



## COURAGE FOR SUFFERING

7 Letters to the Church | 10.20.24

Libin Abraham

(The following text is automatically generated and has not been edited)

Libin Abraham 0:00

Liam realized it was under 16. He's like, Dad, it's cold. I cannot go to school like I need to stay home in my pajamas. And I was like, I agree. I want to stay home too and just scuttle up and say, It's we love comfort. And I was like, buddy, but that's unfortunately, not how life works. We would love to stay in comfort zones, but that's not how life works. In fact, you think about all the decisions you make around comfort, how you spend money to be more comfortable, and spend time and energy thinking about how we can make our lives comfortable, and people will do some strange things to live in the sense of comfort. People even choose churches that are a little bit more comfortable for them, okay, comfort is a major driver, especially in America, there was a survey of pastors, 1000s of pastors, who were asked this question, what's the number one thing that leads and controls the people in your body? Like, what's the number one most significant leadership thing? Like, what's driving people? What's the pervasive, controlling thing within your congregation. And here were the answers of these pastors, gaging the temperature of their church said, here are the results of the survey. This is a 2022, life way study. They said, 67% were driven by comfort, okay? 56% by security, 55% by money, 51% by approval. And really, you can lump all of this into the life of comfort we seek after and desire and want in life. If there is a great idol in America, it could be the idol of comfort. And when our comfort is pushed against, we resist, we fight, we get afraid, because we want to preserve and keep a level of comfort. Now, there's something that you might have not heard about because it's not really talked about that much, but there's an election coming up in a couple of weeks. I know it's like news to you. It's been so under the radar. I do have a few things to say about that next week. So come back. And we had a beautiful night of prayer on Thursday, just praying for our country, praying for the world and what's happening. And we did a series on our last fall. I love I'm going to send you a link this week in my email, but there is an election coming up and one of the things that I so cherish about America, that I think about in moments like this, it's the freedom of religion, like we cherish and and love the freedom of religion, and I hope it's a freedom that is protected and kept and and cherished for a long, long time. It's a freedom that many parts of the world don't have. So we shouldn't take that for granted, the ability to come in a room like this and worship Jesus publicly and not be afraid because of it. And it's not just the freedom to come and worship in a place. It's the freedom of your faith to shape convictions and ethics in your life and for you to live in view of your faith. It's a precious thing, and that should impact how we think about politics and government and even how we vote. The freedom of religion is precious. So I want you to know that. But this because I was thinking about that, I asked myself a question, why do I cherish the freedom of religion in America? Like, why do I love it? Why do I cherish it? Is it because I'm so passionate about the gospel being heard publicly and loudly, so that as many people can come to Christ or be because I want my life as a Christian to be even more comfortable. Like, is it rooted in a love for the gospel, people knowing Jesus, living in view of it? Or is it rooted in my own desire for comfort. Just a question to throw out there when Prime Minister Modi, who was known to be a Hindu extremist, was voted into office many years ago, our missionaries in India were actually not in despair. They actually were filled with anticipation. Some of them even prayed. They were crazy enough to pray that that would happen. Why? Because they knew that persecution and suffering would cause the Church of Jesus to multiply. They knew that discomfort and pain and suffering would spread the gospel, and it would be, in fact, a feel for the gospel. So they say we can't wait to see what the Lord is going to do in seasons of pain and suffering. One of the words that Jesus gave to His disciples to describe the Holy Spirit is the name the Comforter, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would be our comforter. And you know what that implies? It implies the reality of discomfort in this world. Jesus said, Look, following me, things are going to get so hard and uncomfortable for you that you're going to need the third person of the Trinity to come down and. Be your comforter, that life is gonna be difficult and uncomfortable, that you're gonna desperately need the ministry of comfort through the Holy Spirit, because your life is gonna be uncomfortable. In fact, Jesus said it in these words, in John 15, verse 19 onwards, he said, If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. That's comfort. The world loving you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. I'm sure that made them uncomfortable. I've been carrying this weight, not a burden, just a necessary weight, over the last maybe month or so of wanting to prepare our church for a season of discomfort and even suffering on account of the name and gospel of Jesus Christ, because there is a day coming even in America, a country we love, the land of the free, the home of the brave, even here that it will be costly to follow Jesus, that a sacrifice, a cost may be required to follow Jesus, that this little middle category that most of the world don't even know about, this cultural Christianity, follow Jesus because it's uncomfortable. It's what most people do. So if I got to follow somebody, I'll be a

Christian like that category will cease to exist, and that's going to be for the better, that people will decisively have to make a choice to follow Jesus, knowing that it's going to be costly and that's going to be good for the church, and I don't want our body to be prepared for that season. The Book of Revelation is given to a group of churches, seven churches, particularly, it's for everybody, but it's given to seven specific churches who were on the brink of a widespread Empire wide persecution, and some of these churches might have not been ready to endure it. And so John's got a vision, and God peels the curtain back, and he shows them a full revelation of Himself. He peels a curtain back. He reveals to them the revelation of Jesus and in those in doing, in doing so, he is showing them a spiritual battle that's going on between every other battle, physical wars, political, social, culture, whatever you name it, there is a spiritual battle happening, and God wanted these churches to see reality as it were, but he, in this vision, shows him that Jesus is our conquering king, that he will not be defeated, and the Church of God will prevail through suffering, through pain. Yes, there is the Lion of Judah, but every time John looks for him, he seems the Lamb of God. Because the way to victory, the ultimate victory that we see in Revelation, comes through a path of tears and pain. God wants them to see Jesus coming in as the rider on the white horse. But guess what? That doesn't happen to Revelation 19 and 20. And there's only 22 chapters. Y'all meaning it takes a long time for Christ to execute his perfect justice and righteousness in the world and conquer all sense of evil. But the way to that, the journey to that, is through tribulation and pain and martyrdom and cost, but Jesus wants his church to endure. So the goal of Revelation is to breathe courage, stamina, endurance, into the Bride of Christ to say, Hang on, it's worth it. Jesus will return, and you will see Him face to face, he will split the skies open, and there is going to be a day where there is no more death and tears and pain or abuse or divorce or injustice. That day is coming. We hold on to that, but the pathway to that day is going to be one of discomfort, which has always been the hallmark of the church. So last week, we looked at the first letter written to the church in Ephesus, which was a call to come back to first love, that your walk with Jesus isn't ultimately about what you do or how you perform. It's not even about ministry. It is a walk of love with him, a relationship of first love, a passion, just like you had on the day you met him and your life was drastically transformed by him. It's a relationship of love and intimacy. The second church we're going to look at today is a church in Smyrna, and here in this letter, it's a call to endure through suffering. The order of that kind of is fitting and.

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That because the trust the test of true love is your willingness to suffer for somebody, if you got a niece or a nephew that you love, or a child like you'll do anything to take away their suffering from them and to put it on you. Why? Because our willingness to suffer proves the genuineness of our love, that to love someone comes with a willingness to pay a price, even to suffer. And so after Jesus calls a church of Ephesus to first love now, he calls his church in Smyrna to a life of enduring suffering and pain. Would you stand on your feet with me as we read the Word of the Lord from Revelation Chapter Two, I want you to hear the words of Jesus recorded through John, verse eight of revelation two. Write to the angel of the church in Smyrna, Thus says the first and the last, the one who was dead and came to life. I know your affliction and poverty, but you are rich. I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Don't be afraid of what you're about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will experience affliction for 10 days. Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will never be harmed by the second death. Thanks be to God for His Word, amen. Amen. You may be seated. Smyrna is one of the seven cities that is still standing today. It's located in Turkey. In fact, I saw somebody, one of our leaders, they're going to this town next week in Turkey. Well, I said, I hope this prophecy doesn't come true about being put in prison, I hope you come back safely. Okay, it's called Izmir. It's the town of Smyrna still standing today, and here's a picture of it in first century, it was the most splendid and prosperous and beautiful city in Asia Minor. In fact, they called Smyrna the crown of Asia Minor, because when you stand at the sea harbor and look, look up, it looks like a crown. Literally, had had streets paved with gold. Try doing that in Dallas. It may not last long, but they here had streets paved in gold leading to the Temple of Zeus. In fact, this is a birthplace of Homer. So it had shrines of philosophy and religion. And particularly, there was a temple given to or allowed that allowed Smyrna to build a special temple in AD 25 for emperor Tiberius. Okay, every other city in Asia wanted to build a huge, massive temple for emperor worship, and Smyrna was given the privilege or so to build it. And so this city is unique in that it's got a pervasive, prominent worship to Rome, to the Emperor and to the Empire. It deified Rome as a goddess. So the the pressure of this idolatry of worshiping an emperor or Empire was so prominent there, and part of this ritual was it would have public gatherings around the around the altar dedicated emperor Tiberius. They would burn incense in worship of Him, and they would say Caesar is Lord. In worshiping the Roman Empire would say Caesar is Lord, and everyone was expected to participate. Well, you can imagine the Christians refused. Why? Because they said, we only have one LORD, and his name is not Caesar. We worship Jesus Christ alone, and we cannot divide our affections or give Savior like attributes to anyone else but Jesus alone. And when they refused, it was seen as unpatriotic and treachery and therefore, suffering soon ensued upon the Christians. You read at least five different layers of the kind of suffering that this first century church is going through. Jesus says, first of all, I know your affliction, your affliction. It's a word for tribulation and oppression. I know your affliction. Second of all, next slide, the second of all, he says, I know your your poverty in a prosperous city like Smyrna, no one should be poor. It's got more resources than you can imagine. No one should be poor, but the Christians were why? Because of their faith in Jesus, jobs were taken from them, rights were removed, houses were looted, possessions were confiscated. They experienced tremendous poverty. People refused to trade with the Christians because of their faith in Jesus. Third of all, Jesus says, I know the slander coming, especially from the Jews who who are persecuting the Christians through false accusations. Uh, some of the common slander in first century against the Christians were, first of all, they were accused of being a cannibalist, or cannibalism why? Because the Christians often talked about eating of the Body of Christ and drinking his blood. So they were labeled cannibalist. They were called immoral. Why? Because the Christians held love feasts, which was really the table of the Lord, taking the community

together, but it was called a love feast. So people said, Now those people are the worst, the most immoral people. They were even called atheists because they refused to believe in the hundreds of Greek gods. They were called arsonists. Arsonists. Why? Because they talked often about the fire of the Holy Spirit. They were even accused of incest, because husbands and wives often called each other brothers and sisters in the Lord talk about all of these things taken out of context. But because of that, there was real cause and pain and suffering slander, not only that, Christians in Smyrna experienced imprisonment, imprisonment. Verse two, chapter two, verse 10, reads like this, don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Wait a minute. This is after Jesus said, I know you're slant, I know the slander and affliction and poverty, but hey, don't be afraid of what you're about to suffer. Well, wait, that was it enough. Experiment is one of the things two letters that doesn't have any correction, but I think what they have is a little word. So you've been going through hard things, but hanging is going to get a little worse. Okay, so don't be afraid of what you're about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you, not all, but some of you, into prison to test you, and you will experience affliction for 10 days. Scholars are kind of debating what the meaning of the 10 days is. The most prevailing thought is, it's like the idea of God put a boundary around the length of time that his church would suffer in Smyrna. It's sort of like when Satan goes and asks God permission, which is such a weird conversation in the book of Job. It was like, Can I have permission to test job and but God puts boundaries and says this far and no more. And the same way, God gives sort of this guardrail to the devil to test the church's Marna for 10 days, that's what you get, maybe not at a literal 10 days, but a bracket of time. The other interpretation, which I think is really fascinating, is 10 days was generally the amount of days that a prisoner was kept in prison before they were thrown into the arena during the gladiatorial fest. So in the days of the gladiator people who were sort of in prison for the purpose of entertainment, death in public, kept in prison for 10 days, and maybe Christians were in prison for 10 days, and they were thrown into the arena, was a cause for entertainment, which surely led to their fifth which is death, fifth layer of trial and persecution, death. Jesus says to them in verse 10, be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. Be faithful to the point of death. I'll give you the crown of life. Maybe some of the gladiator competitors got a crown of death when they killed a Christian. But Jesus says, Be faithful to the point of death, and you're actually going to get a crown of life. So fascinating. The word for Crown is the word Stefanos, the Greek word Stefanos. It was a unique word for athletes, a crown reserve for athletes, the word Stefanos, it's where we get the name Stephen, if you remember in Acts, who's the first martyr of the early church, Stephen, from Stefanos. Stephen stoned to death, but he doesn't resist it or fight back against it. No, he stands there as he's being stoned. And Luke says, in Acts seven, he was full of the Holy Spirit, and he looked into the heavens and says, Look, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. That was his last sight before he took his last breath. Stephen received his Stefanos stone to death, but received the crown of life. It was worth it. He was faithful to the point of death, and Stephen received his Stefanos. So here's what you read about this church, the lair of their discomfort, affliction, poverty, slander, imprisonment and even death. Now, if

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you're reading this letter, you're thinking, Man, this is not a good Sunday sermon like this is not good. You would be discouraged, you'd be worried, you'd be a little afraid. But these Christians in the first century when they got this letter, remember, this was to give courage, not discouragement. It was put courage in them, and that's what happened. This letter emboldened the church, not a warning. No, no, this is hey, this is what's coming, and it brought emboldening and courage to the church. How? How could such a letter bring courage? Well, it's because of the way Jesus describes himself. You. And what he promises to this church at the end of their journey of discomfort. For instance, look at how this letter opens up revelation two eight, where Jesus says, Thus says the first and the last, the one who was dead and came back to life, or came to life, Thus says the first and the last, if you remember from Revelation, one, these were the words that Jesus spoke to John, as John sees the glory and majesty of Jesus, and John, under the weight of God's glory, falls on his knees, on his face as a dead man, he can't even stand in view of Jesus, and there was some fear when he saw Jesus unveiled. Remember what happens in that moment? Jesus comes to him, and with his right hand, he places it on John, and says these words, John, don't fear because I was I am the First and the Last, I was dead, but now I live forevermore. You don't have to become like a dead man, because I died for you. I was thinking about that image because earlier, John saw Jesus holding the seven stars in his right hand. So this hand is a hand of power and authority and glory, and God is holding the seven stars. In fact, the Bible says he holds a world in the palm of His hands. He's got a big hand. But when he sees John in some in some fear, when he sees John on his knees, it's like God like put the stars away. And he tenderly, lovingly cared for John. The same power of authority and strength became a hand of comfort. Hell, John, love, John. It says, John, you don't have to fear why? Because I'm the first and the last. I think this is what Jesus is doing for this church who may have a reasonable reason to fear. Jesus said, Guys, you don't have to fear why? Because I'm the First and the Last. Empires will come and go, emperors will rise and fall, nations will be here today and gone tomorrow. But I'm here to stay. I'm not going anywhere. I won't be voted in or voted out. I am here to stay the first and the last. He said, keep your eyes on me. Don't look to the right or left. Keep your eyes on me. You can trust me. You can follow me. And in the midst of your discomfort, I will be your comfort. The hand of authority will be the hand of comfort. When the world is so uncomfortable, I am the First and the Last. I have a sense that this Jesus is doing this very thing to some of you right now, some of you online who are feeling the pressure of life and maybe the suffering you're going through, maybe it's not persecution or because of the gospel. It's just because of the brokenness of life and of the world. It's the relational wounding and the hurt. It's the illness that you don't know if you're going to recover from. It's the divorce, it's the abuse, it's the injustice, it's the church wound, whatever it may be that you're walking into something has brought you to your knees and you don't know if you will ever be able to stand again. But right now, just sense the almighty hand of God comforting you. People may come and go. Life may be good, sometimes it'll be hard, sometimes, but I am the first and I am the last. And then Jesus says I was dead, but baby, I'm alive forevermore. He's saying to a group of people who are about to be put to death. He's saying to them, you don't have to fear death, because I already died. Death is what people fear the most. But Hebrews two says Jesus died and rose from the grave, conquered death so that he would

free all of us from the fear of death, the thing that has been, the thing that has burdened you and weighed you down, the fears Jesus said, I've conquered that. I've overcome death. And for a believer, death is not a dead end. It's not the end of our story. It's a transition moment. It is a doorway into hope. It's not a dark abyss of confusion and despair as Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he was taken to the gallows to be hung, but the Nazis would say death is the last station on the journey to freedom. You don't have to fear death. There is life beyond it, because Jesus conquered death for you and for me. So have no fear. People will try to fear-monger you about the future of a country or a people or a faith, but just hear the words of Jesus. If I'm the first and the last, and I was dead and now in my life, you don't have to fear anything. You have nothing to fear Jesus. Then says to this church in verse nine, I know your affliction and poverty. I know. I know I see, and I know some of you are going through stuff that you don't think anyone could even comprehend or know. How could I even begin to describe the level of hurt I feel or the pain I feel or the worry I feel. How could I even try to invite someone into no one could understand. But Jesus does, and he tells the church, I know your affliction. Remember John the Son of Man who is walking between the lampstands in the church. He's walking he's well familiar with our pain, our struggles, our temptations, our hurts, our wounds, our trials, our doubts, our fears. He walks among the church, even right now he's walking in our midst, the presence of Christ. Knows the problems of your life. He knows, he knows, he sees he cares deeply for you. There's deep comfort in knowing that he knows, because it opens the way to you running to him and running from him because he knows he sees. Not only does he know, he says, I know your affliction and poverty, but you are rich. God's got a different perspective of their condition than they do. The world says, you poor, you've got nothing, you're humiliated. And Jesus says, I know your poverty, but actually you are the richest of all people. It may seem like you've lost but you've actually won. It may seem like you've got nothing or no one, but you've got everything you need. Ron Elijah thought he was the only one and he was ready to die in a cave. Guy says, buddy, I got 7000 just like you who have not bowed their knee to Baal. You may feel alone, but there was a cloud of witness surrounding you. You may feel like your situation is hopeless, but there is resurrection life inside of you. It may seem absolutely despair, but could it be the fertile ground for a miracle that God has been wanting to do in your life? You may think to yourself, Man, this thorn in the flesh, I can't get rid of it. But do you see the grace of God that's sufficient for you? I just want to encourage someone to see your situation as he sees it. What does he call it? What does he say about it? How does he bring his perception into your reality? He says to this, I know your affliction, I know your poverty, but you're so rich. What do you have in Jesus that you need to be reminded of. You're not empty, you're full. If you have Christ, my friends used to say, If God is on your side, you're already in the majority. You are. You've got life eternal with him. So Jesus encourages this church. I'm the first and the last. I died. Now I'm alive. I see your poverty, but you're rich. I see something about you that you don't yet see. And then he says, in verse 11, the one who conquers will be never harmed by the second death. Saying, endure, keep going, because when you make it to the other side, you'll realize you'll never be conquered by the second death. There are two deaths. The first one every human being will experience until the coming of Jesus. It's our physical death. It's the death where our bodies die, our soul is separated from our physical body. That's the physical death coming for everyone. It's the one we fight against. Try to live longer. It's coming for everyone. But there is a second death that most aren't even aware of. First death is a separation of our soul from our body. Second death is a separation of our soul from God, forever. And that's far worse. The first death is just temporary, just a moment. Second one is forever. And Jesus is saying to this church in Smyrna, you're going to go to the first death. Some of you, you're going to be put to death. Actually, all of them were going to go to the first death. But his encouragement is that's as close as you're going to get to death, because the second death won't even touch you. It won't harm you, because you're going to live forever with me.

Libin Abraham 29:22

Notice how John continues to describe the second death in Revelation 20, verse six, Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection the second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him 1000 years. Come on. Can I get an amen? No more second death. No second death for us. The next verse, Revelation, 20, verse 14, Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone whose names were not found. And written in the book of life, was thrown into the lake of fire. It's a reality that awaits those who die apart from Christ. I'm gonna tell you. This is why the gospel is good news for those who believe it, and it's offensive news to those who reject it. It's the power of God for those being saved, and it is a stumbling block. Just think about the gospel that you were made by God in His image to be in relationship with Him, a loving and holy God created you, made you, and ultimately you are accountable to him. And we've all sinned, and we've fallen short of the glory of God, and our sin against God is worthy of judgment. But the good news of the gospel is that because God so loved the world, because he loved you and you and you and the whole world, he sent his only begotten Son to die a criminal's death on a cross, to be buried for three days and rise from the grave, so that whoever believes in him would not perish, would not experience second death, but would have eternal, everlasting, forgiven, forever, life with Jesus, that's the good news. He is the Way. He is the truth. He is the life. It's good news for those who accept it, but it's tragic for those who refuse him, because those who don't see Jesus as Savior will see him as judge and experience the second death. That's why we have names on the wall of people we're praying for. So we have set moments and spiritual conversations of just wanting to share Christ with the world because it matters. That's what somebody brought you today to church. Maybe you're not following Jesus, and someone loved you enough, and we love you enough to tell you the truth that there's good news available for you. May seem offensive. I get it, but it's good news. If you open your heart to Christ, you experience peace and joy and life eternal with Christ, our Savior. This is what gives courage to the church. Jesus is first and last. He died, He rose. He knows you. He's got a perspective on your story, and you won't be harmed by the second death. Instead, you receive the crown of life. In this early church in Smyrna, there is a godly man by the name of Polycarp. Polycarp, church history tells us was a disciple of John himself, who wrote this letter, who recorded this letter from Jesus. Polycarp was also, eventually the Bishop of this church in Smyrna. He lived from about 120 to about 190 he became the Bishop of this church. And so he was here in Smyrna as this letter gets delivered and is

read to the church, or maybe he read this church. Some say he might have been the angel of the bishop here to the church in Smyrna, but he needed to hear these words that some of you will be imprisoned, some of you will die for your faith in Christ, but be faithful to the point of death, and you will receive this crown of life. Why do I say that? Because 50 years later from receiving this letter Polycarp, the bishop of the Church of Smyrna, was hunted down and captured because of his faith in Jesus. When his captors came, he didn't resist, he didn't fight, he didn't flee. He offered them food and water, and then he prayed for them. They brought him to the city council, threw him on the ground and said, revile Christ. Reject Christ and you'll get to go home free. Just deny Jesus. Apollo crop said, I cannot do that. Said they brought him to an amphitheater, Soldier surrounding him, and they said, In the name of Caesar, in the according to the genius of Caesar, reject Christ and you will live. Just reject Him. You will be unharmed. He still refused. Then they pointed to a group of wild beasts. So we will throw you into the den with these wild beasts to be eaten and devoured. But all you have to do is reject Christ and Paula. Cup's response was call them so the soldiers said, Well, since you make light of the beast, you will be burned alive at the stake if you don't change your mind about Jesus, and if you don't reject Christ, just reject Him, revile him, recant and you'll be saved. Here was Polycarp response to the soldiers, he said, for 86 years, I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my king and Savior? You threaten me with the fire which burns for an hour, just a little while, and after a little is extinguished, but you are ignorant of the fire. Fear of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, Polycarp saying, for 86 years, I've walked with Jesus, and he hasn't failed me. I cannot bless him, and he's been good. He's my king, my Savior. So sure enough, Jews and Gentiles both gathered wood to burn Polycarp with the stake, and when the soldier came, and the soldier came to hammer his hands into the stake, Paul, a cop said, That's not needed. I will stand here voluntarily. I will remain here voluntarily. And then Polycarp began to pray a prayer of thanksgiving, and said, Lord, I thank you that you've counted me worthy to be counted among your martyrs, Father, I thank You that You've given me the joy of sharing in the cup of suffering and in the resurrection of Jesus. Those who are watching this begin to write letters about what happened. That's how we have a beautiful account of Polycarp martyrdom. And those who observe this said that as the flames were lit, the flames, kind of created an arch around Polycarp where he didn't even consume him. It was just, it's like God was protecting him, a flame, an arch around him. And so one of the soldiers took a spear and pierced Him, and that's how he died. I think about Polycarp story, like 50 years earlier, he got this letter, and he received courage. He was made ready for that day that would come 50 years later. I think about polokov. He didn't have any comfort in that moment in the world, but he had peace. So think about it, we're often chasing comfort, but what we're promised is peace. Comfort is circumstantial. It's temporary. Peace is in a person, it's eternal. In fact, that's exactly what Jesus said, isn't it? John 16, verse 33 Jesus said it like this. I have told you these things so that in me, you may have peace, not comfort, but peace. You will have suffering, discomfort, affliction, pain, whatever it may be, you will have suffering in this world. But be courageous. I have conquered the world. It's possible to have all the discomfort in the world and yet have peace in him. People are going through that every day. The world is hard. It's difficult. The weight of this world seems unbearable. It's possible to not have comfort in the world but to have peace in Jesus. At the same time, it's possible to have all the comforts in this world and not have peace. I'd rather have peace with Jesus than the comforts of this world, because that's a lasting peace. How did poly COVID Have peace such abiding peace in the midst of his own death? It's because he knew Jesus. He knew that Jesus knew him. He knew that Jesus saw his affliction was there for him. He knew that Jesus was the first and the last that he was going to be meeting Jesus receiving the crown of life. He knew that death wasn't the end of the story. He knew that in just one moment, his tears would be wiped away and all would be made right. He knew he would enter the shores of glory and realize it was worth it. It is worth it, and today, I'm not just interested in dying like Polycarp died. I want us to live like He died, eyes fixed on eternity, trusting in the goodness and faithfulness of God, with hearts that are anchored in the fulfilled promises of Jesus and who he is. Would you stand with me? Maybe you're here today and you're going through discomfort, pain, maybe sickness, maybe relation, whatever it may be, whatever form the suffering you're in today, but today, Jesus offers you peace, friend. You can be in the middle of a tornado. You can be in the middle of a storm and the right of the eye of that have peace with Jesus. I want to invite our prayer leaders to come take their their position here. We're going to go into the song. And there's some of you who need to receive His peace today. And I'm going to invite you just begin to come forward. You need prayer today. You're

Libin Abraham 39:15

going through suffering of some kind. Jesus sees you. He knows you, and he wants to remind you of his goodness. There's some of you. Today is the day of your salvation. Today is the day you are going to find yourself in Christ. You're going to realize that he came from me. He died for me, offers his life to me and for me, I want to receive that. I want to receive his life in me. So today, would you come and take the hand of one of our prayer leaders and give your heart to Christ as we sing experience this peace. Oh Father, right now, even May the Holy Spirit of God begin to administer peace, endurance courage. Courage to step forward, courage to receive Christ. Courage from you to navigate the discomfort. Of this world with the peace of the living God right now, may you baptize us with the peace of Heaven.