

The Supremacy of God in Missions Through Suffering

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[0:00] Amen. of both of those things.

Now, we said that life is war. That's how we began two weeks ago. Life is war. It's not peacetime that we're living in. And the only way that we use prayer properly is if we understand that we are engaged in war, that it's a walkie-talkie.

It's a wartime walkie-talkie. It's not a domestic intercom where we buzz up more comforts for ourselves. And so we pray. And as we look at how the Bible teaches us to pray, it's a very wartime mindset.

We're to call in reinforcements for this war. Remember, Jesus teaches us, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. We use prayer to beg God for boldness.

Remember, Paul repeatedly prayed for boldness. Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

[1:36] We pray for daily bread. We don't pray for an excessive amount of food. We pray for the bread that we need for today. We pray for the healing of our sick comrades. We pray that God would extend His kingdom in this world.

We pray your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. And so the Christian life is war. And that means prayer is a wartime walkie-talkie.

We use it to communicate with our commanding general. And this war that we're involved in is a global one. It's a world war. Now, most of us have not seen those in our lifetime, but we are all engaged in one right now.

We are engaged in a global war that extends to all the nations. Jesus has invaded this world. The kingdom of God has come. And Jesus will not stop conquering until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of Christ and His God.

And we can't play our part in this battle unless we pray. Unless we pray. And that's what we've been talking about. We have to pray because God's strategy in this war is that He will not advance His kingdom through us unless we pray.

[2:57] Because He's going to make a name for Himself in whatever He does. He's the most God-centered being in the world. And so, the way that He extends His kingdom through us is by exalting His name.

And the way He does that is as we pray, as He answers our prayers. Now, prayer shows us distinctly that the glory to God, or the glory in missions, goes all to God.

We talked about John 15. Remember last week? We talked about John 15, 5, 6, 7, 8. How does those verses, how does Jesus' teaching in those verses teach us that God is supreme, that prayer is necessary, if anything's going to happen in missions?

What were some of the things that we said last week? Feel free to answer. This is for you. Father comes from the dead.

Okay. What is John 15, 5? What's the main metaphor, the big picture of John 15, 5, 6, and 7? Maybe you need to turn there.

[4:13] Jesus is the vine. I am the vine. You are the branches. Without me, what? You can do nothing. So, we can't do anything.

But, is it to God's glory that we bear no fruit? No. So, how are we going to bear fruit? What does Jesus teach us in that passage?

He does the branches. Okay. He does pruning work. He does pruning work. We didn't actually talk about that. But, he does pruning work. Linda.

Linda. We abide in, and Jesus says, if you abide in me, so, if we remain in the branches, or in the vine, we'll bear much fruit.

But, what else does he say? Roger. Okay. If you obey my commandments, we're talking about prayer.

[5:11] Remember? So, a good answer would be prayer. Remember, Jesus says, that, at that time, you know, if you ask anything, ask for anything you wish, and it will be given to you.

Maybe we need to turn there. John chapter 15. John chapter 15. And we're going to look at verse 7. So, verse 5 says, I am the vine, you are the branches. And then, in verse 7, it says, if you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

And remember, last week, we said, that that is not a promise that's just carte blanche, that's just ask for whatever. He's specifically talking about whatever fruitfulness that you're seeking.

Remember, we all come to our lives, and we look at them, and we're looking at our lives, and it's like Jesus looking at that fig tree. We're looking for fruit, and in and of ourselves, we don't see any.

[6:32] But it's to God's glory that we bear much fruit. So, are we going to remain? How do we bear much fruit? Well, it's through verse 7.

It says, we abide in Him, as we remain in Him, and then, it's as we pray. So, we don't see fruitfulness in our lives, in whatever area we're looking, but then we pray, and God gives us the fruitfulness that we were seeking.

And so, if we're talking about missions, if we're talking about evangelism, or just patience with our children at home, we can't bear any fruit on our own.

We don't have the power. We can produce thorns, and thistles, we can produce pain, but we can't bear anything that's to God's glory unless we pray.

And so, what are we seeking in missions? Well, we're seeking for people to leave their fathers and mothers, to say no to themselves, to go to the ends of this earth, and to see churches planted, people saved, and then for worship to begin.

[7:49] Remember, that's the point. Missions exist because worship doesn't. And all that is fruit. Saying no to yourself, and leaving, and comforts, and starting churches, and seeing people saved.

That's all fruit. Well, how is any of that going to happen? Well, it's as we remain in Him, His words remain in us, and we ask. We ask for it.

And so, our fruitfulness in missions depends upon our prayer life. And, that's from the beginning to the end. To seeing men raised up, and seeing churches planted, all the way from the beginning to the end, our fruitfulness comes from Him.

And so, prayer makes it clear that God is supreme. It makes it clear that God is supreme. When we try to do something, and then we fail, and then we pray, and God makes it happen, then we see, that God is supreme.

Now, we want to move on, to chapter 3 today. That's an extended review, but, I'm hoping that, that would stir up in your mind, and encourage you in some way. But, in chapter 3, it's entitled, The Supremacy of God in Missions, Through Suffering.

[9:01] Through Suffering. Now, the last chapter was a test. This chapter is a test. The last chapter was a test. How passionate are you for God's glory?

Will you pray for it? That was last week. It's a thermometer to check your, your spiritual temperature. Are you on fire? Are you burning with zeal for God?

Well, will you pray? And this chapter is a test as well. How passionate are you for God's glory?

Well, will you suffer for it? Will you suffer for it?

Um, I didn't ask, will you die for it? Because, that's an awfully hard question to answer. Especially, when you're not in that situation.

It's far too easy for us, I think, to say, oh yes, I would die. Or no, there's no way I couldn't do that.

Um, but, when the time comes, uh, that's when the answer is given.

[10:01] Because by God's grace, a person who is weak can stand. And without God's grace, a person who thinks he is strong will fall. And so, I ask, how passionate, I want you to ask yourself, how passionate are you for God's glory?

Will you suffer for it? Will you suffer loss for it? Now, a man was, walking through his neighbor's field. And it had been a long day, and he was dragging his feet along.

You can imagine, he's tired, been working hard all day. And as he dragged his feet along, he stubbed his toe, on something. And down, he fell. Flat on his face.

And surprised, and curious, he looks back to see what he fell over, and he notices, it's the corner of a box. And, curiosity got the better of him, and so he started digging around the edge of this box, to see what was in it, or, what was this about?

So, he started digging with his hands, and, the more he dug, the more he realized that this box is pretty big. So, he's digging around it, and finally, he digs all the way around it, and there it sits.

[11 : 12] A large, giant chest, with a rusty lock on it. And, he's done this much work, so he's not going to be stopped now, and so he grabs a, a big rock, and he breaks that lock, and, the lid pops open, and, much to his surprise, it's full of \$100 bills.

Not just hundreds of them, thousands of them, thousands and thousands of \$100 bills, and he's beside himself. He doesn't know what to do, he's thinking about it, and he doesn't know who this belongs to, he can tell it's old, and so he comes up with a plan, and he shuts the lid, and he puts it back in the hole, and he covers the, the, the box up, again, and he decides that he's going to buy this field, no matter what it costs him.

And so he comes home, and he says, honey, we're having a garage sale. And she said, well, why are we, why are we doing that? I mean, it's the middle of winter, and why are we going to do that? Uh, well, because we're buying the neighbor's field.

Well, why are we doing that? Well, I just have, I think it's a good idea. It might be worth it. And so, they, they put all their junk out, you know, how we do, on these garage sales, and they, she sells, he sells all their junk, it's still not enough money.

So he goes through his 401k, and his retirement, and he cashes it all out, and it's still not enough money. And he sells their cars, but it's still not enough, not enough money.

[12 : 48] And, he sells their furniture, then he sold their house, and it wasn't enough, and so he goes down to the South Bend Medical Foundation, and sells his blood, and his plasma, and, until finally, he sold everything he has, and there he is, with nothing but a t-shirt, a big smile, and a lot of money.

And he goes, and he buys that field. Now, we measure the worth of a hidden treasure by what we will give up for it, by what we will sell to buy it.

Now, if we gladly sell all, all that we have, then, we measure that, the worth of that treasure as supreme, that's worth more than anything else.

And, if we don't sell all, we show that, whatever we have left, we actually treasure that more, than that treasure.

So, we value whatever we have left, that we're not willing to sell, to be more valuable, to be supreme, above that treasure. Now, the kingdom of God, is like a treasure, you remember the story, hidden in a field, which a man found, and covered up, then, in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

[14 : 11] Now, the depth of sacrifice, and the depth of joy, is the display, of the worth, of that treasure.

So, how much he will sacrifice, and what joy it gives him, to sacrifice it, shows the value, of the kingdom, of God.

And that's why, loss, and suffering, and sacrifice, and death, joyfully accepted, for Christ's sake, shows us more, of the supremacy, the more of the value, the worth of God, and his kingdom, than, all the worship services, that you could ever attend.

And that's why, we find it so moving, so precious, to hear, of people, who have given, their all, for Christ.

Who have given up their lives, and who have sacrificed, a lot, and everything. People like, Henry Martin, Henry Martin, was born in England, 1781.

[15 : 22] And, he had, well-to-do, parents, a well-to-do father, and his father, sent him, to the finest grammar school. And, at age 16, Henry Martin, enrolled in Cambridge.

And, after four years, he took, the highest, the highest honors, in mathematics. And, later, he won the highest prize, for Latin prose.

But, the whole time, he had, turned his back, on God. And, as he reached the peak, of his academic, success, he ran, right into, the havel, of life.

Remember, havel, from Ecclesiastes, the vanity, of life. And, he had dreamed, of academic success, but he had found, that he was just empty.

It was, an empty prize. This is what he said, I obtained, my highest wishes. I got, what I really wanted. But, was surprised to find, that I had grasped, a shadow.

[16 : 29] And, so God, started working, in Henry's life. His father died. And, his sister prayed, for him. And, he found himself, reading, David Brainerd's, diary.

And, God, broke him. Broke him. And, in 1802, he resolved, to forsake, a life of academic, prestige, which he had wanted, he had longed for, that he had somehow, in some ways, grasped, and, to become a missionary.

And, that was the first measure. This is, this is the first measurement, of how much will, he value, the kingdom of God. Well, he'll give up, all of his dreams.

The things that he had longed for, he'll give those up, gladly, for the kingdom of God. And, so he became, an assistant, to Charles Simeon, the godly, evangelical preacher, at Trinity College, in Cambridge.

And, that's what he did. He was an assistant, to Charles Simeon, until 1805, when he left, for India. Now, he was going to be a chaplain, at the East India Trade Company.

[17 : 42] So, he spends, better part of a year, on the, on the ocean, going, sailing, to India. And, as he arrives in Calcutta, on day one, he meets, William Carey, of all people.

Now, they had some opposing viewpoints. Henry Martin, was an Anglican, William Carey, was a Baptist. So, they didn't see eye to eye, on everything. But, William Carey, wrote this, we go to the house of God, as friends.

Henry Martin, had a sweet spirit. William Carey, had a sweet spirit, about him. So, they went to the house of God, as friends. Now, for two years, he stayed on there. And, his main job, was being a chaplain, for the East India Trade Company.

But, all of his other time, he was spent, he spent, translating the scripture, into Hindustani. And, after two years, he was done. He had finished that.

And, he began working on, a Persian translation, a Persian version, which we call, Farsi, now. And, as he was working on it, as it was nearing completion, his health broke, and he became very sick.

[18 : 44] And, he realized, that he needed rest, and he needed to, to leave the mission field. And so, he decided to go back home, to England. And, he, instead of going, the sea route, he decided to go, over land.

And, as he went, his plan was, to continue to revise, his New Testament. But, as he traveled, he became sicker, and sicker. And, the caravan, that he was a part of, the, the, the, the leader of the caravan, had no compassion, for him.

Martin, ended up sleeping, in stables, and, in disgusting places. No one cared, as he got sicker, and sicker. And, then on October 16th, 1812, among strangers, on the backside of Turkey, with no one, that he knew around, he died.

And, he was 31 years old. Younger than I am. That's, shocking. So, Henry, died in the line of duty. And, that's really only half, of the suffering.

Because, you know, it's very easy to have, a hero complex, about these kind of figures. Where, we, we, don't see what's going on, on the inside.

[20 : 03] And, the suffering on the inside, of a person, is, almost always, greater than what's going on, on the outside. His life, his inner life, was not uninterrupted calm. It wasn't, oh, glory to glory, never, always a happier day, the next day.

He knew what it was like, to suffer on the inside. So, listen to what he wrote, on the boat ride, the ship ride, over to India. And, I find this first sentence, to be so, striking to me.

I found it hard, to realize, divine things. Have you ever had that? Where, you hear the preaching, of God's word, and, and, it just doesn't seem real to you?

Like, and, you read the Bible, and it doesn't seem, like, it really, how could this be real? What does this have to do with me? Henry Martin went through that. I was more tried with desires, after the world, than for two years past.

The seasickness, and the smell of the ship, made me very miserable. And the prospect of leaving, all the comforts, and communion of saints, in England, to go forth, to an unknown land, to endure such illness, and misery, with ungodly men, for so many months, weighed heavy on my spirits, and my heart was almost ready, to break.

[21 : 23] So as he's on the ship, he's looking forward, to what's in front of him, and he sees a lot of loneliness, a lot of ungodliness, and a lot of suffering, with no one around to help.

And he knew, he was leaving his family, and his friends behind. People that loved him, and cared for him. And on top of that, there was a love story. There's a love story to tell.

Martin was in love, with a woman named Lydia. Lydia. And he didn't feel right, about taking Lydia, to the mission field, until he went there first. And so, on the ship he went, by himself, and you can be sure, that lots of his thoughts, went back to Lydia.

He arrives in Calcutta, and two months later, he asks, he sends a letter, via ship, asking Lydia, to marry him. And it took a long time, for ships to make, that voyage, there and back again.

And so he waited, and he waited, and he waited. And 15 months later, he received a letter, from Lydia. Can you imagine, his excitement, his, the giddiness, and the flourish, and he opens up the letter.

[22 : 36] It was a refusal. She said no. Lydia's mother, wouldn't allow it. And for five years, he hoped, and he prayed, that something would change.

But nothing did change. So letters went back and forth, between he and Lydia, for that time. His last letter, was two months, before his death, and he's writing, and he says, I hope to see you soon.

But he never did. Never did. Right near the end of his life, he wrote this, Whether life or death be mine, may Christ be magnified in me.

If he has work for me to do, I cannot die. And then on the backside of Turkey, among strangers, the work was over. Christ was finished with him, and he died.

Now, why is that terrible picture so beautiful, and so attractive? It's not because Henry Martin was a hero.

[23 : 39] In some ways, he is a hero. But it's not because he is such a beautiful character. It's because all of that suffering and sacrifice points to God and says, This is what God is worth.

This is the supremacy of God. He's worth more than my life. He's worth more than my death. And it's when we put on the glasses of suffering that we see God's glory at its brightest.

That's why the cross is where we see God's glory at its brightest. It's what will he give up? What will Jesus sacrifice? So, Henry Martin's suffering.

It's unusual. It's unusual from our perspective, but it's not distinct. We are all called to suffer in that way. Every single one of Jesus' disciples is called to suffer for him.

And it's that suffering that shows his glory. And so the question is, is how much will you suffer for the kingdom of God? What will you lose for his glory?

[24 : 44] Will you suffer for it? Every disciple, every true disciple will. Dieter Vonhofer died at the hands of Nazis.

And he wrote this, and he's not a totally agreeable person, but he really hit the nail on the head with this one. The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life.

But it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. Now, Martin's death was not a terrible end to otherwise good life.

His whole life was laid out on the cross. That was the trajectory that his whole life had. And so it was no surprise that when he died, or that he died.

And what I'm saying is, when Christ called you, he called you to the same thing. He called you to come and die. And someone might say, you know, whoa.

[25 : 53] You know, we don't know that. We don't know if I'm called to die. You know what? We don't. But we're all called to take up a cross. Mark 8.34, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

And our culture has so perverted what this word, what this means, that we totally missed the point. A cross is not this heavy burden that we bear.

It's not a head cold or a cranky wife. It's an instrument of pain. It's an instrument of execution. And so Jesus isn't merely calling us to hard work.

But he's calling us to pain and he calls us to die. It's hating your own life. It's renouncing all that you have. And this is not doctoral level discipleship.

This is Jesus saying, if you want to follow me, this is discipleship 101. So have you come to terms with that? I think this is something that I continually wrestle with.

[26 : 59] Am I called to suffer like this? And I know I am. But there's so much in me that loves comfort. And so have you come to terms with it?

Did you know that when you took Christ, that you also took a cross and a crown of thorns and nails, you took death.

And it will mean suffering. But the promise that proceeds from Mark 8.34 is a promise of life. Mark 8.35, whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it.

This is the way to save your life is to actually lose it. So the cross is not death. It is life. It's not defeat.

It's victory. It's not the path to darkness. It's not the path down, down until eternal destruction. It's the path upward to heaven.

[28:02] And so we have to come to terms with this. We have to let Jesus' words sink into our hearts. And this is so important at this point in time in history because right now the church is at a very peculiar stage.

And what I mean is for the first time the end of missions is finally in sight. Jesus has said go into all the nations. Well for the first time we actually have a good count of what he's talking about.

All the different people groups. And that number is high. But that number every year is going down lower and lower of unreached groups that have no Christian testimony, no Christian witness.

people. And so there it is. We kind of know what's before us. The only need is for people.

The only need is for men to go. Men need to go. We prayed for the Jumjum of Sudan last week. We prayed for the Makassar of Indonesia.

[29:06] These unreached people groups. Men need to go. The gospel must be preached. But here's the reality. Those countries, those cultures aren't standing with wide open doors and wide open hands saying, oh, come preach the gospel to us.

They're fortresses. They're fortified. They don't want light. They don't want the gospel. And so they're hostile. And if men are going to go, they have to be prepared to suffer and to die.

And that's the only way missions has ever advanced. It's through the blood of the missionaries.

You've heard of the missionary effort to Western Africa in the 19th century.

The average lifespan when a missionary hit the West African shore was two months. Two months.

You land and you get two months on average. Some less, some more.

But did that stop people from going? No. Not at all. They kept going. They kept going. Why?

Because they knew what was ahead.

[30:22] They had come to terms with their own death. They had come to terms with suffering.

And they believed, Mark 8.35, that whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it.

They knew John 12.25, he who hates his life in this world, he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. And so, brothers and sisters, what we need in this day and age, and what the church has always needed, is for people, for men, who are ready to go and see the king very quickly.

So what kind of church do we need to be? we need to be the kind of church that raises up men that are prepared for that. And so that means a lot of things.

And we'll talk about some of those things next week. But we have to be prepared for suffering. We have to take Jesus' words to heart. If they persecuted me, they'll persecute you.

It's not something strange that's happening. Now, we don't know much about persecution right now. We should keep praying that we don't, I think.

[31:38] But soon enough, I think we will. Soon enough, I think we will. Times are changing in our culture. And whether we live to see it or not, a very terrible time is coming upon all the churches, including ours, when the wrath of men will break out and all but destroy the church.

But the gates of hell will not prevail against it. That's the promise. So how do we prepare for suffering now? How do we prepare for that day if we live to see it? How do we prepare to be the kind of people that can prepare men to go and die?

Or how can we be the kind of church that goes and sends men and watches them die? I have three things. First, don't be surprised when you suffer in a small way now.

Don't be surprised when you suffer in a small way now. First, Peter 4.12, dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though some strange thing were happening to you. We have to be prepared.

It's not something strange. If you think it's strange that you are being persecuted in some way, you need to change what you're thinking. Jesus has told you this isn't something that's strange that is happening to you.

[33:03] I think we make a very superficial mistake sometimes. When we think, Jesus died for me, we jump to the assumption, the conclusion, that that means that I don't have to die for him, or I don't

have to die for other people.

Since he suffered for me, I don't need to suffer for others. If his death is substitutionary, shouldn't I escape? Do you ever find yourself thinking that way?

Why am I suffering when Jesus suffered? I think the answer is he died for our sins so that our death wouldn't be for our sins.

He died so that we could die and it could be for God's glory. He died so that we could die and it could display the worth of who God is so that we could die for others.

He died so that we could have God. And so we don't have to cling to this world anymore as if we lose this world we've lost everything. He's died so that we could have God. So if we have God then we could lose this life.

[34 : 14] Because God is better than life. That's what the psalmist says. Your love is better than life. I would rather your love than have my own life. He says. And so if we look at we have to look at Christ's sufferings.

And we have to be we have to arm ourselves with the same thought. That's how Peter goes on. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought.

Christ knew death was coming. He set his face like a flint to Jerusalem. He knew what he was going into and he went boldly, he went bravely, he went believingly. And Peter says, arm yourselves with the same thought.

Be prepared to die. That was the second point. Sorry, I didn't say that. That's the second point.

Think about Christ's sufferings. Now, here's the third point in the final. Brace yourself for it.

Brace yourself for suffering. Think about your own death. One of Edwards' resolutions was, I will think about my death often. And I think we need to do the same.

[35 : 23] And not only a calm, peaceful death, but, and I don't mean this in a morbid sense, but to think, I might need to suffer extraordinary pains.

And prepare yourself. Begin praying for it. It might be painful, it might be calm, only God knows.

Now, finally, Richard Wurmbrand endured 14 years of prison in Romania.

And it was prison and it was torture. And he endured it for the sake of the gospel. And he knew that he had to prepare his people for suffering.

Listen to what he wrote. I remember my last confirmation class before I left Romania. I took a group of 10 to 15 boys and girls on a Sunday morning, not to church, but to the zoo.

And before the cage of lions, I told them, your forefathers in the faith were thrown before such wild beasts for their faith. Know that you also will have to suffer.

[36 : 31] You will not be thrown before lions, but you will have to do with lions. Decide here and now if you wish to pledge allegiance to Christ.

And they had tears in their eyes when they said yes. We have to make the preparation now before we are imprisoned. In prison you lose everything.

You are undressed and given a prisoner suit. No more nice furniture, nice carpets, no nice curtains.

You do not have a wife anymore and you do not have your library and you never see a flower.

Nothing of what makes life pleasant remains. Now listen to this last sentence. Nobody resists who has not renounced the pleasures of life beforehand.

Nobody resists who has not renounced the pleasures of life beforehand. So are you preparing now?

You should be preparing now.

[37 : 37] You should be beginning to renounce the pleasure of this life. Willingly sacrificing things to prepare for the final sacrifice. So have you denied yourself and picked up your cross and followed Christ?

So Charles Simeon, remember the old English preacher that Henry Martin worked under for those three or four years? He had a portrait!

In his study above his fireplace. And it was a portrait of Henry Martin. And when he was asked about it, Simeon would say, I look at that portrait and it seems to say to me, Charles Simeon, don't trifle.

Don't trifle. And then the old man would bow respectfully to the portrait and he said, I won't trifle. I won't trifle. I won't forget. So I'm asking you, don't forget.

Don't forget what God has called us to. Don't forget all those witnesses that are gathered around the race cheering us on, who have gone on before us.

[38 : 44] So let's not forget either. We are dismissed.