

Surrender to Judicial Authority – I Peter 2:21-24

Let's say that you are walking down a busy downtown street, and you find yourself among three strangers. No one seems to know anyone else, and there isn't any talking between you. After a minute or two, you hear the siren of a rapidly approaching police car – two police cars. Suddenly you hear the screeching of tires as those patrol cars seem to surround you. Immediately, two of the men beside you begin to run, while one man and yourself stop dead in your tracks. What might you determine about each of the other three men? Wouldn't it be logical to conclude that like yourself, the man who stopped walking had nothing to fear from the police, but the men who began running had just committed some crime or had outstanding warrants against them?

Let's try to remember the context of Peter's words. He has just been telling reminding those Christians who were household servants to be the best employees they could possibly be, even if their employers were crooked and perverse. Even if the men for whom we work are unjust toward us, we should serve them as if we are serving the Lord Himself. We have the example of the Lord Jesus in this regard. *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”* Christ Jesus endured ridicule, beatings, betrayal, shame and even death in order that we might have eternal life and peace with God. Shouldn't we be able to patiently endure for Christ's glory a tiny bit of what He suffered for our salvation?

Amid the points Peter mentions as worthy of our emulation, he brings up another at the end of **verse 23**: *“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but, committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”* I'd like us to consider that Christ *“committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”* Here is another thing in the life of our Saviour which we are to replicate in our lives. If we claim to be *“Christians”* we should strive to live as Christ lived.

Jesus “COMMITTED HIMSELF” to the righteous Judge.

Look at that verse once again. Does your Bible, like mine, have the word *“himself”* in italics? I checked all the King James Bibles in my library and found that they all italicize the word *“himself.”* That tells us that Peter didn't specifically use that word in his original letter. It was added by our translators to help the sentence to make sense in English. They also went out of their ways to let us know what they had done. I find it interesting that first of the Westcott and Hort Bible versions, the RSV and the ASV, also show the absence of that word, but some of the latest versions, like the ESV, use *“himself”* as if it was written on tablets of stone, without any indication that it is not in the original.

Please understand that I'm not criticizing or correcting our Authorized KJV, and that *“himself”* is probably the best way to look at what Peter was saying. But consider a couple of related alternatives. Literally Peter said, *“When he suffered, he threatened not; but, committed ... to him that judgeth righteously.”* With that blank space in the thought, some commentators put it this way: *“As the Lord suffered, He might have committed his SUFFERINGS to him that judgeth righteously.”* Or *“when he suffered He could have committed his PERSECUTORS to him that judgeth righteously.”* Again, I'm not saying that your Bible is wrong, but perhaps by not emphasizing the word *“himself”* we might be better able to understand what or how He committed himself to the righteous Judge.

And again, what was Jesus' example? What should we do when we are abused? First, we should **look beyond the moment** and whatever pain we are feeling, whether it is a slap, or a fist, or some sort of public embarrassment. Will retaliation really do any good, especially if the abuser is in a place of earthly authority? Will it take the sting out of the slap or remove the bruise? If we react to him as he has treated us, will that open the door to a gospel presentation? Must we respond by slapping him back or taking him to court, because that is the only judgment he will ever receive? The fact of the matter is: just as there is for us, there is a righteous Judge to whom that man will have to give an account. Jesus' example is to look beyond the circumstances and even beyond death into the future

To WHOM did the Christ commit himself, and His persecutors and their abuse?

He didn't resign Himself to some sort of fate. Again, the Lord Jesus was not some sort of martyr. He didn't send a letter off to his congressman complaining about His treatment, and He didn't call 911. He could have called ten thousand angels, but He didn't do that. He committed himself to His heavenly Father.

This opens the door to some interesting theological considerations. Who is the Judge? I don't believe that God the Father will be sitting on the Great White Throne in **Revelation 20**. I believe that will be God the Son. And Paul specifically tells us that the Judgment Seat belongs to Christ, the one who endured all that human abuse.

After one of Jesus' miracles, when the Jews sought to kill Him for breaking their Sabbath laws, He told them: *"The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."* During His incarnation, Christ Jesus committed Himself to His Father, the righteous judge. But then at some point God the Father has, or will, commit all judgment unto God the Son.

By the way, the Latin Bible, the Vulgate, completely misleads its readers by saying, *"the Lord committed himself unto him that judgeth unrighteously."* Jerome, the Catholic translator, for some reason or other wanted his readers to picture the Roman governor, Pilate, rather than God. Indeed, Christ did surrender to the whims of His enemies, but that was not what Peter was saying.

That GOD JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY is a major theme in God's Word.

The Bible teaches that there is **only one way** for **God to judge**, and that is **righteously**. Both His omniscience and His absolute holiness demand that God always judges perfectly. When Jehovah revealed to Abraham His intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, He listened to the man's arguments for sparing Lot. Abraham said, *"Be it far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee."* Then Abraham asked the rhetorical question: *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* Of course. The poet in **Psalms 96** seems to have the same mind as Peter when he says, *"Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the world rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth."* Even though the world is full of wickedness, death and destruction, even the trees and open fields should rejoice in the knowledge that Lord judgeth righteously.

In the **New Testament** we read: *"despise thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:4-6)*. Paul says to bond slaves in **Ephesians 6** – *"With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatenings; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of person with him."* And again speaking to servants in **Colossians 3:23-24** – *"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons."* He wrote to Timothy, *"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8)*. Toward the end of the **Revelation**, as John looked into the future, he saw, *"heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."*

Again, we could go back to the differences between God the Father and God the Son, but clearly, together or

separate, they judge all things, and all people, righteously.

What **didn't** Jesus do under the abuse which was heaped upon Him? He didn't **sin**. He **didn't deflect** the abuse against him through **deceit** and **guile**. He didn't **revile** those who reviled Him. And He didn't **retaliate**. He didn't need to retaliate against those who hated Him, because there is a day of judgment coming. *"When he suffered, he threatened not; but, committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."* Peter tells us that this should be our response to abuse as well.

Now let me return to something which I deliberately skipped earlier.

"When he suffered, he threatened not; but, committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Christ **committed** Himself to the righteous judgment of the Father. He didn't just accept the situation as inevitable. He didn't shrug His shoulders and quote some scriptures which prophesied His sufferings and death. He didn't simply say that this was all necessary for the salvation of a few souls. Yes, He must die on the cross, because that would be the only means of redemption. But Christ deliberately committed Himself to the fulfillment of God's decree, and He committed everything to the Judge to bring it all to its proper fruition.

According to my computerized version of Strong's Concordance, the word **"committed"** means: *"To give into the hands (of another); to give over into (one's) power or use. To deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of, or manage."* It is often used to speak of a treacherous betrayal, although not in this case. In this case it suggests surrender of something to another so that the receiving person might use it in the way that he would like. In **Romans 4:25** Christ was **"DELIVERED for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"** – our salvation. *"He that spared not his own Son, but DELIVERED him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" – Romans 8:32.* Every child of God should love **Galatians 2:20** – *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and GAVE himself for me."* The word **"gave"** which Paul used here is the same as Peter's word **"committed."** *"The Son of God loved me and committed himself to the righteous judge for me."*

The example which Christ has laid before us is that, like him, we need to surrender to the Lord who judgeth all things in righteousness. We don't need to sin by retaliating against those who persecute and abuse us. Knowing that there is a righteous judge who observes all things, and who will adjudicate both us and those who sin against us, we should be able to easily surrender ourselves into His sovereign care. Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, and as God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, we too will be raised, judged and glorified in Christ. *"Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."*

This Biblical principle that there is a righteous judge over both us and the wicked should do two things: It should comfort the saint of God, enabling us to serve the Lord without worry or fear. But for the unredeemed sinner it should create a terror. **Romans 2:2** – *"We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things."*