

Imitators of Christ (Part 1)

I Peter 2: 21-25

Think back to the time when you were a child, to that time when we followed in the footsteps of another. Surely we all had a hero in our lives; one that we wanted to be like when we grew up. We did our best to imitate their every move and literally idolized their very existence. For me it was my grandfather. I was the youngest of his grandchildren and received my middle name from him. We shared a close bond and he was the man that I wanted to be.

A hero is what I thought of as I studied these verses. These were very difficult times for the early church. They had been persecuted and scattered abroad for their faith. They were literally pilgrims and strangers among this world. [1 Pet.1:1 – Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia](#). Peter has written to those “strangers” who were living life on the run in five Roman provinces. Their lives had been uprooted; forced to abandon their homes, jobs, families, and all that was familiar to them because of their faith.

Peter comes to them with warm words of compassion and concern. He well understands the difficulties they face and has tried to encourage them to look unto Jesus for their strength. He has challenged them to pattern their lives after the Lord. With these thoughts in mind, I want to examine the pattern that Christ has left for us and our obligation to follow Him as we consider being: [Imitators of Christ](#).

I. The Priority of the Saints (21) – [For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps](#): Here Peter reveals that all believers have an obligation to follow after the Lord and live as it pleases Him.

- In order to fully understand this precept for living, we need to consider [v.20 – For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God](#). Peter states that there is no glory in being patient in rebuke for our faults, but it brings glory to God when we suffer for our faith and continue on patiently. This brings us to the priority of living our lives in light of Christ. Why should believers embrace this priority? Why should we patiently endure the suffering of our faith?

A. We are Called – [For even hereunto were ye called](#). We have been called to live a life that honors the Lord in all that we do, even if that involves enduring suffering for His sake. We have not been called to a life of ease and comfort.

- I fear that this is one of the greatest misconceptions concerning Christianity in our day. Many believe that once we are saved that all our troubles will cease to exist and we will never face adversity. That may be a popular way of thinking, but it certainly isn't biblical. In fact, the Bible tells us that all [who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution](#).

- Now I want to consider this call that all believers have received and its implications. The word **called** has the meaning of “*to call; to receive the name of; to bear a name among men.*” Clearly this reveals identification with Christ Himself. I bear the name of my dad; it was given to me at birth. I bear that name among the world. It is our names that identify us.
- We have been called of the Lord. At salvation we were born into the family of God. We have been given the name of Christ and are charged to bear it among men. The name Christian literally means “*a follower of Christ.*” In Peter’s day, this was a name of reproach and disdain among the world, but he encouraged the church to bear their name and identity with Christ proudly and without compromise.
- There is one more thought that we must consider before we move on. We have received a call to identify with the Lord and bear His name among men. This reveals to me that I am not to live my life as I please. I am identified with Christ. I am bearing His name and His likeness among the world as a witness to His grace and holiness.
- Far too many neglect this responsibility in our day. They assume that they can live as they please through the week among the world, and then come to church on Sunday and assume their place among the church. They have no problem identifying with the Lord in the church, but refuse to do so among the world. (The world is where we need to bear the name of Jesus!)

B. We are Confronted – For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us. Peter knew that life was hard for these early believers. He knew the suffering and reproach that they bore. He knew that many of them were forced to abandon life as they knew it because of their faith. He too had suffered, but He also well understood that Christ suffered for us. The word **suffered** means “*to be affected; to feel; to undergo difficulty.*” Let’s take just a moment to consider a few things that Jesus suffered for us.

- **Homelessness** – Lu.9:58 – And Jesus said unto him, **Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.**
- **Rejection of Men** – Jn.1:11 – He came unto his own, and his own received him not. Mat.13:55 – Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?
- **Accusations of Demon Possession** – Jn.10:20 – And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?
- **Betrayal by a Disciple** – Mat.26:15 – And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.
- **Abandonment by His Friends** – Mat.26:56 – But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

- **Scourging by Roman Soldiers** – Mk.15:15 – And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.
- **Mockery and Abuse** – Mat.27:28-31 – And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. [29] And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! [30] And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. [31] And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.
- **Crucifixion** – Luke 23:33 – And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.
- **Forsaken of God** – Mark 15:34 – And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?** which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

- Surely if Christ could suffer all of that for you and me, we could suffer the persecution of this world for Him. How many of us have really faced great adversity for our faith? The time may come when we will, and if it does, we must suffer with patience for the cause of Christ.

C. We are Charged – For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Peter finishes his words concerning the believers' priority with a charge that is actually two-fold. Notice:

1. The Example – Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example. The word **example** has a beautiful word picture associated with it. It literally means “*writing under*” and has the idea of “*a copy of the alphabet that is given to a beginning student so that they might trace over it as a learning tool.*” It speaks of careful attention given to every detail so as to make an exact duplicate.

- That is very profound to me. Christ has left the example that we are to copy. We are to strive to live our lives just as He lived His. We are to mimic and imitate every detail. Now I know that we will never achieve that level of perfection, living above sin and in perfect communion with the Father, but we are charged to strive for that.
- Most students that I know have better handwriting skills when they graduate than they did when they first entered elementary school. That improvement came with many years of perfecting that skill. The Christian life is to be no different. We ought to live and look more like Jesus today than we did when we were babes in the faith! Wouldn't be a shame to stand before the Lord and never matured spiritually?

2. The Expectation – For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, **that ye should follow his steps**: Peter reveals lastly that there is an expectation that is to be achieved. We are to follow the steps of Christ.

- This too has a very interesting aspect involved. It has the idea of a guide leading us along a treacherous and rocky path, so difficult that we must actually put our feet in his footprints. The word **follow** means “*to tread in the same footsteps of another.*”
- I was reminded of times as a child when I followed my dad in the snow and tried my best, with little short legs, to make the steps that he made. This is exactly the idea that the text has. Our Lord has walked the path that we must travel. The path may lead us through rough and treacherous terrain, but as long as we follow in the Lord’s footsteps, we will make it through.
- Many times we fail and miss the mark or find ourselves in a desperate situation because we failed to follow the Lord. The path has been walked by our Lord and His way is always best.

This first verse has laid out the priority that all believers must heed. We have been called to bear the name of Jesus and identify with Him, even if that involves suffering for our faith. Christ has given us the example to follow and we are charged to walk in His way.

How is it with you today? Do you stand in need of help for the journey? The Lord is waiting to help you if you will only come to Him.