

A Gospel-Shaped Community

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Date: 30 September 2018

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, well, this morning we continue to work through the book of 1 Peter in our series, The Splendor in the Furnace. Now, if you're new to Watermark this morning, you're joining us in kind of the climax of our series.

We've been working through the book of 1 Peter, and this is the part where we really get to find out about the furnace and affliction and suffering. And it's around this time that we get to see why we call this series The Splendor in the Furnace, because Peter is writing to a bunch of Christians who feel like they're being thrown in the furnace of affliction.

They are going through a hard time. They are being persecuted and maligned for their faith, for following Jesus. They are being ostracized because they weren't worshipped, the household gods, etc.

And Peter writes them to say, though this may feel like you're being thrown in the fire, something beautiful and splendid is going to come of it. God is going to do something majestic and beautiful in the season.

And your faith, which is like gold, is going to be tested in the fire and is going to be purified and fortified and strengthened. And so this book really is about how walking with God through pain and suffering really does produce something beautiful inside of us.

[1 : 1 9] Now, if you're here this morning and you're not yet a Christian, I guess you've probably got a whole bunch of questions around pain and suffering and evil and how can God allow these things. And there's many good, those are good questions and there's many good answers.

The book of 1 Peter is just one of Jesus' answers to us, to this question. Why does God allow these things? Well, he does it partly to shape us and to form us and to fashion us.

And so if you're still trying to make sense of the claims of Jesus, we're so glad you're with us this morning. Now, today's passage follows on closely from last week's passage. If you're here last week, I felt like I did a very inadequate job of opening up the scriptures and I apologize for that. So let's hope that we can make more sense of this today. Summarize briefly last week and then dive into today's passage. Okay. So the big idea for today, this sounds very loud.

Is it loud to you? No? Okay. I'll just bear it. The big idea for today is this. Watermark, let us not waste our time of suffering, but let suffering drive the gospel deeper into our hearts so that we become a community which is gospel sacrificial rather than self-indulgent.

[2 : 3 4] Okay? So, Watermark, when suffering comes our way, don't waste the opportunity that suffering produces to drive the gospel deeper into your heart. Let suffering make us the kind of community which is gospel-saturated, that is gospel sacrificial rather than self-centered and self-indulgent.

And there's four points today. Okay? And so let's dive into the first one, which is the splendor of the gospel. Now, the main idea from last week was this.

1 Peter 3, verse 9 says, Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but bless those who persecute you. And the way to bless them is to pray for them.

Someone's giving you a hard time, you pray God's richest blessings on them. And the motivation for this was found in chapter 3, verse 18, where Peter writes and says, For Christ suffered for sin, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

And this verse really is a kind of summary of the entire Bible. Everything from Genesis to Revelation is pointing to this one truth, that Jesus Christ, the righteous one, suffered for sins, for your sins and my sins, that he might bring us to God.

[3 : 5 0] Christ, the perfect one, died in the place of the imperfect ones. Christ, the sinless one, died in the place of sinful ones. Christ, the righteous, died for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to

God.

You know, there's an amazing verse in the Old Testament in 1 Samuel chapter 14, where a lady in Israel comes to King David and says, We all deserve to die.

Let me just get it for us. But like water that's been spilt on the ground and cannot be gathered up again. But God does not take away life. God goes out of his way to find ways to devise means so that banished ones do not remain estranged from him.

So here's what she's saying. She's saying, like if you take a bottle of drinking water and it spills on the ground, on sandy ground, it becomes muddy. There's no ways you're going to be able to drink that water again.

It's gone, right? It's unsavable, unsalvageable. He says, that's how we are in the natural realm. But God finds a way to save the unsavable. God goes out of his way to find ways of doing the impossible, of taking those that are far from him and bring them back to him.

[5 : 03] And how did he do it? Well, Jesus, the righteous one, died for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. This is the gospel. And so this is what we've been talking about.

This is what the whole of 1 Peter is all about. However, that's not all there is to the gospel. You see, the gospel is magnificent and it's deep and it's beautiful, but it's not one-dimensional.

There's many aspects to it. And so consider this. Consider how Christ's death on the cross was not only the means by which God purchased our forgiveness. It was that. But it was so much more.

Christ's death on the cross was the means by which God made his enemies his friends or his children. Romans chapter 5 says, For while we were enemies of God, God reconciled us to himself by the death of his son.

Consider how Christ's death on the cross was the way that God made those that were spiritually dead alive again. Ephesians chapter 2. As for you, as for me, we were dead in our sins, but now we've been made alive with Christ again.

[6 : 04] Consider how the cross is the means by which God's unusual way of defeating his enemies. Colossians chapter 2 says, God disarmed the rulers and authorities, put them to open shame, triumphing over them in Christ on the cross.

Well, consider how the cross is the way by which Jesus glorified God the Father. Remember, just before he dies, he prays and says, Father, the hour for my death has come. Now glorify your name. The cross is the way by which Jesus puts on display the infinite majesty and the holiness and the justice, as well as the kindness and the compassion and the mercy of God.

Well, consider how not only that, the cross is the means by which God makes a new community. He takes those that are banished and estranged and individuals, and he brings them back together as a family.

You know, sometimes we think, Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. And that's true, but that's not the whole truth. The truth is also that God makes a new community, a family, a royal nation, a people for his own possession.

[7 : 07] Friends, Jesus dying on the cross to take people like you and I and bring us back into his family is like a great shepherd going after the lost sheep and bringing them back to the fold. It's like a father who goes to the judge and says, I'll serve my son's prison sentence so he can be released from jail and reconciled with the family.

Jesus' death on the cross makes a new community. But not only that, as we saw last week, Jesus' death on the cross, in all its anguish, in all its pain, is a picture of how living for the will of God, though it will require you to die initially, actually leads to life.

Karen Job said it like this. Christians know that Christ's death was both purposeful and victorious because death was not the final word. Christians followed Jesus' footsteps through death to victory and life.

You see, Jesus' death shows us that death is not the final word. It's part of the journey towards real, eternal life. And for the Christians, this is the pattern of our lives. Christ calls us to come and die when we follow him that we may find true life.

And all of this is because Jesus died on the cross, what Christ accomplished for us, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, the splendor of the gospel.

[8 : 27] And that leads us to today's passage, chapter 4, verse 1, and to point 2. And so point 2 is this, the splendor of the gospel and the furnace of affliction. Okay?

So let's look at verse 1 of 1 Peter, chapter 4. Peter starts off like this. He says, Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, so that's everything we've just spoken about, okay?

Since Jesus died on the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous, to accomplish all of those things and more, therefore, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

Okay? So Peter's saying this to these Christians that are facing the mill, right? Things are not very comfortable for them. And he's saying, When persecution comes, when you suffer unjustly, when hardship and difficulty comes your way, remember how Christ suffered unjustly on the cross.

Arm yourself with the same kind of thinking. And it's interesting that he uses the word arm yourself. What's he saying there? He's saying, Take up your weapons. Take up your arms, right? So when unjust suffering comes your way, when people are persecuting you and ridiculing you and you're going to suffer for following Jesus, when your boss refuses to give you a promotion because you won't flirt with him or sleep with him, when your boyfriend breaks up with you because you won't sleep with him, when your family ridicules you because you won't worship the ancestors or pray to them, when you lose out on a financial deal because you choose to do the path of integrity rather than dishonesty, arm yourself.

[9 : 59] Take up these weapons. And what is the weapon we should take up? Is it swords and spears? Is it guns and ammunition? No, no, no. Take up this weapon, he says, which is to arm yourself with the thinking of the gospel.

Set your heart and your mind to think about Jesus and how the way he died on the cross. Because last week Peter said, well last week I said, I was trying to say what Peter said, that one of the ways we respond is to pray for our enemies.

We bless those who persecute us. And now he gives us a second means, and that's to arm ourselves with gospel thinking. Friends, if you're a Christian here today, and you're suffering, or maybe if you're suffering because you're a Christian, that will produce in us one of two responses. Okay? One of two responses. Either opposition to the gospel will tempt us to try and live lives of self-preservation, of self-centeredness. It will either tempt us to try and find our joy and happiness in ourselves, or it will drive the gospel deeper into our hearts.

Okay? So in Matthew 24, Jesus says this, just before he dies on the cross. He says, the end of the age is drawing near, and because wickedness will increase in the world, the love of many will grow cold.

[11 : 23] Okay? So think about this. You've got a massive fire. Okay? You've got a barbecue pit. You're going to barbecue some roast lamb. Okay? And busy barbecuing there, and next to it is a tin of see-through liquid.

And so I say to you, hey, what's in this liquid? And you say, I don't know. Let's throw it on the fire and see. Okay? Now, if that liquid is cold water, let's say it's a big jug of cold water, you throw it on the fire, what's going to happen?

It's going to quench it, right? It's going to put it out. It's going to kill the fire. But if that liquid is paraffin, or gasoline, or something like that, what's going to happen? You're going to throw it in the fire end? It's going to be an explosion, right?

It's going to be a combustion. Well, Jesus is saying the same thing. He's saying, when persecution comes, when suffering comes, there's two ways that you can respond. The one is it's like throwing cold water on your affections for Jesus.

It's going to dampen. It's going to cause the love of many to grow cold. It's going to tempt you to retreat into self-preservation. But the other hand, if you arm yourself with gospel thinking, it's like throwing high-octane paraffin on the fire.

[12 : 32] It's going to combust with explosion, right? Either persecution will make our sinful hearts and temptations more appealing and more tempting, or it will open our eyes to see what sin is and make sin more disgusting and the beauty of Jesus more glorious.

And this is what Peter's saying. Look at how he says it in verse two. He says, either suffering will make us feel sorry for ourselves, and as a result, we will look for joy and happiness and pleasure. And what does he use the word here? He says, human passions, okay? That's self-seeking desires. That's what makes me happy, what satisfies my desires. Or, he says, Peter says, don't let that happen.

Rather, combat the temptation to feel sorry for yourself by seeking joy and pleasure and happiness in what does he say? In the will of God. In the will of God.

And so, look at how he says it here. He says, since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For if anyone has suffered in the flesh, if they respond with gospel thoughtfulness, if they respond by reflecting on Jesus and his death, they have ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of their time, no longer for human passions, my desires, and what makes me feel comfortable, but for the will of God.

[13:50] You see that? See that there's two responses here. So either, suffering and hardship will drive us to become more self-focused, self-aware, self-centered, and self-entitled, as we feel sorry for ourselves, or, it will make us selfless, others-focused, generous, and servant-hearted.

Okay? The reformers used to say it like this, the same sun that bakes the clay also melts the ice. The sun bakes the clay.

In one sense, it makes you hard, it can harden your heart towards God and the gospel. But the same sun can also melt the ice, can also soften your heart towards the gospel. How do you know which one it's going to do to you?

Well, how are you going to respond when hardship and difficulty comes your way? And so this is what Peter's saying. He's saying, don't waste your suffering. Don't waste the opportunity that opposition brings to drive the gospel deeper into your hearts and to fall more in love with Jesus. And this is why this book is called *The Splendor in the Furnace*. When the heat is turned up, when you feel like you're being thrown in the furnace of affliction, when difficulty comes because you're following Jesus, not genus, Jesus, the furnace will do something in you and to you which you'd never have discovered apart from it if you arm yourself with gospel thinking.

[15:14] Tim Keller, gee, I can't speak today. Tim Keller, I really do apologize. Tim Keller wrote the most incredible book and I wish I'd brought my copy to show you.

I really want to encourage you to buy this. It's called *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*. Probably one of the best books I've ever read in my life. And in it, he writes this. It's quite a long quote and I forgot to put it on the slide so you're going to have to listen up carefully.

It says this, No matter what precautions we take, no matter how well we have put together a good life, no matter how hard we've worked to be healthy, wealthy, and comfortable, something will inevitably ruin it.

In a secular view, suffering is never seen as meaningful but only as an interruption to my good life. Christianity teaches that while suffering is overwhelming, while it's real, and contrary to karma, suffering is often unfair, it's not without meaning.

There is a purpose to it. And if faced rightly, it can drive us like a nail deep into the love of God, into more stability, into spiritual power you could never imagine.

[16:18] While other worldviews lead us to sit in the midst of life's joys, foreseeing the coming sorrows, Christianity empowers its people to sit in the midst of world's sorrows, tasting the coming joys.

You see that? The gospel says that suffering is not without meaning. It's not always comfortable, it's not fine, it's not nice, it's terrible, it's overwhelming, but it's not without meaning.

And so this is what Peter's saying to us. He's saying don't waste the opportunity. Friends, don't waste your suffering. Don't run away from it. Don't retreat into self-preservation. Let God use the furnace of affliction to open your eyes and to fall more in love with Jesus, to see the ugliness of sin and the beauty of Christ and the splendor of His glory and to long for heaven.

And so this is what Peter's saying. When you suffer for the gospel, arm yourself with gospel thinking. Fix our eyes on Jesus. Remember the cross. Remember what Jesus did for us. For whoever suffers in the flesh has ceased from sin and spends the rest of their time living for the will of God.

Okay? So the splendor of the gospel, the splendor of the gospel, the furnace of affliction. Thirdly, a community of self. Now, what we see in this next section from verse 3 to 11 is that one of the ways we know how we will respond to the gospel or how we will respond to suffering is by observing the nature of the community that we are part of or more specifically, our view of community life.

[17:48] Okay? So how do you know which way you're going to respond? More self-entitled or more other-centered? Feeling sorry for yourself or more selfless and sacrificial? Well, one of the ways you know is by observing the nature of the community you're part of and how you view community.

Because in verse 3 to 4, we have a picture of what some people might consider to be a fun community. Okay? Lots of passion. Lots of excitement. Maybe it's the kind of community you want to be part of.

But there's something sinister about it. And so let's see if we can pick it up. Look at verse 3 and 4. He says, Peter talks about people that are living in sensuality. That means just living for what feels good in the moment.

People who are living for passions. That's what excites you. Living for drunkenness. Okay? Living without any restraints. Living for orgies. Fulfilling all your sexual desires. Drinking parties. And lawless idolatry. Now that may be, maybe that sounds exciting. Maybe you think that's exactly what I'm looking for. Sign me up. Where can I join? Right? But there's something sinister about this. Because the problem is that this lifestyle, like a community that's focused on this, cannot sustain itself.

[18:58] It's going to come to an end. It's going to unravel at some point in time. Because look at how Peter shows us this in verse 3 and 4. He says, this is how you used to live. Remember, this is how you, you were once part of this community.

But now, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery. And they malign you. They ostracize you. They persecute you. Why?

Because a community that's built around pleasure seeking, around self-indulgence, around fulfilling humanistic desires, does not love you and accept you for who you are.

It merely loves you and accepts you because you join them in fulfilling self-gratifying desires. Does that make sense? So the community doesn't say, hey, I love you because I love you. It says, you can be part of us as we both try and fulfill our own pleasures together.

Let me see if I can tell a story to demonstrate this. When I was in high school, so back in South Africa, in high school, you finish high school when most people turn 18 in their final year of school.

[19:59] And in South Africa, everything happens at 18. You finish high school, you also get your driving license and you can drink legally at the age of 18. So most people turn 18 in their final year of high school except most people have started drinking many years before that.

14, 15, et cetera. And so when I was at school, my final three years of school, I was in the boarding house which was the best three years of my high school career. We had a lot of fun.

But I had decided that I wasn't going to drink alcohol before I was 18. It's just a personal decision.

And so while I had a lot of friends in the boarding house, I was always slightly on the outside.

I was never really in the circle with the guys because I wouldn't drink with them on weekends. I'd go to the parties but I would drink soda and I was a little bit on the outside.

A bit nerdy. But when I turned 18, I had a motorbike in the boarding house and so I went out of the school grounds, I went to a liquor store and I bought a whole case of beers and I brought them back to the hostel and I said to all the guys in my year, I said, listen, I've turned 18 today, we're going to go down to the rugby fields and we're going to have beers together.

[21:07] And so we went down to the rugby fields and we all cracked open these beers and had a couple of beers together. And it was amazing. For the first time, I was right in there. I was part of the crowd.

Maybe that's what happens if you buy beers for other guys, right? But something changed that day where I was part of the crowd. I was part of the men. I was welcomed into the circle, right?

Because I had bought beers for them. But the problem is that the fickleness or the ease with which you join a community is the same ease with which you'll be excluded from the community when you no longer participate or you dress differently or you no longer listen to the same kind of music, you're out.

And that's exactly what's happening to these Christians. They were excluded because they no longer participated in the activities of the same interest. You see, friends, a community which is formed around similar ideas of self-indulgence or personal gratification or what makes me happy is self-defeating because the very thing that brings them together is the same thing that actually undermines true community.

True community is formed when you say we have common commitments, common convictions where together we are united about a commitment to something outside of us, something bigger than us.

[22:47] And in the Christian context, it's the person of Jesus Christ. Communities form not just around common interests but common convictions and commitments. And friends, one of the

challenges for us as a church is that a Christian community can actually be just as secular but just around Christian personal self-gratification.

So we can pretend and think we're part of a Christian community but it's not because we actually committed to loving and serving one another. It's because I fulfill my own religious self-gratification and you fulfilling your religious gratification and we're doing it together but as soon as one of us is different, as soon as one of us has a different idea, what do we do?

We shun the person. We kick them out. You're no longer allowed to be our friend. And Peter writes and says that kind of community is always self-defeating. And that leads us to the fourth and the final point which is a community of gospel sacrifice.

And so let's look at what a community which is forged in the furnace of affliction, which is thought deeply about the gospel and Jesus looks like. Let's read verse 7 to 11 together. Peter writes this, The end of all things is at hand.

Therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Now just pause quickly. It's interesting, this is the third time in three weeks that the passage of scripture we've looked at has mentioned for the sake of your prayers.

[24 : 07] It's interesting, Jesus is telling us that God takes our obedience to his word very seriously. There is a correlation between our obedience to Christ and our relationship with him. Three weeks in a row the passage has spoken about obey Christ for the sake of your prayers.

Then verse 8, he gives us four characteristics. He says, Above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever speaks is one who speaks the oracles of God. Whoever serves is one who serves by the strength that God supplies.

In order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Four things that Peter gives us.

Four marks of a gospel community that's been forged in the furnace of affliction but has thought deeply about Christ and who he is. First thing is this. Love one another for love covers over a multitude of sins.

[25 : 10] You see, every community whether Christian or secular is going to have times of misunderstanding, miscommunication, difficulty, disappointments, right? Chris mentioned earlier this week, he said, a lot of people get disappointed in church because church can be disappointing.

And it's true, right? As churches we're not immune from that. We're full of sin, we're full of pride, we're full of stuff and we get in the way and we hurt each other. What's going to stop us from distangling and becoming self-centered and self-orientated?

The gospel community is one whose association is determined not by self-interest or what makes me happy, by a common commitment to love and serve one another.

Jesus said, as I have loved you, so you love one another. And how did he love us? By dying on the cross, by covering our sin with his blood. Christ's love speaks to Christian community.

You see friends, Christian love is not soft and mushy. It's not like, oh, rosy and gentle, right? It's robust, it's strong, it's healthy, it covers over sins.

[26 : 16] And when someone hurts you and maligns you and does something hurtful, the Christian community is able to say, because Christ suffered for me, I can forgive you. The gospel calls us to love one another.

Secondly, verse nine, he shows that a community shaped by Christ's selfless, sacrificial death is one that is marked by incredible hospitality. In Hong Kong, because we have small homes and because time is of a, is a very precious commodity, the temptation is to give in to our secular culture and to never have people in our homes.

Friends, I want to encourage us not to go that route. I want to encourage us to let the gospel shape us and to become incredibly hospitable, to open up not just our homes but our hearts to one another.

You see, opening up our homes is a way of showing, of letting people into the most private areas of our lives. It's a way of allowing people to see the good and the not so good, right? It's allowing people to see our lives when we're not putting our best foot forward but when our kids are messy and there's stuff in the lounge and the music is too loud and Claire patiently puts up with me and I get frustrated.

When people in my homes, they get to see the real me. They get to see all the sin and all the mess. Friends, consider how Jesus opened up not only his home but his heart to us. Consider how Jesus suffered in order to bring us into the family.

[27 : 38] Remember how Jesus welcomed us with open arms. Remember how Jesus said, I welcome you and then you change. I don't ask you to change before I welcome you.

Rosario Butterfield wrote an incredible book called *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*. In this book, she tells her story. She was an antagonistic anti-Christian, didn't want anything to do with Christians.

What changed her life was she met a couple, an older couple, that welcomed her into their home. For two years, they would just welcome her at any time. They said, we have dinner at 5.30 every night.

This is in the States, not in Hong Kong. We have dinner at 5.30 every night and you're welcome any time you want. Just pull in and there will always be food for you. And this hospitality challenged her. She says this, for two years, I was loved and welcomed by a Christian community that I mocked, despised, and rejected. I accepted them when it worked for me but all the other times I rejected them.

[28 : 37] But eventually, this couple won her heart and she explained the gospel to her and she became a follower of Jesus. And she writes this in a book. She says, the gospel calls us to engage in radical, ordinary hospitality, which means we provide the time necessary to build strong relationships even with people who think differently to us, as well as strong relationships with people within the family of God.

Of course, it takes planning, intentionality, and sacrifice to create margins of time and money. but it won't take anything from you that you don't already have in Christ and the gospel.

Friends, because of what we have in the gospel, God calls us to spend ourselves for the sake of others. Thirdly, Peter says this in verse 10, that such a community born of the gospel, shaped by affliction and thinking about Jesus, will live not for themselves but for the well-being of others.

Remember in chapter 3, we spoke about this two weeks ago, in chapter 3, Peter says, husbands, use the strength that God has given you to serve your wife. Whatever strength God has given you, you use it to build up and encourage your wife.

Now, Peter says the exact same thing to all Christians. He says here, each of us has received a gift. So think about the gifts you've received. Maybe it's your natural talents and gifting. Maybe it's your resources, finances, or a house, or a car.

[29 : 59] Maybe it's connections and contacts that you have. He says, use the gifts that you've got. Each one has received a gift. Now use it to serve one another as stewards of God's gracious gift.

I think one of the best examples I can think of of this is Franklin and Teresa. Franklin and Teresa have been really blessed by God in many ways. Good education, good family, blessings, work, opportunities.

Franklin is always asking the question, how can I use the gift that God has given me to bless and serve others? I think of the way he even bought a car a year ago. I mean, it's just Franklin and Teresa in their home, right?

There don't have any kids staying at home. He bought a seven-seater car and the thinking was this, I'm sure there are going to be people that are going to need lifts to and from things. I'll give people lifts. So he bought a bigger car just to help people out.

But he's constantly asking the question, how can I use the gifts that God has given me to love and serve others? And then finally, Peter gives us the fourth, I guess, proof of gospel community.

[31 : 01] And look at what he says in verse 11. He says, Let him who serves serve by the strength that God gives in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Friends, if the gospel is true, if Jesus Christ went to the cross to bear our sin upon his shoulders, if Jesus Christ, the righteous one, died for unrighteous you and me, if God does not hold our sin against us but rather welcomes us into his family and into our arms, friends, if God loves us and forgives us, not because of what we've done but because of what Jesus did on the cross for us, is there any room left for boasting?

Is there any room left for self-glory? Is there any room left for arrogance or self-sufficiency? Peter writes this, to him, to Christ, belongs all the glory forever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

Amen. Right? A gospel community forged and shaped by the gospel be one that says Christ to you be all the glory. Watermark, if there's one prayer I've prayed for our church the last year, there's one prayer I've prayed over and over and over again is this, God make us a gospel church, make us a gospel community, get the gospel deep into our hearts, make us a community which is formed and fashioned and shaped around the person of Jesus Christ and what he's did on the cross.

And I've prayed that prayer for myself, say God, I want to be a gospel man, I want what you did on the cross Jesus to shape every area of my life, I want to be a gospel man. And you know what, I think God is starting to answer that in my life.

[32 : 43] By 1%, very slowly, God is doing stuff in my life. But you know what, there's two things that are happening. One, the way that God is doing it is he's exposing all sorts of sin and rubbish in my heart.

I'm seeing things that I've never seen before and it hasn't been very comfortable. And secondly, he's taken me through probably the most difficult trialing season of my life. But God is doing something.

And friends, I think Jesus wants to answer that prayer for our church. I think Jesus wants to make us a gospel community, a gospel church. But chances are when he does it, he's going to expose things. The things that are hidden under the surface that are going to come up.

But secondly, there's chances are he's going to do it by taking us to the furnace of affliction. He's going to dial up the heat. He's going to allow us to suffer a little bit. But as he does that, let's respond.

Let's arm ourselves with the gospel. Let's think about Christ on the cross. And let's become those who don't waste suffering, but use it to get the gospel deeper into our hearts so that we're a gospel sacrificial community.

[33 : 41] Let's pray together. Oh, Heavenly Father, these things are good ideas and they're nice theory, but God, we need you.

We need a work of your grace and a work of your spirit to really do this in our hearts. Jesus, we need you to make each one of us here a gospel man, a gospel woman, God. We want to arm ourselves.

We want to think carefully and intentionally about you and your death on the cross and what you accomplished for us. God, won't you shape our hearts, we pray, God.

And Father, as you do that, won't you shape our community. I pray, God, that Watermark really will be a gospel community, Lord. That we will be those that love one another intensely and deeply. We will be those that are extravagantly hospitable and open.

We will be those, God, that use the gifts that you've given us, not for our own benefit, but for the well-being of others. And Father, you'll make us a community that lives and that the song of our heart is to the glory of Christ, the praise of your name.

[34 : 48] God, I pray, make us different. Make us a counter-cultural community. May we be a light in the city, God. May we swim upstream. May people see the wonder and the beauty of Jesus because of what you've done in our hearts.

We pray this in your wonderful name. Amen. Amen.