

Our Example within Suffering

1 Peter 2: 21-25

Our text today is a rich passage that deals with much of what Christ endured on our behalf. Peter also speaks of the abundance believers receive through a relationship with Christ. While these truths are universal, and foundational elements of the Christian faith, we need to consider them within the context of the passage.

Christ suffered much in order to provide our salvation. He submitted fully to the will of the Father to accomplish redemption's plan. These are truths that Peter affirmed, and are impossible to deny. However, we must consider the suffering of Christ within the context of the message Peter sought to convey. Having spoken at length about our Christian witness among the world, even in the midst of suffering, Peter declared that Christ was our great example when we are faced with suffering and pain because of our faith. In fact, we will be able to endure the adversities we face much better when we are reminded of all Christ endured on our behalf. I do not imply that we will have the wisdom or fortitude to endure exactly as Christ did, but knowing His commitment in the face of extreme suffering should compel us to abide faithful, even as we suffer for the faith.

As we discuss the [attributes](#) Peter spoke of regarding our Savior, I want to consider: [Our Example within Suffering](#).

I. The Righteous Son (21-23) – In the opening verses of our text, Peter speaks of the commitment of Christ the Son to the will of God the Father. His righteous commitment should serve to challenge us to remain steadfast in the faith. Consider:

A. The Expectation (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 refers back to the statement made in the previous verse. Every believer is called, and expected, to abide faithful to the Lord, even in the midst of suffering and difficulty. Such faithfulness is expected because Christ suffered on our behalf, leaving an example we are to follow. *The word (example) means the pattern of some picture or letter that a teacher gives to the pupil. The pattern is to be copied or reproduced. The idea is that an exact copy is to be made; every detail of the pattern is to be reproduced. The exhortation is that we are to be an exact copy of Christ; we are to follow the pattern of Christ in every detail.*ⁱ *The word "follow" is the picture of a guide leading us along a most difficult and rocky path, so difficult that we must actually put our feet in his footprints.*ⁱⁱ

- The believer must follow the example Christ left for us, but we must also understand this is impossible apart from a close walk with Him, actually following the path in which He leads. This

does not imply that Christ's example in death merely left an example for us to follow in death. As He died, purchasing our redemption, He left an example for us to follow when facing persecution for the faith.

B. The Perfection (22) – *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* Peter then reminded the reader of the righteous nature of our example. As Christ suffered in order to provide salvation for fallen humanity, He did so apart from sin. There was no sin found in Christ as He suffered the horrors of the cross. In fact, He had never once sinned – Christ did no sin. As He stood innocent before His accusers, there was no guile found within His mouth. There was not one trace of deceit found within the mouth of our Lord. He came to this earth God robed in human flesh. He lived a perfect, sinless life, and stood before His accusers in absolute righteousness.

- While this was certainly imperative for Christ to be the atoning sacrifice for sin, accepted of the Father, it also reveals an encouraging aspect for believers as we endure trials and suffering. Christ is now seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. He stands before the Father in complete righteousness. The saved by grace possess His imputed righteousness. Through the Spirit, the Lord equips us to abide faithful, even in extreme adversity. Apart from His righteousness, and the guidance of the Spirit, we would be unable to endure.

C. The Submission (23) – *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* Bear in mind that Peter is referring to Christ the Lord, the Sovereign of the universe, Creator and Sustainer of this earth and all who inhabit it. As Christ was reviled, reproached and slandered, He did not return such to His accusers. As Jesus suffered, He did not threaten those who abused Him. He could have spoken the word and these would have been destroyed, but He was committed to the will of the Father. Jesus had committed Himself to the righteous Judge, God the Father. He fully submitted to the will of God, which included His suffering and death. (While this is quite difficult to accomplish, we too must be willing to fully submit to God's will for our lives, even if that involves suffering for our faith.)

II. The Redeeming Savior (24) – *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.* Here Peter spoke of the redeeming work of Christ upon the cross to redeem us from sin and provide our salvation. Such awareness should prompt faithfulness among all who follow Christ. Consider:

A. The Substitution (24a) – *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* Peter reminds the reader that Jesus bore our sins in His body as He bled and died upon the cross. He was not

crucified for His own sin or for crimes He had committed. Jesus took our place, becoming our substitute, bearing our sin, and enduring the righteous judgment of God in our place. The Father judged and punished our sin in the body of His own Son.

- Jesus willingly died in our place, tasting death so we could be delivered from the penalty of death. If anyone ever suffered unjustly, Christ did on our behalf. That puts our circumstances in a much different perspective when we are called upon to suffer for the cause of Christ.

B. The Salvation (24a) – *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.* Jesus knew the only way sinful humanity could be delivered from spiritual death, was for Him to die in our place. He bore our sin, becoming our substitute, dying in our place, so those who were dead in sin could live unto righteousness. Christ provided the way for us to be saved by His gracious sacrifice, and all who come to Him through salvation are resurrected from the death of sin into new life in righteousness.

- Such grace and compassion are too wonderful to comprehend or express, but I am thankful I have experienced salvation in Christ. I have been resurrected from the deadness of sin and given eternal life in Christ. I have been saved by His grace and placed within the body of Christ. Surely those who have received so much would seek committed obedience unto the Lord, being willing to endure faithful for Him. We have not been raised to continue abiding in sin, but to seek a life of righteousness through Christ our Lord.

C. The Justification (24b) – *by whose stripes ye were healed.* Peter revealed a profound benefit to all who come to Christ by faith. In Christ our stripes are healed. To look at this merely from a physical standpoint would miss the great significance of what Peter sought to convey. Through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross, those saved by His grace, are healed from the iniquity of sin. We are cleansed through the shed blood of Christ and justified in the eyes of God. We are declared righteous, being made acceptable unto the Father. We are no longer viewed as sinners deserving of judgment and condemnation; we are now viewed as children, adopted into the family through the provision of our Lord. Surely those who have been delivered from eternal suffering and death would have a desire to serve the one who provided such deliverance!

III. The Reconciling Shepherd (25) – *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.* Peter closed these thoughts with a reminder of the reconciliation believers enjoy through their relationship with Christ. Notice:

A. The Reality (25a) – *For ye were as sheep going astray*. Peter referred to Isaiah 53:6. Prior to coming to Christ in salvation, we all were sheep who had gone astray. We were separated from God and condemned because of our sin. We had no hope apart from Christ because we had no means to reconcile ourselves to God. Sin brought death, and required a perfect sacrifice to atone. Had Christ not died for our sin, paying the penalty we owed, and satisfying the righteous demands of God, we would yet be in our sin. All are born in sin, separated from God, not walking in the righteousness He demands. In essence, all needed a Savior to restore fellowship to God.

B. The Restoration (25b) – *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*. We must remember that Peter is writing to believers, those who have been saved by the grace of God. Through the provision of the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, we have been reconciled to God. Sheep who had gone astray, wandering in sin to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, have been restored into a right relationship with God through the sacrificial provision of Christ the Son. We no longer wander aimlessly in our sin, fearful of facing God and being forced to pay the penalty for our sin. We have been reconciled and restored unto the fold, enjoying the provision and guidance of our Great Shepherd.

- Surely you will agree that God has been gracious in our lives, providing for our salvation and meeting our needs continually. We are loved and cared for by Christ, the one who took our place to provide our salvation. He is worthy of our commitment to Him. I pray we will be obedient as we seek to follow the Shepherd of our souls.

Conclusion: Peter offered a stirring reminder of the love and provision of Christ for us. He left us an example to follow. As believers we must strive to live in obedient submission to His will, even enduring difficulty for the faith. Are you struggling to follow the path He has set before you? Have you wandered from the safety and provision of the fold? If so, come to Christ today for the needs you have. He stands ready to restore your fellowship. If you have yet to respond in salvation, I urge you to consider all Christ endured for you to provide your salvation. He is calling you to respond, but you must come in repentance and faith. Don't delay; come as he leads.

ⁱ Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - 1 & 2 Peter; 1, 2 & 3 John; Jude.

ⁱⁱ Ibid