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

The Suffering Jesus: Our Substitute and Shepherd
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:24-25
Code: 60-30

As we look together to the Word of God, we come to 1 Peter chapter 2 in our study tonight. I can't tell you what a rich and refreshing and pertinent study this has been, as we have been looking at chapter 2, particularly from verse 11 on. And how we have seen that God has called us as believers to a submissive role in society. It's been a very great interest to me that this particular series of messages has come at the express time that Christians are engaged in civil disobedience even in our city, as they were again yesterday, in Operation Rescue. And we've been learning, I think, rather explicitly what the Bible has to say about our duty as believers to live a kind of life that manifests Jesus Christ in the midst of an ungodly culture.

In the process of Peter unfolding to us these elements of our Christian conduct, he has come to speak about Christ at the end of chapter 2 because Christ is the model which we are to follow. We looked at that last time. We considered the suffering Jesus as our model or as our standard. Now in our message tonight, we're going to go on from there to consider the Lord Jesus as Peter does not only as our standard but as our substitute, then finally as our shepherd in verse 25.

At the heart of the church's worship is the beautiful ordinance of the Lord's table, with which we are very familiar. There at the Lord's table we take the bread and the cup in remembrance and communion with Christ. At the heart of the Lord's table is a doctrine and that doctrine is the very core of the Christian gospel. At the heart of the church then is the Lord's table. At the heart of the Lord's table is a very significant doctrine. It is summed up in the words of our Lord who said, "This is My body which is given for you...for you." The essence of the Christian gospel is that Jesus Christ has done something for us. Most specifically, He died for us. That's the point. His death was for us. And that is precisely what Peter is saying here. It says in verse 21, "Christ also suffered for you." He suffered for you. It was for us that Christ suffered, that's his point.

In three ways we look at the suffering of Christ. First of all, we've already noted that Peter looked at the suffering of Christ as the standard for how we ourselves suffer under unjust treatment. Christ suffered for you, he says in verse 21, leaving you an example or a pattern or a standard or a model 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.

Christ suffered for us on the cross to give us an example of how we also are to suffer patiently, enduringly, in the midst of unjust treatment. Christ, as we noted last Sunday night, was treated more unjustly than any creature will ever be treated because He was the only perfect person. So all that came against Him was utterly undeserved and hell as well as humanity massed its powers against Him. And so He suffered in a way that none of us will ever really know as to extent. And in doing such suffering, He was the perfect example of patient endurance, though the suffering was more unjust than any other, He nonetheless gives us the perfect model of patient endurance. He then becomes our standard, our pattern. He suffered to set an example. We will suffer unjustly as believers in an ungodly society. We are to follow the pattern of Jesus Christ.

But there is a greater way that He suffered for us. He suffered not only as our standard but tonight I want you to look at the fact that He suffered as our substitute...He suffered as our substitute. Notice verse 24. This is a great text, one that ought to be underlined in every Bible. "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."

That great verse speaks of Christ as our substitute. It speaks of Christ as the one who took our place. By the way, we noted last time that as Peter unfolds this closing section of chapter 2, he's thinking of Isaiah 53. And he will be alluding to Isaiah 53 verse 4, verse 5, and verse 11 here because in those verses in Isaiah 53, Isaiah writes about the substitutionary sin bearing death of Christ. And here again I say is the heart of the Christian gospel. The great doctrine of substitution, that is that Christ was our substitute in dying is basic to our faith. In fact, we could safely say that all other elements of salvation merely surround this great core truth.

One of my favorite writers is now with the Lord, a man by the name of Leon Morris, you do well to read anything he ever wrote. Leon Morris writes, "Redemption is substitutionary for it means that Christ paid that price that we could not pay, paid it in our stead and we go free. Justification interprets our salvation judicially and as the New Testament sees it, Christ took our legal liability, took it in our stead. Reconciliation means the making of people to be at one by the taking away of the cause of hostility. In this case, the cause is sin and Christ removed that cause for us. We could not deal with sin," says Morris, "He could and did and did it in such a way that it is reckoned to us. Propitiation points us to the removal of the divine wrath and Christ has done this by bearing the wrath for us. It was our sin which drew it down, it was He who bore it.

"Was there a price to be paid? He paid it. Was there a victory to be won? He won it. Was there a penalty to be borne? He bore it. Was there a judgment to be faced? He faced it," end quote.

And what Leon Morris is saying is whether you're talking about redemption, justification, reconciliation, whether you're talking about the removal of sin and transgression, whether you're talking about propitiation or covering, all of those are corollaries, in a sense, to the great truth of

substitution, that Christ took our place on the cross. So the Apostle Paul sees Christ as substitute.

In 2 Corinthians he says there what Peter says here. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," and there he echoes Peter's words...does Paul. Peter says it's substitution. Paul says it's substitution that is at the heart of the Christian gospel. Paul also says in Galatians 3:13 that Jesus was made a curse...then these two words...for us...for us.

To put it as simply as I can put it, if Christ is not my substitute, then I still occupy the place of a condemned sinner. If my sins and my guilt are not transferred to Him, and He does not take them, then they remain with me. If He did not deal with my sins then I must deal with them. If He did not bear my penalty then I must bear it. There is no other possibility. It is either Him or me. Some have suggested, by the way, that it is immoral to teach the doctrine of substitution. Some theologians have suggested that, that it is immoral to teach that God in human flesh took on sin and bore my sin and your sin. But it is not immoral because you are not pushing something on God that He wouldn't want. You are not tainting His holiness...not at all. The truth of the matter is that in the process of salvation, mark this, God is not transferring penalty from one man guilty to another man innocent. No, He is bearing the sin Himself for Jesus was God in human flesh.

The point is this, nobody is pushing substitutionary death off on God, God took it on Himself. It is not immoral. It is not an affront to a holy God to say that He bore sin. He did it by His own will. He wills that sin be punished and He wills to be the victim who bears its punishment. The bottom line is this, either Christ took my sins and bore them or I will. Either He paid the penalty for my sin or I will pay it in hell forever.

Now what does the text say? It begins with these words, "And He Himself bore our sins..." "He Himself" is emphatic and it means to emphasize that this is God in human flesh bearing our sins, not because somebody outside the trinity pushed it on Him, but because He chose it Himself. He Himself bore our sins. He did it alone, the emphatic personal pronoun indicates that He did it alone and it also indicates that He did voluntarily. Voluntarily and alone God took on our sins. He came into the world to save His people from their sins, as John said of the Lamb of God in John 1:29. Peter is simply affirming that Jesus willingly took on Himself sin, He Himself with no outside influences bore our sins. That's the key.

Some people think Jesus died as a martyr, you know that. They think that Jesus is just a great example of someone who died for a cause. That's the "Jesus Christ Superstar" mentality, that Jesus was a martyr who lived for a good cause and sets a great example of how to be so sold out to a cause that you're willing to die as a martyr. And admittedly, a martyr can be an example of suffering but a martyr cannot be a substitute. A martyr cannot take away my sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Look at 1 Peter 3:18 for a moment where Peter reiterates this same great truth of substitution, "For Christ also died for sins once for all...here it is...the just for the unjust." He the just died as a substitute for us the unjust. He took our place. The verb "bore" there means to carry a massive heavy weight. And that's exactly what sin was...a heavy weight that Jesus bore for us. In fact, if you want to know how heavy the burden is, read Romans 8, it says that all creation creaks and groans and moans under the burden of sin. Jesus took the heavy weight of our sins.

You say, "Who is our?" I believe it's unqualified here. It must mean Peter. Who else does it mean? It must mean those to whom he wrote. There is no further qualification. I think it means all men who are sinners. He took our sins, the sins of sinners and He bore them.

Now let me follow that up with some thoughts for a moment. What does it mean that He bore our sins specifically? I chased that around a little bit in the Old Testament because it comes from the Old Testament and I wanted to have you understand it. It is not common in the New Testament to use that phrase "Jesus bore our sins." It only appears here and in Hebrews 9 verse 28. But it appears frequently in the Old Testament. And if you understand how the Old Testament used it, you'll understand how Peter before he was a New Testament saint who was an Old Testament saint, would have understood it.

When you turn to the Old Testament, it becomes very clear what bearing sin means. Let me tell you what it means. Israel, for example, it says bore her sins by wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. You remember when God brought Israel out of Egypt and brought them to the land of Canaan to KadeshBarnea, the spies went into the land for 40 days, they came back out of the land and they told the people, "Don't go near that land, they're giants in there, we can't handle it. They'll destroy us." And God says, "All right, for your unbelief and lack of trust in Me, I will punish you by causing you to wander in this wilderness for...how long?...40 years...40 years." God punished them by making them wander in the desert for 40 years instead of going right into the promise land.

What's the significance of that? Listen to Numbers 14:33 and following, I'll just read it to you, Numbers 14:33. "Your children...God said to them...shall be wanderers in the wilderness 40 years and shall suffer for your unfaithfulness until your corpses lie in the wilderness, according to the number of days which you spied out the land, 40 days, for every day you shall bear your iniquities one year." What does it mean then to bear iniquity? It means to be...what?...punished. That's what it means. For every day in the land you will bear your iniquities one year in the desert. In other words, you will suffer the punishment of your sin. Bearing iniquity means to suffer punishment. In Ezekiel you have another illustration, there are many more, I'm only selecting a couple. In Ezekiel chapter 18 verse 20 it says, "The soul that sins, it shall die." And listen to this, "The son...son...shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." What does it mean? No son will be punished for his father's sin, and no father will be punished for his son's sin. To bear iniquity

means to be punished, in that case the soul that sins shall die. He says, "Sons, you won't die for your fathers sins, fathers you won't die for your sons sins."

So to bear sin meant to endure the penalty of sin. And that's a very important biblical distinction to make in order to clearly understand what Jesus did on the cross. He bore punishment...the wrath of God against sin was put on Him instead of us, that's precisely what it means. In Leviticus...pardon me, in Numbers chapter 18 verse 1, "So the Lord said to Aaron, You and your sons and your father's household with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary, you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood." What is he saying? He is swearing the priesthood in, as it were, and he says when you violate the sanctuary and when you violate the priesthood, you will bear the guilt. What does that mean? You will suffer the punishment.

In verse 23 of Numbers 18 it says, "Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting and they shall bear their iniquity." In other words, if they violate the law of God, the Levites in the course of their duties, they will endure the punishment, that's what it means. And you find this repeatedly in the writings of Ezekiel. I read you chapter 18, I might just note chapter 4 verse 4, "As for you...He says to Ezekiel...lie down on your left side and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it, you shall bear their iniquity for the number of days that you lie on it." He went through a symbolic punishment, demonstrating to the people of Israel what happens when you are punished for your iniquity. You find it again in the forty fourth chapter of Ezekiel and other places in the Old Testament.

So Peter says, and let's go back to 1 Peter, and what does he mean? He says He bore our sins in His body. What does that mean? Does that mean that He became a sinner? Well, Paul says He became sin for us, but that's a different issue. When he says He bore our sins it means that He took on the punishment. He endured the penalty. And it wasn't just physical death, it was spiritual death..."My God, My God, why have You...what?...forsaken Me?" That is the cry of spiritual death, spiritual death is separation from God. He bore that for us. Yes, our iniquity was placed on Him. Yes, He carried in His body our sins. But that's not what Peter is talking about. What Peter is talking about is He took the punishment for that...thus satisfying a holy God, He bore our sins. What an absolutely thrilling truth...thrilling truth.

Spurgeon, who has to be everybody's favorite preacher, loved the doctor of substitution. He absolutely loved it. If you've read at all extensively in Spurgeon, you come across it over and over and over again. And he knew it was at the core of Christianity. Let me read you some of the things he said, these are taken from all different areas of his writing.

He said, "In one word, the great fact on which the Christian's hope rests is substitution. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the sinner, Christ being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, Christ offering up a true and proper substitutionary sacrifice in the place of as many as the Father gave Him who are recognized by their trusting in Him, this is the cardinal

fact of the gospel." What he is saying there is atonement is at the center, substitution is at the center. He says, "There is no doctrine that fires my soul with such delight as that of substitution. Substitution is the very marrow of the whole Bible, it is the soul of salvation, it is the essence of the gospel. We ought to saturate all our sermons with it for it is life blood of a gospel ministry." He says, "I am incapable of moving one inch away from the old faith, the gospel of substitution and one thing I do is preach it." He says, "If you put away the doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, you have disemboweled the gospel and torn from it its very heart."

I jotted down two times more quotes than I read you from Spurgeon. He said, "I pray, God, that every stone of this tabernacle may tumble to its ruin and every timber be shivered to atoms before there should stand on this platform a man to preach who denies the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, or who even keeps it in the background, for this is our watch word." You know that. Jesus was our substitute. He not only became sin for us but He bore the punishment for us.

How? Back to verse 24, "In His own body on the cross." Through crucifixion. He had to die on the cross, He had to be lifted up. He had to be crucified. That was the plan. He had to even be hanged, as Paul says, to fulfill the curse of one who is hanged on a tree, He had to be crucified on wood. In His own body He felt the potent punishment of God as He hung on the cross. By the way, the word "cross" there is literally the word wood. He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the wood...the wood.

Why did He do that? Verse 24 says, "In order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." Oh what a great statement. He did it in order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. Did you hear that? It didn't say He did it that we might go to heaven. It didn't say He did it in order that we might have peace. It didn't say He did it in order that we might experience love. He didn't do it for that reason primarily. He did it, would you please note, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. He did it to transform us from sinners into saints. He did it to change us. He did it to regenerate us. He bore the punishment in order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

So the purpose of Christ's substitutionary death is not just the forgiveness of sin, not just the removal of guilt, not just a change in our standing or our position. Please note that. It's not just forensic, it's not just some declared change. It's a real one. He took our place in order to transform us that we might die to sin. By the way, the word "die" here is a unique word in the New Testament, not the normal word for die, in fact, it's the only time it's ever used. It means to be away from, to be missing or to depart or to cease existing. In fact, the particle is used in classical Greek to refer to the dead as the dearly departed. What he is saying is that the purpose of this substitutionary work of Christ is that we might depart from sin. That's what he's saying...that we might depart from sin and that we might live to righteousness, that we might enter into a new life pattern.

Peter here is on the same track as Paul in Romans 6. Having been crucified with Christ we die to sin and rise to walk in newness of life, it's a real change. That great passage in Romans 6 is at the heart of everything in the Christian's life. If you haven't studied that carefully, oh how much you should study that. I've written that little book on it, on Romans 6 and 7 and we have tapes on it, every Christian should master that material. We have been crucified with Christ in which we have died to sin. How? We've paid the penalty, that's one part of it. But not only that, we have departed from sin. And Peter goes beyond what Paul intends in Romans 6. Paul is saying we have in paying the penalty of sin through the death of Christ, we have died to sin in terms that we have paid the penalty in Christ and so sin has no claim on us. Peter says, "Further, we are saved to depart from sin." Now Paul talks about that when he talks about living according to that new life. But Peter explicitly uses the word that means to depart from.

So, beloved, Christ died for you in order that you might depart from sin and live to righteousness, to change your life pattern, to convert you, to regenerate you, to make you a new person from sinner to saint. And then he alludes to Isaiah 53:5 when he says, "By His wounds you were healed." The word "wounds" molops...molops, you know what it means? Scars from flogging is exactly what it means, bruises, welts, scars from whipping. By His scars, by His pain, by His bearing punishment, we were healed. It's not unfair to say that even the whipping of Jesus, the flogging that tore His back, was part of the punishment of God which He bore for sin. And they became the means of our spiritual healing. He's not talking about physical healing here, primarily he's talking about spiritual healing, he's talking about transformation from death to life, from sin to righteousness. He took our place to make that a reality.

Somebody always says, "Well look, when it says right there by His wounds you were healed, I hear people all the time say that means you're to claim healing in the atonement." That's fine. I believe there's healing in the atonement. But not yet. The healing in the atonement is going to come in our glorification. Do you understand that? There is healing in the atonement, I won't argue that. And by His stripes we were healed spiritually, and by His stripes we will be healed physically because the day will come when we will have no more physical pain, no more physical problems.

In Matthew 8:16 you remember Jesus was casting out demons and healing everybody who was ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled saying He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. And people say, "You see, you see, He took our infirmities, He carried away our diseases when He healed those people." That's right. And He was showing as an example to those people what all of us will experience in the glory to come, healing from physical disease. But physical disease isn't the issue in this text. There is physical healing in the atonement promised, not yet realized. Beloved, listen, if there was physical healing in the atonement given now, no Christian would ever...what?...be sick or...what?...or die. How obvious is that? But He did promise healing in the atonement...in the future...in the future.

So our Lord suffered. He suffered as our standard to show us a pattern of virtuous suffering in the midst of unjust treatment and He suffered as our substitute...and this is so basic...He took our place. It's really unfathomable isn't it that the lovely Son of God, pure and untouched by sin, untainted at all, would take upon Himself not only our sin but our punishment and do it willingly?

Finally, Peter says He is not only our standard and substitute, He's our shepherd...He's our shepherd. I love this. Verse 25, see the Lord had to do that because you were continually straying like sheep. You see, if the Lord hadn't provided a sacrifice, He never could have brought you into His fold. If the Lord hadn't provided a substitute, He never could have saved you. Peter is still thinking of Isaiah 53:6, he must have just read it before the Spirit inspired him in this text. Isaiah 53:6 says "All of us like sheep have...what?...gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on Him...what?...the iniquity of us all." What does that mean? He bore the punishment for it all. And because of that you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. He had to bear your sin to be your shepherd. You and I are like sheep gone astray and he says, and so did Isaiah, you're like straying sheep but there was a shepherd who brought you back because He gave His life for you.

When he says you are continually straying like sheep, he's talking about their unsaved condition in the past. But now because of God's provision in Christ, you have turned toward is what the verb means. You have turned toward...that refers to repentant faith. That was the prodigal who turned toward the father. Would you please notice, you have turned toward not a system, not a theology, not a religion but a person? I love this. You have turned toward the shepherd and guardian of your souls. Literally your lives and has the whole person, your shepherd and guardian. Who's that? Who is the good shepherd? The Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, "Well, that's out of John's gospel." That's also out of Peter's epistle. Look at verse 4 of chapter 5. He calls Christ the chief shepherd, the chief shepherd. It's so wonderful. Peter calls Christ the chief shepherd in chapter 5. He calls Him the shepherd and guardian right here. By the way, that's a very significant thing because in the Old Testament who was the true shepherd? The Lord is my shepherd. So what Peter is saying is Jesus is the Lord...Jesus is God. This is an affirmation of His deity.

The term shepherd is His title. The term guardian is His function. What is the function of a shepherd? Guardianship guardianship. Interestingly enough the word "shepherd" is poimen which is the word "pastor." And the word "guardian" is the word epitropos which is the word "bishop or overseer." Both of them are applied to elders. We are the shepherd guardians of the flock under the chief shepherd guardian. By the way, in Ezekiel 34:23 and 24 and Ezekiel 37:24 the title of shepherd for God becomes Messianic. So even in Ezekiel, the Messiah will be shepherd. Every Jew should have understood that that was a promise that the Messiah would be God. He is the shepherd who guards, oversees, leads, supervises and further gives His life for the flock. In John 10 Jesus said, "I am the

good shepherd, I lay down My life for the sheep." Jesus put His life on the line for us to bring us to Himself.

The suffering Jesus, He suffered to be our standard. He suffered to be our substitute. He suffered to be our shepherd, to gather us to Himself. Spurgeon said, "When the pangs shoot through our body and ghastly death appears in view, people see the patience of the dying Christian. Our infirmities become the black velvet on which the diamond of God's love glitters all the more brightly. Thank God I can suffer. Thank God I can be made the object of shame and content, for in this way God shall be glorified."

What did he mean? Well he's really summing up Peter's point. This all started when Peter wanted to say to us as a Christian you should expect to suffer. Back in verse 11 he said, "Look, you're aliens and strangers in a hostile world and not only that, you've got fleshly lusts waging war against your soul. You've got pagans slandering you," verse 12. "You've got human authorities abusing you. You've got unkind masters taking advantage of you. You're going to suffer and it will be unjust. So look at Christ. And look at the one who is the standard."

You say, "Why didn't he stop there?" Because he couldn't. Once you've identified Jesus' suffering at all, you can't just say He suffered as an example. You've got to then say He suffered as a sin bearer and He suffered as a shepherd gathering His sheep. But the main point here is that Satan wants to heap against us unjust suffering. And in the midst of it we lose our victory, we lose our testimony. We sin with our mouth. We sin with our actions. We sin with our attitude. We retaliate. We are vengeful. And Peter wants us to know that that is not consistent with what God has called us to do. Even though we suffer unjustly, we can overcome.

There's a good hint at how. I close with this. Look at Revelation 12 verse 11. This is a description of some godly saints that have been under attack by Satan, the accuser of the brethren relentlessly assaulting their character. But it says in verse 11 they overcame him. Who's him? Satan. They overcame him. They overcame all his onslaughts, all his insults, all his persecution, all his efforts to destroy them and their testimony. They overcame him. How did they do it? Because of the blood of the Lamb, because of the word of their testimony and because they didn't love their life even to death.

How do you overcome? First of all, through the blood of the Lamb, that's salvation, that's the power of God. You overcome because through the blood of the Lamb you have the power of God to overcome. Secondly, they overcame because of the word of their testimony and that is to say they overcame because they would not forfeit their testimony. And when they were persecuted and hostilely treated, they would not retaliate, they wouldn't lose their testimony. There was bold courage and an uncompromising spirit.

I tell you, there's so much compromise today, so much. These people wouldn't compromise. How did they overcome? Because in salvation they had the power of Christ, because they would not compromise their testimony and finally, because they really didn't care about their lives. It was no big thing to them whether they suffered or didn't in this life, it just didn't matter that much. And if you have through salvation the power of God, if you have through conviction the noncompromising boldness not to equivocate on your testimony, but at all costs keep your testimony pure, and if you really don't care that much about your life here, you're going to overcome. It certainly would be our prayer that it might be said of us. They lived in a hostile world, Satan threw everything at them he could but they overcame him. They never lost their testimony, they never cared about their life. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, thank You for the great reminder of who our Christ is. We bless You, we praise You that He is our standard by which we accept patiently unjust suffering and pattern our response after Him, taking it and entrusting the equity and the righteousness into Your hands. Thank You that we have seen Him as our sinbearing substitute, the one who paid the penalty for our sins, who died in our place. Thank You that we have seen Him as the suffering shepherd who gives his life for his sheep in order that he might rescue them and gather them in the fold. It's all about Christ, Father, we want only to love and exalt Him. As we saw this morning in Philippians 3, "All else is loss, all in Him is gain." May He be praised in our lives. Amen.

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