

Theme: God calls His people to suffer and sacrifice in order to penetrate new areas with the Gospel.

I. Intro - A Price for the Mission?

- A. Saving Private Ryan – The Cost of War
- B. A great, but graphic, movie
- C. Shows the cost of war – many suffer & die
- D. America could not stomach the price in Vietnam and so withdrew
- E. We are in a spiritual war - is there a price to be paid?

II. Paul's Wartime Call - Preach & Suffer

- A. God's chosen instrument to carry His name
But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! **This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.**" Acts 9:15
 - 1. Paul is God's chosen instrument - what an honor
 - 2. Paul will carry God's Name before Gentiles & Jews
 - 3. Paul will testify of Christ before commoners & kings
 - 4. He is called, anointed, and blessed for mission!
- B. As God's chosen instrument, Paul will suffer greatly
But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.
¹⁶ **I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.**" Acts 9:15–16
 - 1. Paul is given the **promise** that he will suffer greatly

- 2. God's blessing and call does not prevent suffering
- 3. In fact, suffering and sacrifice are part of God's call
- 4. Suffering and sacrifice are the price of mission

C. The Call Fulfilled

I will not venture to speak of anything except **what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God** by what I have said and done—
¹⁹ **by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.** Romans 15:18–19

- 1. Christ had worked through Paul to reach the world
- 2. God had worked by the Spirit's - miracles
- 3. Paul had fully proclaimed the Gospel
Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.
²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 2 Corinthians 11:23–28

4. What a litany of suffering!
5. This part of God's promise did not fail either!
6. Fulfilling mission required great suffering & sacrifice

III. God's Wartime Call for the Church

A. Call to suffer & sacrifice for mission is not unique to Paul

1. Ananias took great risk to go to Paul! (read Acts 9)
 - a. Paul had been killing believers - & might kill Ananias
 - b. There was real risk in taking the Gospel to Paul
2. Timothy had the same mission call

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. ³ Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 2:1–3

- a. Timothy had received the grace of God in Christ (v1)
 - b. Proclaim the message and disciple others (v2)
 - c. They must join the mission too (v2)
 - d. This requires enduring hardship like a soldier (v3)
 - e. To storm enemy held territory requires suffering and sacrifice. There is no mission without sacrifice.
3. All Christians are called to suffer like Paul did

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 2 Timothy 3:10–12

- a. Paul's call - suffering, persecution
 - b. All Christians called to the same pattern (v12)
 - c. The call to suffering and sacrifice for the sake of the mission was not unique to Paul - it is the call of every believer.
4. Christian suffering and sacrifice through the ages
 - a. Early church - massive suffering for centuries
Your tortures accomplish nothing, though each is more refined than the last; rather, they are an enticement to our religion. We become more numerous every time we are hewn down by you: the blood of Christians is seed. Tertullian, Apology, 50:13
 - b. The cost of mission - reaching hostile lost peoples
The Congo, as much as any area of Africa, lived up to the reputation of a 'white man's graveyard.' Only one out of four missionaries survived the first term of service. Ruth Tucker, From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya, 139
 - c. The mission has always been fulfilled at the cost of suffering and sacrifice by believers, from the early church to the present day.
 - d. There is no 'mission accomplished' apart from suffering and sacrifice. The only way to a life of ease is compromise and refusal to join God's mission.

B. Suffering and sacrifice in this spiritual war

1. Spiritual warfare requires suffering on the battlefield
 - a. Those taking the Gospel to unreached people groups will have much to pay in terms of suffering and sacrifice
 - b. It will be impossible to storm these beaches of darkness without great suffering and sacrifice

- c. The greatest areas of spiritual darkness, are also the greatest areas of suffering - and of the growth of the church!
- d. The blood and suffering of Christians is still seed for the church!
- e. The spiritual war here in the USA is likely to require real suffering soon as well - remember Paul's words

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:12–13

1. A godly life is increasingly rejected by our culture
2. To stand in the face of our current immorality will likely cost socially, financially, politically - and perhaps even jail
3. If this happens we must take our place on the front lines and pay the price

2. Spiritual warfare requires sacrifice on the homefront

- a. In total war, those at home sacrifice for war effort
- b. The example of WW II - great sacrifice at home
- c. Difference between peacetime & wartime mentality

But most people do not believe this in their heart. **Most people show by their priorities and their casual approach to spiritual things that they believe we are in peacetime, not wartime** ...In wartime, families talk about sons and daughters on the front lines and write to them and pray for them with heart-wrenching concern for their safety. In wartime we are on the alert... In wartime, we spend money differently – there is austerity, not for its own sake, but because there are more strategic ways to spend money... John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad, 47.

- d. We who are not on the front lines of this spiritual war are called to sacrifice time, money, and prayer for the cause of the mission.

IV. The Mission: Applying the Word

A. Do I see God calls all Christians to sacrifice & suffer for the sake of the mission?

1. This is not unique to a few - it applies to all
2. We have understood this for the persecuted church
3. But this requires more than just sympathy from us
4. We must sacrifice to support the mission
5. We are likely to be called upon to suffer ourselves as the darkness increases in our culture
6. Am I willing to do without a life of ease so that the mission might be accomplished?
7. Am I willing to stand for the faith if our culture punishes me for doing so?
8. Make no mistake - the accomplishment of God's mission requires suffering and sacrifice on the part of God's people - this is not a bloodless war

B. Do I see that Christ has won the victory for me?

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:33

1. There is trouble in this world - sacrifice & suffering
2. But there is peace in Christ - for He has overcome!
3. This is a huge theme in Revelation - He has conquered!
4. His victory means peace with God, eternal life, joy now and forever!

5. Christ has suffered and now entered glory - and guaranteed that we will as well
6. The Table of Suffering and Victory

The Price of Mission - Suffering and Sacrifice

Acts 9:15-16

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Communion

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Teaching keywords: Evangelism & missions; great commission; suffering; persecuted church; spiritual warfare

May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.² May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. ³ May he remember all your sacrifices ⁴ May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. Psalms 20:1–4

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” Acts 9:15–16