

**1 Peter 5**  
**Putting Suffering Into Perspective**  
**J.D. Farag**

KAPONO: For this time of worship, Lord, we lift all of this up to You, Lord. What a time it is to be here, Lord. We ask that You continue to speak to us, Lord, especially through the word as we dive into finishing off the Book of 1 Peter. Would You just guide us, Lord, teach us, correct us, love us, whatever it is we need Lord, wherever we're at now, Lord.

We love You and we're so thankful for this time and this place to be here to learn and to dig into Your in Word. So bless this time. We ask this in Jesus' name.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good morning. Welcome. So glad you're here. I want to welcome those of you online. You can be seated. We're so glad that you're joining with us for our verse-by-verse study through 1 Peter, and as Kapono just prayed, we're going to finish the Book of 1 Peter today. Yeah!

You know what book is next? Very good. Very good. 2 Peter. That is the most profound point I have today. (Chuckle)

Well our text is going to be *Chapter 5*, of course, and *verses 10-14*. So I'll ask those of you that are here, if you're able, to stand. If not, where you're seated is fine. You can follow along as I read.

The Apostle Peter now closing his first letter writes by the Spirit, **“And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. [What a prayer!] [Verse 12]**

**With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon, [This could be referring to Rome or some even suggest literal Babylon in modern-day Iraq] chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.”**

Let's pray. If you would please join with me. Father in Heaven thank You so, so, so much. Lord, we're here to hear You speak in that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit as only You can and are always so faithful to.

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But Lord, we want to hear when You speak, and in order to do that, we need to turn down the volume of our busy lives, all of the voices that are clamoring for our attention of which there are so many. Lord, we want them to be turned down, even turned off so that we can hear You as You speak very specifically, if need be, personally, even confidentially because You know our hearts.

So speak to our hearts, especially for those who are here or watching online that are really struggling. They're really going through it. So Lord, please encourage, comfort, strengthen. And Lord, thank You in advance for doing that for us in and through our time together in Your word, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you today about the paramount importance of putting our suffering into its proper biblical perspective and perhaps even more importantly, its proper eternal perspective. And here's why.

The Apostle Peter, by the Holy Spirit, is concluding his first epistle with a much-needed reminder in regard to suffering. Now if you're anything like me and I believe that you are in many ways, when you come to an end, the end of a letter, you kind of, you know, tend to read through it real fast and then move on.

Same thing with the introduction, you know the formalities, greetings in the name of the Lord, grace and peace. Well let's get to the meat of it. Let's cut to the chase. Which, by the way, comes from an old movie, film metaphor, that they would cut to the chase scenes. That's the exciting part! That's where that saying came from, "cut to the chase."

Okay, now that we've cleared that up.

[ Laughter ]

But we do that, right? We're all prone to want to cut to the chase, let's get to the exciting part! This is why it is, by the way, when the movies over — okay, let's be honest — how many of you sit there and go, okay, the credits!

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And you're watching? No, everybody gets up. In fact, it's kind of annoying actually, because they get up before you and then there in front of you and they slow you down because you want to get out too. It's the credits.

Who wants to... oh, how about those... this is very clever, by the way. You got to hand it to them. It's actually quite brilliant.

The credits start scrolling, everybody puts their stuff away, gets up, gets ready to leave and then all of a sudden, they show another scene, and you're like wait, wait! We can't leave yet.

And then the credits... okay, let's go.

Oh, there's another part. We have to stay for it. But as soon as those credits start scrolling, we're out of there.

Let's not do that. Let's not do that here because this is like that here. And truth be made known what the Apostle Peter writes here at the end of this letter is so packed full with truth to stand firm in and not be moved by, especially in those times of suffering and difficulty and hardship which they were in extreme persecution, as we've talked about.

Now what he's going to do and what we're going to see are — I found four — again, you might find more, but I'm going to call them, again, reminders because we need to be reminded of this especially when we're going through a trial.

When you're in the heat of the battle and your suffering, that's the time when you lose perspective because all of the emotions are flooding in and it's so intense sometimes and overwhelming that you lose perspective, and you need someone to come alongside you and remind you: Hey, (Chuckling) but God, but God. You be encouraged.

The time you need encouragement the most, and we're going to talk about this, is when you're really in the middle of that trial of your life and you're suffering, and it's hard, and you're hurting, and it's at that time that you need reminders specifically to put what you're going through into perspective.

You've got to have a refocusing, if you will, because you're looking at your trial, your circumstances, your adversity, but you're not looking at God. You're not looking to God.

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And you need to be reminded that you need to look at that situation through the lens of eternity and not the other way around.

Isn't it true that when you're focused in on your difficult situation, the more you focus in on it, the more bigger it grows? I mean when the thing starts out, it's kind of like okay, this is a trial. There's no doubt about that. This is hard, no doubt about that. But then you start focusing on it. You start worrying about it.

And the next thing — you start feeding it — and it's not long before all of a sudden oh, this is a big problem! This thing got really big. That's because you made it big! And then in making that big, you make God small.

This is why it is when Jesus would say to the disciples throughout the Gospels, it's recorded, not in a harsh tone. There's not disdain or disgust in the voice of the Savior when He says, **“Oh, you of little faith. Why did you doubt?”**

What He is saying is why is your faith so little when your God is so big? And the more you look at that situation, the bigger it grows, and then God's up here going, “Hello! Look at your circumstances through My lens, through the perspective of eternity, a biblical perspective, an eternal perspective, and I promise you that thing is going to shrink and fade away, and you're going to be like oh, I wish I would've done that sooner.”

You know, I always know I made a good decision when my only regret is that I didn't make that decision sooner. I've had a couple of them recently and I'm always reminded, wow, I'm so glad I did that! I mean it might be a small thing, but it made a huge difference. And then I find myself, you know, coming down pretty hard on myself.

I know you don't do this. But I'm like having a talk with myself.

Why, you stupid idiot, why didn't you do it sooner? You could have saved yourself a lot of hassle, a lot of difficulty, a lot of hardship.

Well, at least I did it.

But I need that reminder. I need to be reminded, Oh, wait a minute. Let me step back from this thing. I need to get a perspective on this. I need to see this through a proper perspective, especially when it comes to suffering.

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So that's what we're going to do. We're going to look at four of these. And all four of them have this propensity to refocus us to view suffering through the lens of eternity.

And the first one is in *verse 10*, and this is huge! Our suffering is only a little while. A little while? This has been... Now we need to deal with this because I know what you're thinking. I can read your minds.

A little while? This has been going on for a long time! In fact, my prayer as of late has been like the psalmist David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, "Oh, Lord! How long? And now I've got Peter telling me yeah, your suffering is going to be a little while. A little while? What are you talking about?

Oh, it's a little while in light of eternity. Let's do an exercise here. Let's do the math, if you will, okay? Let's just say for purpose of discussion that our lives here on this earth are – should we go with 70? I tried this one time, and someone said go 80.

[ Laughter ]

And you know who you are. Okay, let's go 80. That's fine. 80. Is that okay? Are we good with 80? 80.

Okay, 80 years. And let's just say again for purpose of discussion that those 80 years were very hard years riddled with suffering and difficulty and hardship, 80 years! You suffered for 80 years.

Well, the first five you probably didn't remember Okay, so 75. Okay, let's be accurate.

So 75 years of your 80 years of life here on this earth were just so hard, the suffering so intense. Now let's take that number of, we'll call it 80, and now let's superimpose that number on eternity.

How many years is eternity? That was rhetorical. Here's the thing about eternity. It's forever. That means it's forever and ever. Everlasting life, this is profound I know, it means life lasts forever.

Okay. That's the best I got so you're going to have to take it and run. Don't run yet. Well, now that kind of changes my perspective a little bit. Didn't the Apostle Paul kind of echo

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what Peter is saying here? The suffering of this world in this life on this earth is not even worthy to be compared with the glory that awaits us.

And that's what Peter is saying here. He's contrasting temporal suffering with eternal glory. And when you see it like that and that's your perspective, then it changes everything.

How so, you ask? Well, Peter answers that question as well. It changes your perspective so now you see your suffering and you see in your suffering God's grace, God's calling, God's restoration, and steadfast strength.

Well, wait, how did you get that?

Well, that's *verse 10*. He's praying for them in his closing of his letter to them. And hey, if someone like the Apostle Peter is going to pray for me, I'll take it. I want somebody like that praying for me. By the way, you know who's the greater than Peter that prays for you? Jesus.

Do you know that Jesus prays for you? He prayed for us when He was here on earth, and He's at the right hand of the Father, ever making intercession for us. Wow! Thank You, Lord! Because when you're in the middle of a trial and it's so hard, it's hard to pray sometimes.

I've had times in my life where it was so intense, so painful that I couldn't even pray. Forget reading the Word of God; I was in such pain the only thing that came out were moans and tears. One has likened them to liquid tears, liquid prayers that are sometimes more powerful and the prayers that have words.

So he's praying for them with the hopes of refocusing their attention on the eternal. Isaiah writes, **"He [The Lord] will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."**

Get your eyes off your problem. Quit feeding it, quit nursing it, quit nurturing it, quit growing it. Get your eyes off of it. Get your eyes on the Lord.

I love that song, Kapono. You did it again, wherever you are. Oh, he left the building. Okay, Kapono left the building. I hope he comes back. You don't want me singing the closing song. That would be brutal.

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Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim. What was your problem again? My eyes are on the Lord. My mind is stayed on the Lord, and everything is put in its proper perspective.

Let me say it like this. When you know what you have to look forward to, it will make whatever you're going through easier to get through. Now if I know – I'm going through it right now and this is the hardest thing I've ever experienced in my Christian life, but when I understand the glory that awaits, that changes everything.

It changes my perspective, changes how I see it. I see now God's grace. God's grace is in this. He's being very gracious to me, even in and through this. God's calling. What you mean by that? Oh, those who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

How about those who are in Christ Jesus will have the fellowship of His sufferings? That's the calling. Restoration: I need the restoration. Can I get an advance on the restoration like now?

No, that's what awaits. And because that awaits, that gives you that steadfast strength where you're immovable. You're immovable. The Apostle Paul in the Book of Acts, I love this! He says, "Nothing moves me." Go ahead and try. I'm moved by nothing. I'm fazed by nothing. Nothing shakes me. Nothing moves me.

Why?

I'm steadfast, resolute in the Lord. And that's why he could also, by the Holy Spirit, write about suffering. He knew a thing or two about suffering. I think he earned the right and qualifies to be able to speak to suffering.

He lists what — his suffering resume to the Corinthian church, have you read that lately? Not for the faint of heart. It will help put your suffering into perspective. He lists it, he grocery list his sufferings. It's a doozy. I mean, shipwrecks, like three of them, three.

One, I'm done. That's it.

Beatings? 39. 40 minus one. 39 times.

Oh, stonings? And this is not like being stoned. This is how they would try to kill — yeah, sorry for that picture, but they would take stones. He was in Lystra, and they wanted to kill

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him. How are they going to kill him? There was plenty a supply of rocks in that area. So they would pick up rocks and what a way to die, man.

I know this is morbid, but they tried to kill him. How? They took these boulders, these rocks, and they're throwing them at him. And basically, they left him for dead. Imagine; I know this is graphic, but the Apostle Paul collapsed. He's probably laying there and he's probably not breathing, or if he is, he's going to be resuscitated.

Some believe that he was resurrected because that's when he was caught up to the third Heaven which he would later very carefully write about. Didn't talk about it for 14 years. And then when he does, when he finally does, it's almost like he's forced to refer to this experience when he died and was caught up to Heaven and saw things that you cannot — it would be criminal to try to describe the glory that awaits.

And it was because of that that God had to give him a thorn in the flesh. Because see, if God took me up to Heaven and let me see what He let the Apostle Paul see and then I come back, I'm on a speaking tour, a book tour.

[ Laughter ]

'Being Stoned, Dying, Going to Heaven, and Coming Back,' by JD Farag.

[ Laughter ]

And I'd be all puffed up, all that. And that's why God had — and even Paul tried to pray to ask God, he pleaded with God. This thing was tormenting him, this thorn in the flesh.

And by the way, it's left generic and not specific by design because if we knew exactly what — and please stop speculating — because if you knew specifically what that thorn in the flesh was, and that's not an area in your life that you struggle with, you're going to dismiss it. Well, that applies to that. I'm not dealing with that.

So that thorn in the flesh is left blank so you can fill in the blank with whatever that thorn in the flesh is in your life. And don't look at your wife or husband when you try to fill in that blank. I'm actually trying to go somewhere with this. Just bear with me.

When he finally after 14 years does write about it, he refers to it in the third person. **“I knew a man.”** That's you, Paul.



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What are you talking about?

That's how carefully humble he was in even talking about that experience.

So what's your point?

Well, Paul suffered a lot, shipwrecks, stonings, beatings, left for dead in Lystra. You know what he does after he resurrects or resuscitates? He goes back into Lystra.

Listen, if I'm Paul, I can take a hint. I know I'm not welcome here. You take me outside the city, try to kill me, leave me for dead. I'll move on. I'll move on. I'll shake the sand off my slippers and I'm out of here, man! Fine, you don't want me? I can tell when I have overstayed my welcome here.

But not Paul. He goes back in. I love that guy. And by the way, that's where Timothy was from, Timothy, who he fathered in the faith.

Well, one more thing on this temporal suffering in the perspective of the eternal glory that awaits. It is very brief and only a little while when you understand that in light of eternity — let me propose it this way and let me present it this way and I want you to think through this with me.

Would you sign a deal that said this: You're going to have to go through this suffering for this period of time in order to have this glory for the rest of time? Would you sign that deal? I would. Well, we basically did when we came to Christ, right?

Because you cannot compare our 80 years to eternity. I mean those 80 years can be just utter torment and pain and suffering and hardship and difficulty. But if I've got to go through that to have that forever and ever and ever and ever amen, amen, so be it! Where do I sign?

Yeah, okay, I feel better. I hope you do too.

*Verse 11.* Okay, our suffering is a little while, but God's power is forever and ever. Now what Peter says here is very interesting and this for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that he's praying for them and all of a sudden, it's like he can't contain himself.

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He just burst forth in praise. Oh, Your power oh, Lord. Glory be to You oh, Lord. You are worthy of all of our praise and honor and glory forever and ever and ever, amen. Oh yeah, sorry. Okay, I'm back now.

Why would he do that?

Because he fully grasped, he fully understood, he fully embraced the eternal glory in Christ forever, forever. Well, that's a game-changer. That changes everything. Okay, so if God's glory and power and eternal life, and by the way, if you need a reminder of the glory that awaits, spend some time in *Revelation Chapter 20, 21, 22*.

We actually talked about that a little bit in the Prophecy Update. I mean even before – this is just the introduction. We get a 1000-year introduction to eternity. It's called the Millennium. The lion laying down with the lamb. That alone is worth the price of admission right there. The cockatrice den. The deadly poisonous serpent: the child is playing with it. That's the Millennium.

Oh, man! And it's going to be on earth, and earth will be like it was pre-fall, pre-sin, like the Garden of Eden, a thousand years! And we haven't even started eternity yet.

The new heavens and the new earth? Will they have previews, you know when you're at the – I'm back at the movies; sorry, we're going to go back to the movies real quick. And you know at the beginning, they have previews, those previews which are very demonic, by the way. I haven't been in a theater for quite some time. The movies are getting more and more demonic.

But how much... and it seems like there's more and more of those previews. By the time you actually get to the movie, you've already been there, and you're out of popcorn. Thank God you got the free refill and the soda, and then you have to go to the bathroom.

But anyway, enough of my problems. I mean, you haven't even got through the previews. Well, that's what the Millennium is going to be like and then the main event: Eternity future! You know how we often times joking, I mean it's innocent. It's an innocent naïveté. We'll say something to the effect of, man when I get to Heaven I'm going to ask the Lord some questions.

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No, you're not, no, you're not. Hey, listen, at the rapture when we're caught up, the dead in Christ rise first, first of all, we're going to see our loved ones. And then we're going to be with the Lord forever when we meet Him in the air and then He takes us to that place that He prepared for us that if it were not so, He would not have told us, that where I am, there you may be also. Where I am, not where you are.

I'm going to take you to this bridal chamber where we're going to consummate, celebrate our marriage together. I'm the bridegroom; you're the bride. Oh, you're going to ask Him questions?

No, you're not. I mean that's just the seven years. You're going to be just... goo-goo gaga eyes. You know, just, oh, my. This is the honeymoon. What was that question you had? Never mind. It's not important now. It's irrelevant. It's inconsequential. Just forget about it. It doesn't matter now. I'm with You.

Or you know how we say — and I do this in fact quite often even from the pulpit. Man, I can't wait to meet Jeremiah. Well, you're going to wait all right because the first, I don't know how many thousands of years, there is no years to measure eternity, you're just going to be praising Him. You're going to be at the throne, casting your crowns before Him, singing worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb.

You know it's too bad; it's kind of sad actually, because the enemy has succeeded in large measure of painting this picture of Heaven where you're just playing the harp. No. No.

First of all, I don't know where they got the harp. It doesn't mean there won't be a harp. I'm sure there will be a harp, and if there is one, you'll know how to play it and so will I because we're in glory. So that's fine. So are we good with the harp? Now let's move on from the harp.

Streets of gold. No more night. No more sorrow. No more crying. No more dying. What was your question again? And that's forever!

[ Applause ]

Yeah! Oh, man, chicken skin! Goosebumps, for those of you on the mainland. I mean doesn't that just give you chicken skin?

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Well, let's take the chicken skin and superimpose it on the trial that you're in the middle of. Wait, that's what I have in store? I'm good! I mean this is bad, but I'm good! This is forever we're talking about here.

Third one, *verse 12*, again this is huge. I want to spend a little bit of time on this. But now is the time to be encouraging and be encouraged.

Now let me explain this one. So you've got this prayer up to this point that Peter prays and now he's ended his prayer, glory and glory forever and ever, amen. And now he's going to turn this corner because he's just now changed the focus on to eternity.

So your response to Peter would be, okay, Peter, I get it. Thank you, Jesus. I can't wait. I know the glory that awaits, but the rent's due tomorrow. What about the here and now? I know about the hereafter. I know about eternity future. I know about the glory that awaits. I'm very much encouraged by that. I have a much-needed perspective on that, but what am I going to do about this?

Okay, well, he goes from praying to encouraging. And what he says here can be easily missed at first read, and I think we would err greatly were we not to understand what's here. This is again one of those places in God's word where you just kind of read past it. It's like he's closing the letter, say hi to Joe, say hi to Bob, Silas, Mark.

So what he's saying to them is, and again, remember these believers were suffering severely and they were very discouraged, and I would venture to say that their discouragement was giving way to despair and depression.

And so here comes Peter. He's just got done praying for them. Now he wants to be encouraging to them.

Would you agree with me on this that when we're going through a very difficult time, it is the time that we need encouragement more than any other time in our lives? And a lot a little is a lot. That's an original, by the way. You can take that if you want it.

No, it doesn't have to be much. It doesn't take much. Just a little pat on the back. Just a word fitly spoken. Just hey brother, sister, I know you're struggling. The Lord put you on my heart. I've been praying for you. I just want to encourage you.

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Man, that's the time we need it the most. And this is what Peter is doing here, inspired by the Holy Spirit. He's writing this word of encouragement and he's testifying.

Now this is a strong word. Don't get all twisted up on this thing. He's testifying like under oath. Can I take you from the movie theater to the courtroom? (Chuckling) I just did.

So now we're not sitting in front of that movie screen, the big screen. Now we're sitting there in the courtroom. This is a testifying of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help me God. I'm testifying to you.

What's your testimony? What are you testifying to, Peter?

I'm testifying to you that this is the true grace of God and as such you can stand fast in it. You be encouraged. You stand strong because you can. I can testify.

And he could, by the way. You think about what Peter went through. I mean it may not compare necessarily with what Paul went through, not that there was a competition. There might have been between them. I don't know.

But Paul's list is pretty impressive. He survived all of that. Well, Peter went through quite a bit too. And by the way, the way his life would end, and Jesus had already prepared him for that which was prepared for him. He was crucified like his Savior.

You know what Peter did? He would — he refused to be crucified like Jesus and he demanded to be crucified upside down because he wasn't worthy of the same crucifixion as his Savior. Oh, man that's chicken skin again.

So what I'm saying is Peter again earns the right to speak into my life by the Holy Spirit and into your life by the Holy Spirit and encourage you, hey brother, sister, Peter would say, I've been there. I've been where you're at.

I've gone through what you're going through, and I want to testify to you on the authority of God's truth, God's Word, God's grace, you're going to make it. I promise you on the authority of God's word. I'll swear an oath on it. He's earned the right to do that. And that's what he's saying here.

Let me just quickly mentioned before we move on to the last one. I think that, and just hear me out please and bear with me. We need more encouragers in the body of Christ.

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Just one of the best illustrations I ever heard in my life was from Pastor Chuck Smith who is now with the Lord. And it was actually at a conference, and they were breaking for lunch, and they were getting ready for the afternoon session, and there was an accident at the intersection.

And Pastor Chuck as — I mean true to form — he used that illustration in his session. And he said, you know, that accident we just witnessed, the paramedics showed up and arrived on the scene and then the police also showed up and arrived on the scene.

Now the paramedics are not there to determine whose fault it was, who broke the law. That's law enforcement. They're there to minister to the injured, the wounded. The policemen are there to determine who's in the wrong, who ran the red light, who's to blame, who broke the law.

And his point was this, and it's profound: We have way too many policemen in the body of Christ. We're all pointing the finger of blame. The last thing I need when I'm discouraged and down and struggling and hurting is for someone to point the finger of blame at me.

Well, it's because you're wrong!

Okay. Thank you. Would you leave now please? Just leave me alone and don't call me. Lose my number. I'm going to block you anyway. (Chuckling)

You can do that now. Back in the day you couldn't. That was even before Caller ID. Those were horrible times. What a difficulty in and of itself, but I digress.

No, I don't need a policeman. I already know everything's wrong. We're in a fallen world, and what I really need is a paramedic to come to me because I'm hurting, I'm injured, I'm wounded, I'm bleeding, and I need a paramedic to help me, minister to me, be an encouragement.

And that encouragement, again, it doesn't have to be something so grand. You know it could just be something so little, just the fact that you would go out of your way and just say something encouraging, even if it's something as small as I know you're struggling. I just want you to know I'm praying for you, man. I love you, man.

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And a hug; we're going to talk about that next. I mean sometimes all people need; they don't need your mouth. They need your shoulder to cry on.

That's a marriage illustration and another sermon for another time, husbands. Because we want to fix everything. What's going on, what's wrong? We're so logical. The wives are so emotional. Let's just — how can I fix this?

Well, first of all, close your mouth.

[ Laughter ]

Did I strike a chord here? She doesn't need your mouth. That's the policeman. She needs your shoulder to cry on. That's the paramedic. Just listen, let her cry. And bite your tongue. I'm very convicted right now so I want to move onto the last one.

We need paramedics to encourage, not policemen to blame. And again, sadly it's a sad day within the body of Christ when a believer who is really suffering, doesn't feel safe going up to a brother or sister and sharing with them what they're struggling with lest they be seen as not having enough faith.

Where's your faith? What's the matter? Buck up, Buttercup.

Oh, really? I hate that, by the way. You're going to say that to the Apostle Paul in Acts Chapter 28?

You know it's very interesting; Luke recorded it. Luke was on that ship when they crashed on their way to Rome. Paul would get to Rome. He just had a stop in his itinerary on the island of Malta because God wanted to save the Islanders. So he was shipwrecked. Now keep in mind Paul had been shipwrecked three times prior. He had a Ph.D. in shipwrecks. This was not his first rodeo / shipwreck.

So here he is now, shipwreck number 4. He's there on that ship, and I mean you read the narrative recorded in the Book of Acts. It is just unbelievable. I mean, it got to the point where everyone onboard had given up all hope of surviving this, including Paul.

Luke writes, **“When we finally [Interesting word] had given up”** [We, whose we? Me and Paul] We gave up. We thought this is it. This is how it ends. I'm coming home, Lord. I mean I've survived three of these, but this storm? I ain't making it out of this one.

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So you're on that ship and you say to Paul, buck up, Buttercup. That's not going to go over very well. In fact, you're going to go overboard. That's what's going to happen. There's something here, and maybe this is for someone here. There are times in our lives where it just looks so hopeless, and we give up all hope.

You think Paul was not a man of faith? Yes, he was. And even he, as he writes elsewhere despaired of life. He wanted his life to end. In fact, he's very candidly open about this. He's torn between staying and leaving.

He says, **“For me to die is gain.” “For me to live is Christ.”** And I'm torn because I know you need me. If you didn't need me, I'd go home to be with the Lord. That's my preference. But it's your fault I'm still here! It wasn't like that.

But that was a point of it. He really wanted to be with the Lord, but he knew that they needed him, but his heart was already in Heaven. His heart was already in the Lord, with the Lord.

So here he is on this ship. He's given up all hope. Is there anything he did to be saved and survived that shipwreck?

No, not one thing. It wasn't even a thing of just hold on to the Lord. Hold onto your faith. Don't give up.

No, he's already given up. He's already let go of all hope. When all hope was finally gone, when we had lost all hope, we lost all hope, what does God do?

It's not our grip on Him. It's His grip on us. And I mean, I tell you there's been times in my life where like Paul I thought this is it. I ain't getting out of this one. I mean God's got me through a lot, but this is how it ends. And when you just give up and it's a surrender and you don't think you're going to survive it, that's when the Lord reaches down and He has His grip on you and He pulls you through, and then you survive it. The un-survivable: You survive the un-survivable.

And you see the grace of God through it all. Sometimes on the tail end of something like that, you're looking back on that and you're just saying of that man, I don't know how I made it through that. You didn't; God got you through that.



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[ Applause ]

Okay, one last thing and then we'll get to the last one. I haven't said one last thing, right? So you know where Paul, to the Corinthians, says, **“Comfort others with the same comfort you yourself received from the Lord when you were going through that painful trial and time of difficulty and suffering?”**

And the Lord comforted you in it and got you through it, and now here's your brother and sister and they're going through the very same thing you went through. Now you need to come alongside them as a paramedic, and you need to comfort them with the same comfort that you were on the receiving end of from the Lord when you went through that.

In fact, I'll take it a step further and suggest, and from my own personal experience, some of the trials in my life, yes, they had many purposes and reasons, and God worked every single one of them without exception out for the good for His glory as He promises to do in *Romans 8:28*.

But there have been trials in my life that were not just for my benefit but for the benefit of others. One example of that was when our daughter Noelle died. How many times after that did God use that in the life of another? I could comfort them. My wife and I could minister to them and encourage them.

You're going to get through that. God got us through that too. Oh, I know right now it seems like this is it. This is how it ends. I'm not going to make it through this. But God will get you through it.

And I want to encourage you with the encouragement that God encouraged me with when I was going through what you're going through right now. I can testify.

You put me on the witness stand. I'll swear under oath. This is the truth. I'm living proof. This is the truth. Look at me. I mean don't look at me too much but look at me. If God can... anyway that's a whole other sermon too. Let's move onto this last one. We're almost done. I appreciate your patience.

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*Verses 13 and 14.* This is all about love. Like with encouragement when you're really hurting, that's the time more than any other time when you just need to be loved on. And it's so soothing and encouraging and comforting.

Here again, we have in closing a word fitly spoken and what's interesting about this is that it concerns a cultural dynamic from that day and even into modern day, sadly not here in the West but in the Middle East.

What I'm speaking of is the display of brotherly love. As a kid, I'll never forget this. I remember when my uncles and aunties would come, my dad and mom's brothers and sisters, they would come and I mean it was like over the top, the greeting. In fact, it was very awkward and uncomfortable for me because these are men, okay?

And they're hugging each other and their kissing each other on the cheek. That is too much. And is not just one kiss like (Kissing sound) and then it's the other cheek (Kissing sound) and then sometimes it was back-and-forth and back-and-forth and back-and-forth, kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss, hug, hug, hug, hug. It's like enough already! You love them. We got it!

And I want to be careful here because this can be an issue. This is a holy hug. Just let the Holy Spirit take that one just for a moment. A holy hug and a holy kiss. And the cultural dynamic in this display of affection and love was such that you would demonstrate to that person just how much you love them.

And then when it came time to eat and break bread, they would eat from the same bread. This Communion Thursday by the way, this has its place in the Communion table. They would eat from the same bread and drink from the same cup because it's a common union, communion.

And again, we miss this in the West, and it's sad because in the Middle East when you break bread and eat with somebody, you're loyal to them till death, till death. That's the culture. You come into the home, we're going to see this Thursday night in Jeremiah, it's crazy.

This evil man — spoiler alert — he's in the home and anyway... I don't want to tell you anymore. You have to come on Thursday night. I'll leave it right there. It's a cliffhanger.

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But when you're in someone's home, you're under their protection. Now when you eat with them in that culture, and it's to this day by the way, you are now committed to them.

You're united to them. It's a common union with them. The bread that's in you is the bread that's in me. The cup that we drink from is the same cup. And now we're bonded, and this is a physiological thing too, by the way.

Again, hang in there with me. You know when we touch, it releases these God-given hormones and chemicals, feel-good chemicals. I want to say it. I have to be careful because of a horrible evil pharmaceutical that sounds like it. I think it is oxytocin, not OxyContin. I shouldn't have opened up that can, but I think it's called oxytocin.

This is a God-given chemical that is released in the human body when you hold hands, when you hug, when you kiss. And again, this spills over into the breaking of bread together.

So I'm going to get into trouble here, but whatever... I've got nothing to lose at this point.

You know in the proverbs, and husbands please be gracious here, where it says it's better to eat a crust of bread — it's actually — when we were going through Proverbs — so it started off it's better to eat on the roof, bread, crust, crumbs than eat, you know, prime rib in a house with a nagging wife.

So it starts off in the house. You're on the roof now, and then you get a little bit further. It's better to eat in the wilderness. So now you're not even in the house anymore.

[ Laughter ]

I mean you really get the picture. Now what's the “why” behind the “what” on that? This is why when we eat with people there's a bond that takes place and if there's contention, it mars it.

When I was young, my mom's side of the family, there was a family feud. It was horrible. I mean, listen, Arabs know how to feud, okay? This thing lasted for seven years. I mean we know how to do it right, okay? Seven years. Finally, they're going to reconcile. So there's a big feast.

My aunts spent months preparing and planning, and we're going to have this big feast. And that was going to bring them back together, a reconciliation, unite them again around food.

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Because see, there's a physiological dynamic that takes place when you eat with someone. That's why when you take somebody to lunch, that's different, right? When you take them to lunch, and you're eating and you're sharing and you're fellowshiping — I'm going to get hungry — but I mean the food's good, the fellowship's good.

There's a physiological dynamic that takes place. Your relationship now with that person has changed forever. I mean you're not going to take someone to lunch that you don't want to be with, right? I mean how's that going to work out? You're going to be in the wilderness. Table for one.

So you see where I'm going with this? This is the demonstration of love. This is the display of love. It's a holy hug. It's a holy kiss. It's a display of affection.

And what do we do here in the West? We shake hands. Really? And then we wash our hands afterwards especially now, right? We're like eww!

You know, here in the Middle East they would dip the pita bread in the hummus, and then they would double dip. You do that here, well, you'll be out in the wilderness. No, that's double dipping! Well, not in the Middle East. Your germs are my germs. It doesn't matter. We're one. That's love! That's how to show love.

You know I have the privilege, and I'll close with this. Some of you are saying thank You, Jesus, that he's going to close. I really am. I really, really am going to close, okay? But it has been my privilege and I mean profound privilege, and the Lord knows my heart when I say this.

When I get an opportunity to meet or talk with somebody, whether they're here locally or visiting, it just happened after First Service. Someone just shares how that their husband of how many years went home to be with the Lord. One recently lost their sister. And they start tearing up. And of course I start tearing up.

Because you weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. And isn't that how a healthy body functions? When one part of your body is in pain, the whole body hurts. That's a healthy body. It's a problem when the other part of the body doesn't feel it.

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Listen, I get a hangnail and I'm asking the Lord to take me. Oh, Jesus! Please! I have no tolerance for pain.

But here's a hangnail on my finger, and my whole body is like hey! What's up? This hurts! What are you talking about? This is the finger. You're the toe. I know, but I feel it. Part of the same body.

Interesting, the bread broken is the body, a symbol of the body broken. Why? To unite, to reconcile.

So this is the close, and I will close. I told you I would, and I will.

I wonder if we, and I include myself in this can maybe revisit this from a biblical perspective. Because the first two are really the eternal perspective for then and there, but the second and last two are for the here and now.

This is what we can do before eternity in the here and now. Love one another, love deeply. That's the gauge, by the way. Jesus said it.

You know how they're going to know that you're My disciples? By how big your Bible is. No. How worn-out it is? No. If that's the case, man, I'm a disciple. I've had that one and I won't get rid of it. I've had it for many, many years.

No, the way they're going to know that we're a disciple of Jesus is by our love one for another. Oh, would to God that it would be said of us, man, those guys, man, they really love each other. No, it's real. It's not the fake kind. It's the real deal. They really love each other.

Okay, one last thing. This church, and I praise God for this, is the real deal. This is a loving church. This is a praying church. Nothing blesses my heart more as the pastor of this church, which is my profound privilege to be, and when somebody visits and last week was a good example.

My friends that I introduced you to, oh, man, they were blown away. Thank you, by the way, for loving on my friends. They were just flabbergasted. Their church is kind of a big church. Man, they just – your people are — what in the world? We've never — I mean this is a loving church.

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I said I know. In fact, if I wasn't the pastor of this church, this is where I would go to church. I mean that by the way. But nothing blesses me more than when I hear someone say to me you know, I'm visiting here and I can't even begin to tell you how blessed I was, how loved on I was as soon as I walked in that front door.

Actually, it starts in the parking lot with our team that's out there. Man, you guys are amazing. (Applause) Yeah, praise the Lord! Not many pastors — in fact very few pastors can say what I'm about to say and mean it. You make the pastorate a joy. And I thank you for that and I love you so much.

Okay, now Kaponi come on up. (Applause) Smudged my mascara again. Father in Heaven thank You so much. Thank You, God! Thank You, Lord! Thank You so, so much, Lord!

Lord, this is in some ways one of the best parts of this entire letter from Peter. What a way to end this. What a close. How powerful is this, Lord! How helpful is this. How encouraging is this. Lord, we need this perspective. We need to put it all into perspective.

And so Lord, thank You so much. Thank You so much. Thank You for loving us, comforting us, encouraging us, strengthening us. Now Lord, may we in kind do that for others in Jesus' name, amen.