



Session 7: Sacrifice Over Comfort  
2 Timothy 4:5-8; Colossians 1:24; James 1:2-4  
04/07/2019

MAIN POINT

It's counter-intuitive but the key to living as light is not comfort, for that only leads to the burden of guilt and the unshakeable feeling that we are not fulfilling what we were made to do. Comfort leaves us with the heavy burden of realizing we are wasting our lives. We live as light through sacrifice; we live light by taking up our cross; we live as light by being poured out. We live as light by being conformed to the image of Christ because He poured Himself out for us.

INTRODUCTION

Every day we all choose comfort over sacrifice. Men especially, will watch movies like Rocky, and Saving Private Ryan and play war games like Call of Duty but do it from the comfort of their couch. Women, likewise, will watch romantic comedies and melodramas from the comfort of the couch. It's fake love and its fake war: We don't bleed and we don't sweat. Video warfare promises adrenaline without danger. We're comfortable.

**What are some of your favorite comforts in life? How can these be hindrances to fulfilling our purpose in following the Lord?**

**When have you been inspired by someone who overcame a significant challenge? To get up and do something that required a sacrifice?**

**When have you sacrificed something and looked back with no regret at all?**

Transition: Today we are going to see what it means to truly live light in the perspective of being someone that is willing to surrender and sacrifice their lives to the plan of God. We are going to be challenged in our comforts and to see how the call of the Lord moves us from the couch to Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

| Ask a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 4:5-8.

***<sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.***

***6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.***

In this passage, Paul sought to prepare Timothy for his approaching death. The anticipation gave an added sense of urgency in the charge he had just given Timothy. Paul's testimony in this passage provided a motivation that could encourage Timothy in continued obedience so that he could eschew comfort and live as light.

**How does Paul's words here emphasize his focus in his life? When our comforts are challenged, how do we lose sight of the focus in our life?**

**Reflecting on Paul's life and what he states here, what are some ways Paul had modeled sacrificial living for Timothy?**

When experiencing hardship, we are most likely to be tempted to act in unchristian ways, but as we walk in the Spirit, we are able to persist. Self-control is prominent in Paul's writings, most notably in the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Also included in that important exhortation and evidence of the Christian walk is the idea of patience and perseverance. Paul had modeled this by returning to his work after shipwreck, beatings, rejection, and all manner of having his plans thrown off course. Timothy knew this was Paul's testimony.

**How does the promise of future reward for faithfulness impact how we view the call for spiritual growth?**

Transition: As we maintain an outward focus, doing the work God gave each of us to do in spreading the gospel, we find ourselves less caught up in our own personal struggles. Remembering to keep an eternal perspective over the temporal certainly serves as a motivator toward living as light—walking in grace and doing faithful works.

Sermon Notes:

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| Ask a volunteer to read Colossians 1:24.

***24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.***

Paul reflected here on the words of explanation at his conversion experience. God told Ananias that Paul would learn how many things he must suffer for Christ's sake (Acts 9:16). From the beginning of his ministry, Paul and others knew that unique suffering would be his lot. That knowledge came through direct revelation from God. Perhaps,

further, Paul reflected on the fulfillment of that prediction in the various experiences of suffering in his ministry. Even at the time of writing, Paul was suffering in house arrest for the sake of Gentile churches. In a unique way, the apostle was granted the privilege of suffering for the Messiah.

Paul suffered in two ways. He suffered the attacks of those he sought to reach with the gospel, and he suffered at the hands of the Jews who sought to stop the advance of the gospel. His suffering related to the Colossians in that his personal difficulties came because of his attempts to convince the Jews to accept the Gentile believers.

**How is the type of suffering that Paul experienced, similar in ours today? How is it different? How was Paul completing Christ's work on behalf of the church?**

**How is the testing that Paul went through an example for us today? What are some ways we find our faith tested today? Why do we shy away from being tested today? Why is testing valuable for us as followers of Jesus?**

Sermon Notes:

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Have a volunteer to read James 1:2-4

***<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.<sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.***

For James, suffering also had another purpose: to reveal the joy that comes from a growing faith. Joy is not the product of circumstances but instead it is the most fundamental expression of faith. Faith is not so much a means of accomplishment but a means to truly hear from God. Wisdom is a means of acquiring the maturity in faith that characterizes a true child of God. We learn to live light as we gain this important wisdom.

**Based on what you read and, in your experiences, how does testing produce endurance? What is a time of testing that you have or currently are experiencing? How are you demonstrating faith in these circumstances?**

**Who do you know who models being spiritually mature and "lacking nothing?" What characteristics do they demonstrate in their life that encourages you? Challenges you?**

While everything we needed for salvation was completed in Christ, Jesus gave us His Great Commission to carry out, knowing that there would be suffering that we would endure in order to lead others to Christ. Paul's testimony was certainly replete with such suffering.

Transition: Today we find believers in many parts of the world facing death itself for their faith, but even in our country, persecution comes in many forms for believers, whether

public shunning or mocking, or limits to advancement in our jobs or education. When such testing occurs, we gain a quiet confidence that our faith in Jesus is worth whatever it may cost. We can be thankful for the example of those around us who suffer with great joy, thereby setting a selfless example for us as we too learn to live as light.

Sermon Notes:

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#### APPLICATION

**What are some ways we can prepare our hearts for times of testing?**

**How could you encourage or help a person who you have seen suffering for their faith?**

**What are some practical ways our group can help one another live as light?**

**In 2-3 minutes, how can you use what you've learned today to share Christ with someone in your community?**

Pray

Spend some time thanking God for giving us the strength we need to endure through hardship and come out even stronger on the other side. Pray that God will help us communicate this testimony to others who need to hear it. Praise God for the gift that we have of being conformed to Christ and that we are more than conquerors through Him. Ask Him for the wisdom we need to live light.