

You Won't Believe What Francis Chan Just Told Liberty Students

Francis Chan gave a passionate plea to Liberty University students at Convocation on Friday, calling them to embrace suffering as a tool for purification in their personal lives and a means to know Christ by relating to His experience as a man.

Chan was introduced by Senior Vice President for Spiritual Development David Nasser as an author whose words have had “an incredible impact on the lives of this generation.” Popular titles by Chan include *Crazy Love* and *Forgotten God*. Chan is also a well-known pastor and church planter. He spoke at Liberty for the first time in 2011.

In his message, Chan talked of the love of God, but through a less conventional lens—suffering. Focusing on 1 Peter 4, Chan explored the author’s call for believers to “arm themselves” with the same mindset that Christ had—one of suffering in the flesh.

“When you have the mentality of, ‘Christ suffered; I’m going to suffer,’” Chan said, “then, when the suffering comes, it doesn’t hurt you; it doesn’t confuse you, like before.”

He explained that Jesus set an example for living a life of fulfillment, even as He was rejected.

“Jesus didn’t come down to the Earth thinking, ‘Everyone is going to love Me; everyone is going to worship Me; no one is going to reject Me,’” Chan said. “No, He says, ‘I came to serve and I knew I was going to give my life; I knew I was going to be rejected; this is what I came for.’ And if we entered into our church gatherings thinking, ‘You know, I am

going there to give my life for these people; I am going there to sacrifice for them,' and we arm ourselves with that mindset, we are not going to be let down."

Chan explained that suffering is guaranteed on the path to overcoming sin. He likened defeating one's personal struggles to the painful recovery a drug addict must face to get clean.

So often, Chan said, people get discouraged trying to defeat sin that they give up. They expect it to be easier, and become discouraged when temptation strikes, and they instead feel like a dog returning to vomit or a pig running back to the mud. But the reason for this struggle is because sin is in our nature, Chan said. The solution is to arm oneself with the mind of Christ and prepare to feel the weight of battle.

"But what God can do in you," Chan emphasized, "and this is what I am praying for here, is that He can change your very nature. He's not here just to wash you off so that at one point you just go back to the same junk because it is who you are; you are a pig; you are a slave to sin; you can't help it; you keep running back. What Christ says is, 'I offer, I actually put my spirit – this is insane—I will put my Holy Spirit inside of you and now you become a slave to what is right.'"

Chan told the believers in the room to live a life of sober-mindedness and self-control, and to remember that it is not common for their peers to encourage them to embrace suffering. But it is an important part of spiritual growth nonetheless. He said that if church culture embraced suffering that it would be a much more powerful and resilient force.

"My prayer is that we would change the culture, our mindset, that we would arm people so that they don't walk away from Jesus when life gets difficult, but that we arm them with a proper theology of suffering," he said. "We actually embrace it as a church because we rejoice in it. So no longer are we

surprised, but we expect it, no longer do we complain when it gets difficult, but we rejoice in it, and no longer do we set our lives up so that we avoid suffering at all costs but we actually want some of it so that when Christ returns we go, 'I am one of yours. Look at my scars; look at my life; I've lived the life of Christ.'"

Chan concluded with an altar call and from his knees prayed over the dozens of students who knelt around the stage.