

Outgrowing Anxiety, Part 4

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. . . as I mentioned in the last episode, as I mentioned, that was a lot, I know. Thank you for enduring. We have to orient ourselves around reality as the Bible describes it.

I think that the main accomplishment of my life, my adult life, is that I have laid a theological grid on top of reality that has allowed me to begin to understand things from a biblical perspective.

And for those who are dealing with anxiety, and I imagine that comes in all kinds of forms, I have my form, you have your form, so forth. I want to stress how important it is to keep reminding yourself of base reality, base truth.

[1:57] What is my reputation for? What is my public persona for? What is my life for? What is my health for? What is my body for? Teleological questions.

Secondly, ontological. Who, what am I? And the answer, if you're in Christ, not only are you a new creation, but specifically, you are a new creation in the household of God.

And really, if you wanted to understand sort of the broad structure of Ephesians, you know, when I got to, we didn't plan necessarily to go through Ephesians, but it was kind of downstream of a bunch of conversations at the leadership team level.

And this was the decision that was made. And this was the decision that was made. But, you know, I was delighted because this is a book that I really feel like I know in a way that I don't always feel about every book. First John was an adventure for me.

I've struggled with the circular language in First John for my whole Christian life. And it just always felt like, I don't know if I want to go there, but, man, that was super rewarding.

[3:10] But Ephesians is, you know, very familiar territory. And one of the amazing things that happens in Ephesians is by the time we get to chapter five, it's clear that the Holy Spirit through Paul is saying, you guys form your households the way I formed my household.

That's where we start in chapter five. You form your household the way I formed my household. Well, okay, well, what is that way? It's by hyper George Bailey level responsibility.

It's by being willing to just consistently suffer the Kipling-esque defeat, you know, the risk it all in a game of pitch and toss.

And then after losing, you know, get back up again. That's how God's family was formed. It was formed by Jesus offering himself as a payment for the washing, for the founding and washing of his bride.

And everything flows downstream from this hyper-responsible head who does all this stuff knowing that, well, maybe he doesn't know if he's not God, but Jesus knew that this isn't going to be fun, but I'm literally here for this.

[4:42] That's why I'm here. Again, it's a theological question. I'm here to, back into wonderful life, George Bailey territory, I'm here to lose my hearing.

I'm here to resign all my dreams. I'm here to despair in my Gethsemane on the bridge. And then the angel ministers to him, you know, it's a very Christological movie.

And, you know, that's how Ephesians starts. We are predestined to be adopted as his sons into his household. That's the main way God gets his glory.

And by the time we get to chapter 5, it's, okay, now you build your household the same way. So I suppose in some respects I'm speaking to men in a little bit more deliberative way, men related to anxiety here, but not entirely.

Because then we get to chapter 5, the basic idea is, okay, you saw how God formed his household through suffering. You form yours the same way.

[5 : 52] And that's the symmetry of Ephesians. There's, and what's interesting is that the spiritual battles that Christ had to face, temptation, so forth, dealing with the devil, dealing with the Pharisees, who were the sons of the devil.

By the way, again, another example of biblical sonship, just inverted. What do sons do? Do they just hang out with daddy? No, these are not three-year-olds. They go do the work of their father. Even in the darkness, you know, the Pharisees are sons of Satan. They do the work of their father, the devil. Sonship in the Bible, which would include daughtership, by the way, isn't infantilized. It's, you could do the work that your father does, or your mother does. Anyway, Jesus has to deal with all of these principalities and powers who are trying to keep him from being the founding of this new household.

And, like, one of the temptations comes from Peter, where he says, don't, you know, okay, you can be our founding dad type figure, but just don't suffer.

[7 : 17] And Jesus is like, get behind me, Satan. There's only one way to do this. So then you get to Ephesians 5, and Paul's essentially saying, through the Holy Spirit, okay, you know how the household of faith was formed.

Now, here's how you form your households. You have one person who is ready, willing, and able to lay down their lives for their bride.

And the inference there, by the way, which is, if we would just stick to this, our world would be so much different, isn't that the wife is suckling off the sacrifice of the man, but that she joins him in the sacrifice.

He's just the founding sacrificial piece. She doesn't live off of his sacrifice. She joins him in the sacrifice. Anyway, all that to say that if you want a good thing, you're going to have to suffer.

That's fundamental to the biblical language. And the Bible's like just very clear in its sonship and daughtership language that that's kind of the point.

[8 : 27] You know, when it goes right, the reason it goes right is because the son or the daughter joins in the suffering of the father and the mother. And if it goes wrong, the reason it goes wrong is because the son or the daughter refuses to join in the suffering.

So Noah is right. In fact, his name is Rest. He is his father's Rest. Why? Because he's going to work. He's going to take up the toil and work in this cursed world.

He's going to work. You know, I was thinking about Joshua where Caleb chooses the land that he chooses. When the time comes to divide the land, Caleb does not ask for easy territory.

He asks for Hebron, the hill country still occupied by giants because he believes the same God who sustained him in the wilderness will give him glory in the land. Caleb receives the inheritance, but he doesn't take hold of it alone.

His household advances into it with him. Atheniel, the Caleb's own family line, captures a fortified city. Caleb's daughter secures the water sources needed to make the land fruitful.

[9 : 41] You know, it's a real inheritance. It's a real gift of grace, but it's not passive. It's taken and secured and cultivated through shared faith and shared risk and shared labor. That is God's vision for his household, and that is God's vision for our households.

Caleb's story kind of leans into the Ephesians' inheritance language, because Paul's using the word inheritance. As a good Jew, he would have Joshua fully in his mind, which is the divvying out of the good promised land as the inheritance.

By the way, all that happens with the New Testament in terms of covenantal developing is that the promised land is not a section of physical ground directly to the east of the Mediterranean Sea.

It's the world. That's what's happening in Colossians. That's what's happening over and over again. But the way that that is all taken is through suffering.

And I think that if, to be honest with you, if we all lived the following life, none of us would have anxiety.

[10 : 54] Here's what I would suggest would be the following life. If we all had a soul-crushing defeat at, say, let's say, what?

It's an arbitrary age. Let's say 17. Existential George Bailey on the bridge level. And then our father either personally met us or sent someone to meet us who said, no, no, no, no, no, no.

This is so good. This is so good. And I'm so proud of you. And this is absolutely as it should be. We are a family of giant killers.

And we have to expect to get our noses bloodied. Let's take the time we need to heal our wounds and deal with the stuff.

But then this is who we are. This is what we do. I think if every one of us experienced that at a young age, anxiety wouldn't exist.

[11:57] Because we would just understand that this pain is inevitable. And rather than microdose it with an everyday neuroticism, we just say, well, I'm going to live free.

And then when hardship punches me in the face, it does. And I'll just deal with it when it happens. And God will be with me because he's my dad and I'm working with him.

So this fourth piece of the outgrowing anxiety conversation really needs to handle sort of work. And I don't mean work like your job. I just mean doing stuff.

You know, getting out there and getting after it. Trying new things. Applying for the job you don't have any reason to apply for.

You don't have the ability to apply for. Asking the girl out. Whatever. Like this adventurous relative indifference.

[12:53] I'm not saying you're a robot. I'm just saying you have pain in its proper perspective.

That's how we advance. And that's how we form households. That's how we form countries. And so on and so forth.

That's how God is forming his kingdom. So I want to walk through the theology of that. We ended last time by saying that adoption is the point.

And then downstream from adoption is this eschatological reality where the sons and daughters, the kingdom of priests, rules with the Father.

Okay. Rules with Christ, you know, in the world. Romans 8, Revelation 5, Revelation 22, so forth.

Let me take you through a couple other texts.

Let's start with Hebrews. Look at, let's say, Hebrews 1 and 2. So first thing is, Hebrews 1 establishes beyond question the exaltation of the Son.

[13:59] Long ago and in many ways God spoke to, you know, but now it's Christ. He is enthroned. He's superior to the angels. He's the heir of all things. And he's addressed as God whose throne is forever.

By the end of that chapter, you have Christ's supremacy. It's just a completely unmistakable reality. He rules. He inherits. He reigns.

But then Hebrews 2 opens, and it's a bit of a juke, to be honest with you. And this is just really feeding the recapitulation ideas that Irenaeus, Athanasius, and so forth had.

Hebrews 2 opens up with a surprising clarification. It says, It was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. That line starts to reframe the conversation a bit.

The question's no longer merely who Christ is, but kind of also becomes something like, Who the world is for? Who the world is for?

[15:04] And the answer is a bit unexpected. It feels for a second like a completely unrelated tangent. The world is not for angels, but for humanity.

And to explain this, the author of Hebrews reaches back to Psalm 8, which is a creation psalm that reflects on humanity's original calling.

What is man that you are mindful of him? And yet is the idea. And yet. And yet. The psalm asks. And then it just describes this idea that humanity is crowned with glory and honor. All things are placed beneath mankind's feet.

This is not, you know, Psalm 8, not originally a messianic text. It's an anthropological one. It's like, essentially, Genesis 1 rendered in poetry.

[16:01] Humanity was made to rule, to exercise dominion over God's world as crowned image bearers. Hebrews wants us to see that this was always God's design.

Human beings under God ruling over creation. And then the author of Hebrews says, In other words, it's really obvious that the world is still not fully under the dominion of man.

Not in a proper way. Not aligned properly. The promise is real. The fulfillment is not. It's delayed.

But humans were created to rule. That's clear from Genesis. But that rule has been fractured by sin and frustrated by death and, you know, obscured by suffering.

The honest admission that, like, hey, it's not all. We're not there yet. I mean, that prevents the social gospel. That prevents a lot of things.

[17:19] Prevents the prosperity gospel. We aren't there. It prevents a kind of naive triumphalism. The world is not yet everything that Psalm 8 envisions.

Humanity is not what it is supposed to be. The resolution, though, comes in verse 9. But we see him who, for a little while, was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus.

Oh, gosh. Jesus steps into a human role. He becomes the God-man. Not merely as a divine ruler, but as a man.

He becomes humanity's representative. He's the new Adam. He's the final Adam. He's the perfect Adam. And he's crowned with glory and honor through suffering, guys.

Through suffering. The very obstacles that seem to disqualify humanity from its calling, the suffering.

[18:35] I'll explain that here in a minute. It's just crazy how God does things. So Christ comes to be the new and perfect and final Adam.

And this leads to one of the most important statements. I think it's verse 10, right? It was fitting that he should be made the founder of their salvation perfect.

Sorry. It was fitting that he should make the founder of their salvation, he, the founder of their salvation, should make them perfect through suffering. Should be made perfect through suffering.

Let me look up the verse. I'm just saying it off of memory here. Hold on one second. This is ridiculous. Let's see.

Okay. The idea is, it's just crazy. And that is, is that the goal of Christ's redemptive work is not simply to forgive or escape.

[20:00] It's to bring his enemies into his household as his sons and daughters. Right? That's, that's the text.

Let me read it again. For it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist and bringing many sons to glory, bringing many sons to glory. And I often add daughters there just because we live in the era where it's not understood that there used to be sort of this universal use of the masculine to refer to all people.

I'm not going to fight that fight. I'm not going to fight that fight every time. I'm not going to fight the linguistic fight every time. Sometimes I'm just going to say sons and daughters. And I just, I just do that pastorally to help people and help girls understand.

It's you too. For it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist and bring many sons to glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. Why is that fitting?

Why is that fitting? The word fitting, which is, let me look it up here. Propaion does not mean unfortunate or necessary or the best available option or, you know, plan B.

[21:15] It means, it is fitting means it is in keeping with the moral order. It is appropriate. In other words, this is how things ought to work. Given the world as it is, this is how things ought to work.

And that immediately invites us back into a creation, fall, restoration frame that I talked about last Sunday. And it pushes right back into Genesis 3.

Why does suffering exist? And why does it a part of taking dominion over the world, of doing our job? Well, because after the fall, God doesn't fully revoke dominion.

He just reconfigures it. He just says, Adam, the ground is cursed because of you. And now your rule of this world will come through toil and resistance and sweat.

Dominion remains, but it's achieved through suffering. And he says to Eve the same thing.

Fruitfulness will continue, but now it's marked by pain and vulnerability and disquietude, which I think of as like unresolvable desires.

[22:24] Which seems to be what God is saying. Eve, you will have unresolvable desires.

Crucially, Adam and Eve, they never lose their vocation. Their vocation is simply now exercised under cursed conditions.

So after Genesis 3, the rule of humanity is still real, but only accessible through suffering. And, you know, in that sense, severely limited because people just don't do well with suffering.

They sin. They freak out. They quit. They avoid it. They blame others. They steal from others to avoid more hardship. They, you know, all the stuff, all the sins.

So Hebrews 2, you know, when it's talking about man is supposed to take dominion of all things, but at present we don't see dominion of all things.

And then Hebrews 2.10 gets to this. Jesus comes and he is willing to suffer to bring many sons and daughters to glory. That's not abstract. That's not.

[23 : 29] Jesus didn't take a shortcut. In other words, he's saying humanity was meant to rule. We do not yet rule. Jesus enters our cursed condition. Not an idealized one, like a cursed condition.

And he says, so essentially the rule now, post-fall, is in order to own, in order to rule and subdue, you have to suffer. Is that the rule now?

Jesus is like saying that. Is that the rule? Father's like, yep, that's the rule. That's the rule. You're a human being, by the way, now. And, yep, that's the rule. You have to suffer.

If you're going to run things, you have to suffer. Jesus says, okay. He enters the post-fall human condition, full of weakness and mortality and frustration and resistance.

In that world, in the world we live in, glory cannot be reached except through suffering. Because the path of dominion itself has been bent by the curse. And Jesus doesn't avoid the curse.

[24 : 29] He fulfills it. That's the key theological idea. He doesn't bypass the suffering. He doesn't negate the curse. He simply rules through suffering.

He bears the curse. He walks the cursed path. He fulfills human dominion under the curse conditions. Where Adam and many, every other human fails under resistance, Christ perseveres. You ever think about, we talked about David a minute ago. You ever think about, what went wrong with Solomon? Well, I'll tell you exactly what went wrong with Solomon. You're a leader.

You want to do stuff. It's really hard. And I would say that while I do value all vocations, I would say that the work that is the closest to the spiritual is actually the most full of friction.

When you get the closer to a person's soul, the more likely you are to suffer as you try to help the soul. And so, I don't know that Solomon was doing that.

[25 : 34] That might have just been me venting for a second. Sorry. Anyway, Solomon's like, yeah, I'm going to do all this. I'm going to build the temple. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this. And David had it all laid up for him. And, you know, we'd love to turn this into kind of like a silver spoon kind of situation, which I suppose is fine to some degree.

It just doesn't quite add up given the data we have about who Solomon was. I think the basic idea is lots of us have persevered for a while. And then it just gets hard.

And then there's, you know, we have the ability to hit the eject button, the eject button appropriate to our means and resources and our abilities. And Solomon had, you know, the concubine eject button.

Like, why go through all this hardship when I could just, like, just do this instead? And I can make relationships with all the nations.

And, you know, if you wonder what happens to people, it's this. It's really hard to endure a whole lifetime trying to take ground and dominion when there's a cost associated with it.

[26 : 45] And that cost is from the curse. And so lots of people, all people in one degree or another, have failed. Jesus comes and he is founding a new family.

And what do you have to do when you found a new family? Well, what does Adam have to do? He has to basically die. That's the language of falling asleep. And he has to lose a part of himself. And he has to die to himself and so forth.

And so Jesus comes to found a new family. And that family is a dominion family. It's a fulfillment of the dominion mandate family.

That's why Hebrews says it was fitting. It was fitting for this to go this way. Because under the conditions we live in now, that's just the way success works.

Real success. You got to die. You got to suffer. You got to fail. It's so good of God to have written, you know, with the ink of reality into the story of the crucifixion, the detail that Jesus, first of all, in the Gethsemane, said, is there any way for this cup to pass?

[28 : 02] But secondly, to say, he didn't, he couldn't even carry his cross all the way. If you decide to go for it and really work alongside your father, you are going to fail.

You are not going to have enough. You're not going to have enough. And? And?

Seeds fall to the ground, man. They fall to the ground and they bear much fruit. True suffering is the only way dominion can be redeemed. If Christ had ruled without suffering, he would not have redeemed human rule.

If he had bypassed the curse, he would have replaced humanity, not restored it. Hebrews insists he is crowned as man. He brings many sons to glory. He fulfills Romans 8.

On our behalf, but not alone. He brings us into his new dominion. Suffering is not incidental, friends.

[29 : 12] It's vocational. And so when you're thinking about like, well, how do I handle my anxiety about this or that? It's like, well, you don't. You just understand that you're going to have moments where you're like George Bailey on the bridge.

And that's just the way it is. But God is faithful. And he will meet you there. And he will get you back home. There's no way around this, guys.

There's no safe path. The safe path is the path of nothing, of microdosing pain every day of your life, feeling anxious, of feeling.

There's no way around this. You just have to go for it. By the way, this whole concept of conquest through suffering, I think answers one of the riddles that I've had, you know, over the years.

I don't know how to explain this. Give me a second. Let me gather my thoughts. But hit pause and gather my thoughts. Okay, I'm back. The reason that this is so funny to me is I'm thinking of Colossians again.

[30 : 20] And Paul gives the kind of Christology which we now are pretty certain is a hymn. It's another podcast I forgot to do. Anyway, I forgot to do this whole podcast about how we're now finding out pretty good evidence that in, I think, four different places in Paul's writings, he's not actually writing originally.

He's citing a hymn that would have been well known to the people. Anyway, and this is one of those. So all of that stuff in Colossians 1 about, you know, he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

You know, and this is, of course, how Hebrews begins and this high Christology, this cosmic Christ. Well, we think that now that that was a hymn from the very beginning of the early church, which means, by the way, that the early church started producing culture right away.

Anyway, he goes through all of this like Jesus has done everything. He is everything. You know, it all exists for him. And then listen to Colossians 1, 24.

Just while I'm finding that verse, just as a reminder, a massive amount of my spirituality and theology happened is downstream of a moment.

[31 : 45] My freshman year, probably still in September of my freshman year, the first month of being taught by a person who was a Bible professor.

I had accumulated, even in a couple of years of studying, I had accumulated a lot of doubts. Not doubts enough to make me run away, but also like, I don't know what this seems to contradict this and so on and so forth.

And I just had this professor who just, almost like he knew my, read my mind, just the whole class just felt like it was tailored to resolving all of these things.

And if not resolving all of them, at least saying there's probably a resolution. If there's a resolution to like, you know, 80% of your doubts is probably a resolution to the last 20%, even if you don't understand it.

So all that to say, that taught me to read the Bible with a skepticism, like a God glorifying, well, what about this kind of skepticism.

[32 : 44] So when I find things that don't add up to me, I've learned to kind of lean into them. Anyway, all that to say, you know, you've got this glorious Jesus image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation.

For by him, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. And then it says in verse 19, for in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on heaven or whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And, you know, you've got this utterly high Christology. Jesus is enough. He's in charge of everything. His death reconciled everything to himself.

Okay, that's verse 22. Verse 23 is kind of like pointing back to the Colossians. If indeed you continue in the faith, stable, steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, of which I, Paul, am a minister or became a minister.

Now listen to verse 24. Booming Christology. Jesus is enough. He's done everything. Listen to verse 24. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh.

[34 : 02] I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. For the sake of his body, that is the church, of which I became a minister, according to stewardship from God.

Now, the broad takeaway is, is that what does Jesus do with people he adopts? He makes them his partners. That's where Paul's at here. That's what we saw in 2 Corinthians 5.

5. He has made me an ambassador of reconciliation. He's reconciled me, and then the next thing, he's made me an ambassador of reconciliation. Here, Paul says, I am partnering with Christ. He saved me, and I'm his partner. But how can he say, the broader point is, how can he say, Jesus, his sufferings, his death, reconciled the whole world to himself.

And he made peace by the blood of his cross. Now say that there was something lacking in Christ's afflictions. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up.

[35 : 06] I don't look at the Greek right now, but I suspect that's the perfecting word. I can't remember the word right now, but I suspect that's the state. I'm completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

What does he mean by lacking? Lacking in what sense? Lacking for whom? Why would Paul even dare to speak this way if Christ's work was already finished and sufficient?

So clearly, either the Bible is just a crock, and it's not, by the way. Or, Paul is saying something other than Jesus' suffering was deficient in its atoning power.

I mean, he has said that the blood of Christ has reconciled all things to himself, made peace, the debt is canceled, the hostility is put to death. What could he mean? What does Paul mean when he says, I'm filling up what is lacking?

Well, Paul says something remains, not in heaven, but on earth, not in merit, but in history, in the progression of the kingdom, in the coming of the kingdom, not in Christ's obedience, but in his embodiment.

[36 : 21] So the question isn't, was Christ suffering enough? The question's more like, enough for what? Enough to reconcile the world? Yes, of course. Enough to inaugurate the kingdom?

Yes. Enough to enthrone the Son? Yes. But is it enough to see that the reign of Christ is fully manifested in a world still resisting its rightful king?

It's enough to make Paul work. It's enough to send Paul out to the field with his older brother, Jesus, and his father, God.

You know, it's enough to get him going. It's enough to give him the spirit to work within him, to will and to work according to God's good purpose. But there's still work to be done, which means under our human economy now, because of Adam, there's still suffering to be done.

Think back at Hebrews 2. Humanity was made to rule. Psalm 8 says that plainly. Is everything subjected to us? No. Why? Because after the fall, dominion is now exercised under curse conditions, suffering conditions, and rule happens through, or in spite of resistance.

[37 : 36] Fruitfulness comes through dying to yourself, falling to the ground, going through the hard thing, getting punched in the face.

Authority comes through suffering. Hebrews says that it was fitting for Christ to redeem people and start this new family through suffering.

Why was it fitting? Because that's the world we live in now, under the curse. And Christ entered the curse under the law. So Christ walks the path first.

He fulfills human dominion through suffering. He is crowned through death. And he brings many sons and daughters to glory. And they're not brought because he's decided it just because he wanted to.

He didn't speak it into existence. Why is it that Jesus had to die? Well, the world post-Adam is a world where progress happens through pain.

[38 : 38] And I believe that we live in a world now that is just nice enough to allow people to indulge in ongoing neuroticism and fear as if it's possible to avoid cataclysmic pain.

It's just not. It's just not. I can't remember the book, but Sebastian Younger comes to mind.

I don't remember who the author was even now. But there's several books written about sort of the theory that our world is just too easy and it produces a neuroticism because it gives certain people the illusion of thinking that if they just do everything right, they can avoid pain.

And that's impossible. So how do Jesus' sons and daughters... By the way, when I talk about Jesus as father and brother, it's actually right out of Luke and Isaiah.

He's called father and a lot of other things. He's kind of everything in some sense. As a second Adam, he's certainly a father. What do those sons and daughters that he brought to glory, what should they expect?

[39 : 51] Should they float behind him and untouched by the suffering that he endured? Do they inherit a kingdom without sharing the cost of its advance?

Or do they follow the son along the very path he carved out? Well, I think every Christian knows these verses. If anyone wants to follow after me, let him pick up his cross, deny himself daily. You know, right? And that's Paul's understanding in Colossians is not that Jesus' suffering is insufficient to save or insufficient to sanctify, but that there are many sons and daughters yet to join the workforce of the family business of bringing the kingdom.

And we all have to just understand that we have a George Bailey-like life ahead of us. Is that a miserable life?

It isn't actually a miserable life as long as you keep teleology and ontology sorted out and understand, what am I here for? What am I supposed to do? And then you see all sorts of glorious, beautiful things once you get your orientations rearranged.

[41 : 03] Christ's afflictions aren't lacking power or worth or efficacy. They're just lacking historical extension through Christ's body. The kingdom has been secured, but it's not fully occupied.

Basically, we are being invited to be Caleb's who go into our little section of the land we've been given of the kingdom and with our households do the hard work of killing the giants.

Some of those giants are going to hurt us. The victory has been won, but, you know, there's the ground still has to be claimed.

And in a fallen world, under the cursed conditions, claiming that ground still hurts. And so part of anxiety is, I think, just a failure to come to terms with the basic math of the universe.

You cannot consistently avoid pain and expect to achieve. It just won't work. That's why Paul can rejoice in his sufferings, by the way, not because it's good, not because pain is good, but just because it means that the reign of Christ is advancing.

[42 : 22] His suffering is not pointless. The number of times Paul was disrespected and embarrassed and treated so poorly and dishonored, and the number of times he was physically attacked, and the number of times he lost everything, and, you know, you don't come out of a shipwreck with your wallet intact back then, you know?

Like, everything just gets reset to zero if you're used to playing, you know, role-playing games or something. And he just went through that over and over again, and we didn't get into this in 2 Corinthians 6.

We didn't really spend much time last Sunday in 2 Corinthians 6, but he just lists all these things that he's had to do. But it's okay because he knows what he is for, and he knows who he is.

Who he is is God's son, and what he is for is the advancement of the kingdom through suffering under cursed conditions. That's just the way it's going to work. And creation is liberated because sons are revealed.

That's Romans 8. That's kind of tied into Ephesians 1 and so forth. So when Paul suffers, he's not filling in a gap for Christ. He's just stepping into the role of a son. He's sharing the vocation of the family business.

[43 : 39] He's participating in the long and costly process by which the kingdom comes. Through many toils, dangers, and snares, we must inherit the kingdom of God after all.

Christ's suffering advanced God's kingdom. Our suffering advanced God's kingdom. Period. End of story. And so I wonder how much anxiety is just like hyper-programming to avoid the inevitable, which is you're just going to lose, man.

You're just going to go through hard things. You're just going to be embarrassed. You're just going to overstep. You're going to understep. You're going to make the wrong choice. You're going to choose the wrong person to be friends with.

Well, as someone who's done all those things, I will tell you, it all really actually does hurt, and there's no way of getting around that fact. And the reality is that I don't think in terms of suicide, but I think in terms of just in particular ministry.

I've stood on George Bailey's Bridge many times. Because that's what a human does until God comes and confirms, strengthens, and establishes them.

[44 : 48] You know, like, that's just what's going to happen when you really get hurt. You're going to go to George Bailey's Bridge. But God will meet you there.

And you will go home and realize how good you have it. So in terms of applying this piece, and I don't know, I'm not, I don't have a plan for this series.

This could be the last one, unless something else comes to mind. But in terms of this, like, I would say this.

This perspective has to change how we think about work, effort, and suffering. If redemption is at least even partly about restored sonship and restored vocation, then faithfulness in this life isn't busy work.

It's actually going to mean something. Always. Scripture consistently describes progress not as instant triumph, but as a sowing before reaping, tears before joy, death before resurrection, seed, falling, and then blooming.

[46 : 03] This is the system. This is the world we live in. Make peace with the math. Which means that effort matters, and persistence matters, and showing up matters, and work ethic matters.

Not because we're trying to earn stuff from God, but because we are sons and daughters. This means that learning is a assumed sort of part of being gods.

Have you heard the acronym for FAIL? First attempt in learning? I'd say that as someone who's failed a lot, it should probably not be first attempt in learning.

It should probably be further attempts in learning. Because it almost implies, first attempt in learning implies, like, you just need to fail one time, and then you'll figure it out. Well, that's not true.

Reality is, is that learning itself is impossible. This will show you how deep this curse structure lays in reality. It is actually impossible to get anything figured out without first suffering, without first failing.

[47 : 25] It's, your failures are, depending on how much they cause you pain, just depend on how you frame them fundamentally. So you've got to learn to rule by meeting resistance faithfully.

That's the idea. Learn to rule by meeting resistance faithfully, hopefully, confidently, with a biblical ontology and a biblical teleology.

Whose am I and what am I for? This also reshapes how we think about frustration and delay. When scripture talks about sowing in tears and reaping in joy, it's not actually romanticizing pain, at least not very much.

It's just naming reality. Growth is slow. Mastery is costly. Fruit takes time. And so whether we're talking about spiritual maturity or relationships or work or skill or wisdom, I'm talking to, you know, people who are, their problems are widespread, like from figuring out how to love their husband, how to be, you know, gracious and kind and faithful to their husband, to a dude who's figuring out how wide to cast the net for vocational aspirations, to a person whose body gave out on them when they were so young, and just a thousand things like this, it all winds up in the same deal.

If you begin to understand that suffering is normative, it is simply the way that the world is going to be until Jesus comes and makes all things new. And the way we get there, by the way, is by being faithful sons and daughters who join our Father in the land of giants, ruling and subduing.

[49 : 08] And I just feel like this just gives a massive amount of dignity to just ordinary obedience. If Christ redeemed human dominion through suffering, then your unseen faithfulness, your small faithfulness, it's not wasted.

Learning and failing and trying again, that's not, that is not meaningless repetition. The devil wants to hand you your failures like your resume.

It's just so full of crap. That's not what's happening. That's not what's happening. You're God's, you're God's son, you're God's daughter. It's okay.

Not a single moment of failure is ultimate. It's subordinate. It's preparation for glory. The sins of God are revealed through endurance, not shortcuts.

The world is trying to convince you that if you get the right life hack, you can avoid pain. And the reason that that's so seductive, and I myself am fully, fully vulnerable to these sorts of things, is like we know that's somewhat true.

[50 : 17] We know that wisdom does cut a shorter path. But let's not, let's not lie about this and let's not fall into like delusion here.

It cuts a shorter path sometimes, but it never prevents suffering entirely. Sometimes you can be the right guy doing the right work in the right place and just get your lunch handed to you.

So learning and failing and trying, it's not repetition. It is in God's sovereign history, kingdom advancing, and not repetition.

It is not you repeating the cycle of futility. And so far as you are trying to obey him, it is advancing. It is filling up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings.

As crazy as that language sounds, I invite you to just, I encourage you to embrace that. Think about it. Don't run from the weirdness of that. Figure out what you think that means.

[51 : 22] I think I know what that means. But the idea is like the world that is going to come to us one day will not come to us simply because we drafted behind King Jesus for X number of years.

He hit the rapture button and we all wound up okay. No, that's not how this has all been designed. The world to come is ruled by those who learned faithfulness in a world that resisted them down to its very bones.

So don't despise the small beginnings. Don't interpret struggle as divine disfavor. Don't imagine that joy comes without tears. When God adopted you, he adopted you into a life of fruitful suffering. And the path there for now still looks like leaning, learning through effort and failure and sowing through tears and trusting that, you know, like the psalm says, joy really does come in the morning. I think this also really exposes a difference in how we imagine the future. You know, as many of you know, I have a very optimistic eschatology.

[52 : 41] I have the most optimistic eschatology, let's be honest. And I always joke with my friends who are most, who are more pessimistic.

I always joke with them. But I do this because I think it's true that some people would rather brace for impact than learn how to fly the plane. Let me say that again.

Some people would rather brace for impact than learn how to fly the plane. The story they tell themselves is that the world's going to end in a crash. And so you best just strap in and lower expectations and wait it out.

I don't think that's what the Bible teaches. I think the Bible teaches, yeah, some things have gone horribly wrong. Get up, go into the cockpit. What's the worst that can happen?

Exactly what would have happened if you'd stayed in your seat. Let's try to figure out how to take the dominion that God has created mankind and womankind to take.

[53 : 41] This is like Romans 8, that section of Romans 8 that talks about the redeeming of the sons for glory. History's not a countdown.

It's like a classroom. And if the world is your inheritance, then obedience isn't damage control. It's not trying to avoid hardship so much as it is just preparation and building and getting the place more situated than it was when you got there.

Laboring and failing and trying again aren't signs that you are not good at something. Well, they are. I mean, it's okay to not be good at something. What are you for?

Do you exist to impress people with yourself? Or do you exist to impress people with the faithfulness of God? So yeah, turbulence is real.

Resistance is real. Suffering is real. It's actually completely unavoidable. It will just happen to you. Stop trying to avoid it. Stop believing that you could just make the precise number of excellent decisions and avoid looking like an idiot.

[54 : 57] Those of you that are at church Sunday know exactly what I'm talking about. I, you know, I was so disoriented. Brand new sanctuary. So disoriented.

And I had all these other things I wanted to do. And I really wanted to try to do a good job honoring people. And I'm a liturgy dunce. When the service order gets too complex, I completely lose my place.

And so you all saw me, if you were in church on Sunday, you know, beautiful new sanctuary, wonderful day, glorious day, full of God's goodness. And I'm just, I just look, like I said, on Sunday, like a dog in a new house.

I have no idea where I'm supposed to be. You know, at some point you just start embracing that and saying, well, those are cracks in my jar. And the thing that is the most important thing, the thing I was made for, which is to reveal the glory of God as a son of God, that's happening right now, even as I'm looking like an idiot.

And, you know, be prepared, by the way, for the fact that when you finally make peace with this, when you finally start living that way, everyone's going to assume you're prideful and full of yourself. You know why? Because you're just done with neurosis.

[56 : 08] You're just done. You're just happy to be you. And everyone will assume that, you know, the worst of you in those senses. Again, but our goal is not to be holy and blameless in the world's eyes. Our goal is to be holy and blameless in God's.

And he's already secured that for us in Christ. So, all that to say, man, if your anxiety is fundamentally about avoiding pain, stop. Just go ahead and understand that that's actually the way that we get there.

And there meaning the new heavens and the new earth. You have a role to play, but you have to do what Jesus did in the garden.

And you have to say, I don't really want to suffer. But nevertheless, not my will be done, but your will be done. Or the teleological argument he makes to himself earlier in John where he says, you know, my heart is heavy, but what shall I say?

Father, spare me from this hour. It's for this hour that I was born. You say, well, I don't really want to look stupid. I don't really want to fail. I don't really want to go through hard things.

[57 : 16] I don't really want to accidentally say the wrong thing. I don't. And then you have to say, well, hold on. Why am I here? Am I here to make myself look good? No.

No. I'm here to make Christ look good. And I need to act in such a way as to make that the priority of my life. So this is my sincere effort to help those who are struggling with anxiety overcome it.

You start with until I, if I produce anything else, of course, you'll see it. But if this is a real struggle for you, let's make 2026 the season where it stops being.

And what I would encourage you to do is I'm confident, not in my delivery, but I am confident that the material I provided in the first four episodes is enough for you if you will just keep thinking about it.

It is enough for you, for the Holy Spirit to take that and start to unbind, you know, loose some of these chains. All right, friends.

[58 : 27] Well, I think that'll probably be it for me. Tomorrow's Christmas Eve. I don't plan to do too much. And this was just very important to me to get out before then so that you could have some basic architecture prepared for you before you start the new year.

Love you so much. I know not everybody that listens to this is somebody I know, but I know a lot of people that listen to it or friends and family and church members and so on and so forth. I'm so grateful for each and every one of you.

I asked my daughter-in-law if I had this theory, the first pain that you feel in life is when you're bored.

And she said, yeah, I can see that. She said, I bet you it's more emotional than physical, but yeah, I can see that. So if that theory is true, somebody can probably look it up, figure it out.

But what we're celebrating this week is God of the universe, equal with God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but humbled himself to obedience.

[59 : 30] Even the obedience of being smushed in a birth canal. You know, even obedience. I just can't understand what the hypostatic union looks like with a fresh-squeezed baby.

But Jesus came to suffer, man. He did. Not as the ultimate end, but as an end to serve the ultimate end, which was to bring many sons and daughters to glory.

Which was, well, that's not the ultimate end, but the ultimate end behind that is that in that chief way that God has demonstrated from the very beginning, from Genesis 1 onward, the chief way that God has aimed to bring glory to himself is to create a people for himself, to create a family that he walks with and talks with and treats as his friends.

And Jesus Christ has offered that to you, and so, you know, I never want to forget to just remind people, like, you know, there's always a chance. You just have been trying really hard to live a good life, but haven't ever been born again.

So I'd say, well, let's believe that the Lord Jesus is God, that he was the payment for our sins, and that we have to stop striving for our own personal achievement to please God and rest in what Jesus has done for us.

[60 : 51] I've always felt like the real clear sign of repentance for the prodigal son was that he sat down and ate a meal he didn't deserve. So if you really believe in Jesus, like, one of their best evidences of that is you'll just stop striving.

I'll just trust in him. So I hope that you've done that. I pray that you will do that. It's the beginning of the rest that you are really desiring.

And then from there, understand that no matter how good your church is at telling you this, one of my main goals is to make a local church that tells people constantly, you don't need to impress us.

I hope your church is like that, but even if it's not, that's actually the truth. You're not going there to impress people. You're going there to show Jesus to people. And sometimes that comes through weakness, and sometimes it comes through excellence, and so on and so forth.

But all that to say, maybe we should stop trying to avoid pain and just understand that actually, because God's in charge and because we're gods and because of what Jesus has done and how Jesus did it, pain's going to produce stuff, good stuff, if not for us, for others.

[62 : 13] And when God gets our heads screwed on right like he did, and it's a wonderful life, then we begin to see that, well, that's actually a really wonderful way to live. Merry Christmas.

Have a wonderful week. The Army Blues.

The Army Blues. Thank you. Thank you.