

Imitators of Christ (Part 3)

I have really enjoyed our study in these verses the past couple of weeks. They are rich in truth and present a needful challenge for our day. I am convinced that the average Christian needs to commit to becoming more like Jesus every day. No doubt there is room for improvement in our lives.

If you remember, we have already discussed:

I. The Priority of the Saints (21)

A. We are Called

B. We are Confronted

C. We are Charged

1. The Example

2. The Expectation

II. The Purity of the Savior (22-23)

A. His Character – *Who did no sin.*

B. His Communication – *Neither was guile found in His mouth.*

C. His Conduct – *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not;*

D. His Commitment – *but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*

As we consider our Lord and the expectation for us to follow His example, it can seem a bit overwhelming. How is it possible for us to do such a thing? Well we can't within ourselves. It will take the presence and power of God working in our lives to accomplish such a task. That brings us to the last point in our study. The only way we can become an Imitator of Christ is by:

III. The Provision of the Savior (24-25) – These two verses reveal much concerning the provision that Christ made for each of us as He died there upon the cross. Were it not for Calvary and the blood that was shed to atone for our sins, we would all remain hopelessly lost.

- Often we think of the cross around the Easter season, but it was the single event that forever changed history and humanity. That was the defining moment in time. It is good for us

to be reminded of the events that took place as well as the provision that was made. Let's take a few moments to consider what our Lord provided as He gave His life for you and me.

A. Our Substitute (24a) – *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* May I remind you that Calvary was a personal experience for our Lord and it must be a personal experience for each of us. Jesus bore **our** sins in His **own** body.

- This wasn't something that He oversaw or sent another to provide for us. The darling Lamb of God, He who was holy, perfect, and sinless, bore our sin in His body. He was God robed in a garment of flesh. There was no sin found in Him. Never once had He transgressed the law of God. Never once had He broken fellowship with the Father. Never once had sin entered into His heart or mind. Jesus became sin so that we might be saved.

- Keep in mind that this was how it had to be. God is holy and cannot look upon or condone sin. The sins of humanity had to be atoned and in order for atonement to be made, there had to be an offering of a perfect sacrifice. Jesus was the only One who was worthy to be that sacrifice. God made a righteous demand that mankind could never achieve, so He became the sacrifice for Himself.

- *Heb.2:9 – But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. 1 Jn. 2:2 – And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* The word *propitiation* means “*to be a sacrifice; the covering, satisfaction, payment, and appeasement for sin.*” Jesus' sacrifice turned away the wrath of God and brought reconciliation. We could never have achieved that within ourselves. Jesus became my substitute!

B. Our Salvation (24b) – *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness:* This is a truth that we all understand. Beginning with the first of God's creation, sin entered into the hearts of mankind. Because of that initial sin, all are born in sin, being dead through sin unto God. *Rom.5:12 – Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:* There was no hope, no means of escape from the penalty of sin within the human race. Death was the ultimate consequence of sin. *Jam.1:15 – Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* There had to be One who could forever make that atonement and free humanity from the penalty of death.

- Jesus was that One. *1 Cor.15:21-22 – For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* We were all dead in trespasses and sin. We were separated from the holiness of God and condemned. Unless a change was made, we would all be eternally lost because of our deadness. Jesus died upon the cross that we might live.

- We have been raised from a state of deadness unto life. The sins that once held us captive and undone have been pardoned and we have been set free in Christ. I rejoice that I have been born again unto life eternal.

- Dead men can't follow after anyone. If we are to follow the Lord and serve Him we must be alive in Him.

C. Our Sanctification (24c) – [By whose stripes ye were healed](#). Jesus bore our sin upon the cross so that we might be saved. He suffered death that we might live. Here we find the source of our healing, the [stripes](#) of our Lord. This has the idea of “*a wound that trickles blood*.” We all know the suffering and pain that Jesus endured. We all know of the horrendous scourging He received prior to the crucifixion. Those stripes that He bore brought about our healing.

- There is an interesting concept that we need to consider. The healing that is spoken of literally means “*to cure; to make whole; to free from error and sin*.” The suffering and death that Jesus endured brought about our healing. It brought about the cure for sin. It set a captive race free from bondage. All that sin had damaged and the hindrances that it had caused were made right and justified as Christ hung upon the cross. [Is.53:5 – But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.](#) All who come to Jesus in salvation can be made whole of this dreadful disease that always ends in death. Jesus made a way for all to live if they will only come to Him.

- I also believe there is a continual application here for those who believe in Christ. We have been made whole in Him; we have been freed from the error of our sin. Is that saying that all who come to Christ will live perfect lives, free of sin? Absolutely not, but it does remind us that we have a source of healing when we are tempted and fail living in these bodies of flesh.

- Jesus is the way to a life of peace, contentment, and righteousness. He alone has the power that we need to rise above sin and live lives that honor Him. We will never imitate and follow the life of Christ as long as we are burdened down with sin. Jesus can give us the strength and help to live a sanctified life in Him. When we do fail and come short we can take comfort in knowing that Jesus already paid our sin debt and we are forgiven in Him.

D. Our Shepherd (25) – [For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls](#). Peter portrays us as sheep that have gone astray, those who have wandered from the safety and provision of the flock, and are no longer under the care and protection of the Shepherd. In Jesus sheep can be restored unto the fold. We can find the comfort of a loving, providing Shepherd who watches over His sheep.

- I am told that sheep are among the dumbest animals that God created. Without a shepherd to guide them they will not find the green pastures; they will not seek out a source of water, and in danger they will flee the safety of the fold. We may not like to admit, but we are just like sheep. God created us and He knows the similarities that we share. God knew that we too need a Shepherd if we are to survive in this world in which we live. Jesus Christ is that Shepherd.

We have looked at much in the past few weeks. The Lord desires that we live our lives as He lived His. It is no accident that Peter concludes with these thoughts.

If we are to imitate the life of Christ, then we must be led by Him. It is hard to pattern your life after one that you are never around or know nothing about. If we are to live for the Lord, in a way that pleases Him, we must allow Him to guide our lives. We must allow Him to be the Shepherd of our souls and heed His voice.

Aren't you glad that Jesus made provision for us? He endured all that He did so that we might live through Him. Our only hope is to keep our eyes upon the Shepherd and follow Him.