite.

I'm going to say one thing really briefly. This does not mean that if you're in an abusive marriage, you must stay in that. Nick's going to deal with that next week, so I'm just going to put that in place.

However, Peter's looking into our hearts and he knows how difficult it is for us to follow in the words of Jesus to turn the other cheek when we suffer unjustly.

[33 : 19] Martin Luther King in his sermon on love, law, and civil disobedience wrote this. Three ways that oppressed people have generally dealt with their oppression.

One way is the method of acquiescence, the method of surrender. That is, individuals will somehow adjust themselves to the oppression, they adjust themselves to the discrimination, to segregation, or colonialism, or what have you.

The other method that has been used in history is that of rising up against the oppressor with corroding hatred and physical violence. Now, of course, we know about this method in Western civilization because, in a sense, it has been the hallmark of its grandeur.

And the inseparable twin of Western materialism. But there is another way, namely, the way of nonviolent resistance. Martin Luther King saw clearly how easy it is for our hearts to be turned and twisted either into accepting evil or rising up in bitterness and anger against it.

And he says, there is a third way. There is a third way to respond which is right and good. When you think about this, suffering unjustly, how does your heart run?

[34 : 43] does it run to despair and slavish self-abandonment? Do you seek desperately to please the one who's oppressing you so that you might somehow appease them so that they will no longer cause you suffering?

Do you allow anger, bitterness, and rage and desire for retaliation and revenge to consume your heart? Peter knows this is the way we are and yet he calls us to something else.

He calls us to follow in this pathway of submitting and I would say in love reading lots of Martin Luther King this week. One of the things that he saw so clearly was that the desire to love in the midst of suffering is one of the hardest but one of the most Christian things that we can do and how do we know that?

Because it's following in the footsteps of Jesus. We're not creating a new path. This third way is not new. In fact, it's very old. It's the paradigm that Jesus gave us and this is the last part.

This is the second half of what this passage tells us this morning. We are to do this as we follow the example of Christ who suffered for us. Peter begins by saying to this you've been called.

[36 : 09] You, slaves, have been called to follow in the footsteps of Christ. That actually gave them great dignity and worth in their culture. Peter saw them as being important members of God's kingdom.

But as he's calling them to this he's saying unjust suffering is not a mistake in God's kingdom for even as Jesus said in John 15, 8 if the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hates you.

Peter says to this God has called you to be his in following in the footsteps of Jesus. Following his example in verses 22 and 23 what was Jesus' example?

These are a bunch of images that are translated and kind of jumbled a little bit from Isaiah 53 that we read earlier in a passage he did it without sin.

He did not revile he did not threaten he did not take it into his own hands to condemn or retaliate or bring justice but instead as it says in verse 23 he entrusted himself he entrusted himself to God who judges justly.

[37 : 27] Peter's already reminded his audience that this is what we need to remember that we have a father in heaven who is the God who judges justly the world on earth and this is where final justice comes in the midst of suffering and trial by trusting the one who will ultimately bring all judgment.

This is the example par excellence look to Jesus Pastor Micah Edmondson of the Koinonia Church in Nashville Tennessee wrote this about Jesus there was no greater atrocity in all the world than when Jesus Christ the innocent righteous perfect sinless light of the world who only spoke truth and always loved people was set up falsely accused tried in a sham trial and tortured his death on the cross was a lynching and God allowed it and Jesus Christ trusted that through his choice to lay down his life God would bring about redemptive good whenever Jesus talked about his coming death he also always talked about his resurrection he is the ultimate example of how God is able to bring about redemptive good through engagement with unearned suffering friends this is the good news of the gospel that Christ took upon himself our sin he unjustly suffered the punishment of God against our sin as he hung on the cross for us this is his substitution for us his atoning of God's wrath against sin and Jesus did this so that we might have healing so that we who wandered away from God might be brought back into his household and be called his people and he is the one who is the shepherd and the overseer of our souls and as

God redeems us in this work of Christ through this work of unjust suffering he calls us then to die to sin and to live for righteousness so that we might know the power of forgiveness in our own lives so that we might forgive those who sin against us so that we might have the refining power of the Holy Spirit to burn out the sin that resides in our heart so that we might love one another purely Jesus died for our sins so that we might have in us a new life with enabling power to persevere and endure even unjust suffering for the sake of Christ as I've thought about how to apply this to our church I've thought a lot about how the black church in America in the last 300 years has responded to unjust suffering Martin Luther

King wrote this in 1960 my personal trials have taught me the value of unmerited suffering as my sufferings have mounted I soon realized that there were two ways I could respond to my situation either react with bitterness or to seek to transform the suffering into a creative force I have decided to follow the latter course recognizing the necessity for suffering I have tried to make it a virtue if only to save myself from bitterness I have attempted to see my personal ordeals as an opportunity to transform myself and heal the people involved in their tragic situations I have lived these past few years with the conviction that unearned suffering is redemptive friends this is what I have seen as I've talked and read in the past we who are not a part of the black church and don't have this history have so much to learn from our brothers and sisters about how to endure how to persevere in hope through centuries of subjugation and discrimination and injustice not forsaking their hope in God or their inheritance in the kingdom but with that also having the ability to work for change to see injustice and to confront it and to work in godly ways for transformation to not only change their society for the better but even to redeem the souls of those who are trapped in sins of racism and prejudice and friends what I see is that if we can't have both of those things the ultimate hope of God and the work now we will lose our faith because we will see that the injustice of the world is unbearable and we will either try to enforce it through other means or we will despair of it and we will lose the hope of the gospel and look the day is coming when all Christians will suffer unjustly we will find ourselves in positions where those who have authority over us will treat us unjustly because of our faith in

Christ as our culture moves further away from some overlay of Christian values and morals as the church becomes more distinct from the culture we live in we will suffer unjustly and we need to be prepared for that and we need to learn from our brothers and sisters how they have walked in fellowship with Christ so that we may know the strength and power that they have had so that together we might work walk with them through what is to come God's purpose for us is that we may know the fellowship of Christ and his sufferings even being even dying with him so that we might be raised with him to new life for God's glory for our good and for the salvation of others in the world let's pray Lord we thank you for this word and we pray that you would help us to receive it to hear it and respond to it as you would call us to we pray this in

[44 : 21] Jesus name amen an amen you in you you you you you