

Standing Fast in the Grace of God

“Leaving Us an Example”

Christ Is Our Pattern in Suffering

1 Peter 2:18-25

In these final verses of chapter 2, Peter finalizes what he began in verse 11 where he showed us that believers, as strangers and pilgrims, are called to live honorably before the world, submit to authority for the Lord's sake, and endure opposition without compromising their testimony.

As he begins the text before us, the focus is narrowed to a particular situation that was very difficult for the believers then (and is so today, in many cases): living under a harsh, unreasonable, and even cruel authority. As the question might be asked as to how a believer is to live the kind of life given in verses 11-17, Peter makes it clear that submission and endurance are not based on the character of those in power, but on a believer's conscience toward God.

Peter, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, doesn't leave the recipients of the letter with just commands alone. In verses 21-25, he directs the focus to Christ Himself, and gives us the greatest example of all for how we maintain our testimony under those conditions. The call to endure unjust suffering is grounded in the example and redemptive work of Christ who suffered for sins He did not commit, submitted Himself willfully to the persecution, and entrusted Himself entirely to the Father. Christ is not only the reason believers can endure suffering – He is the pattern by which they do.

I. THE CALL TO ENDURE UNJUST SUFFERING – VS. 18-20

A. The recognition of position (vs. 18)

It is vital that we recognize our position when it comes to authority to whom we are to submit.

1. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear"

- a) "Servants" (οἰκέτης) – this is not the normal word for "servant" (slave). The word translated "servants" refers specifically to household servants – those who lived and served within the home. It emphasizes their role within the household rather than the legal terms of their service, which could vary. Peter's concern is not ownership, but how believers conduct themselves while living under authority in close daily relationship.

While the term does not describe modern employment exactly, the principle applies to anyone who lives or works under authority in a close, ongoing relationship.

- b) "Be subject to your masters" – they were to put themselves in subjection to their masters, willingly and without compulsion.
- c) "With all fear" – "with all proper reverence and respect" (Barnes).

Ephesians 6:5-7

⁵ Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; ⁶ Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

2. This applies regardless of the character of authority.

- a) "Good and gentle" – self-explanatory
- b) "Also to the forward" – this word (σκολιός) is often used in Greek writing for someone who is perverse or crooked in their dealings with other,

or simply wicked in their actions toward others.

B. The right perspective (vs. 19)

1. "This" refers to the specific kind of conduct Peter is describing – enduring grief and suffering wrongfully while remaining submissive, and doing so out of conscience toward God. It is not suffering alone that is in view, but faithful endurance motivated by reverence for God.

Romans 13:5

⁵ Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

2. "Thankworthy" does not mean that such conduct will be thanked or rewarded by men. Peter is not suggesting that the servant should expect recognition or approval from his master for doing right under unjust treatment.
3. The word translated "thankworthy" (χάρις) is the same word often translated "grace." It speaks of what finds favor with God. Enduring unjust suffering for conscience toward God is an expression of grace at work in the believer's life.
4. In this sense, such endurance is "thankworthy" because it is pleasing to God. As John Gill noted, it is "a fruit and effect of grace, an instance of it, in which it shows itself."

C. The proper reaction (vs. 20)

1. Peter draws a clear distinction between deserved suffering and unjust suffering. There is no honor, credit, or spiritual value in enduring punishment for wrongdoing. Such suffering is simply the consequence of sin.

2. The issue is not whether a believer suffers, but why. When a believer suffers for doing wrong, there is nothing commendable in enduring it patiently.
3. But when a believer suffers while doing good and endures it patiently, that endurance finds favor with God. It is not the suffering itself, but the faithful response to unjust suffering that is acceptable in His sight.

Matthew 5:10-12

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

4. The word translated "acceptable" is the same word translated "thankworthy" in verse 19. Peter is reinforcing the point: gracious endurance under unjust treatment is evidence of God's grace at work.
- Peter now moves from instruction to illustration, pointing to Christ Himself as the supreme example of unjust suffering endured in perfect obedience.

II. THE CALLING OF THE BELIEVER IN SUFFERING – VS. 21A

"For even hereunto were ye called"

A. "Hereunto"

1. Points back to patient endurance under unjust treatment (vs. 18-20).

2. Suffering for righteousness is often part of the path of God's will for our lives.

B. "Were ye called" – not "might you be called".

We are not to consider ourselves "victims of circumstances," but that of the "vocation" God has given us.

III. THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IN SUFFERING – VS. 21B

"Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example"

A. His suffering was substitutionary in purpose – "suffered for us"

1. Christ's suffering was voluntary, vicarious, and God-ordained.

Ephesians 5:2

² And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

2. The suffering of Christ was not just a moral example but substitutionary.

B. His suffering was exemplary – "leaving us an example"

1. "Example" (ὑπογραμμός) – a writing copy set for careful tracing (only time in the Greek New Testament this word is used).
2. We do not (cannot) follow His atoning work, but we can follow His submission, His restraint, and His trust in the Father.

Hebrews 12:3

³ For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and

| faint in your minds.

- Christ's suffering saves us (substitutionary death); His submission instructs us.

IV. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST UNDER SUFFERING – vs. 22-23

His moral perfection revealed

A. Sinless in conduct (vs. 22)

"Who did no sin"

1. No wrongdoing provoked His suffering.
2. This establishes the injustice of His treatment.
3. This disqualifies any notion that suffering was disciplinary.

B. Restrained in speech (vs. 23a)

"Neither was guile found in His mouth...reviled not again"

1. He did not retaliate verbally with any arguments or manipulation.

| Isaiah 53:9

⁹ And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

2. Silence was an act of reliance on the Father, not a sign of weakness.

C. Confident in judgment (vs. 23b)

"Committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"

Christ entrusted justice to the Father.

V. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING – VS. 24

A. Substitutionary atonement

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"

1. Personal ("his own self")
2. Physical ("in his own body")
3. Penal ("bare our sins")

B. Sanctifying purpose

"That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness"

1. Salvation results in transformation.
2. The believer's response to suffering flows from a changed life.

C. Healing accomplished

"By whose stripes ye were healed"

This is speaking primarily of spiritual restoration.

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

VI. THE RESULT OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING – VS. 25

Restored relationship

A. Our former condition – "ye were as sheep going

astray”

This speaks to mankind’s moral helplessness, spiritual vulnerability, and self-directed ruin.

B. Our present reality – “but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls”

1. “Shepherd” – speaks of care and guidance

This can be seen in the discourse on the Good Shepherd found in John 10 – the Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.

2. “Bishop” – speaks of oversight and authority

C. The final comfort

The One who suffered for us now shepherds us through suffering.

Conclusion:

We have been given the mandate, the calling, to live faithfully and righteously in this wicked world, even under the harshest of situations. This is possible because Christ has already suffered for us, redeemed us by His sacrifice on the cross, and because He now shepherds us through every trial.