

1 Peter 2:21-25

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, ²²“who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth”; ²³and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered not threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴and 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. ²⁵For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Peter has had a lot to say to the Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia in the little we have covered so far. The text has been full of things that we can learn from. I would suggest going back and rereading the verses we have covered. There is so much to be learned and it all cannot be seen and picked up on in just one read. Also, rereading will help you remember where we have been which will help shed light and give understanding to the things that are coming in the book. That being said, let's get into the passage for this session.

We start out with “for you have been called for this purpose”. For what purpose have we been called? This is another instance where knowing where we were is helpful in interpreting what is at hand. The verse continues by talking about Jesus' suffering. If you recall, we talked about suffering last time. We said that suffering for doing what is right finds favor with God. We also talked about patiently enduring our suffering and waiting to let God handle the details. This is what purpose we have been called to and Christ is the example that we must follow if we are to be holy. Christ suffered unjustly. He “who committed no sin, nor was any deceit in His mouth” died as one who had committed sins and had deceit in their mouth. He suffered for doing what was right in the sight of God. He should not have received any punishment for what He did. This is exactly what can happen to us. As I mentioned last time, there will come a day when we will be punished for doing what is right, for what God has called us to do. What is our response to be?

Last session we talked about patiently enduring the suffering that will occur, and that is what we are to do. Without an example, we do not really know what that looks like though. Thankfully, we have that example. Our example for living a Godly, holy life is Christ. We have Christ as our prime example of how to react and behave during our suffering. Today's passage tells us that He was reviled but did not revile in return. To revile means to criticize in an abusive or angrily insulting manner. So even though insults were hurled at Christ during His suffering, He did not once give that response in return. The passage says that while He suffered, Christ did

not utter any threats. In modern terms, Jesus kept His cool through all of the suffering He experienced here on earth. How did He do this?

Peter tells us how. Jesus was able to keep His cool because “He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Christ knew the whole time that God, His father, was in control and would take care of everything. In earlier sessions, we learned that we can keep our hope so long as we keep our focus on God, what He is doing, and the glory to come. It is when we lose our focus that we try to take control of the situation. That is when we get ourselves into trouble. That is when we lash out in anger or utter threats. We need to learn to have a response like Jesus’.

Luke 23:35 But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

Matthew 5:38-39;43-44 You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.⁴³ You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

It is important that we respond with love, not hate. Jesus selfLESSly went to the cross, bore our sins, and took our punishment. That is the kind of love we have to have for those that treat us unreasonably, poorly, or with malice in their heart. We must have a love for others that allows us to lay down our lives for theirs.

I must point out one thing. This is not a call to suffering. Some religious sects take this verse as a command to suffer as Christ suffered. That is not at all what this verse is saying. What Peter is saying is that when we do experience trials, suffering, and hard times Christ is our example of how to act.

At the end of this passage, Peter likens us to straying sheep. If you didn’t know it already, sheep are dumb animals. How rude of Peter to compare us to such an animal! In reality, we are more like sheep than you think. They constantly wander off and get lost. We were lost sheep before realizing our sin and coming to Christ for salvation. As a people that are sinful by nature, there are times in life where we sin and stray from the life that God has called us to. Times when we lose our focus and our flesh takes over. This can happen at any moment. We must always be on guard and constantly checking that our focus is on God. We always think we know how to do things, but end up running back to God asking for help because we messed it all up. Then down the road we do the same thing again. Like sheep, we wander off on our own path and then wonder why we end up in danger. The Shepherd is there to guide us so long as we heed His guidance.

Application Questions

- How can you prepare yourself for the suffering that will come?
- Have you been treated unreasonably lately? If so how did you act? Did you act in a way that followed Christ's example?
- If you have reacted poorly in a tough situation, what could you have done differently to change that?
- Do you know anyone who is still a "continuously straying sheep"? Are you willing to step up to the plate and tell them about Christ through whom their wounds can be healed?
- Do you know where to find your hope in hard times?
- What steps can you take to safeguard yourself from the flesh taking control?
- Are you willing to patiently endure suffering, as Christ did?

Final Remark

We will inevitably experience suffering. That is the fallen nature of the world will live in. Sometimes, that suffering may come as a result of doing what is right and good in the sight of God. In a perfect world, this would never be the case, but we live in a sinful world filled with sinful people. One day, you may experience negative consequences for doing what is right, and we must be ready to respond as Jesus did, with love. It is not a love that we can produce on our own, but it is God's love that flows through us. We must continually remind ourselves to selfLESSly love those around us. It is not a natural love to human kind, but it is the kind of love that will make all the difference. Be ready. The moment will come where you have the opportunity to lay yourself aside for someone else. Prepare your heart now for that moment by spending as much time as you can in the Word and in prayer.