

Arm Yourselves - 1 Peter 3:18-4:2

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[0 : 00] If you will open your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter, our text for today will be 1 Peter chapter 3 starting in verse 18 and going all the way to chapter 4 verse 2.

! There are at least three theological landmines in this text. It's a really complicated text. I really enjoyed studying it. I've studied it for several weeks now.

But there are multiple pathways that things could go wrong in a hurry. We have Christ preaching to spirits in prison. We have the phrase in this passage that baptism saves. And we have the phrase that whoever has suffered in the flesh is done with sinning.

Lots of complicated, potentially problematic statements in this passage. I think if you've made the wrong turn on any one of them, you would start a cult.

So I'm hoping not to do that today. That's my main goal today, is not to accidentally start a cult.

Because this passage is complicated and the exegesis of this passage is a little bit tricky, I want to go ahead and give you the thesis of what I think Peter's trying to say and also the application points.

[1 : 21] I want to front load the sermon with those things and then show you my work as we work our way through the text. I think that the thesis of 1 Peter in general is that we are not called to fight like the world.

We are in a fight with the world, but we are called not to fight like the world, rather to fight like Jesus. And the main supporting argument that Peter uses throughout this epistle to support this idea of not fighting like the world is, he says, repeatedly in different ways that we are to look to Jesus and look how he fought and look how it worked out for Jesus pretty well.

And I think that sort of the last statement in the sort of overarching thesis would be something like this. Pain that is faithfully endured can and will be hyperproductive.

Pain that is faithfully endured can and will be hyperproductive. I believe there should be a Christian posture toward pain in general that is hopeful, that has expectation and faith, is not avoidant, but sees pain almost as a pump that God uses to move some of his most treasured treasures into our lives.

I was thinking about the pump jacks that you see, you know, sometimes out in Kansas and Oklahoma and so forth. And just thought about what it would be like to be, you know, a relatively poor guy living on a little bit of land.

[2 : 56] I'm not going to recreate the Beverly Hillbillies story arc here, but it's going to sound like it. You know, you're living on some rough land. It's barely producing a crop. And then someday, one day, you see a little bubble and crude come out of the ground.

And you're living in this, you know, this plywood house. The wind cuts right through. It's dusty everywhere. You have really worked so hard to make a living on this little piece of ground.

And you one day see a little bubble and crude coming up out of the ground. And so, unfortunately, it's right next to your house. And so, the problem is as follows.

You do not have any money to move. You have wealth in concept. You don't actually have any of it yet. And it's going to be a while before you do. You've got to invest in the pump and so on and so forth.

And so, there's this season where this pump is right next to your house. And it's annoying. And you really don't have anything to show for it. And all you hear throughout the day is chun-chun, chun-chun, chun-chun.

[3 : 54] Day after day, you just hear this. But you process that differently because you know, as we saw lightly in 2 Corinthians 4 already, that these light and momentary troubles are producing for us an eternal weight.

Intentional oil joke there. Crude weight of glory. And so, you like deal with the pump in a very different way than someone who doesn't understand the economics at play.

It is still annoying. It is still a problem. You don't want to be there. But you are there. And you know that while you're there, productivity is happening.

And that one day, you'll get to the point where you're not living next to the pump anymore. But all of the benefits of the pump will be your kind of life.

So there really needs to, we need to embrace. And I think that parents, we have to make a massive course correction. I think that previous generations were not raised with a Christian view of pain.

[4 : 56] I think there have been many Christians who have tried to live the Christian life with a worldly view of pain. They're avoidant of it. They're afraid of it. And it's just not going to work.

It's not the Christian perspective. So I think that Paul's, Peter's thesis is something like, when you are in a hard time, fight like Christ. Don't fight like the world.

And if you fight like Christ, you will see that your pain is productive, just as Christ's pain is so productive. And I think that there's three application points underneath that thesis. Number one. Application number one. And I'll support these as we move on. Comfort zone living is costing you character. Comfort zone living is costing your character.

You have to have a Christian view of pain that doesn't cause you to be consistently avoidant of it. Because if you are consistently avoiding discomfort, your character will suffer.

[5 : 57] Building a life to avoid pain is antithetical to God-honoring productivity. Building a life to avoid pain is antithetical to God-honoring productivity.

Application number two. The pain that comes as a consequence of proclaiming the gospel is massively productive and should not be avoided. Do you hear me?

The pain that comes from sharing the gospel, from being rejected, from being thought of as weird, from being excluded, from feeling insufficient. With a Christian view of pain, that pain is massively productive and should not be avoided.

When we avoid it, we are really taxing both our character and our legacy. We are limiting our productivity in this life, and we are also limiting the development of our own character.

Number three, third application. Even when you are not suffering for Christ, you must always aim to suffer like Christ. In other words, there's different kinds of suffering.

[7 : 06] And Peter discusses a number of them. One being, you are suffering because of Christ. What he's, it's interesting that he does this, he doesn't assume that just because a person is suffering for Christ, that they will suffer like Christ.

He says, hey, you know, yeah, you're being picked on. The world's not liking you. Jesus said this would happen. They're rejecting you. There'll still be a temptation for you to respond to this suffering like the world responds.

So there's a difference between suffering for Christ and suffering like Christ. First Peter is mostly a book about however, whatever suffering comes your way, you should always suffer like Christ.

Even if that suffering is physical, has anything to do with persecution, or even as a consequence of your own sins, whatever the cause of your suffering, whether it's suffering, whether it's for Christ or not, we need to ensure that we're always suffering like Christ.

That we have a Christ-like attitude in our suffering, wherever that suffering comes from. Okay, so let me kind of support the thesis and the application points by showing you, walking you through the text.

[8 : 19] I think that verse 1 of chapter 4 is probably the verse that grounds the entire passage and helps us to see clearly Peter's intent. Verse 1, 1 Peter chapter 4 says this, Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. The way of thinking is a really interesting term. I think that very often Christians sometimes believe that if they just get the right doctrine, that that's the goal.

It's the accumulation of right beliefs. It's like, no, we are actually looking for the right disposition. Not just the right doctrine, but the right disposition. The phrase, the way of thinking, is it relies on a very unique Greek word that doesn't simply mean ideas or mind or even attitude.

It's something even deeper than that. It's the idea of disposition. It's like who you naturally are in reaction to your environment. If you think about it this way, there was the famous study that said, you know, that people respond in one of three ways to stress.

This started in the early 1900s into attacks, rather. And the first were fight or flight. You guys have probably heard that many times. And then a third was added, which I think is totally reasonable and observable, and that is freeze.

[9 : 44] So there's three possible ways that people respond to things. And it tends to scary things, to pain, to the potential of pain. Fight, flight, or freeze.

And that's a disposition. Like, there are some people that do it this way. There are some people that do it that way. And what Peter is saying here is, is that you should arm yourself with the fourth way, which is faith.

There's a fourth option to difficult circumstances. There's a fourth option to the things that are frightening, as Peter just got done talking about earlier in chapter 3.

And that is faith. Respond like Christ did. Arm yourself, he says. The phrase arm yourself, that's a term for combat or for war. This, your disposition, whether you realize it or not, is your weapon.

It's the thing you reach for instinctively to handle hard things. And Peter is calling us to arm ourselves, not with one of the three worldly dispositions or human dispositions, but to arm ourselves with the disposition of Jesus Christ.

[10 : 55] How he fought, how he endured suffering, his attitude toward pain. That's the disposition that the Christian should have. Walter Cannon, in this initial idea of fight or flight and then eventually freeze, I want to say, yeah, there is a fourth way.

We see it in Jesus and we see it in the martyrs. What are the martyrs doing exactly when they die the way they do? Are they fighting?

Kind of. Are they freezing? Kind of. There's something going on here that doesn't fit any of the three normal categories when a faithful person faces persecution.

And the answer is, is that they have armed themselves with the disposition that Christ has toward pain, toward suffering. It's a fourth way. It's the way of faith.

Arming ourselves with this way of faith is rooted in the fact that Christ has already showed us the productive pathway, the productive response to pain.

[12 : 04] Look back at verse one again. Since, therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh. Since, therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself, therefore, with this way of thinking.

We have a path cleared out by Jesus that shows us the right way, the most productive way to respond to pain.

And now we have to, as Peter's telling us in verse one, arm ourselves with this new disposition. Put on this new disposition. Now, the word, therefore, in verse one tells us that we do need to spend a little time looking backwards because Peter's referencing some stuff that's already happened and some stuff that he's already said.

And you can kind of see where we're supposed to look. If you look at verse 18, you see that there he is also talking about the sufferings of Christ. Verse 18 of chapter three. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God and being put to death in the flesh, but being but made alive in the spirit in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison because they formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through water.

For baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers, having been subjected to him.

[13 : 43] If you ever read the Bible and just feel like, I'm a dumb person. I don't understand what's going on. That's sometimes the absolute right reaction to reading the Bible.

This is one of those places where it is, okay, you just said a bunch of things, Peter. I'm going to have to really think about what you're trying to tell me. There's a lot going on in this particular section, so let's see if we can unpack some of what he's doing.

By the way, the way that I always tend to try to figure things out is I look in the rest of the book and say, well, what else is he saying similar to this? But I think the big key to understanding the Bible, frankly, is that ultimately there really is only one author of the whole book, the whole Bible.

One author through many different personalities, but one author making one point through many different places and personalities to different people. And so one of the things that I rely on a ton

when I get to these passages is I just ask, well, what does God mostly like to talk about? And how does God talk in other places? And I sort of use the other passages that are clearer as a kind of Rosetta Stone to understand this particular passage. That's why I'm fairly confident that I won't start a cult today.

[14:59] Because everything I'm seeing in this passage, I can see much more clearly in some other passage. So let me try to walk you through what I think he's saying here.

I think one thing to acknowledge is that Peter just has this consistent pattern throughout the entire book that we could summarize in a statement he makes early on in chapter 1, where he uses the phrase, the sufferings of Christ and his subsequent glories.

I think that phrase, sufferings and subsequent glories, is the way that Peter wants us to think about pain. It's a pump.

It's an annoyance. It's a hardship. But it's producing for us an eternal weight of glory. And he grounds that in Jesus, who suffered and then experienced subsequent glories.

In verse 21, he does the same thing in chapter 1. He says, God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. I think the main sort of axiom, the main machine, if you will, in Peter, it's a pump.

[16:08] It goes down and up. It goes in and out. It produces by declining to some degree. There's this idea of the seed falling to the ground and dying.

That's what Peter's doing. He's just using different terminology. He says, after you have suffered a little while, later on, God will himself confirm, restore, restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

He says, humble yourself under the mighty hand of the Lord, so that in due time, he will exalt you. And so, this is why I say that Christians ought to have a different attitude toward pain. Because we actually believe it produces something.

We believe it produces a lot of things, actually. So, one of the things Peter's clearly doing is, is he's pointing us back to Jesus, so that we see just the classic seed narrative, the seed story arc, the falling down, the being result, the resultant exaltation, and fruitfulness, and so forth.

And I think the big idea is, is that when you faithfully endure pain, that pain produces far more than you could have ever asked or imagined.

[17:19] And I think what Peter's doing mostly in this passage, is he's giving us two proofs, that pain can be hyperproductive. He points to Jesus and says, look, here's someone who endured suffering faithfully.

And look what God produced, as a result of this faithful suffering. And I think he's saying, there's two things, that Jesus' suffering, was used by God to produce.

Let's look back at verse 18 again. I'm saying there's two things in this passage, that Peter's saying, look what God used, look how God used Jesus' pain.

Look what, look what was produced, as a consequence of Jesus' faithful endurance. Let's read this again. You tell me if you can see, two things here. Verse 18, 1 Peter 3, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey.

When God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through the water, baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, powers, having been subjected to him.

[18:56] What did Jesus' pain produce? Well, first of all, it produced our redemption. Do you see that in the passage?

Jesus' pain produced our salvation. Verse 18, For Christ also suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us back to God.

Peter has run this exact play before, earlier in chapter 2. He's talking to servants who are suffering under unjust masters, and in verse 21 he says this, listen, he's calling these servants to suffer well, to suffer like Christ, and listen to what he says, For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges

justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed, for you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

[20 : 21] So do you get the play that Peter's running? Here, and in chapter 3, he's saying, Endure suffering like Jesus. If you endure suffering like Jesus, there will be all sorts of things produced.

And here's exhibit 1. What did God produce with the sufferings of Jesus? You! He produced you in your current justified, adopted state.

He's saying, You want evidence? Do you want evidence that God turns pain into something productive if you will endure in faith? You are that evidence.

He died for you to return you back to God. You were like sheep straying, and now he has returned you to the shepherd of your souls. That's an incredible sort of way of saying, Here's, You want some proof?

You want some proof that the pain is productive? You're the proof. Friends, I want you to lock this saying in and really think about it in terms of how your attitude toward pain is reflected in this.

[21 : 27] I truly believe that a Christian struggling to believe that pain can be productive is like an apple struggling to believe in apple seeds.

I really think it's the most insane thing in the world that a Christian doubts whether faithfully endured pain can be productive because they themselves are the evidence that it can be.

That's one of the, I think, tricks, tricks, rhetorical plays that Peter is running here. He's saying, Yeah, Oh yeah, it works. Look, you, you exist.

You have been saved. How did that happen? Because Jesus didn't fight like the world. Jesus entrusted himself to him who judges justly. Also, Jesus did not fear pain.

Not as a fundamental. Jesus did not commit to living in his comfort zone, did not commit to a life primarily dictated by the search of personal peace and affluence. He embraced the Father's will and he produced something glorious as a result.

[22 : 43] And now, we get into this next section where it says in verse 19 that in addition to producing our salvation, it produced a prison sermon.

It produced a prison sermon. Do you see that? Verse 18 and 19, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison because they formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared.

Okay. What's going on here? What's Jesus doing, preaching, and when is Jesus doing it?

What is Jesus doing, preaching the spirits in prison, and when is Jesus doing it? Well, I think that this is part of the classic one-two punch in gospel proclamation in basically every book of the New Testament.

And there's basically two ways that New Testament writers brag about the cross's consequences. One, he saved us.

[24 : 06] He saved us from our sin. He died. He made atonement. He propitiated God's wrath. He saved us. And there's a second brag that shows up all the time, and that brag is, and he subdued all of the principalities and powers and demons and so forth.

What is the gospel? What's happening in the gospels? Just helping a bunch of people out? Kicking a bunch of demons out. Like, what's happening in Acts?

Helping a bunch of people out? Kicking a bunch of demons out. What is Revelation about? Nearly every epistle you'll find has two celebratory exclamations littered throughout them.

Number one, he died for us while we did not deserve it. Number two, he defeated Satan and all of his enemies. And so my understanding of what's happening in this section of Scripture from, you know, verse 18 through 22 of chapter 3 is that Peter is going back and forth, and he's showing the two things that Christ's cross have most famously accomplished.

One, salvation, and two, superiority over all principalities and powers. And if that is the correct take, that would make sense of verse 22.

[25 : 30] You see verse 22? This is a very common way of talking in the New Testament about Jesus' cross victory. Who has gone into heaven is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

So I think what Peter's doing here is he's saying the two outcomes of Christ's cross that show that pain can be productive when entrusted to God are the salvation of souls and the superiority over all other beings.

Now, this idea of Jesus going into a prison to preach, it's like, well, where does that happen? There are multiple ways of thinking about this, multiple theories.

I would tell you that they basically fall into one of two categories. Number one, these are spirits of human beings who during the time of Noah did not obey and were cast into sort of the outer darkness, not hell, but shoal or something like that, and that Jesus went and preached to them not a message of salvation, but a message of condemnation.

You should have listened. The other option is pretty close. It's just that they're not human spirits. They're demons.

[26 : 51] Either disembodied or cast into the gloomy darkness during the flood in which Jesus also did the exact same thing. He went and preached a message of vindication of his superiority.

When did he do this? There's two options. He did this during the time of Noah or he did this after his resurrection or after his death or after his resurrection or something like that.

But there's a few things we can know for sure. Number one, this was not a message of salvation. It would just disagree with everything else in the Bible to suggest that Jesus was going to people after they had died or to demons and offering a message of salvation.

We know that for sure and we know that the message of vindication, I have won, is indeed something that God delights in saying to the principalities, the powers, and so on and so forth.

So I think that's what's going on. I'll try to walk you through this a little bit more in a minute. Now, what about this baptism saves thing? In fact, what about, why is Peter taking us to Noah in general?

[28 : 04] I want you to think about three ideas in the Noah typology. See that phrase in verse 21, baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience.

That word corresponds is the word for type. Peter's doing typology here. And I think this is an important lesson and not just something kind of that you might want to know about.

His invocation of Noah here is really interesting and using the ark is really interesting for at least three reasons. Number one, I think one of the ideas being communicated here is that pain can either be productive or destructive.

Pain can either be productive or destructive. If you place your faith in Christ, the same pain that judges and destroys the unbeliever will deliver and purify the believer.

The floodwaters being God's pain, God's judgment, the suffering. What is suffering? What do the floodwaters of suffering do to the unbelievers outside the ark?

[29 : 25] Destroys them. What will pain do to you if Christ doesn't preserve your heart, fill you full of the Holy Spirit, and let you persevere in Him through hope?

It will destroy you. You will deconstruct. You will walk away and you will blame God because a good God wouldn't do X, Y, and Z. When the waters rise, if you are not truly in Christ, the suffering, the hardship, the calamity, it will destroy you.

But if you are in Christ, what do the waters do then? They transport you to the mountaintop. They move you to the next stage.

They put you in a unique position of authority and leadership. You see, the idea is that the pain that destroys can also save and secure and start over if you are in Christ.

And so, like, again, the big message of Peter is if you're going to suffer anyway, suffer in Christ. Christ is seen as the ark here. Put your faith in Christ.

[30 : 41] Live out your life in Christ. Put on the mind of Christ. Arm yourself with the disposition of Christ. Make him your ark. And when the waters of suffering and hardship rise, you will find not that they destroyed you, even though there will be moments where you're hanging on and it's really gusty out there, you will find that that same calamity has brought you to a place that you needed to be, that was in God's next step for you.

That's why the Christian just has to have an entirely different attitude toward pain. And the third idea is when he says that baptism saves, I think what he's really saying here is that baptism is the ceremonial entrance into the ark.

It's the thing that is represented by baptism, which is, I am trusting Christ. The idea, I think, here is you have entered into Christ like those eight survivors entered into the ark, and because of that you

are saved from calamity and the natural consequences of calamity and the natural consequences of pain.

The very thing that could drive you away from God, the very thing that could make you angry and bitter and self-pitying and full of excuses and just a victim will drive you into obedience, into faith, into a higher level of your walk with the Lord.

Wayne Grudem talks about this in his commentary on this issue. He says, Baptism now saves you not the outward physical ceremony of baptism, but the inward spiritual reality which baptism represents.

[32 : 20] An appeal to God for a good conscience, Grudem says, is an inward spiritual transaction between God and the individual, a transaction symbolized by the outward ceremony.

So as we're working through this, we've said, okay, Peter seems to be doing two things. He's talking about our salvation and he's talking about demons. And I want to help you to see that that's extraordinarily normal.

It's just the way that the New Testament talks about the victory of Christ. It's routine that we see this idea that Jesus' authority over the darkness, over principalities and powers, it just shows up over and over and over again.

It's in Romans, it's in 1 Corinthians, it's in Ephesians, it's in Philipians, probably most famously it's in Colossians. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.

And then again in chapter 2, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them. You see this throughout everywhere and I think that's what Jesus is doing to the spirits in prison.

[33 : 35] I think he is on a I told you so mission that is a holy righteous vindication of his name. He's displaying his greatness, he's making his enemies his footstool, so on and so forth.

Now, those are the two main evidences that Peter, we're almost done, thank you for your patience, this is a lot. Those are the two main evidences of Peter's proof, his thesis.

Endure pain like Christ and it will be productive. How do you know? Number one, he saved you with it. Number two, he subdued all the demons. And now we're ready to look at verses one and two again, kind of land here because there seems to be a third thing that Peter says can be produced by faithful suffering.

Since therefore, look at verse one of chapter four, since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions but for the will of God. See, this is another potential cult moment because we could just say like, hey, if we suffer enough in the flesh, we won't sin anymore. By the way, I have an iron in a branding fire outside and afterward we'll make our way outside and, you know, there's this broken, you know, flawed, heretical doctrine called perfectionism.

[35 : 15] It's held by Nazarenes and other people and that is that you arrive at a certain place where you no longer sin. Which is insane because I know some Nazarenes and I love them but they most definitely still sin just like me.

So Peter's not saying that we can somehow go through one hardship, one significant hardship and just stop sinning but he is saying that that is the path to sanctification.

That doing hard things in the name of the Lord, insisting that you follow Jesus when your flesh is barking at you to stop, that is going to have an effect on your relationship with your flesh and with sin.

We know, the Bible's clear, that suffering produces godliness in some way when it is joined with faith through the Spirit.

Jared read from James, consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials for you know that these trials are going to produce things in you. Steadfastness will have its full effect and then you will be perfect and complete and lacking in nothing.

[36 : 28] Romans 5, not only that we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

I think what Peter's saying is similar. He's saying that a person who endures suffering with faith has in some sense practiced the disposition of Christ-like suffering.

He has turned a corner in terms of becoming a new person. He is a person who has in the hardest moments of his life resisted the barking and yelping of the flesh, quieted his soul, entrusted himself to him who judges justly, and in that sense by enduring suffering he has developed some of the muscles that are needed to say no consistently to sin and the flesh and yes consistently to God. I think that's what Peter's saying here. Not that certain amounts of suffering will make you perfect, but that one of the things, one of the three things he's saying suffering produces is for us as sinners a new relationship with our flesh and with the truth.

All of those times we spent telling ourselves during those hard moments when we want to quit, when we want to hit the eject button, all of those hard moments where we instead choose to trust, that trust transfers into our daily life and how we approach just the normal annoyances of being simple and the normal temptations that are accompanied in this world.

[38 : 15] I think the idea is something like this. What if you started sharing the gospel routinely so that you became routinely rejected and ridiculed and mocked? Would that help you with your porn habit?

With your whatever? Yes. Yes. That's the idea. Yes. If you will suffer righteously and develop a Christ-like relationship to pain, with pain, it will produce godliness in a way that cannot be produced in any other particular way.

Which brings us back to our application. question. Number one, comfort zone living is costing you character points. Comfort zone living is costing you character points.

If you have built a life around avoiding hard things because you don't have a Christian relationship with pain, that is affecting your character.

that is affecting your ability to sort of be who God's called you to be. We don't want to do that.

Building a life to avoid pain is antithetical to God-honoring productivity.

[39 : 29] Pain is actually a part of the process that God uses to produce. Think of the oil pump. Number two, gospel suffering, gospel-related suffering, is massively productive.

The pain that comes as a consequence of proclaiming the gospel is good pain. Productive pain. It will help you. You shouldn't avoid it.

You should understand that this kind of endurance learned is exceptionally good for you. It's exceptionally good for the world indeed.

In fact, that's the whole idea here is that when you endure suffering in faith, you see other people blessed. And you see yourself blessed.

And number three, suffer like Christ even when you are not suffering for Christ. I don't know how many people in this room are suffering for Christ, but I know several people in this room are suffering.

[40 : 36] And what I would just encourage you to see is that fundamentally, if you can endure this season of suffering by arming yourself with Christ's disposition, which is a hopeful and trusting disposition to hardship, you will see God use your pain to produce all sorts of excellent glories.

Let's pray. Amen. Father God, would you, through your Holy Spirit, help us to stop being afraid?

Lord, we live in a world perfectly and totally controlled by our Father God, who has already demonstrated He loves us and that He gave His own Son for us.

Lord, we should just have a completely different relationship to suffering than anybody else in the world. It's where we got our start in the sufferings of Christ.

It's why the world is the way it is to the extent that there's anything good here. It's because Christ has shed His blood for this world. It is our freedom and our joy and our hope and, Lord, it all came about because someone did a really hard thing, the only thing that He could do for us, that no one else could do.

[42 : 18] I think Peter would have us look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, forsaking its shame.

Lord, would You please help us not only to receive the comfort that comes from the cross, but also our marching orders. Would You please help us to suffer like Jesus Christ?

to see pain and difficulty, especially gospel-related pain, to see that through the eyes of faith and hope, expectation.

Lord, would You please through Your Holy Spirit do this work for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, for communion, I just thought I would share something real quickly with you. Jesus says to every person in this room, if you want to be His disciple, you've got to take up your cross and follow Him. And I want to clear something up before you come and celebrate this reminder of His cross, His presence in this celebration.

[43 : 30] Do you think that Jesus is calling you to take up your cross because He's like one of these kind of guys who suffers and wants everybody else to suffer too? Like, what is Jesus actually, why would Jesus tell you to take up your cross?

Why is He telling you to do that? The answer is that He loves you and there's certain crowns that you can only get on the other side of that cross bearing.

That's the answer. He loves you. He's not doing a hard thing and like, well, you've got to do a hard thing too because I'm doing a hard thing.

No, He's doing the hard thing for the joy set before Him and He loves you and He wants you to follow Him so that you find the glory after the suffering.

And so this communion is an invitation by Him not only to be saved but to follow this most excellent person to the cross, to the grave, out of the grave, to the throne, it's the last thing He prayed for you.

[44 : 42] Did you know that the last thing He prayed for you was that you would see His glory, that you would be with Him where He is, that you would reign with Him.

Why is He calling us to do hard things, to endure hard things, to suffer? Because He's a meanie?

No, He loves you and He's giving you the most excellent investment advice ever given to anybody. unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a seed, but if it falls to the ground and dies, it produces, it produces, it produces, it produces.

So this communion is an invitation for you to just have that conversation with Jesus and say, Lord, I'm not you. I live under you, I live in you, but I do want to be like you.

Would you please give me the faith to follow you? Come and partake of it. Come grab the elements. Sit down.