



#4 In the Sojourners Series
The Pain is Gain
Forest Park Church
April 28th 2024
By Jason Corder

THE UNSTOPPABLE EMMA! A great example - no hiking boots - no backpack - no GPS - no sleeping bag - no hiking equipment at all - just **GUTS and DETERMINATION!**

When 67-year-old Emma Rowena Gatewood told her children she was going out for a walk, they didn't think much of it.

- In 1950, Emma read a story in the National Geographic that would play on her mind for the next five years.
- It described the famous Appalachian Trail, a 2,168-mile trail stretching from Mount Oglethorpe in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine.
- The article said that no woman had ever completed the entire hike.
- In 1955, she decided the time was right to embark on her impromptu stroll.
- Wearing Keds tennis shoes and packing a blanket, raincoat and plastic shower curtain, she told her by-then adult children she was going out for a walk and set off.

Emma would later explain that the trail was nothing like the description offered in National Geographic which had given the impression of leisurely walks, with clean cabins waiting at the end of each stretch.

- I thought it would be a nice lark. It wasn't.
- There were terrible blow downs, burnt-over areas that were never re-marked, gravel and sand washouts, weeds and brush to your neck,
- most of the shelters were blown down, burned down or so filthy I chose to sleep out of doors.
- This is no trail. This is a nightmare.
- For some fool reason they always lead you right up over the biggest rock to the top of the biggest mountain they can find.

- I've seen every fire station between here and Georgia.
- Why, an Indian would die laughing his head off if he saw those trails.
- I would never have started this trip if I had known how tough it was, but I couldn't and I wouldn't quit.

The walk ignited something unstoppable in Emma Gatewood.

- By the age of 75, she had completed the hike a further three times, breaking records as she went.
- She had also walked the 2,000 mile Oregon Trail from Missouri to Oregon, averaging 22 miles a day." ~

I Peter 4:1

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, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. ³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

I. The Suffering Servant

The sufferings of Christ are a key part of this letter.

- Obviously this is so because Christ's sufferings are central to the Christian faith.
- But the other reason lies in the situation that we have discussed above. Peter wants his readers to identify with Christ's example.

We've all said it, or at least thought it: "Jesus couldn't possibly understand what I'm going through right now. After all, He never had to experience what I am dealing with!" Often, this thought is brought on by physical suffering, feelings of being alone or a particular temptation, trial or conflict.

In a way, this thought process has been made worse by a reading of Scripture that skips right from the birth of Jesus to His death and resurrection, ignoring how most of the Gospels deal with Jesus's life—His very human life.

When the Son of God came to earth 2000 years ago, He was fully God and fully human. With this reality came all the experiences of what it means to be human. If there's anybody who can understand what you're going through, it's Jesus.

A: Jesus Knew Poverty

Living from paycheck to paycheck can be a real struggle for anyone.

- Surely God can't understand what it is like to go to sleep hungry and cold, can He?
- Jesus, the Son of God, knew exactly what it was like to be poor.
- After all, He was homeless, so He can identify with those who have to do without.

Luke 9:58

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"

B: Jesus Knew Exhaustion

It's okay to admit it: Some days, maybe even most days, we're T-I-R-E-D tired.

Jesus knew all too well what it was like to experience weariness.

- Jesus walked everywhere He went.
- On top of that, He had to deal with His disciples arguing about who was the greatest and missing the lessons He was trying to teach them.
- Not to mention the religious leaders who were plotting His death while He did nothing but heal people, raise folks from the dead and feed the hungry.
- He knows what it is like to be physically and emotionally exhausted.

C: Jesus Knew Betrayal

Jesus was well acquainted with the pain of betrayal.

Not only was He betrayed by jealous religious leaders, He was betrayed by those close to Him, even His own family!

Mark 3:21

“When his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, ‘He is out of his mind’”.

One of His closest friends, Peter, betrayed Jesus by denying that he knew Him, and of course, one of the Twelve sold Him out for 30 pieces of silver.

D: Jesus Knew Grief

Jesus knew what it was like to experience heartache and sorrow.

A couple of instances in the Gospels show Jesus weeping,

- First over the condition of Jerusalem: *“And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it”* (Luke 19:41),
- Second due to the death of a beloved friend: *“Jesus wept”* (John 11:35).
- He was also sorrowed by humanity’s rejection of God: *“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...”* (Isaiah 53:3).

E: Jesus Knew Temptation

Maybe you can accept that Jesus knew grief and exhaustion, but when it comes to fighting temptation, surely Jesus cannot relate.

But the writer of Hebrews reminds us that nothing could be further from the truth. Although Jesus never committed a sin, He was still tempted.

Therefore,

Hebrews 2:18

“because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted”.

F: Jesus Knew Pain

When we search for meaning in our suffering, it can be hard to find on this side of eternity because we cannot know all the purposes of a sovereign God.

- But we have a savior who knew exactly what it was like to suffer.
- He confided His emotional pain to His disciples, saying, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Matthew 26:38).
- And He obviously endured the physical pain of His extremely gruesome death on the cross.

G: Jesus Knew What It Was Like be forgotten

Even when we feel as though God has forsaken us we’ve never experienced that , but God the Father had to turn His face away from His Son while He became sin on the cross in our place.

Matthew 27:46

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

However, we need to remember that although it was a reality for Jesus at that time, being forsaken by God is only a feeling for His children. The truth is, He has told us,

Hebrews 13:5

“I will never leave you nor forsake you”

Plain and simple, Jesus knows what it’s like to live as a human.

- He got hungry.
- He got thirsty.
- He slept.
- He had to learn things.
- He grew.
- He loved.

- He was glad.
- He was angry.
- He was troubled at times.
- He prayed all the time.
- He exercised tremendous faith.
- He read the Scriptures.
- He hurt when He saw another person's illness.
- He cried when He saw death.

As the old hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" says, "Jesus knows our every weakness."

What a comfort to know that

Hebrews 4:15

"we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin"

Yes, Jesus suffered.

II. Arm Yourself

I Peter 4:1

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,

The Greek verb *ὀπλιζω* was often used in a military context **of taking up weapons for battle.**

- Christian believers are to be resolute in imitating the mind of Jesus.
- This does not mean that martyrdom is a mandatory requirement, but there must be a willingness to suffer if need be.
- It involves mirroring the attitude of Jesus in the midst of suffering,

The commitment God calls us to have is nothing greater than the commitment Jesus had in enduring suffering for our salvation.

Jesus communicated the same idea when He told us that anyone who would come after Him must take up his cross and follow

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Taking up the cross meant that you were absolutely committed and not looking back.

A: Arm yourself with the same mind:

Many of us are defeated in our battle against sin because we refuse to sacrifice anything in the battle.

- We only want victory if it comes easily to us.
- Jesus called us to have the kind of attitude that would sacrifice in the battle against sin

Matthew 5:29-30

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

B: Jesus faced Suffering with Prayer

Hebrews 5:7-9

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him

from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.” —

C; Jesus faced Suffering with Submission

Even though Jesus was God’s Son, He didn’t use that privilege, position, and authority to *avoid* pain and injustice.

- Instead, He willingly faced more pain than any of us will ever know in our lifetimes.
- He accepted this as the “*cross*” He needed to carry—*going further, to die on a literal, splinter-infested cross for our sakes and salvation.*

He realized His suffering was beneficial and necessary.

Not only did Jesus need to learn “***obedience***” from what He suffered while on earth, but He was also made “***perfect***” by going through that pain Heb. 5:8-9

- You and I may not always get to see the purposes God has for the suffering we face and endure in life.
- But we can rest assured that God is using them to teach us obedience, as well as perfecting our image into more and more Christlikeness as a result.

III. An Overcomer

We suffer not to forgive other but so that we can cease from sin.

Jesus also makes this clear when He explains who can be His disciple (pupil or follower):

Luke 9:23-24.

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.” (HATE MOTHER FATHER SISTER BROTHER VERSE Luke 14:26-27.)

We meet these sufferings in the time of temptation when we have the mind of Christ that *“not my will, but Yours, be done,”*

But we find that our flesh does not easily give up its passions and desires. (James 1:14; Galatians 5:24.)

- Like Jesus, we have to cry out for help.
- We too, have to learn obedience through these sufferings
- But the incredible thing is that because Jesus has gone through the same thing, *yet without sin*, He knows and understands the temptations and sufferings that we face.
- And because of that, He is able to aid us when we are tempted.

Hebrews 4:16

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

We come to Christ to ask for the grace and help we need to deny ourselves and take up our cross, which quite simply means

- To say “No!” to each temptation,
- Faithfully, over and over,
- Until the temptation has been overcome.
- No, again and again, to our own will, to the lusts and desires of the flesh.
- When these desires are denied, it hurts.
- This is what it means to suffer in the flesh.
- But when we do this faithfully, when we resist temptation without relapse, we little by little cease from sin in that area.

Conclusion

The Words of Job, Stephen, and Peter

After months of suffering, Job finally says to God,

Job 42:5

“ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;

- Job was a godly and upright man, pleasing to God, but the difference between what he knew of God in prosperity
- and what he knew of him through adversity was the difference between hearing about and seeing.

When Stephen was arrested and put on trial for his faith and given a chance to preach, the upshot was that the religious leaders were enraged and ground their teeth at him.

- They were just about to drag him out of the city and kill him. At just that moment, Luke tells us,

Acts 7:55

“Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit and gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”

- There is a special revelation, a special intimacy, prepared for those who suffer with Christ.

Peter put it this way, *“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you”*

- In other words God reserves a special coming and resting of his Spirit and his glory on his children who suffer for his name.