Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Suffering Jesus: An Example for Every Christian
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:21-23
Code: 60-29

We're looking at 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 21 to 25, and this is part 2 in our study of the suffering Jesus...the suffering Jesus. Now the images of Jesus Christ are many. And if you were to survey various people in our society about images that they have in their minds concerning Jesus Christ, there might be a number of them.

Some people would see Him as a baby in a manger, and their image of Christ would be the Christmas image. Some people would see Him as a little child, perhaps living in a carpenter shop and on one occasion confounding the religious leaders of Jerusalem. Some people would see Him as a gentle loving teacher. Some people would see Him as a compassionate and powerful healer who could heal the sick and raise the dead. Some people would see Him as a courageous, bold and fiery preacher who got great crowds together and spoke to them the Word of God. Some would see Him as a virtual model of manhood, the model man, the consummate human being. And all of those images of Christ would to one degree or another be true. And we can all learn from His life, as we look at the perfections of His person, at His goodness, His kindness, His sympathy, His concern, His care, His tenderness, His forgiveness, His wisdom, His understanding, His trust in God. As we look at all of those characteristics of Christ, they are images that are instructive for us. And we can learn from them.

But there is an image of Christ that surpasses all of those and, in a sense, is the truest perception of Christ and the one that is most necessary. Paul summed it up when he said this, "I am determined to know nothing among you except Christ and...what? Him Crucified." The proper vision of Christ is as the crucified one. The truest and purest perspective of the person and work of Christ is found in viewing Him as the suffering Jesus. That surpasses all the others. And so, as we look unto Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith, we must look at Him in His suffering, that's the key. The focal point for every Christian must be on the suffering Christ, the crucified Christ is our vision.

Nowhere do we see Him so clearly as on the cross. Nowhere do we see His deity so manifest as on the cross. Nowhere do we see His humanity so manifest as on the cross. Nowhere do we see His work being accomplished as clearly as on the cross. There in His suffering He is most completely revealed. And that is precisely what is in the mind of Peter as he writes, starting in verse 21 of chapter 2. Let me read it to you. "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth, and while being reviled He did not revile in return, while suffering He

uttered no threats but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by His wounds you were healed, for you were continually straying like sheep but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

Now here Peter talks about the suffering Jesus. And before we're done with this passage you're going to see Him suffering in three ways, as our standard or model for suffering, as our substitute or sin bearer in suffering, and as our shepherd perfected through suffering. We see Him them as the model to follow, the substitute who paid the price for our sin and the shepherd who drew us to Himself. Here then, Peter focuses on the perspective of the suffering Jesus.

Notice then back in verse 21 how he opens this particular portion, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you." What have we been called to? Go back to verse 20, we have been called to suffer for doing what is right and to patiently endure it which finds favor with God. Now you understand that as Christians we're at odds with the world, right? They're hostile to us, they reject us. As a result of that there is unjust punishment, there is unjust criticism, there is unjust persecution to one degree or another. Sometimes it is verbal, sometimes it is physical, sometimes it is mental, just the ostracizing of a person, social, but always as committed people who follow Christ we are at odds with the system that follows Satan. So we're going to suffer. And we're going to suffer, please notice in verse 20, for what is right. There's no virtue in suffering for what is wrong, that's deserved suffering. But we as Christians will suffer for doing right because the world is offended by our doing right. And when we suffer we are to endure it patiently because that finds favor with God.

Then in verse 21 he says, "For you have been called for this purpose," what purpose? "To suffer for what is right, that's what we've been called to." Because if you've been called to be a Christian, you've been called to be at odds with the world. And if you've been called to be at odds with the world, you have been called to suffer. And if you manifest your Christianity, there will be hostile reaction, you will suffer, you've been called to that. Then he says, "Since Christ also suffered for you." And then this, "Leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."

Peter says you've been called to suffering. Now look at your example who is Christ. First of all, then, He is the standard of our suffering. In His suffering He sets the standard for our suffering. That is a very, very important reality. For Jesus Christ the path to glory was the path of suffering. And that's the pattern for us. The path to glory for us is the path of suffering, and we've gone over this already in this chapter. The greater the suffering for righteousness in this life, the greater the glory in the life to come. Remember our last message? That your eternal capacity for glorifying God is in proportion to your suffering for His cause in this life. Those who suffer most for righteousness here will be granted the greatest capacity for glory in the life to come. So we've been called to suffer. And suffering is the path to glory. It was for Christ and the greater the suffering the greater the glory.

In Hebrews 2:10 it says, "It was fitting for Him...that is Christ...for whom are all things and through whom are all things in bringing many sons to glory to perfect the author of their salvation...that is Christ...through sufferings." So God has perfected Christ through suffering...the path to glory, the path to completion, fulfillment for Christ was the path of suffering. That was God's plan.

Hebrews chapter 5 verses 8 and 9, "Although He was a Son He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." And the next verse says, "By it He was made perfect." Again, the same idea. Perfection not in the sense that He being imperfect became perfect, but He being perfect fulfilled that perfection through suffering. The path to glory is the path of suffering.

In Matthew you remember chapter 10 where Jesus instructs the disciples? It says this in verse 21, "And brother will deliver up brother to death," in other words, you believers are going to be turned over to the authorities by your own brothers and sisters, your own family members. "Fathers will turn their child over to death, children will rise up against parents and cause them to put to death." And through the history of the church that has been true. "And you will be hated by all on account of My name." Verse 23, "Whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next, for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes." In other words, as long as you're in this world you're going to be persecuted and you're going to be fleeing from one place to the next.

But then verse 24, this is the principle, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master." In other words, if they did it to Christ, who is the teacher, why not the disciple? If they did it to Christ who is the master, why not the slave? In John, you remember chapter 15, Jesus said, "They'll hate you because they hated Me." And so He says in verse 25 of Matthew 10, "It is sufficient for the disciple that he become as his teacher and the slave as his master." And what He's talking about there is persecution. They persecuted Christ, they'll persecute you. And the path to glory for Him was through suffering, and the path to glory for us is through suffering.

Now let me say it in a simple way. Unjust suffering was Christ's path to glory, it must be ours. And as we go through unjust suffering, the first thing we want to notice is that Christ is our standard. He is our example. And that's precisely what it says, if you'll note it again in chapter 2 verse 21. "He suffered for you leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."

Now in what way is the death of Christ an example? Well, we've already given you the basic idea, but let me be more specific. When Jesus died on the cross, He was being executed as a criminal. Had He committed a crime? Had He? No. Was He guilty of any wrong doing? No. Was He guilty of any trespass? No. Was He guilty of any sin? No. Did He ever have an evil thought? No. Did He ever say an evil word? No. Was it an unjust execution? Yes. Was it the most unjust execution ever perpetrated on any human being? Yes. Now what then do we learn from it? Jesus shows us that a

person can be in the will of God, He was, a person can be greatly, eminently gifted by God for ministry, He was, a person can be beloved of God, He was, a person can be perfectly righteous, He was, a person can be totally obedient to God in everything, He was, a person can believe God perfectly and yet He suffered. And His suffering was unjust. He was misunderstood. He was misrepresented. He was hated. He was persecuted. He was murdered. And what is the point? Christ in His death gave us the standard of how to respond to unjust persecution. He is the epitome of illustrations. It is possible to be perfect and still suffer. Jesus did.

And along with that let me just say this, it is extremely shallow theology and it is utterly ungodly Bible interpretation to say as some contemporary false teachers say that Christians who suffer are out of God's will. That is absurdity. That is God's will to suffer for righteousness sake. To say that when a believer suffers he's not claiming his available resources is foolishness. It's heresy. If Jesus Christ was perfectly in the will of God, perfectly gifted for ministry by God, perfectly loved by God, perfectly righteous, if His faith in God was absolutely perfect and He still suffered unjustly, then what makes us think we who are so imperfect will escape it? Or what foolish ridiculous theology would concoct the idea that to suffer means you're out of God's will? Was Jesus out of God's will? More than that, was He out of God's will when He died on the cross? What a foolish absurd thought.

No, the surprising truth here is that the righteous will suffer and the righteous do suffer for their goodness and their godliness. And in the midst of that they can look at Jesus Christ as the standard for how they are to respond to the suffering. And that's the whole point. We should expect to suffer. He did. It was His path to glory. It's our path to glory.

Please notice then verse 21. He's left us an example. That word "example" is a wonderful word, hupogrammos. It literally means "writing under." And it was writing put under a piece of paper to trace letters on. Christ is the pattern, He's the standard. He's the example by which we trace our life. It had the usage of a child in a basic class learning to write the alphabet and putting a model under what he was writing on, or below what he was writing on, following the modern...the model, the standard, the pattern. So Christ has given us the pattern, the standard. It says, "For you to follow in His..." see the word "steps," marvelous word, ichnos, it's the word footprints, plural, footprints. In fact, it means tracks, a line of footprints. We are to follow in His tracks, we are to follow in His footprints. Why? Because the path to glory which He walked is the path of righteousness and the path of righteousness in an unrighteous world is the path of unjust suffering. That's it. And some of our dear brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering more than we are and many are suffering in ways differently than we are. But those who walk the path of righteousness to glory will follow the path through suffering. I know it and I experience it and I'm sure many of you as well. If we move in the same direction Christ moved in, we're going to experience the same unjust suffering.

So Peter wants us to look closely at how Christ responded to suffering. Now keep in mind that He suffered a lot in His life but never did He suffer as much as He did at the cross. And so Peter takes

us right to the cross. He moves us right into the scene of maximum suffering. He also reveals to us his personal experience because he was with Christ right up until the end. And he certainly had first-hand knowledge of the suffering of Christ on the cross, even if from afar. Furthermore, he not only shows us his personal knowledge in regard to the suffering of Christ, but he shows us his understanding of Isaiah 53, the greatest Old Testament chapter on the suffering of Christ, for he uses five different quotes or allusions to Isaiah 53 in this brief passage. Isaiah 53, you'll remember, is about the suffering Messiah.

So, we have here then Peter taking us to the cross through the eyes of his own experience, and taking us to the cross through the eyes of the prophet Isaiah in that great fifty-third chapter. The first thing he draws on is Isaiah 53:9, to describe Christ's reaction to unjust treatment. Look at verse 22, "In all of it He committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth." That is drawn out of Isaiah 53:9. And it describes Christ's general reaction to unjust treatment. He committed no sin. Now in Isaiah 53, if you were to look it up, in verse 9, what it says there is He committed no violence. Isaiah used the word "violence," the Septuagint which is the Greek translation of Isaiah uses the word "lawlessness." The Septuagint was going deeper but the Septuagint translators understood that Isaiah by the word "violence" meant sin which is violent against God. Violence not in the sense that we think of violence as a single kind of act, but violence in the sense that it violates God. He never violated God. The Septuagint translators used the word "lawlessness" to say that He never violated the law of God. Peter comes right to the heart of it and he simply uses the word "sin" because that's exactly what he knew Isaiah meant and the Holy Spirit confirms it here. Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says that what Isaiah meant was sin. What he's saying is Jesus committed no sin...even under the most difficult circumstances when He was being unjustly treated. And here you have the full character of what theologians for centuries have called the impeccability of Christ defended. He was impeccable. That is, He did not sin, He could not sin. Back in chapter 1 verse 19 He is an unblemished spotless lamb.

And here Peter quotes out of Isaiah that the Messiah committed no sin, never violating the law of God, and never being lawless. He had no sins of His own. Peter further says, "Nor was any deceit found in His mouth." Why does he say that? Isn't it enough to say He committed no sin? It is. But the second statement is just a strengthening of the first because where is it that sin most easily shows up and where is it that sin shows up first of all? In the mouth. Because the heart speaks through the mouth. The mouth of Jesus uttered no deceit.

Now the word for "deceit" means any type of sin of the tongue. And the tongue sins by deception, innuendo, slander, a myriad of ways. But no wickedness came out of His mouth, no wickedness ever came across His tongue. He committed no sin by act and He spoke no sin by mouth.
You see, the mouth more than any other agency of human behavior reveals the heart. That's why James 3:2 says, "Whoever doesn't offend with his mouth, the same is a perfect man." Conversely, the perfect man will never offend with his mouth. Jesus who never offended with his mouth is

therefore a perfect man. He committed no sin and no sin ever crossed His lips. He was absolutely flawless, sinless, perfect. Even the thieves on the cross, Luke 23:41, hanging there, one of them says, "We indeed suffer justly for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." No jury could ever find Him guilty of anything. His trial was a farce, all the accusations were lies, they were trumped up. Jesus said, do you remember in John 8:46, "Which of you convicts Me of sin? Go ahead, which of you can legitimately accuse me of sin?" And, of course, none could speak. None could speak because there was no sin.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 the Apostle Paul says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." Again, Christ was absolutely sinless. In Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 15 it says, "We have a high priest who can understand us, He has been tempted in all things yet without sin," Hebrews 4:15. He was without sin. In Hebrews 7:26 it says, "He is a high priest holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners." And again you know this, I'm only reiterating it. Jesus was perfectly sinless.

Would you notice verse 18 in 1 Peter 3 right in the next chapter? First Peter 3:18 it says, "Christ died for sin once for all, the just for the unjust, the righteous for the unrighteous." And again, Peter reiterates His sinless perfection. John says in 1 John 3:5, "In Him there is no sin."

Scripture is absolutely clear on this. In all circumstances of life, in all the injustices, in all the accusations against Christ that were false, in all the mistreatment, He never sinned in anything He did and He never sinned in anything He said. It's amazing. All the accusations against Him, all the abuse, all the cruelty, all the suffering was absolutely unjust. And because He never retaliated in a sinful way, He's a perfect model...the perfect model. He is the most unjustly treated human being who ever lived. And because He was perfect and all the mistreatment of hell was thrown against Him and He never sinned, He is the perfect model of how you and I are to respond to unjust treatment. Did you get that? That's the bottom line. He's the perfect model of how you and I are to respond to unjust treatment.

Peter's mind then goes back again to Isaiah 53, he knows it now to be fully Messianic, speaking of Christ, and he echoes the thought of that prophet again in verse 23. Look at the next verse, verse 23, Peter says, "And while being reviled, He did not revile in return. While suffering, He uttered no threats but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." That's right out of Isaiah 53:7, do you remember what it says there? He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not...what?...open His mouth. Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, innocent, unjust and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, He didn't open His mouth. So Peter has it. While He was reviled, He didn't revile in return. While He was suffering, He spoke no threats. That is the perfect standard. Boy, that's hard to follow.

Some time when I am falsely accused which is often, there rises up within me a desire to retaliate. Sometimes an unfit word may come from my mouth in speaking of a critic who has attacked unjustly.

I cannot imagine what it is to never commit a sin, to never have anything come out of your mouth that is not right, to be reviled in ways that I can't even comprehend like Jesus was and yet never revile in return, to unjustly suffer and yet utter no threat. Unbelievable. He was under sustained and repeated provocation. They provoked Him to the breaking point but they couldn't make Him break His silence and they could not make any sin come out of His mouth. Why? Because there was no sin conceived in His heart...none whatsoever.

I...I fit better in the company of Paul. Paul in Acts 23 looked intently at the council that was trying him. And the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside Paul to strike him on the mouth. One of the soldiers was going to smack him right across the face. And Paul said to him, "God strike you, you white-washed wall." And what did the bystanders say? "Do you revile God's high priest?" Paul grabbed his mouth and apologized. I understand that. I identify with that. I don't ever identify with what Jesus went through and the perfection of His perfect response, but He's the standard, not Paul. Paul is an example in a lot of things, but not this one.

Notice that little phrase "and while being reviled." Reviled is a verb that means to use abusive language, vile language against someone, to literally pile up abuse, a present participle indicating it's done repeatedly. You find it used in Mark 14 and 15, they were reviling Christ. Verbal abuse which is a very, very harsh kind of abuse. Sometimes harder to deal with than physical abuse. But in it He didn't revile in return. Do you remember His trial? Do you remember when He was at the home of the high priest and He was being tried unjustly by the Sanhedrin, as recorded in Matthew 26:57 to 75? He accepted all of the verbal abuse they threw at Him in total silence. Do you remember then He was taken to the praetorian of Pilate where He was unjustly accused and abused again, Matthew 27:12 to 14? And there He accepted that silently and never said a word.

And then He had to come before the throne of Herod and He was further accused vehemently by the chief priests and scribes. And they incessantly abused Him verbally. Luke 23:7 to 11 says, "And where Herod and the soldiers began to treat Him with contempt and mockery, He accepted it in absolute silence." Never said a word. His example is a perfect standard for us. As Christians, we are never to return abuse to the one who gives it, no matter how injust their abuse might be.

Notice also in verse 23 it says, "When suffering, or while suffering, He uttered no threats." Hard to imagine, isn't it? Because there were moments of utterly inexplicable pain, they spit on Jesus, they pulled the hair out of His face from His beard, they jammed thorns into brow, they hammered nails through His flesh, they spit on His face. The physical, the verbal cruelty, the provocation, the agitation, the ugly wicked venomous hatred, any normal human being is going to well up with feelings of retaliation because it's unjust. But He threatened no one and, boy, could He have given some threats. The amazing soberness of that silence is most appreciated when you think of who He is. He is God. He is God the creator, the upholder of the universe, sinless, holy, anointed Son of God. And one word from His mouth could have blasted them into eternal hell, could have literally burned them

to a crisp, the ground could have opened to swallow their ashes. But He never threatened them. And when He finally did speak about them, He said, "Father...what?...forgive them for they don't know what they're doing."

You see, it was for those very people who were unjustly killing Him that He was dying. He was there on the cross paying the penalty for sinners like them. And He knew that the glory was through the path of suffering, so He accepted it without retaliation, He accepted it without revenge, He accepted it without bitterness, He accepted it without anger.

Look at chapter 3 verse 9 of 1 Peter. Peter says, "Don't return evil for evil, or insult for insult but give a blessing instead." That's what Jesus did. "For you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing." And that's the same idea. You say, "Well, how could Jesus do this? How can you be suffering what He suffered so totally in an unjust way and just not retaliate?" Well he gives you the secret at the end of verse 23, here's the secret. "Jesus kept on entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Who's that? That's God, that is God. The word "entrusting" means to hand over to someone to keep, paradidomi, to hand over to someone to keep. He just handed over Himself to God, said, "You keep Me." He handed over the circumstance to God. Literally, He kept handing Himself over because the suffering kept coming and He kept handing Himself over. This was not easy, but He kept doing it. It became His habit. In every unjust suffering, in every event, He kept handing Himself over, handing Himself over. By the way, the word "Himself" is added, it's not in the original but it is a very accurate addition because it is the intent of the text to emphasize that.

Do you remember what He finally said on the cross? "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." Always handing Himself over to the Father until finally that was the last thing He ever said before He yielded up His life. You see, He gave Himself to God. Why? Because He knew that in the future there would be glory. He knew that God would not make an unjust evaluation, that God would judge righteously, that God would assess rightly. And, beloved, when you as a Christian are persecuted unjustly in your job or your family or your environment, when you and I are persecuted unjustly, we are to follow the standard of Jesus Christ which is to accept it without any retaliation whatsoever and simply continuously entrust ourselves to the care of the one who will bring a righteous verdict on our lives and who will grant to us the eternal glory that our faithfulness wins. That's the point. God will make it right but as soon as you retaliate or I retaliate, we forfeit the blessing and lose the reward that God would grant to us. The eternally righteous God, my friends, is the equalizer. He will deal with all the parties. He will deal with those who perpetrate the unjust treatment and He will deal with the believer who is faithful in suffering.

You see, underlying Jesus' placid peaceful resolute acceptance of suffering was confidence in the perfect righteousness of God...the perfect righteousness of God. May I tell you from my personal experience that that is my confidence no matter what happens. No matter how much you're criticized, no matter how much you are maligned, misrepresented and misunderstood and unjustly treated, no

matter how much of that goes on there can be perfect calm and perfect peace in your heart because you commit yourself continually to the perfect judge who will not make any mistake when it comes to evaluating your life.

Alan Stibbs(?) wrote a few years ago, "In this unique instance of our Lord's passion when the sinless one suffered as if He were the worst of sinners and bore the extreme penalty of sin, there is a double sense in which He may have acknowledged God as the righteous judge. On the one hand, because voluntarily and in fulfillment of God's will, He was taking the sinner's place and bearing sin. He did not protest at what He had to suffer. Rather, He consciously recognized that it was the penalty righteously due to sin so He handed Himself over to God to be punished. He recognized that in letting such shame, pain and curse fall on Him, the righteous God was judging righteously.

"But on the other hand, because He Himself was sinless, He also believed that in due time God as the righteous judge would vindicate Him as righteous and exalt Him from the grave and reward Him for what He had willingly endured for other's sake," end quote.

That's the point. For us, when we commit ourselves to the righteous judge, we're doing that latter part. We are giving ourselves to the God who will vindicate us. What a standard. I believe that in days to come, Christians are going to become more and more of an issue in our society in America. I believe it is likely that Christians who take strong stands for the gospel of Jesus Christ are going to become less and less popular. I believe the price of being a Christian may go up. And I believe that means we may find the world more hostile to us all of the time and we may receive more unjust treatment.

How much we need then to go back to this passage and realize that we should never retaliate no matter how unjust the treatment is but like Jesus Christ realize that suffering is the path to glory. It was His path, it's ours. And we're to follow His tracks. And commit ourselves all in the process of that to the one who will not make an erroneous judgment about our lives but who will deal with us in perfect equity. Do you want a human illustration? Stephen, Acts 7 verse 60, who while being crushed unjustly under the stones of those who murdered him said, "God, lay not this sin to their charge." He learned that from Jesus. Forgive them. He followed the standard Jesus had set.

On a May day in 1555 a great and anointed man of God by the name of Hugh Latimer(?) was sentenced to burn at the stake for his anti-people reformed convictions which were composed in an open letter to all unfeigned lovers of God's truth. This is what he wrote. "Die once we must, how and where we know not, but here is not our home. Let us therefore accordingly consider things, having always before our eyes that heavenly Jerusalem and the way there to in persecution. And let us consider all the dear friends of God, how they have gone after the example of our Savior Jesus Christ whose footsteps let us also follow, even to the gallows, if God's will be so, not doubting but as He rose again the third day, even so shall we do at the time appointed of God, that is when the trump

shall blow and the angels shall shout and the Son of Man shall appear."

And so wrote Latimer. Let us go to persecution and suffering the way Jesus went. Well on that May day in 1555 when he established this principle in the letter, he set the course for his own destiny. Later Latimer and Ridley(?), his friend, two great English saints, were fed to the flames. But not until Latimer who everyone said was astonishingly composed said to his colleague burning alongside these words, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out."

The man from Nazareth was the standard for Latimer. And He is for us. It's highly unlikely that we'll burn at the stake. But in all our unjust suffering we are to follow the example of Christ...the suffering Jesus who suffered as our standard. Pray with me.

Father, again this vision of Christ is so rich, so blessed. We thank You for giving us again the model to follow. And as Peter has said in this portion earlier, we are strangers and aliens in the world. We are to submit ourselves to every human institution. We are to submit ourselves to our employers, no matter whether they are good and gentle or unreasonable. We are to submit even to unjust treatment, if need be, silently and commit ourselves to You, always unflappable, always composed, always the picture of confident trust and knowing that the light affliction of this life can't be compared to the eternal weight of glory that is at the end of the path of suffering. Make us faithful to be like Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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