



The Power of God's Word – Part 5

Accepting the Costs for Relaying the Truth

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Well, you will often hear Christians quoting Matthew 25:23 with kind of a hopeful anticipation that they're going to hear those six words, and I know you are familiar with them, where Jesus says to the servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And I know that's a hopeful aspiration and should be, rightly so, of every Christian as we live our Christian life, knowing we'll stand before the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ to be evaluated for our Christian life. Three words I know you don't want to hear are words "cowardice," you don't want that, "discouraged," you don't want that and you don't want "compromise." You don't hear any of those. You don't want to stand before Christ and have him say, you know, you were kind of a coward when it came to your Christianity. You don't want him to say that about you. You do not want him to say, you know you were such a negative, discouraged Christian. Most of your Christian years were spent like just so like the sky is falling and you were so, you know, Eeyore about your Christianity. You don't want to hear that. And you don't want him to certainly say, you know, I tasked you with a message and, man, you compromised it all the time. You're really ashamed of what I said and you just never really admitted the things that were clear that I revealed to you in Scripture. You compromised my message.

You don't want to hear those things and the good news is there is one truth that can safeguard your life. It can protect you from ever having to hear that because when it comes to just one singular perspective on the Christian life, if you had that in place, all three of those problems by and large would be mitigated if not eliminated. So I want to show you a text that has just the right mindset in it that is going to help us to hopefully never hear you just were compromised, or you were discouraged, or you were the kind of person that I looked at thinking you just didn't live this thing the way you were supposed to. And I want you to see this in Second Corinthians Chapter 4, in our continued study of Second Corinthians, five verses beginning in verse 8, and we will find this perspective so that you're not seen as a coward, discouraged, or compromised.

Paul's using this particular section to describe his perspective on the Christian life, and it's one we need to adopt. And I'll explain why after I read it. Verses 8 through 12, reading from the English Standard Version, here's what he says about himself and his missionary apostolic band. He says, you know, "We are afflicted in every way, but were not crushed; perplexed," yeah, yeah, we're perplexed for sure, "but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken," we know that, "struck down," we took a lot of hits, "but not destroyed." I mean, you see that volley back and forth of, yeah, it was hard. Look at those words, afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down. But the other side is it didn't take us into this land of constant depression and discouragement. We weren't down about our Christian life at all.

And then he says something really strange in verse 10. It's kind of a deep concept here. We have to unravel this later. "Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus." That sounds weird. "Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus." We'll see if we can untangle that. "So that," middle of verse 10, "the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." That's also



strange. Verse 11, so, "We who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." And then he sums it up with this, a new component added, he says, "So death is at work in us, but life in you." That's not a slam as he goes on to say later about the false apostles. This is a statement of it has benefited you that I've gone through all this. I've been afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down, but it's been for your good.

Now, this whole perspective is very helpful. We want to walk through these verses and catch the fact that if you have this sort of anticipation about the Christian life, if you understand your Christian life the way the Apostle Paul did, right? You can think about this now. He's definitely going to have a lot of opposition, a lot of persecution, a lot of affliction, a lot of perplexity, a lot of head scratching, a lot of problems of taking hits because he's a Christian but it never gets him down and out. And so number one, when it comes to the opposition, he's certainly not a coward. You know that. If you know this opposition is going to be there, then you anticipate it with a sense of courage. He certainly has that. And he's not going to be a coward, and he certainly wasn't. And when it comes to him knowing this is the case, he's not surprised by it. He's not disillusioned about the Christian life because he thought it was supposed to be easy street and he found out it was hard. I mean, he's not falling away because of the persecution that arises on account of the Word because he knew it was coming. And he's not one to mitigate the message, right? He's not giving in to the pressure of the opposition. He continually says, I'll accept this because I've got a task that I've got to faithfully execute. So in a sense, it's the forecast itself with the right mindset about the forecast that gets us to not be cowards, gets us not to be surprised, and it really drives us to be faithful in our task of not compromising the message that Christ has given us to pass on.

So, look at those four things again, afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. But at the same time, not crushed, not driven to despair, we know we're not forsaken and we're certainly not destroyed. The connection of the Christian life, being afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down, is a common theme, and some of you hear it preached, you kind of think it's ad nauseam from the platform, but we have to understand this because faithfulness is certainly going to bring these things. That's why the verb here that starts our first point on your worksheet is important for us, and it's all throughout the New Testament, and that's that you and I, if we're going to live the Christian life in a non-Christian world, we're going to have to endure. Number one, "Endure the Pains of Being Faithful," because if you are faithful it carries with it things like affliction, being perplexed, being persecuted, and being struck down, right? That's going to be normative Christianity.

And I know in South Orange County, California, I've been preaching in this county for decades now, since 1988, and I understand this about people, many of them who come to this very comfortable kind of upper-middle-class part of the country. And they think somehow Christianity is supposed to make their lives easier, not harder. And they think that somehow if I just come to church and learn some proverbial principles and put them to work, maybe my marriage will be better, my kids will be better, life will be better, I'll be upwardly mobile in my business, things will go well. And they want that kind of Christianity, but that's not the kind of Christianity we find in the Bible. We find people who are being faithful, like the Apostle Paul



and his band of missionaries saying, hey, we are afflicted in every way. I mean, we're perplexed, we are persecuted, we were struck down, but it doesn't take them out. And they don't get discouraged over that, and they don't back down.

So we've got to figure out what's going on here. And this is important, and I think you've heard me quote enough of the classic texts on this, but I need to go to a more nuanced text just to drive this home in case some of you are tempted to try and wiggle out of this kind of situation regarding Christianity, thinking well that's just how it is for missionaries like Paul. That may be why Mike likes to always quote these things. Pastor Mike loves this because he's a pastor, and for him out there preaching, he's going to get the kind of pushback that Paul got. But not me, I'm just a rank-and-file Christian, so I can kind of have the nice suburban Christian life that makes my life better, not worse. Well, I've got a verse for you, this will help. Colossians Chapter 4, go with me to Colossians Chapter 4. I hope you know that when I quote the Great Commission, Matthew 28, "Go make disciples," I've always said to you, well, this is your calling as well. Look at the beginning of all the gospels, I said, well, if Christ calls you to follow him, he's going to say, okay, now I'm going to make you fishers of men, you've got a test. I can quote what we're getting into in the next chapter in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, that you're an ambassador, and I can say that, and you may say, well, well Paul's an ambassador. I'm not an ambassador. I can go to Acts Chapter 1 and I can say we're called to be witnesses in their concentric circles of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth. Well, that's not me. That's them in the book of Acts. It's the Acts of the Apostles, after all.

Well, if you still want to think this doesn't apply to you, I think this is a more carefully worded text that begins with Paul saying, well, I know I'm a missionary and this is how it works. But he instantly takes the same things and drops them right into the pew, right into the chairs of the congregation in Colossi. And he says, yeah, you guys have the same task I have. So take a look at this. I don't often go here to take on the responsibility that we are representatives, that we are disciple-makers, no matter if we have a seminary degree or not. But this is a great text to go to. Now we often quote Colossians 4 verse 2, which is about prayer and is a great text about prayer. But when he tells them to "continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful and thankful," he says, "At the same time," while you're praying, while you are down there with your prayer list and on your knees, he says at "the same time, pray also for us." Now you think, okay, instantly he's gone, you and us. And so we've got that kind of bifurcation, right?

But look what he says though he's talking about his job as a missionary, "that God may open to us a door for the word." And as we read that in First Corinthians Chapter 16, or we see that through the book of Acts, we think, okay, a missionary missionary missionary, "to declare the mystery of Christ." Well, that's what he does. He's a preacher, he's a seminary grad. He's a missionary. "On account of which I'm in prison." Well, that's what you get for being a missionary. That's what you get for being a preacher. You're going to have suffering if you do that job. But that's not my job, right? I'm a software engineer. I'm, you know, I'm an architect. I'm a housewife. I'm whatever. It's not my life. Verse 4. I want to make this clear, which is how I ought to speak. Well, that's what missionaries do. Now, he flips these two verses right into the lap of everyone who's gathered to hear this text read for the very first time in Corinth, and it's true of us. The congregation has the same task as the preachers and missionaries. He



says, you guys, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders." Now who are the outsiders? Walk, by the way, is the word Paul loves to talk about the daily life, we're doing our life. So between now and the time we meet again next week, you're going to do your life, you're going to walk around in all the places you go, you can drive around, you can go to your office, you can go to your kid's little league game, you're going hang out at wherever you hang out for your donuts and coffee. You're going to go and whatever, talk to your neighbors over the mailbox. You got all these places you go.

Now it says you have to "walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the kairos." Now, I often talk about the word T-I-M-E, time. It's translating from two Greek words, different Greek words. And they have two different nuanced definitions, "Chronos" and "Kairos." And when we talk about chronos, we're just talking about the linear ticking of time on the chronology of life. The chronograph. The ticks on the clock, that's chronos. But this is the word kairos. Sometimes they're back-to-back in a text and talk about, like, the times and the seasons in Acts Chapter 1. So this is about the same thing he said in verse 3, and that is pray that God may open up a door for the Word, which by the way, a few weeks ago, I dared you to pray that prayer, at the beginning of your day, just pray to God. And that's assuming you have accepted the job description of Christianity and you're saying, God, today I got to go and do my job. I got to take all these tasks and these meetings and get these projects done or meet with these clients. I got to do all that so I can make a paycheck and pay the bills and then I'll get off to church on the weekend and I'll do my weeknight sub-congregation or small group or whatever. And that's how you view it.

But I dared you to say, get on your knees in the morning and say, God, today, as I go about my work, as I walk around in my life with the outsiders, with the non-Christians, I want you to open up a door for the Word. Just pray that. And all I'm saying is here's the proof of this. "Walk in wisdom." Just get through your day. Take your slalom course through all the non-Christians and try and stay out of trouble. No, he says, walk in wisdom, you've got some tasks to do toward non-Christians, making the best use of every opportunity, which you ought to be praying for, just like he prays for. And then you got something to say. This isn't just letting your light shine before men so they can see your good deeds. It's about you saying something. "Let your speech always be gracious."

Now, sometimes we read that, we think, ah, it just means, you know, be nice, say, yes ma'am, no ma'am, yes sir. That's not what this means. Be gracious. Just remember the central feature of New Testament Christianity is that we need to be saved from the penalty of our sins, and God has graciously supplied an answer. You're saved by grace, through faith, that's not of yourself, not as a result of works. It's the gift of God that no one should boast. It is a gift of grace. It's all about being saved by grace. And so to say gracious isn't about you taking an Emily Post class or learning your etiquette and being able to be a nice, gracious person, genteel. That's not the point. The point is, even though you must treat people with gentleness and respect, that we are having something to say, something to say that is laden with the central message of Christianity. It's about grace. "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt," as if we didn't get it in the first word. The salt is doing something. It's provoking something. It's having an effect. My words aren't just about, you know, what about



those Dodgers? There's got to be more to our conversation as we wisely look for opportunities, and I trust like the Apostle Paul, pray for opportunities for the Word to go forth, that I can make it clear, just like Paul does on the mission field. "Seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

Now, if you're thinking about the message that we are to share, and you're saying things that are provocative and helpful and clarifying, and you are standing up in your office and in your sphere of influence and saying, I am a Christian, and when they pat you on the head and say well that's nice for you, that's good, I'm glad you got your religion, your little blanket and your binky, and I hope it's nice for you. It's good for you. You're supposed to respond as the New Testament tells us to respond, no, it's not just good for me, it's necessary for you. "There's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." This is not relativism. This is the truth of Christ coming, invading space and time, and solving the penalty of our sin. And this is mandated. This is not an invitation I'm giving someone, try God. That's not what we're doing. We're saying to people, repent. We're declaring to people everywhere they must repent or they're going to perish. That's the reality of the message.

Now we can do that with gentleness and respect. We can do that without jamming our Christianity down anyone's throat. But you ought to be praying for opportunities. You ought to be looking for opportunities, you ought to be wise when you interact with non-Christians. And your speech ought to be seasoned with salt. It ought to be filled with grace. And you then are going to have people say, well, I don't know, are we all sinners? I think we're basically good. You're going to answer questions. You're going to have to respond to people. Yes, you may not be a missionary, you may not be an apologist, you may not be some kind of campus evangelist, you may not be a preacher. I get that. But every Christian is an ambassador representing the message of Christ, holding out the word of life to our generation. And you must shine brightly in wherever God has planted you to be able to represent Christ. And that is our calling. But what comes with that, if you are faithful at the end of your life to be doing that is you're going to have things like affliction. Look at the list. You're going to have affliction, you're going to have perplexity, you're going to have persecution, and you're going to have hits, you're going to be struck one way or another. So being faithful is you doing what the missionaries do only in your sphere of influence. And I get that. That's different. And everyone has to accept the pains of being faithful.

One passage that should just be the absolute conversation ender is here in Second Timothy Chapter 3. One more passage with this and then I'll not hold your head under water any longer. Second Timothy Chapter 3. Look at verse 10. Let's start there. Paul is talking to, admittedly, a pastor. Timothy's a pastor in the city of Ephesus. And he says, "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim of life." Now think about that. You followed my teachings. Just like you're doing right now, I hope, leaning in as a Christian, as long as I'm saying biblical things, you're following what I teach you. You're accepting the teaching and my conduct. I should be living this out and you ought to be living it out. So this is about you growing in your knowledge of Christ and your growing in your application of Christ. But there's one more thing here. The third thing is... "My aim in life." And Paul is a missionary. Timothy is a pastor, different roles, and yet they have the same aim in life, to make disciples. And while



Paul may be emphasizing the making disciples so that they can get baptized, in other words, he's dealing with the evangelistic segment of that. And Timothy might be in the segment of it that teaches people to obey all that Christ commanded, they all have the underlying aim to see people won to Christ. Everyone does. Missionary may be on the cutting edge, the tip of the spear, but even the pastor, who's one step back from that, teaching disciples how to follow Christ, still has the responsibility that Paul has.

"My faith, my patience, my love," and here's what we're going to need, the last word, "steadfastness." Now, that's not a word you use very often. But it is the Greek word I often talk about because it's a great compound word with a preposition in the front of it. "Hypomonē." How many times have I talked about that from the platform? Hypomonē. "Hypo", the preposition "underneath." "Monē" comes from "Menō" and is "to remain," together it is "to remain under." And I take you back to my childhood image of going to Tijuana across the border and buying my little hoodie with the, you know, the pocket that goes through. You had one of those, right? And getting my little marionette, is that what they call it? Okay, you guys never went to Tijuana as kids apparently? (audience laughing) You got your Chiclets on the way back. You know what I'm talking about. OK. You're from Nebraska? Did anybody grow up here? I thought I was talking to Southern California people. Listen to me. You would see, occasionally, when I was a kid, the burrow under that big, massive weight of stuff they piled on top. And that was always my childhood picture of, like, how does that burrow not collapse under that pressure? That's what hypomonē means, steadfastness.

Now, why would I need, if I'm just trying to grow in my knowledge of Christ and just trying to be sanctified, why would they need steadfastness? Well, because my aim in life is going to be just like the missionary. And I'm going to need steadfastness because, now a great transition to verse 11. It's going to bring up stuff like we saw in our passage, affliction, persecution, being knocked down. He calls it here, "my persecutions, my sufferings that happened to me at Antioch." Do you remember what happened to Paul in Antioch? This is not the Syrian Antioch. That was the headquarters that sent him out. But he went into Pisidian Antioch over in the middle of Turkey, modern-day Turkey. And in Pisidian Antioch, you might remember when he was there preaching the Word, the high-ups, the influential, the elite of society came to Paul and said we don't agree with this. They stir up the crowds. They pushed him out of town. So he got rejected because the elites thought he was a loser. And then he goes on and he says, you remember my sufferings and things to happen to me at Iconium? When he goes to Iconium in Acts Chapter 14, now all of a sudden he's winning some people to Christ in town. But the others who got jealous, who didn't like what he was saying, they got together in the mob and basically turned the group against them. The crowd started to say we don't accept what Paul is saying. And they threatened to stone him. They threatened to kill Paul. And so Paul and Barnabas had to leave.

And then he says, you remember what happened to me at Lystra. And that ought to be a red letter city in your mind because you know anything about the story of the Apostle Paul in Acts, at the end of Chapter 14 he's in Lystra and in Lystra, they not only conspire against him, the mob actually does pick up rocks, they take him to the edge of town, and they bury him in rocks and leave him for dead. He was actually literally bearing the marks of the Lystran



stoning for the rest of his life. The Apostle Paul took literal hits. In our passage, it talks about being struck down. He was literally physically struck to the ground in Lystra, and he says you know what I went through. The "persecutions I endured," there's our word again, "yet from them all," look I'm still kicking, I'm still here, I am still writing letters to you, Timothy, "the Lord rescued me."

And then he says this, two words that ought to jump off the page, the first two words of verse 12, if you're reading from the English Standard Version, "Indeed, all." You could have just said "all." No, indeed, all. I just want to make sure you know "all" means "all." "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." It may not be the same as the missionary in a land that's prohibiting the teaching of Christ. It may not be like the pastor who is out there periodically sharing the gospel on the radio, but it's going to be persecution. It's going to be pushback. There will be affliction, there will be perplexity. You'll get opposed. There's going to be pushback. And you're going to, indeed all. But here's a great comfort, verse 13, look carefully at this verse. "While evil people and impostors," will start to improve and by the 21st century they'll be all but gone. Underline all that. No. "While evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." See, we should expect the forecast to go from bad to worse. And in the United States of America and Western society is proof of that. Just like in Western Europe, we have the same pattern of Christianity taking hold, blessing a group of people, blessing a nation, and then having that nation turn on the very principles that got it to where it is. And so now we find ourselves on the tail end of this Judeo-Christian society, quote unquote, and we find ourselves increasingly dealing with evil people and imposters. And they're going "from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

So he says in verse 14, note this carefully, "but as for you," if you just toned it down a little bit, they wouldn't hate you so much. Highlight that part. No, no, no, "continue in what you've learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it." God ultimately is the source of all this as he goes on to say classically in verse 16, the Scripture comes from God's own mouth. It's as though he breathed these words out and you better hold tight to that. You believe them and when you believe them in the privacy of your heart and you embrace Christianity on your knees, please just remember, you've got to hold on to that throughout the entirety of your life as things go from bad to worse. And in our country, you know that's where we're at, in our culture that's where we're in. And we are on the cutting edge, the avant-garde culture here in Southern California. We are in it. And you need to know that the reality of my Christian life, just like the Colossians in Colossian Chapter 4, is to walk wisely with outsiders, always looking for that door of opportunity with non-Christians, that the Word might be clearly stated. That I can have words that are not only presenting truth, but answers coming behind those statements and being able to answer whatever their questions are. We've got to be ready for this. Endure the pain of being faithful. I know that's hard to do, but you've got to expect it, you've got to anticipate it.

Navy SEAL candidates, they have a brass bell in their training, the instructors will take them through all this crazy, crazy training with pain and exhaustion, pressure. I mean, it's just nuts. Well, they have a brass bell and if they ring it three times the instructors will pull back. It's like,



you know, it's like tapping out, crying uncle, can't take anymore. And what's interesting is the instructors say this, right? The difference between those who make it through and those who don't last in the Navy SEAL training, he says, isn't strength, it is expectation, right? Those who knew it would be painful, they endured, generally speaking. Those who thought it would be manageable, those are the ones who quit. And that's why Jesus always promised us there would be pain, and you better see this as denying yourself, taking up your cross and following him. There's a form of suburban, western, evangelical, plastic Christianity that says that's not going to happen to you. You don't have to..., don't quote those verses from Luke 14:33. You don't have to quote that. You can have Christianity and have your nice, cushy life just like all your neighbors in South Orange County. And the Bible says, no, you're tasked with a mission to represent Christ in your generation and to be faithful to it is going to bring pain. That alone can keep you from being a coward. That alone can keep me from being disillusioned. And I hope knowing that this is the forecast can keep you from compromising the message.

The only way to keep enduring when it's painful is to remember the next thing we learn in our passage, Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 10. And it's a strange statement. And I said we have to untangle it. And here's what he says, verse 10, after saying afflicted, but not crushed, perplexed, not despaired, persecuted, not forsaken, struck down, not destroyed, we get up. It's kind of the terms that some of the commentators say of the gladiators in the Roman Coliseum, right? They get up, they keep fighting. Then it says, "Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus." Now, the death of Jesus, that was predicted even hundreds of years before Christ came. Even though Christ, think about it, this is the principle we just talked about in Isaiah Chapter 52, at the end of the chapter, it talks about the servant coming representing the Father. He's going to be the Son. He's going to be one who is pleasing the Father, he's walking in wisdom, right? And he's going to be glorified and magnified by the Father! Great statements.

The next verse says this, and then he will be marred more than anybody. He'd be disfigured more than anybody. He would die on a Roman execution rack. Why? Why would Christ be crucified? Well, because he didn't back down on what he said. He started with a forerunner who told everyone they were sinners and they needed to repent. And he came on the scene when John the Baptist pointed to him and said here's the one, follow him. And Jesus didn't back down. He said, "unless you repent," Luke Chapter 13, "you will all likewise perish." Unless you repent. He repeated himself. You're going to perish. The message of Christianity is a hard one to swallow because it starts with the problem of sin. And Jesus didn't back down from that and they didn't like it and who he said he was. Then you add the layer of power and authority that he's the Son who has been given all authority from the Father, and that he would judge all people, and then you start to have all the problems that people had with Jesus. They didn't like him and therefore they took him all the way to the end and crucified him. They had him crucified. That's what happened to Christ. And this text says we're carrying around in our body the death of Jesus. Why was he crucified?

Well, because as the next chapter says in Isaiah Chapter 53, he would be one, though pleasing to the Father, would be the "one from whom men hide their faces." And while we may struggle with being marred more than any man, even though we should think about the



beginning of our Christian lives, are we willing to die for Christ? He is the one who people said, here he comes. And we have that sense. You stand up for Christ in your workplace, and you say, no, it's not just good for me, this is necessary for you, right? They're going to say, "I'm going to make my copies in the copy room when he's done, or when he's in the lunchroom. I don't want to take my break now if he's there. I'm not interested in spending time with that guy because he's probably going to bring up Christianity. I don't want to talk about it." They hid their face from Christ, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." This is how he's described, pleasing to the Father as the voice came from heaven twice, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I'm well pleased; listen to him." And they didn't want to hear him. They crucified him.

So the rejection for his faithfulness is what we carry around now. And the reason I think this is important just to take the first part of verse 10 and set it apart as its own point is because there's something profound about that. I have an association with Christ when I suffer for being faithful with the message. If I take the powerful Word of God and relay it to people and they don't like it and I pay a penalty, either affliction, perplexity, being pushed back, knocked down, whatever the persecution is, I'm now in union with Christ. It's just like Christ said, "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." There's something comforting about that. I'll put it this way, number two, you need to "Remember Your Union with Our Crucified Christ." Let's just take it to the end. He was crucified and I doubt you'll be martyrs like Ridley or Latimer or Kramner. Maybe you will. Who knows where it's going to go? You may be young and maybe our culture at some point is going to string you up for being faithful to Christ. I don't know. Maybe it's going to take a couple more generations if Christ tarries. But here's the point. You're going to have some suffering. And every time you suffer you are identifying yourself with Christ who said if it happened to me, it's going to happen to you. You draw near to Christ in that.

Let me put it this way. Colossians Chapter 1, let's look at this passage. Go near the end of Colossians Chapter 1 and look at the way Paul described this. If you've been around here, I quote this passage every six months or so. It's such a great passage to remind us that something profound is happening when you suffer for holding out the words of life to the people you hang out with. Something profound is happening. Two passages, if I can share those, let's start with Colossians Chapter 1 verses 24 and 25. Paul says this as he ministers to the Colossians, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake." I'm okay with it. I'm happy about it. It's not going to take me down and out. I'm not going to get discouraged about it, I'm not going to compromise the message. I'm certainly not going to think this is some surprising thing. I'm happy to do it. "And in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction."

Now, how many times have I read this to you and said anytime someone says lacking in Christ's work, even in his afflictions, we should think, oh, wow, that doesn't sound right. Because when it comes to his affliction on the cross, was there anything lacking? No, not at all. Everything about the New Testament uses the word "propitiation" about Christ's death. He said on the cross "Tetelestai," which means "it is finished." Paid in full. So his affliction in incurring the Father's punishment for your sin and my sin is completely adequate. There's nothing lacking in that. But you know what's lacking? The hassle he's going to have to put up



with to win somebody in Irvine to Christ this week. Yeah, it's lacking because what did he have to have put up? Dealing with Peter, James, and John, and Thomas, and Nathaniel, Judas, all the people in the villages he preached in, in Capernaum, in Chorazin, in Bethsaida, down in Judea, in Perea. All the work he did, he put up a lot of stuff. Sometimes he said, how much longer must I put up with you? OK?

Now here's the thing. He's not putting up with anybody in Mission Viejo, no one in Dana Point, no one in Irvine, no one in Tustin, no in Aliso Viejo, right? He's ensconced in heaven. And in that sense he's saying you get to do what I did, extending my same message to your generation, and you are in league with him. We're unified in this. And Paul says, I'm filling it all up, not for his body on the cross. Look at the bottom of verse 24, "for the sake of his body, that is, the church." We're still building the Church, right? God, of course, is building the Church through Christ and the Spirit of God. But the reality is he needs you and I, needs with a small 'n.' He could use a donkey, really, but he chooses to use us as his ambassadors to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Aliso Viejo. And as you do, and you get pushback, "You're sharing in the sufferings of Christ." There's something profound, something dignifying about being insulted for Christ. Paul says, "Of which I've become a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me," to do what? To make the Word of God the parts of it that people like known. No, no, no. "Make it fully known." Everything about the truth. I don't want to mitigate the truth, I don't want to tailor the truth. I don't want to in any way adulterate the truth, I've got to give it straight up.

And that starts with the problem of sin. That starts with a reality of God's judgment and hell, and that may not be popular these days, but it's the truth. And if I love people, I'm going to tell them the truth. And you and I need to say, every time we tell the truth and we get pushback, we are in league with our crucified Christ. There's nothing more dignified. That's why the early Church said in the opening chapters of Acts, when they were persecuted, they say, oh, praise God that we "were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." That's an amazing thought. I mean, I doubt most of us are trying to slalom our way through all the pain. I hope I can get through this week. Lord, please don't let me suffer. When they suffered for the sake of representing Christ in their generation, they said, I can't believe we were counted worthy to suffer like Christ. And when now we're suffering for..., I can't believe it. It's amazing. And every time the authorities threatened them, like when they flogged them in Acts 5 and they said don't speak in his name anymore, the Christians prayed for boldness and they got it. And they kept on talking and I love the next verse, "every day, in the temple and from house to house," they spoke boldly the Word of God.

See, we've got to know that we are in league with Christ. It is like, one more passage I said, First Peter Chapter 4. First Peter Chapter 4. Look at three verses here starting in verse 12. Again, it's the same concept, only it's said in such a rich way here. Verse 12, "Beloved, don't be surprised the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening." And you think testing, that must be just kind of enriching my faith, deepen my faith. Well, it does all that. But look at the context, verse 13. "Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed." Why did Christ suffer? Just so that he'd have a bigger house or a better family or a better career? No,



it had nothing to do with that. It was about being faithful. "I've come to seek and save the lost." That was his task. That's Paul's task. That's what Pastor Timothy's task is. That's what your task is, to make disciples. "Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may rejoice also and be glad when his glory is revealed." You're looking over the horizon. This is going to be good. I'm sharing in Christ's sufferings. And "if you're insulted for the name of Christ," verse 14, "you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."

You want to talk about the prosperity preachers. That is not their path to being blessed, right? Hey, follow Christ's teachings, represent him, and when you're insulted, you'll be blessed. Everyone wants a shortcut to some kind of blessing, and the shortcut isn't going to happen, not in this life. The blessing that we're going to have is storing up treasure in heaven. When we reach our rest, Hebrews Chapter 4, we'll be able to enjoy all that. Our life is not for this world, it's for the next. And in this world we're his ambassadors. And the text here says, when you get pushback, because of Christ, I love this, "the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." It's like Christ and the Father, the Son and the Father are there just saying, yes, that's it. "You're sharing," verse 13, "in the sufferings of Christ." That's an amazing truth. And you need to embrace that. That's so good.

Think about Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul in Acts Chapter 9 and he gets kicked off his horse and the voice came out of the sky, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Not them, he was going to persecute Christians in Damascus. You're not persecuting them, you're persecuting me. Even that, do you want to talk about an alliance and a union with Christ? If you suffer, even if you get insulted, First Peter Chapter 4 says, this week, it's as though Christ draws near to you. It's like, yeah, that's what happened to me. You're doing what Christ did. I'm not looking for it, I'm not trying to have it, I don't pray for more insults, but I do want to be praying to be faithful, to represent his Word in our generation. Remember your union with the crucified Christ. It's a privileged alliance. We should see it as such. And if you're not suffering, I had this discussion after the first service this morning, if you are not having this problem and it dawned on someone in such a way, it was like the light bulb came on, it was so good. It's like, I get it now. You talk a lot about suffering and I realize, I'm not suffering because I'm not sharing the gospel. Yeah! I mean, that's exactly what I've been trying to say. The powerful Word of God, it needs to be shared. You share it, you'll have this reality.

Make the Word of God fully known this week without compromise. If someone says no to you, by the way, we live in a target-rich environment, or a more godly way to say that is, a harvest field that's ripe for harvest. There are millions of people around us, right? Someone says, don't talk to me about that anymore, fine, fine. But I'm not going to shut up about this. But if you don't want me to talk to you about it, okay. I've said that many times, but that still needs to be said. We're not jamming our religion down anyone's throat. We're trying to tell people who need salvation, this is mandatory that you get right with the living God. And the only way to do that is in trust and subservience to Christ. You've got to submit your life to Christ, you've got to say I trust you for salvation. If you don't suffer, it's a problem. Not because everyone's so receptive to the Word, but because maybe we're not doing enough to hold out the Word of truth.



Quickly back to our text, Second Corinthians Chapter 4, second half of verse 10, "the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." If we're carrying around the hassle that Christ went through in his generation and we're doing it 20 centuries later, well, then here's the deal. You can have the life of Jesus. Now, what was that? Perseverance? Endurance? He endured to the end. It can "be manifested in our bodies." We can keep going. "For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake." We're doing Jesus' work. We're representing Jesus' words. We are representing the salvation work of Christ. All of that is bringing pushback, which is under the label here of death. I want life. What does that mean? I want to be able to endure this. I want to be able to continually, boldly hold out the Word in my generation. And he says, if we're doing that, "The life of Jesus will also be manifested in our mortal flesh."

This is not about Christ's glorified promise of having our bodies be like his body one day. We're talking about here and now. First Corinthians Chapter 15 is all about the fact that you and I are going to get a glorified body. Great. Right now, we're in our in our mortal bodies. And in our mortal bodies, what we need to do is to have the endurance of Christ. Number three, let's put it this way. Since this is external to us, you better pray for it. That's why the first word in the third point is "pray." "Pray for Strength to Boldly Persevere." That's what we mean by the life of Christ being manifested in you. Christ endured, and Christ and his strength, he wants to perfect your strength, and he wants to grant you that strength. As Isaiah Chapter 40 says, he's the one who gives strength to the weary so that you can "mount up with wings like eagles." You don't have wings, that's the thing. This is external to you. You can have a perseverance and a bold endurance that keeps you going that is external to you.

Go to Hebrews Chapter 12 real quick with me. Hebrews Chapter 12. This is a great text and if you're not thinking of this passage let me help you think about it. Hebrews Chapter 12. Let's just start in verse 3. This is the basic principle. Verse 3, "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted." Hebrews Chapter 12 verse 3, "Consider him," think about him, "who endured from sinners such hostilities." Why? If you'd just back down Christ on all this stuff you're telling them, you wouldn't have all this hostility. No, but he endured it. He endured it, here's our word. He held up, he maintained, he stood up under all that opposition. Why? Well, part of it is if you think about it, maybe you cannot grow weary or faint-hearted. That just looks like an example but it's more profound than that.

Look up at verse 2. We're supposed to "look to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith." There's something active, something going on within us. There is something external to us, and he's perfecting that in us so that we can look beyond the pain to the prize. You and I are going to one day be glorified. We are, as Hebrews Chapter 4 says, one day "enter into our rest." But right now, we have to in our mortal bodies endure. We need the endurance of Christ. We need the power of Christ. We need the strength of Christ to not give up, not back down, not be crushed, not be despairing, not feeling forsaken. And every morning we get up and say we can do this. God can give this to me. He grants strength. Even though young men stumble and fall, right? He can give you the kind of strength that when you walk you won't be



weary. When you run, you're not going to faint, you are going to get through the Christian life with external strength as the perfecter gives you all that you need, "for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and now seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Let's finish the Christian life to where he does say to us, "well done, good and faithful servant."

Verse 1, as long as we're reading this backward, a lot of people in Chapter 11, great witnesses, they testify to the fact that if they trust God, they can endure. From Noah to Abraham, all the way through the list, all the to Gideon and Barak, all these people who believed God and God granted them the perseverance. It says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that clings so closely." I'm all for the sanctification, let's do it. But then there's a course, "run the race with endurance," there's our word, hypomonē, "that is set before us." And the race set before us is different than the race set before Christ in the fact that it's 2,000 years removed on the other side of the planet. And yet, the harvest fields are just as ripe as they were in John Chapter 4 or in Matthew Chapter 9. We have a harvest field. And so our race is here. My course throughout the week is different than your course throughout the week. But you have a course and you ought to endure it by doing what Christ did. Verse 3, he endured all the pushbacks. You can endure all the pushback because he can perfect your faith in active engagement in giving you strength. But it starts by you praying for it. Pray for strength. God, he doesn't grow weary, and he wants you to not grow weary. That's a great text by the way. You should read it again sometime, maybe in the next 24 hours, Isaiah Chapter 40, and just the promise of strength. It starts in verse 26 but it's a good text.

This week, by way, at our kid's Camp Compass, one of the things our pastor's wives are doing, and they tag team all throughout the week to teach the story of Corrie ten Boom. You know about Corrie ten Boom, I hope, right? Who was willing to risk her life for the Jews during Nazi World War II, and all the stuff that was going on in Europe. An amazing story and a woman of great faith. Here's a great story when she went to her dad before all this started happening. And she said to her father, I don't know, she said, that I would have the strength to suffer for Christ if the time ever came. Oh, the time was coming for sure. But her dad, in wisdom, according to Corrie, said this. Her father replied, when you go on a train, Corrie, when do I give you your ticket? And she says right before I get on. And he said, exactly. God will give you what is needed when you need it. And we've all got to start and say we're thinking about Monday morning, we are thinking about Wednesday, we're thinking about Friday afternoon, all the times we have to go through the course that God has set out for us, representing him, and if it's scary to you, we don't want to be cowards. We've got to say, God, you're going to give me the strength, I'm going to ask for the strength and you're going to grant it. Even if you become Ridley, Latimer, Kramner, even if we were burned at the stake, God will provide the endurance. He is the perfecter of our faith, the strength to endure. It doesn't come in advance. It comes as we need it and God will give it. We just need to pray. We need to trust that God will do that.

Verse 12, back to our text, Second Corinthians Chapter 4, after talking about this life of Christ, this enduring, bold life of Christ being manifested even in our weakness, in our mortal flesh, he ends with this, "So death is at work in us, but life in you." And I said this isn't a slam. And



even in First Corinthians, you talk about the people with the over-realized eschatology thinking that they had arrived, and he's saying, oh, you haven't. He was being sarcastic. He's not being sarcastic here. Like in the first book, First Corinthians that we have, the extant book from Paul to the Corinthians, he says, I'm your father in the faith. I brought Christianity to you. I preach Christ to you, you became Christians. He's just talking about the relationship he has. And when you think about the book of Acts, when you read about him coming to Corinth, you realize he went through a lot to bring them the gospel. And he's saying death was at work in us as we came, but life in you. The payoff was you guys came to faith in Christ.

So there's one more layer in this, this four-point sermon this morning. There's one more layer in this. And that is something that Paul is clearly pointing out here. The suffering is worth it, not only because we're in league with Christ, not only because he'll give us the strength to endure and hopefully we'll hear, well done. But we've got to remember the tangible outworking of what happens when we're faithful to represent Christ in our generation. People come to Christ. Let's put it this way. Number four, "Keep the Next New Christian in Mind." Keep the next new Christian in mind. Who is going to come to faith next through your faithful, consistent testimony about Christ? Who? It is somebody. Wouldn't it be great if the next baptisms that we have, which, by the way, are going to be outside, but we'll be outside, but someone steps in that tank and testifies to their new faith in Christ and tells their story of coming to faith. And you know you had a part in that because you weren't ashamed of the message of the gospel, because you were willing to speak up, because you were one who was ready to answer questions that they had. The powerful Word of God took root in that good soil and you said I was part of the sowing. I took the seed and I sowed it. That's so satisfying. That is such good, that's so good, That's what we ought to do.

I quoted this last week, but Second Timothy Chapter 2, "We endure all things for the sake of the elect," Paul says, "that they also may obtain salvation." I just hope that you're willing to pay the price and say I'll take a little death in my life. I'll take a little, what were the words, affliction, perplexity, persecution, being struck down. I'll take a little bit of that. I'll take that death at work in us so that we can see new life in other people. I'm going to focus on the new life. I'm going to look past the cross, despising the shame of the cross, whatever the payment might be, so that I might see the joy on the other side. And in this case, he brings in the very practical joy of seeing new life. He says, yeah, you guys became Christians because we were willing to pay the price.

Note this very profound statement that John records from Christ's lips in John Chapter 12. Everything's changing in the book of John here to go toward Christ being crucified. And before we get there, Christ is starting to talk about it. And he describes it this way in John 12:23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man," of course that's who he is, "is going to be glorified." So he knows he's going back to the Father and just like Christ, doing exactly what Hebrews Chapter 12 says, he's looking past the shame of the cross to being back ensconced at the right hand of the Father. This is a great statement. But we know what that means. That means you're going to go to the cross. And here's the next line in verse 24, very profound. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Have you ever read that twice when you've been



reading through John? "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone," it's just a grain of wheat, "but if it dies, it bears" all kinds of wheat. It grows up and it creates more. This is a great statement.

And clearly there's something unique about Christ's death. Your death, my death, whether it's insults or pushback or opposition or being knocked around this week, isn't the same as Christ going to the cross and bearing fruit of saving the souls of countless numbers of people. But the principle we know is meant to be absorbed in our own life because the next verse says, "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Man, that's so helpful. If you and I can say I don't really care if I get insulted this week, I don't really care if they turn their face away, I don't care if they want to invite me out to the ball game with the rest of the guys. I don't care. What I care about is being faithful and bringing a message to them. I'll stop when you tell me to stop, but I'm going to keep looking for people who are able, by God's grace, to hear the message. I'll answer their questions. I'll walk wisely. I'll look for opportunities. I'll even dare to pray for opportunities. And I'll do that for the sake of Christ. I'll do that and any pushback I get, I'll be in union with Christ in a very practical and even a personal way. I'll pray for strength and hopefully see some people come to Christ. If you're willing to go through the hassle, you will watch baptisms here at Compass Bible Church, or you'll see them from wherever it might be that they get integrated into a church, and you'll watch and you'll say, God, it's so satisfying. I was willing to have death at work in my life so that life would be at work in their lives. That's amazing.

I can't thank culture enough for being such a great living illustration of my sermon this weekend. It was great. It makes the point. If nothing else, all that went on this weekend across the country and even here in Aliso Viejo shows how people really feel about power. Am I right? Power. We've been preaching here in this series about the power of God's Word, the authoritative Scriptures, and we're supposed to hold that message out to our generation without compromising it. I mean, they're marching around, sometimes little old ladies with the F-word on their sign saying, "No Kings, No Kings, No Kings." That's great. That's just rich. That's just wonderful. You are proving exactly what I need to prove to thousands of people at Compass Bible Church, that this is the posture of the world that we're in. And when you come to a co-worker or a neighbor and say, oh, no, no, there is a King. There's a King, and he's the King of kings. And I'll tell you what, he didn't have to deal with the Senate, federal judges, Congress. He didn't have to deal with any of that. He's in charge of the whole wide world. (audience clapping)

And when there were kings and there were kings like Nebuchadnezzar or Pharaoh. You know, God was careful from time to time to make sure Pharaoh understood there was a King, a real King, a King of kings. And Nebuchadnezzar, yeah, God was careful to touch him and say, hey, crazy, right? There is a King. And that King, according to Daniel Chapter 7, is going to have all the dominion over everyone in this whole entire world. And the Bible's clear, and I hate to repeat myself, but I don't hate it too much, I will tell you this, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess. And while they're carrying around their signs saying, "No Kings," our message to all of them this week is to remember Psalm 2, there is a King and he's been ensconced in Zion. That's what the Lord says in that great psalm. The protestors are raging.



They're saying let's burst the bonds away. They can't even take law and order in America, let alone the binding Scriptures of God's eternal Word. And we're saying to them there is a King, and you better, as it says in the text, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." You better be careful to submit to kissing the king was a picture of homage to the ultimate authority, whether it was Nebuchadnezzar or a Syrian king or a Persian king. You better bow down. You better serve the Lord with fear and trembling. You better "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way." And then I love the way it ends. "Blessed are all who take refuge in him." We're the blessed crowd.

Yeah, there were a thousand people down here at the town center yesterday with their "No Kings" and all their vulgarity on their signs, yelling at people as they drove their Teslas down the street. But I'm telling you this, I've already seen, looked in the eyes of close to 3,000 people here this weekend who believe there is a King and they know that King is coming. And the only hope we have is to get right with the King. And if that message is not uncompromisingly held out to our generation, then I got to say, God may say, we've got a problem. Are you a coward? Are you thinking it's going to disillusion you because you thought the Christian life was all about being comforted and pampered? No, or are you going to compromise the message? And you're not going to fully declare the Word. You can kind of tailor it to the generation that you're in. We can't do any of that. And God is never going to say that to you. He will say, good and faithful servant if, in fact, we're willing to stand up and say to our generation, not belligerent, no veins popping out of our forehead or our neck, we're just simply saying to them, with gentleness and respect, you are made in the image of God, his imprint is on your conscience and on your life, he owns you, you will bow down to him one day, and we beg you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. That is our message, and I just want you to boldly, kindly, respectfully have that conversation this week for the glory of God.

Let's pray. God, help us in our day to even be bold enough to say what Psalm 2 verse 10 says, to be warned, to warn the people, to say you rulers of the earth, you better be careful. Don't think that you are the master of your own fate. Don't think you are the king of your own life. And it's easy to look at people saying things in positions of authority you don't like, and you can call them names and our country is unique in allowing that to happen in our streets. But there's a day coming when Christ comes back and they can read about it in Revelation Chapter 19, and there will be no revolt, there'll be no signs, there'll be no vulgarity. There'll be nothing but regret from people who have rebelled against the Son. So we pray, God, that we would be good advocates, good, loving ambassadors of the King, that we'd hold out the message that is so desperately needed in our generation. Intrepid, bold, courageous, unflinching, unafraid and welcoming. The privilege of even being insulted for Christ if it comes to that. So God I know that's hard, our feelings, they just grate against all that, but help us please to think that way for your sake and for your glory.

In Jesus' name. Amen