

“The Suffering Savior and Straying Sheep”

(1 Peter 2:21-25 ~ Part 1)

Introduction

➤ The book (or letter) of “1 Peter” was written by the apostle Peter (1:1) most likely around 64-65 A.D. Peter wrote this letter to Christians who were suffering persecution for their faith in Christ. One of the main themes of this letter is suffering. In fact, the words translated “suffering” (*pascho* and *pathema*) are used sixteen times in this short five-chapter epistle.

While all Scripture is always relevant and applicable, this book seems particularly important for us to study today. For, in many ways, our culture has declared “open season” on Christians, Christian ethics and Christian doctrine. Although we are not (yet) being persecuted like Christians were in the first century – and like countless Christians are being persecuted throughout the world today – we are experiencing more opposition and hostility toward Christianity.

Consequently, we need the instruction and encouragement of God’s Word to help us navigate these challenging and even painful times, and the challenging and painful days ahead.

➤ As we have seen in this section of Peter’s letter, Christians are called to be submissive people. The word “submission” is often misused and misunderstood today. The word (*hypotassō*) translated “submit/submission” is used thirty-eight times in the New Testament with six occurrences in 1 Peter. Biblically, whether required or not, submission is the willful or voluntary decision to forego one’s personal rights and/or desires for a greater good or a unified goal. First and foremost, Christians are to submit to God’s authority and obey His commands (see Heb.12:9; Acts 4:19-20; 5:29).

Christians are called to be peace-makers, not trouble-makers. We are not to be known as rebellious, vengeful or hostile people. We are not to be unruly, mean-spirited or vindictive. Rather, Christians – never wavering in their convictions or their submission to God – are to be kind, gentle, gracious and loving.

1 Peter 2:12 ~ “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

1 Peter 3:14-16 ~ “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”

Eph 4:15 ~ “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ”

Gal 5:22-23 ~ “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control ...” [cf. Jms.3:17; 1Tim.3:3; Tit.3:1-2]

➤ But this does not mean that Christians are weak or irresolute, nor does it imply that Christians are to be patsies or doormats of the world, nor does it forbid Christians from protecting or defending themselves. There is an incredible amount of strength, determination and courage that is associated with truly being submissive. The apostles, and many other godly men and women in the Bible, were great examples of the courage and resolve of Christian submission – submitting to those in authority over them, and yet ultimately submitting to the authority of God.

To be sure, Christians are in a spiritual battle. We are called to “*fight the good fight of the faith*” (1Tim.6:12), but we must always remember that our battle is not against “*flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places*” (Eph.6:12).

➤ Jesus, the absolute and supreme example of the Christian life, was perfectly submissive. He was submissive to His earthly parents (Lk.2:51), and [even though He is equal to and one with God] He was submissive to His Heavenly Father (1Cor.15:57-58). Jesus [even though He is the Son of God, King of king and Lord of lords] was also submissive to human authority.

Jesus was not a weak or irresolute person. He was not timid or cowardly, and He was no victim. With perfect allegiance to the will and authority of God the Father, Jesus willfully surrendered His rights and privileges as the Son of God (Phil.2:5-11)

Phil 2:5-11 ~ “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

➤ As an apostle of Christ, Peter not only heard Jesus’ teaching but witnessed how Jesus responded to the hostilities, jealousies and animosities of sinful men. Many times, Peter had a front-row seat to witness Jesus’ fearless resolve and faithful submission – including the time in the Garden when large group of soldiers, officers and religious leaders came to arrest Jesus at night:

Matt 26:51-54 ~ “And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?’”

John 18:10-11 ~ “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?’”

➤ Jesus is the supreme example of the Christian life. In writing this epistle, Peter draws from what he saw and heard from Jesus Christ. And in the passage, we are studying this morning, we find that Peter makes direct and specific applications from the life in which Christ lived to the life that we, as Christians, are called to live.

In 1 Peter 2:21-25, we find four aspects of the life that Jesus lived and how we are to emulate that life as Christians.

1. Jesus Christ suffered injustices (vs.21)

➤ Christian suffering is not a popular topic in Christendom today – especially not suffering that is deemed undeserved or illegal. Twenty-first century Americans are particularly (if not, excessively) focused on personal rights and freedoms. Many people live with an overactive “fairness meter” – always looking for ways in which they perceive to be offended, slighted, mistreated or victimized. Unfortunately, this mindset has crept into the Christian church. Consequently, any teaching on submission or suffering (injustices) seems strange if not outright offensive. But we must pledge our allegiance to the truth of God’s Word, not the ever-changing philosophies and values of the world.

For the Christian, the most important thing in life is not personal rights and freedoms but the glory and pleasure of Jesus Christ! As Christ, in His humanity, divested Himself of the divine rights and privileges He had as the Son of God (Phil.2:6-8) – in submission to and for the glory of God – we too are called to be willing to forego our personal rights and freedoms in submission to and for the glory of God.

➤ In verse twenty-one, we read: *“For to this you have been called”* (vs.21). To properly understand the context, we must understand both the “this” and the “you.” Again, the context clearly indicates that Peter is referring to Christian’s submitting to governmental authorities (vs.13-17) and occupational authorities (vs.18-20). The “this” is in reference to the experiencing of unjust (undeserved, unlawful) sufferings.

In the immediate context, the “you” is in reference to “servants” whose “masters” may treat them unfairly [vs.18; note: the closest parallel for us today is employees and employers, not slavery in American history]. But as we have seen, the attitude and actions of submission are universal to the Christian life. Christians are to be submissive people. Therefore, generally speaking, all Christians are called to be submissive in all contexts (while always, first and foremost, being submissive to God).

➤ Notice that Peter referred to this as a “calling” (*“you have been called”*; vs.21). This means that suffering injustices is part of God’s redemptive plan and purpose for those whom He has saved. In other words, suffering for Christ is part of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Christian sufferings are to be normative in the Christian life.

1 Peter 4:12-13 ~ “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (see 1Pet.5:9)

John 15:19-20 ~ “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.”

2 Tim 3:12 ~ “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

Acts 14:22 ~ “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

➤ Peter wrote that Christians (“you”) are called to suffer injustices *“because Christ also suffered for you”* (vs.21). Christ suffered immensely and intensely while He walked on this earth. Not only did He suffer the excruciating physical pain of a six-hour crucifixion, and the pain of being beaten and flogged, but He also suffered the shame of being treated as a notorious criminal who had been cursed by God (Gal.3:13). He was vehemently mocked and blasphemed by sinful men.

In addition, Jesus suffered injustices all throughout His earthly ministry. He was often slandered, criticized and threatened, as well as hated, and on more than one occasion the people attempted to kill Him. All of Christ’s suffering were unjust – He did not deserve any mistreatment, and He certainly did not deserve to be crucified.

➤ Jesus endured unjust suffering for us: *“Christ ... suffered for you”* (vs.21). Every single suffering that Jesus suffered was those He came to save – every hateful thought and word that was directed at Jesus; every ounce of spit that landed on His face; every slap, every punch, every beating that struck His head; every lash of the whip that lacerated and ravaged His body; every nail that pierced His hands and feet; every thorn that was embedded into His head; every drop of blood that poured from His body; every single thing He endured He endured for those who would believe.

➤ Jesus endured all these things for our sake, as He died in our place and for our sins. He suffered such unimaginable and unjust sufferings – though sinless, bearing the full penalty of our sins – so that through His sacrifice we could be saved.

2 Cor 5:21 ~ “For our sake he [i.e. God] made him [i.e. Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

➤ But there is another reason why Jesus such hostilities and atrocities from sinful men: *“because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps”* (vs.21). The sufferings and injustices that Jesus willingly and submissively endured, reveal to us how we should

respond when we face unjust sufferings. Like Him, we should respond to mistreatment with love, grace and mercy. We are called to be like our Savior, which means being like Him in His sufferings.

Phil 3:8-11 ~ “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith – ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”

- **Christians are called to suffer injustices for the name, sake and glory of Christ.** When Christians suffer injustices for Christ, trusting and submitting to Him, God is uniquely glorified and greatly pleased. In His sovereignty, God has determined that He would reveal His goodness, love and grace through the humility, sacrifice and submission of those who worship Him.
 - Unjust treatment from government authorities (2:13-17)
 - Unjust treatment from occupational authorities (2:18-25)
 - Unjust treatment from spouse/family (3:1-7; see Eph.5:21-33)
 - Unjust treatment from anyone (3:8-17; see Matt.5:38-48)
- We need not be surprised if/when we are treated unfairly, or even persecuted for our faith in Christ. If anything, we should expect it (for Jesus and the apostles forewarned us of such sufferings). While we are not to “go looking for trouble”, we should rejoice when we are afforded the opportunity to suffer for the name, sake and glory of Christ.

Matt 5:9-12 ~ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

2. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life (vs.22-23)

- In the next two verses, Peter highlighted another aspect of the life that Jesus lived and that we are to emulate. *“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly”* (vs.22-23). Although Jesus was grossly mistreated and maligned, He did not waver in His obedience to God nor in His trusting of God. He did not sin in any way – either in thought or word, motive or attitude, action or inaction.

Specifically, Jesus did not resort to “deceit” (vs.22; *dolos*) as a means escaping suffering. In other words, Jesus did not attempt to lie or trick His way out of dying on the cross.
- In verse twenty-two, Peter quotes from the Prophet Isaiah:

Isa 53:9 ~ “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.”

2 Cor 5:21 ~ “For our sake he [i.e. God] made him [i.e. Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

1 John 3:5 ~ “You know that he [i.e. Jesus] appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.”

- This not only reveals Jesus as the Messiah in the fulfillment of prophecy, but also in His righteous and sinless nature.

➤ Not only did Jesus not sin by lying, He also did not sin by reviling. That is, He did not seek to repay evil with evil. With another allusion to the prophet Isaiah, Peter wrote, *“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten”* (vs.23).

Isa 53:7 ~ “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”

➤ This does not mean that Jesus never spoke during His trial, or crucifixion, but that He never spoke in defense of Himself. Jesus never tried to be acquitted. Jesus never begged or pled for His release. Jesus never demanded a lawyer or a mistrial. Jesus suffered willingly, and He died willingly.

Unjust suffering is a unique, and especially difficult, form of suffering. It is one thing to suffer as a consequence for wrongdoing (even then people will beg for mercy or seek to manipulate a way out of punishment). It is an entirely different experience to suffer when you have done nothing wrong. Nothing will try your faith quite like unjust suffering.

But the fact is, none of us are completely innocent. While we may have to suffer for that which we did not do directly, we must remember that – apart from Christ – none of us are sinless. Jesus was/is completely sinless. He was absolutely innocent of any and all wrongdoing – even Pilate knew Jesus was innocent (Lk.23:4, 14) – and yet Jesus willingly suffered the shame and pain of crucifixion as if He was the most notorious criminal alive.

✓ **Illust:** “There was no reason why [Jesus] should be made to suffer, for He had done no wrong. He was buffeted for no fault of His own, yet how patiently He endured it all! He did not even open His mouth to murmur or complain, but He handed the whole matter over to the Supreme Court of Appeal: ‘to Him that judges righteously.’ It will be wise for us, also, to feel that we can afford to wait, knowing that our Avenger lives, and that, in His own good time, He will rectify all wrongs and justify His people against all their accusers” (C. H. Spurgeon; sermon: *“Bringing Sinners to the Savior”* [exposition at end]).

➤ Peter then explained the motive behind Jesus’ faithful resolve: *“but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly”* (vs.23). One reason why Jesus did not seek revenge, nor demand immediate justice, is because He knew and trusted in God. Jesus was able to suffer such gross injustices because He had an unwavering faith in God.

When we take matters into our own hands – when we are vindictive or vengeful – we are acting as if we believe that God is unable or unfit to be Judge; we are acting like an unbeliever. We must remember that God is neither ignorant, nor can He be deceived (see Gal.6:7). In addition, we must remember that God is never powerless to do, or incapable of doing, what He sovereignly desires and determines to do.

Heb 4:13 ~ “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Gal 6:7 ~ “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

➤ This understanding has a two-fold application. First, we can rest in the assurance that God will (in His timing) make all things right. God will judge justly. There is no sin – no matter how big or small we may think it to be – that will escape the millstone of God’s justice. Every sin – every evil thought or word or act; every lie (even “white lies” and “half-truths”); every profanity (including expletives and coarse joking), every perversity (like pornography and sexual immorality), every abusive, violent, malicious or murderous act. Every sinner, who has not been forgiven by the blood of Christ, will appear before God’s judgement seat and be eternally condemned for their sins. Therefore, we do not have to seek revenge, nor should we retaliate. We can trust that God will deal justly with all who have hurt or wronged us.

Second, we must be sobered by the reality that God also is aware of every sinful thought, act or attitude that *we* have or have ever had. We must not be blinded to the fact that we are sinners saved by God’s grace, and that we are sanctified by God’s grace. We must be sensitive to our own sin, being

quick to confess and repent of our sin. We must also keep in mind that unbelievers are not our enemies, but they are our mission field. We must constantly remember that we too were once lost, dead in sin and under God's just wrath (cf. 1Pet.2:25; Tit.3:3-5). As we remember these things, we will grow in humility and in our love for those who are lost.

➤ Christians are called to be submissive and godly – even in the midst of unjust sufferings – for the name, sake and glory of Christ. I think most non-Christians are not impressed with religious fanaticism, nor are they ultimately swayed by artificially sensationalized worship. It seems that the more we try to make Christianity appealing to the world, the more we undermine the true power and purpose of the Gospel (cf. Rom.1:16). The world does not need more religious fanatics, but more professing Christians who are authentically living in and for Jesus Christ.

The unbelieving world around us is not impressed when we express our faith in and love for God in times of blessings. That makes sense to unbelievers. Likewise, the unbelieving world around us is not impressed when we suffer justly (i.e. suffer for being foolish, unlawful, sinful). However, I think that unbelievers take notice when we cling to our faith in and love for Jesus in the midst of unjust sufferings.

Conclusion

➤ As Christians, we are called to be “salt” and “light” in this world. To be in the world, but not of the world. To portray and proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Matt 5:13-16 ~ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”