

FOLLOWING HIS STEPS

1 Peter 2:21-23

INTRODUCTION

- We are all followers of others, therefore must careful who we follow – there many instances where people have blindly followed blind guides and lost their lives for it
- As humans we are easily influenced by others, and will imitate the speech and behaviour of others, whether consciously or unconsciously
- As Christians, we are to take care to “follow not that which is evil, but that which is good” (3 John 11), and particularly those who walk in godliness
 - ✓ Follow the apostolic Christians (1 Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:9)
 - ✓ Follow the Lord’s true churches (1 Thessalonians 2:14)
 - ✓ Follow the faithful saints throughout history (Hebrews 6:12)
- But above all this, the Christian is to be a follower of Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23; John 10:27)
- We are to follow him in our service (John 13:14), our speech (Colossians 3:16) and our love (John 15:12)
- We fail in this, yet it is our desire to follow him and be like him

- Previously we considered Peter's exhortation to servants, that they must submit to their masters, even those who are mean and harsh towards them
- This applies to any situation where the Christian suffers for doing good
- In such circumstances we are not to retaliate against our persecutors, but are to patiently endure it, and in so doing glorify God
- And to reinforce this exhortation, Peter presents the greatest and most perfect example that ever has been or ever will be, of One who suffered patiently the most cruel persecution for being righteous
- He left us an example, and we are to follow his steps
- There are some false teacher who use v.21 to teach that Christ *only* left an example to us, denying his atonement and man's need of regeneration, and that the essence of Christianity is to attempt to live by Christ's moral teachings, and follow his example
- These people are denying the true gospel and replacing it with another, bringing the curse of God upon themselves (Galatians 1:6-9)
- This is an ancient heresy known as Pelagianism that denies original sin and claims that man is capable in himself to bring himself into a state of righteousness, without the grace of God
- A mere outward conformity to a standard of righteousness, with no change of heart is nothing but a form of godliness without the power of it (2 Timothy 3:5)

- “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3)
- To the suffering, despised, downtrodden saints of God the apostle gives the highest motivation to patiently endure: the example of Jesus Christ
- Why ought we return love for their hate, blessing for their cursing, good for their evil?
- Because that is what our Lord Jesus Christ did, and we are to follow his steps

I. WE ARE CALLED TO SANCTIFICATION IN CHRIST

A. Peter frequently refers to the believer’s calling

1. We are called to salvation (1 Peter 2:9)
2. We are called to glory (1 Peter 5:10)
3. And here we are called to sanctification (1 Peter 2:21)

B. We are called to be holy

1. The same divine calling by grace that effects regeneration, justification and adoption, also works sanctification throughout the believer’s life
2. We have a responsibility to “follow holiness” (Hebrews 12:14)
3. We are to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10)

C. To be holy is to be like Christ who is the standard of holiness

1. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15)
2. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son (Romans 8:29)
3. Christ is to be formed in us (Galatians 4:19)
4. We shall be like him (1 John 3:2-3)
 - a. Those who shall be holy hereafter desire to be holy here
5. God did not just give us his standard of holiness written down in words for us to follow, but gave us the perfect embodiment of that holiness in the Lord Jesus Christ

II. WE ARE TO CONSIDER THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

A. He suffered "for us"

1. His death was not for his own sins, for he was sinless
2. His death was not to merely set an example for us to follow
3. His suffering and death was substitutionary and vicarious
4. He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29)

5. The atoning sacrifice of Christ is the central element of the gospel

III. WE ARE TO COPY THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

A. He is our example in suffering

1. The word for “example” (*hupogrammos*) is used of an original template over which paper was placed and a copy would be traced
2. Christ is the original template, and our lives are to be traced according to his in every detail
3. We are not merely to appreciate and admire his life, but to *imitate* it
4. Christ’s example in suffering, repeated in the life of the believer, becomes a means of our sanctification
 - a. He suffered for us – we are to suffer for his sake
 - b. He was hated and persecuted because he was righteous – we are hated and persecuted for righteousness sake
 - c. Christ’s suffering sanctifies us – and our suffering, while not removing sin, serves as a means by which God sanctifies us
 - d. Christ died for our sins – we must die unto sin
 - e. Christ’s sufferings, and our sufferings work for our holiness

B. The particulars of Christ’s example

1. He did no sin
 - a. He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), is without sin (Hebrews 9:28), and in him is no sin (1 John 3:5)
 - b. He never once, from the moment of conception, committed sin in thought, word or deed
 - c. Peter, who spent over three years with him, could attest to Christ's sinlessness
 - d. He did not suffer because of his sin, yet we often do
 - e. He did not sin during his suffering, yet we often do
2. There was no guile in his mouth
 - a. Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:9 – “neither was any deceit in his mouth”
 - b. Every word Christ spake was truthful and purposeful
3. He did not revile or threaten those who persecuted (cf. Isaiah 53:7)
 - a. Christ endured the most wicked reviling during his ministry
 - b. He gave strong rebuke at times (e.g. Matthew 23), but never reviled or abused anyone
 - c. Rather than threaten his murderers, he prayed for their forgiveness (Luke 23:34)
4. He committed himself to God's righteous judgment

- a. God is the righteous Judge (Psalm 7:11; 96:13) and every judgment he makes is right (Genesis 18:25)
- b. The word “committed” (*paredidou*) means to hand over; to deliver into the hands of
- c. This verb is in the imperfect tense, indicating that this committing of himself to the Father was not a once-off event, but a continual handing himself over to God, right until he breathed his last (Luke 23:46)
- d. As followers of Christ, we are forbidden to exact vengeance on others, but rather commit our cause to God, to whom belongs vengeance (Romans 12:17-19)
- e. Christ knew that his suffering was not merely the malice of men, but the cup that his Father had given him to drink (Matthew 26:39) and was the fulfilling of “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), and therefore he could commit himself to God’s judgment
- f. “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19)

CONCLUSION

1. Before thinking of following Christ in our outward conversation, we must receive him as our personal Lord and Saviour, trusting his atonement, and be regenerated by the Holy Ghost

2. Having been born again, we then must “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5)
3. At all times, in all circumstances, we must look unto Jesus, and consider him as our leader and example, that we might know how we are to live in this world (Hebrews 12:1-3)
4. Is it your desire, as was the apostle Paul’s, to know “the fellowship of his sufferings”? (Philippians 3:10)
5. In the next world the saints will “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Revelation 14:4)
6. But are you following him in this world?
7. Peter struggled with meekly enduring suffering and persecution in his younger days (John 18:10)
8. But in the end, he faithfully followed his Master’s steps by going to his own cross and glorifying God in his death
9. May Christ give us his strength (Philippians 4:13) to follow his steps as we suffer for his sake in this evil world