

## Christ Is Our Example

1 Peter 2:20-25 (NASB)

***<sup>20</sup> For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. <sup>21</sup> 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, <sup>22</sup> who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; <sup>23</sup> 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; <sup>24</sup> and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.***

I think this is one of the most difficult messages that I have ever prepared. Peter writes to believers who were facing persecution. In 1 Peter, the word “suffer” is used 16 times. I feel like I am just as qualified to give advice on suffering as I am qualified to give advice on childbirth.

I have never been persecuted for my faith. Once, while in Spain, we were denied access to an apartment because we were evangelical Christians. On another occasion, someone ran a black magic marker the whole length of our white van.. In both cases, I was annoyed. But, -- I have never really suffered. I have never been beaten. I have never been jailed. I have never faced wild beasts in a coliseum. It is hard to talk about walking in shoes that I have never worn.

This passage is also difficult because of personal experience. This passage also talks about injustice. I'm sure that we have all gone through circumstances that lead us to conclude, “This isn't fair”. According to Peter Jesus “committed no sin”. Yet, He was treated like a criminal. His response to His suffering was beyond comprehension. Even while dying on the Cross, He prayed, “Father, forgive them”.

We are called to be like Jesus. Jesus came to serve. If necessary, I think we could all find it within ourselves to serve in the most disagreeable circumstances. Jesus came to love. With God’s help, we can love the person who might be considered unlovable. But to me, it is a tremendous challenge to forgive the unforgivable.

What is our response when we face circumstances that are not fair? In a previous message that I shared with you, I made this statement,

***“We are never more like Jesus than when we forgive”.***

I have been through experiences in which I found it very hard to forgive. You would probably all agree that sometimes, it takes a long time to forgive.

Peter's audience was suffering persecution. My response – I can not relate. But, when he talks about Jesus, and how He was treated, my response is, “It wasn't fair!”.

***[1 Peter 2:20,21](#) For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. <sup>21</sup> 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***

Verse 20 & 21 give us an introduction to the message this morning. Peter give 3 words of advice to the believer of his day –

**Advice #1 - Do what is right.**

1 Peter 1:20 *if when you do what is right*

It doesn't matter in which century we live. It does not matter how sinful the society is that surrounds us. We must do what is right.

[Philippians 2:15](#) *so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,*

Pastor Bill made a statement last week that caught my attention. I was working on this message. And I thought, I will steal that one. It was something like this, "The greater the darkness around us, the better the world can see the light of Jesus in us".

**Advice #2 - Fulfill your calling**

Peter 2:21.... <sup>21</sup> *For you have been called for this purpose,*

I have heard people say, "God called me to this ministry". In 64 years, I have yet to hear anyone say (except Paul), "God called me to suffer". Paul mentions suffering repeatedly in his letters.

This was Paul's prayer that he shared with the Philippians....

[Philippians 3:10](#) *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;*

I can understand wanting to have Resurrection power in my life. Oh yes. Let's pray to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection. But, I find it outside of my comfort zone to ask for suffering. When we asked for prayer requests earlier this morning for our prayer time, no one requested that god send suffering.

Paul wrote these words to the believers in Corinth....

[2 Corinthians 1:5](#) *For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.*

Paul wrote this encouragement to Timothy...

[2 Timothy 1:8](#) **Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,**

Paul gave this perspective to the Romans....

[Romans 8:18](#) **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

If our society continues to degenerate to the point that Christians one day face open opposition, will the Church in the United States be ready to stand ?

Peter continues...

1 Peter 2:21 ....., **since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example....,**

### **Advice #3 - Follow the example of Jesus**

To the believers of his day, Paul says, "Suffer well". "Follow the example of Jesus". Jesus not only shows us how to suffer. He shows us what to do when we face circumstances that are not fair.

1 Peter 2:22,23 <sup>22</sup> ***who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;*** <sup>23</sup> ***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;***

What do we do when we are treated unfairly? We know how the unbeliever responds. The typical response is to, first, lawyer-up. People become angry. Some make threats. Some might even seek revenge.

How should the response of the believer differ? If we are made new in Christ, shouldn't we visibly demonstrate that we are different? To me, this is the challenge. What good does it do if I claim to be a follower of Christ if my response to challenging circumstances is the same as the response of the unbelieving world?

This morning I would like to look at what Jesus did, why He did it, and then try to explain how we might respond when life is not fair.

#### **1. His Suffering had a Purpose**

2:21 ***For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you,***

The suffering of Jesus was not random. Jesus did not suffer because the Jewish leaders outsmarted Him. Jesus didn't go to the Cross because the Romans overpowered Him. Jesus **gave** His life.

John 10:16-18 <sup>16</sup> ***I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.*** <sup>17</sup> ***For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.*** <sup>18</sup> ***No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."***

Jesus suffered with one purpose in mind... to save us from the power and penalty of sin.

The early Church included the suffering of Jesus in its teaching.

Acts 17:1-4 (NASB) ***17 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> And according to***

*Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,<sup>3</sup> explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."*

*What was the purpose of His suffering?*

**2 Corinthians 5:21** *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

**1 Peter 2:24** *and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

Other religions prescribe that men suffer for themselves. But that is not an option. God required a perfect sacrifice. So, God's Lamb took our place.

Galatians 3:13 <sup>13</sup> *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us— for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—*

If you are ever tempted to think, "Nobody loves me", you would be so very wrong.

John 3:16 <sup>16</sup> *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

## 2. His Silence was Prophesied

1 Peter 2: <sup>21</sup> *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,* <sup>22</sup> *who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;* <sup>23</sup> *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;*

### **Isaiah 53 (NASB)**

53 Who has believed our message?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

<sup>2</sup> For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,

And like a root out of parched ground;

He has no *stately* form or majesty

That we should look upon Him,

Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and forsaken of men,

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

And like one from whom men hide their face

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

<sup>4</sup> Surely our griefs He Himself bore,

And our sorrows He carried;

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten of God, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But He was pierced through for our transgressions,

He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
Yet He did not open His mouth;  
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.

If you have an opportunity to witness to someone, you might begin with the Roman road. At work, I have tracts that I have written.. I make them available to truck drivers. You might share the verse(s) that were instrumental in your decision to surrender your life to Jesus. You probably wouldn't whip out Isaiah 53. But God knows each person's need.

Let's see what happened one day in the life of Philip....

Acts 8:32-33 <sup>26</sup> But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) <sup>27</sup> So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." <sup>30</sup> Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" <sup>31</sup> And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup> Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

**"He was led as a sheep to slaughter;  
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
So He does not open His mouth.**

**<sup>33</sup> "In humiliation His judgment was taken away;  
Who will relate His generation?  
For His life is removed from the earth."**

And we know what happened. The Ethiopian was apparently so impressed that Jesus had suffered for him that he believed and was baptized on the spot.

Jesus suffered in silence.

Matthew 26: <sup>63</sup> ***But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."***

### **3. His Suffering was Unpreventable**

Jesus had to suffer to fulfill prophecy. Jesus had to suffer because it was the only way to bring salvation to lost mankind. If Jesus had not died, we would still be offering burnt sacrifices on an altar. And that would continue to be only a temporary solution for the problem of sin.

The author of the book of Hebrews is quite emphatic about the need for Jesus to die....

Hebrews 7:26,27 <sup>26</sup> *For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;* <sup>27</sup> *who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*

Hebrews 9:11,12 <sup>11</sup> *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;<sup>12</sup> and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

Hebrews 10:8-10 <sup>8</sup> *After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law),<sup>9</sup> then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first in order to establish the second.<sup>10</sup> By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Hebrews 10: 11-13 *Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;<sup>12</sup> but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,<sup>13</sup> waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.*

Not everyone believes in the All-sufficiency of the Cross. Not everyone believes that there is Power in the Blood. Not everyone accepts that the blood shed at Calvary is the only acceptable atonement for sin.

Several weeks ago Pastor Bill pointed out the error of the Roman Catholic Church in regards to Mary. The Catholic Church also teaches the false doctrine of the "Transubstantiation of Christ". The Roman Catholic church teaches that during the sacrament of communion, the bread becomes the actual body of Christ and the wine becomes the actual blood of Christ. Why? Because the Cross was not enough.

Was there a way for Jesus to escape the Cross? No. In the Garden Jesus prayed....

Luke 22:42 *"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."*

Just moments after that prayer, Jesus made it known to His disciples how absolutely necessary it was for Him to suffer and die.

Matthew 26:51-54 <sup>51</sup> *And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.<sup>52</sup> Then Jesus \*said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.<sup>53</sup> Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?<sup>54</sup> How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"*

From Internet Site.....Bible Study Tools

### Legion

a regiment of the Roman army, the number of men composing which differed at different times. It originally consisted of three thousand men, but in the time of Christ consisted of six

**thousand, exclusive of horsemen, who were in number a tenth of the foot-men....**

Have you ever heard or sung the song, “He Could Have Called Ten Thousand Angels”? The song is wrong.

Let’s do the math.  $6,000 \times 12 = 72,000$

1 Peter 1:19,20 **19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who truly was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,**

Jesus had to die. His death was unpreventable. “Love Found a Way”, and that way was the Cross of Calvary.

#### **4. His Suffering was Pacific**

We have already noted that Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would not speak. We noted His silence. I think we should also note that He suffered peacefully.

1 Peter 2:22,23 **who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; <sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats,.....**

This is the part of the passage that is foreign to 21st century America. Jesus had no lawyers. Jesus offered no resistance in the face of lies, false accusations, bribed testimony, false witnesses, humiliation, and physical abuse, including; sleep deprivation, punches, spitting, flogging, and crucifixion.

Except for a few short statements, Jesus did not defend Himself. He did not demand His rights.

We read in Isaiah 53 – **“like a lamb lead to the slaughter”.**

**“while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats,**

How do you do that? How is it possible to be passive when faced with such inconceivable injustice? How could Jesus be at peace under those circumstances?

#### **5. His Suffering was Patient**

1 Peter 2:21,23 **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, <sup>22</sup> who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; <sup>23</sup> 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;**

These words might be one of the most important keys to forgiveness. Jesus... **“kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;”** When life isn't fair – when you face circumstances that are filled with injustice, can we believe that God will take care of it ?

Think about it. What is one of the obstacles to forgiveness? I want justice ! We want the offender to “get what he deserves”. We might even demand that the offender get what he deserves. But this is what the Lord says....

Romans 12:19 ***Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.***

Someone wrongs you. You are insulted or offended. You are the victim of rumors. Your reputation is ruined. You are the victim of crime. How many more scenarios can we list? Something happens to you and you know this is not fair.

Here we run into a problem. If I decide what is just, will my justice be appropriate? Will my justice be appropriate for the offense? One day, God's justice will be perfect. God judges "righteously".

My solution might be too lenient. Is that just? My response might be too severe? Is that just?

You have no doubt heard someone say, "I want justice". If you want justice, then you have to give the whole matter to God. The only One who can guarantee perfect justice is God.

Conclusion:

**Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father because...**

- 1) His death was part of the plan of redemption.**
- 2) His resurrection and ultimate victory over sin and death was guaranteed.**
- 3) He had absolute confidence that one day, the evil of that day would be confronted.**

Every wrong committed on that day would be made right. He was so confident in the justice of God that He could put the entire matter in the Father's hands. He "kept entrusting Himself ..." That is an ongoing action.

Am I suggesting that we become passive and allow the world to run over us? No.

When God gave the Law to Moses, he included instructions for moral law, religious law, and social law. The moral law told each one how to live in relation to God. The religious law told each one how to worship as a community of faith. The social law set boundaries for a God-fearing society.

If someone killed an animal, there were consequences. If someone caused physical injury, there were consequences. It is called "personal responsibility" – something lacking today. Today, criminals post bond and are released before the ink on their paperwork dries.

Consider 2 things: (1) If there are no consequences for wrong-doing, society will descend into chaos.. (2) Believers of the 1st century lived in a pagan culture with no protections. We live in a democracy that guarantees religious rights and religious freedom. But, take note – Paul warned Timothy in the last days that there will be lawlessness

Forgiveness is a matter of the heart. What do we do when we are wronged? How do we handle injustice ?

Some might say – in fact, you have probably heard someone say, "Just let it go". Where does it go? If you "let it go", is it like a group of balloons that floats up into the clouds. If you "let it go", the matter remains unresolved. No, we don't let it go. We, do what Jesus did – we put the circumstances in the hands of God. Jesus kept entrusting Himself to God



Sometimes it is hard to forgive. It is hard to forgive the unforgivable. We can probably all agree that we have "Been there. Done that". Oh, but, ... remember....

**"We are never more like Jesus than when we forgive".**

A good resource on the topic of forgiveness is a book written by Dr. Charles Stanley, "The Gift of Forgiveness". Forgiveness may not be deserved. But, when forgiveness is given, 2 people are freed. First, the offender is freed from the debt he owes to the one he offended. And, the offended person is freed from hurt, anger, and all the emotions that come with suffering an injustice.

The book is out of print. But I can tell you where you might be able to find it after the service.

Anger and bitterness never exist in a vacuum. They poison other relationships. When we forgive, we free ourselves from all the emotions and feelings that come with hurt.

Maybe you have a moment in your past that you have not been able to resolve. It frustrates you. It eats at you. Whenever the circumstances come to mind or a specific name is spoken, all the buried emotions and all the hurt come over you again like a wave. I have a few of those.

There used to be a commercial that had the tag-line, "The gift that keeps on giving". Forgiveness is like that. You take an event that wasn't fair. You take the injustice, and you give it to God. If you are young enough that you have not experienced what I am talking about, sooner or later, you will. When you have carried the anger long enough. You when tire of dealing with all the emotions, now you know what to do. Give it to Jesus. He knows all about injustice. He knows what to do when we are treated unfairly.

How do we forgive? How do we handle things when life isn't fair?

1. **We follow the example of Christ**
2. **We suffer well so that please the Father**
3. **We entrust the matter to God and wait patiently for Him to bring justice.**