

EXPOSITION OF I PETER

Message #10

I Peter 2:21-25

In the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), are inspired accounts of the life of Jesus Christ. When you read those accounts you soon realize that Jesus Christ put up with a lot of horrific things. Much of His life was a life filled with negative things aimed at Him. Even when He was a baby, there was an edict issued to kill Him. When He grew up and began His public ministry, people mocked Him, criticized Him, hated Him, hounded Him and eventually they killed Him. Christ put up with all the evil attacks from religious powers, political powers and satanic powers. His example is the ultimate example and it is the reason why we should be willing to submit and suffer.

You will notice that **I Peter 2:21** says, “For you have been called for this purpose.” What purpose? **You and I have been called for the purpose of maintaining a commitment to righteousness and a patient enduring spirit when suffering.** Suffering was part of Christ’s life and since we have believed on Him, it will be part of ours. There will be times when we get shafted in this world and when that happens, we need to realize this is all part of the work of God, and when we bear up under the hardship and we quietly and faithfully submit, maintaining our commitment to righteousness, God is glorified and we earn His favor. When we hurt and suffer, it is not fate, it is our calling. There is purpose to our trouble. There is some sense to our hurts. We can actually lay up treasures in heaven by the way we cope with trouble.

Now we are all sinful people who need a sinless Savior. So when the text says we are to “follow Christ’s example,” it does not mean we follow Him to be saved. **We are not saved by following Christ’s example; we are saved by believing on Him. However, by following Christ’s example after we are saved in times of hardship and suffering, we earn the favor of God and we reflect the grace of God.** Peter is addressing the elect, the royal priesthood of God, not the unbeliever. The example of Jesus Christ should promote our coping with suffering in a way that reflects God’s grace in a way that reflects Him. That is the main point here.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST SHOULD PROMOTE OUR WILLINGNESS TO BE QUIETLY SUBMISSIVE EVEN WHEN SUFFERING, AND CONTINUE TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT IN A WAY THAT REFLECTS THE GRACE OF GOD AND FINDS THE FAVOR OF GOD.

Why should we be willing to be a quiet, submissive person when there is so much wrong in the world done at times against us? Why should we submit to a government that seems at times to mock God? Why should we submit to a boss who is godless and ruthless? Why should we take the wrong when we are in the right? The answer is Jesus Christ. The motivation we have for proper conduct and attitudes when hurting is Jesus Christ. Now in these verses, Peter gives a description of some of the suffering aspects of Christ’s life. He paints a picture of the example we are to follow, when we suffer.

That word “example” (υπογραμμων) (**2:21**) in Greek is rare and is only used here in the Greek New Testament. The word refers to tracing something in writing.

This particular word means to put one piece of paper over another and trace what is written on the first piece of paper (Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 460). By using this word, Peter is saying when you are hurting and suffering, I want you to trace the life of Jesus Christ. **In other words, the life of Christ, when you are hurting and suffering is not just a life to be admired, it is to be traced.** We are to trace the steps of Jesus Christ and follow His footprints right straight through the difficulty. In fact, years ago Charles Sheldon wrote a book based on this verse, *In His Steps*.

I want to point out that in the older more reliable Greek manuscripts **verse 21** says Christ suffered for “you,” not “us.” In Greek the difference between the pronouns “you” and “us” is one letter, the first letter of the word “you” (υμων) “us” (ημων). Although this may not appear to be a major issue and certainly does not change the theology of the text, I am convinced that the original pronoun was “you” and it does make it more personal. **Peter wants every one of us to personally think in terms of the fact that Jesus Christ suffered for “you.” In fact, the preposition “for” (υπερ) means that Christ suffered in your place, in your stead, as your substitute.**

The picture Peter paints here of Christ’s suffering life is very personal and very lofty. It is not so much focused on the actual dynamics of the physical aspects of suffering, as much as it is the theological aspects of it. I. Howard Marshall said, these verses are the “theological center” of the entire letter of I Peter (*I Peter*, p. 91).

When we suffer for being a believer, Peter wanted us to rivet our attention on the cross-work of Jesus Christ, realizing that Christ went to that cross specifically for “**you**.” As near as I can determine there are five Christological suffering examples Peter gives us:

EXAMPLE #1 – When Jesus Christ suffered He committed no sin. **2:22a**

Jesus Christ committed no sin ever! His conduct was perfectly holy. The aorist tense of the verb “committed no” sin indicates there was never a moment of time when He committed any act of sin. He never said anything wrong. He never did anything wrong. He never thought anything wrong. He never once violated the Law of God. His character was completely unblemished. In other words, there was never a time in His life when He suffered because He deserved to suffer. The same cannot be said of any of us. There have been times in our lives when we suffered because we did the wrong and deserved it.

EXAMPLE #2 – When Jesus Christ suffered He did not say anything deceitful. **2:22b**

The word “deceit” (δολος) is one that refers to being verbally crafty and deceitful in order to bait someone or set a snare for them. The idea behind this word is to use your words as bait to trap someone. Now Jesus Christ is God. He knows everything about everyone and He could have used His words to trap every one. But not one time did He do that.

Now the reason Peter brings this up is because there are times when we suffer because of our mouths. We say stupid or deceitful things and get in trouble for it. Christ never did. His speech was perfect. **Jesus Christ did not die because He sinned, which is the reason we will die; He died because we sinned and His death is the only way we may have a relationship with God.**

Now here is the point, if Jesus Christ, who never did anything wrong in work or word, is willing to put up with suffering, then we, who have done plenty wrong in our lifetime, ought to be willing to put up with some of it. He is our example.

The one thing this proves is that Jesus, who was always pleasing to God the Father, still suffered. **So suffering does not mean one is out of the will of God nor does it mean one does not please God.** In fact, suffering and hardships becomes a means by which we may demonstrate the supernatural grace of God. There is a heretical and shallow concept of Christianity which says Christians will not suffer if they are really doing the will of God. As Warren Wiersbe said, those who teach that haven't thought much about the cross of Jesus Christ (*Be Hopeful*, p. 63).

EXAMPLE #3 – When Jesus Christ suffered He did not retaliate . **2:23**

Jesus Christ was God with full authority as God and He could have dropped people dead like flies. Anyone who wronged Him, He could have executed legitimately.

(Fact #1) - When He was reviled, He did not revile. **2:23a**

When Jesus Christ was reviled to the point where He was suffering for it, He never once reviled others. That word “revile” is one that speaks of being abused verbally.

I want you to think of some of the lies that were told about Jesus Christ. He was called satanic, possessed with a devil; He was called a glutton, a wine-bibber, a blasphemer, demonic, a perverter of the nation, a deceiver of the people. Not one time did He ever retaliate by unleashing a barrage of hateful and vengeful words, which He would have had an absolute right to do. **Whenever He spoke severe words, they were designed to bring people under conviction, not to settle a score.**

(Fact #2) - When He was suffering, He uttered no threats. **2:23b**

Most people when wronged threaten, “I’ll see you in court”; “I’ve got my rights and you have messed with them and now you’ll pay.” Jesus never reacted like that.

I want you to think for a moment of some of the things that happened to Jesus Christ. His beard was ripped out by the roots, He was bashed in the face, He was spit on with gross unsanitary saliva, He was crowned with thorns, beaten with rods, scourged with a whip, forced to carry His own cross and then had iron nails pounded into His hands and feet. In all of this, He uttered no threats. He did not threaten His tormentors that one day He would get even with them. He didn't even tell them they would be severely punished. He never even threatened those doing those things to Him with hell. He never opened His mouth and said, “I will have my revenge on all of you” or “I’ll come back in three days and take care of you all.” Even one time the great Apostle Paul, when struck in the mouth in court, did not resist the temptation to verbally threaten those who did it (**Acts 23:2-3**). But not Jesus. He uttered no threats. In fact, He prayed, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

When you are going through difficulties because of your faith and you refuse to verbally lash out, but quietly submit, you are developing into a spiritual level that is far above the norm and you earn the favor of God.

EXAMPLE #4 – When Jesus Christ suffered, He kept entrusting Himself to God. **2:23c**

He knew His Father the righteous judge and He knew He would settle the score, He didn't have to. He could have handled matters Himself as God the Son, but He left it to God the Father. The word "entrust" means Jesus continually handed the matter over to God the Father. I love the way Luther translated this out of the Vulgate, "He left it to Him" (Cited from Huther, p. 267). What this means is that instead of Jesus retaliating Himself because of all of the unjust things happening to Him, He turned everything over to God the Father, leaving vindication to Him. When Jesus was being verbally abused and physically abused, He just kept quiet and kept entrusting Himself to God the Father.

When you find you are suffering and hurting and you have not done anything wrong, just keep faithful and turn the matter over to God, knowing that He is a righteous judge. Vengeance is His, He will repay (**Romans 12:19**).

EXAMPLE #5 – When Jesus Christ suffered, He was suffering for you. **2:24-25**

Jesus put up with the terrible suffering because of us and therefore we should be willing to put up with some suffering for Him. Peter rivets His mind on the cross and the theology of the substitutionary cross-work of Jesus Christ. Many of the things he says, he says drawing from the imagery of Isaiah 53, specifically verses 5-7.

Reality #1 - Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body on that cross. **2:24a**

Jesus Christ did not die as some martyr; He died as our Savior and as our Substitute. Now the Jews did not crucify people on a cross, they stoned them with stones. If a person were unusually evil, they would hang them up on a tree until evening as a mark of shame (Deuteronomy 21:23).

By virtue of the fact that Jesus is hung on a cross, we learn that the evil there with Him is at an unusual level. All of our sin is with Him and on Him. He is hanging on that cross and all of our law violations and evil sin is hanging there with Him. For Him it is a terrible physical hanging, but for us it brings the wonderful possibility of total spiritual healing.

Remember this - if Jesus' death does not personally take God's wrath away from you, your death will bring God's wrath to you.

Reality #2 - Jesus Christ bore our sins so we could have a healed relationship with God. **2:24b**

Our relationship with God has been fractured. We have two main problems: **(Problem #1)** - We have a sin problem; **(Problem #2)** - We have a lack of righteousness problem. On that cross, Christ took care of both of these problems and by His wounds He healed us in our relationship with God. This is not talking about physical healing. It is speaking of spiritual healing. One of the early theologians (Theodoret - A.D. 393-458) made a powerful observation about this when he said, "A new and strange method of healing; the doctor suffered the cost, and the sick received the healing!" (Cited from D. Edmund Hiebert, *I Peter*, p. 178).

If you miss the tenses of the participle and verb here, you'll miss the whole, rich meaning. The participle "we might die to sin" is aorist, which means Peter is looking at a point in time in which God deems us dead to sin and that point in time is the moment we believe on Jesus Christ. In Greek the noun "sin" is plural which means at the moment you believe on Jesus Christ all of your sins that would condemn you are gone. That is why Jesus Christ died. He died for our sins so we could have a relationship with God. You and I cannot suffer to wash away our sins, Jesus is the only One who could do that, but we can suffer for the glory of God once our sins are washed away.

The verb "live to righteousness" is also aorist, meaning Peter is looking at the same specific moment when you believed on Jesus Christ. From the moment you believed on Jesus Christ, God deemed you as righteous. So Christ is on that cross, solving your sin problem and your righteousness problem. That is why He died. That is why He put up with all of the suffering.

In view of that, we should be prepared to suffer in a God-honoring way - no whining, no threats, no sin.

Reality #3 - Jesus Christ did all of this for us because we were astray from God. **2:25**

We were continually going astray like sheep and that meant our souls were headed to everlasting condemnation. But our Shepherd came after us via the cross. The Shepherd of our souls and the Bishop and Guardian of our souls went to that cross to save our souls. Peter has already said our soul is in war (**2:11**), but through the work of Jesus Christ our soul has been saved and we are no longer in war with God but we have peace with God. Our fractured relationship to God has been healed by Him.

Perhaps you are here today carrying a heavy burden or you are feeling the sting of hurt. Just remember what your Lord went through for you and bear it for Him. Remember this, no matter what you are experiencing, you are in the Shepherd's fold and He is watching over your soul. He saved you and He is looking out for you.

You can know this about your eternity, if you suffer for Jesus Christ, you will reign in honor with Jesus Christ.