

1 Peter 2:21-25, Part A

1Pe 2:21 (NKJV) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

As we come to [1 Peter 2:21-25](#), it appears that we would be amiss if we did not see this passage as the very heart of [1 Peter](#). Obviously, [1 Peter](#) is about suffering since it uses a form of that word more than any other book in the New Testament. It is also about being submissive in very difficult and trying circumstances. We have seen so far that God is not always interested in our ease or our comfort, but rather in His name being glorified in our life as we face very challenging moments – which will come to all believers at some point in their life. We have consistently taught over the years that the various trials that believers face are simply tests, but they are also something that clearly reveals where we actually are relative to our Christian life. I am sure that all believers have felt good about where they were in their Christian life, but then something spiritually challenging happens and their response becomes very negative, very non-constructive, and often times spiritually debilitating. It is like the Christian who loses their temper and says things that are very difficult to take back.

What will immediately be seen in this passage is that Christ was willing to suffer for us, and in that supernatural work, He became what Peter calls an “**example**”, a model, a standard, and a pattern to “**follow**” in our personal lives. The word for “**suffered**” in v21 is not a nice word. It is the Greek word “*pascho*” and it refers to when someone experiences both harm and emotional pain. It describes both physical suffering and the emotional suffering that accompanies the pain. One aspect of this word for suffering is that it also implies a level of spiritual endurance that is outside of the range of what may be considered normal.¹ Obviously, the sufferings of Christ were what we call “vicarious”, and certainly outside the range of normal for the average believer. I.e., the sufferings of Christ had deep spiritual significance. [1 Peter 3:18](#) says,

1Pe 3:18 (NKJV) For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

Stated another way, without the unjust suffering that Christ experienced, no one could ever be saved. So, the problem that exists when dealing with this issue of Christ’s life being an example to follow is that if the believer does not have an appreciation for the idea of patiently enduring (v20), then it will become very easy to quickly lose perspective on the greater will and purposes of God that are most often being worked into both the believer’s life, as well as other individuals who may actually be prompting the pain and suffering.

Now, it is important to appreciate that Peter says that Christ Himself has “left” us an example – “**leaving us an example**”. The participle for “**leaving**” is “*hypolimpano*” and literally means to leave behind, but

¹ Logos, 1 Peter 2:21, *pascho*, ep.

it means to leave behind with a specific purpose.² I left my credit card behind recently in a restaurant, but I can assure you that that unfortunate “leaving” behind had no specific purpose whatsoever. This is the only place that this verb is used in the New Testament, and the obvious specific purpose is identified in the two words “**example**” and “**should follow**”. Christ has left us an “**example**” to “**follow**”, but we can all be assured that it is not the kind of example that most believers are eager to embrace – the idea of suffering, and especially suffering unjustly. The word for “**example**” is “*hypogrammos*” and it refers specifically to a writing that is under, something to copy.³ I remember when we were teaching our children how to write. What we did was to give them a piece of paper that had the letters of the alphabet provided in dashed letters. The goal was to have the children literally trace over the dotted lines with a solid line. The dotted lines were the “**example**” that the kids could “**follow**”, and it completely describes the meaning of this word. Christ left believers an “**example**” to follow. Where the words “**should follow**” take on more significance to the believer is that it is in the subjunctive mood, active voice which simply means that it is only a possibility for believers. Since it is in the active voice, it means that it is something that believers must do for themselves. The active voice makes this an intentional decision of the believer to follow Christ’s example. This is not some passive work of the Holy Spirit, but a very intentional choice of the believer to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ. Notice what Peter says in [1 Peter 2:24](#),

1Pe 2:24 (NKJV) who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

In understanding this whole passage and this very large teaching on both suffering and submission, it is critical to appreciate that just because a believer is faithful to God’s will does not mean that they will not often times suffer unjustly. From our study of the word “**suffer**”, it is apparent that they suffering will often times be very painful. The whole tenor of this section of Scripture is that the more faithful that a believer becomes in obeying the will of God for their life, the more vulnerable and susceptible they will be to having to suffer for Christ unjustly. That is one of the obvious deductions that must be drawn from these verses. There is no kind of spiritual detour that someone can take to avoid this reality if they choose to wholly live their life for Christ. Christ’s example becomes the believer’s standard, the believer’s model to follow, but following His example is no guarantee that everything will turn out for the believer’s initial and ongoing benefit. I met some pastors in Indonesia who were serving in West Java, or the most Islamic populated area of Indonesia. Everyday their life was being threatened, and they were constantly living with the reality that each day could be their last, not the best of those yet to come. This was normal for them, but a cost that they had already calculated before they ever entered into that setting with the gospel. In their mind, suffering was not just anticipated, but expected, and they knew that it may also cost them the life of their family members. For these believers, they fully understood that suffering for Christ was not God’s “Plan B” for their life, but the actual way of life into which they had been called as believers. What is so different about their perspective and the American Christian culture is that they have fully embraced that calling as a permanent and dangerous way of life, and in our culture that way of life is generally rejected as being outside of God’s will. Many segments of the charismatic movement have brought more damage to this teaching that can be imagined with their

² Harris, 1 Peter 2:21, *hypolimpano*, ep.

³ Strong, 1429.

name it and claim it mentality, with their false health and wealth gospel that they perpetrate on their audience. You will never hear these charismatic teachers teaching on suffering, unless they are saying that the believer should never suffer. Listen to what [Philippians 1:29](#) says,

Php 1:29 (NKJV) For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

What is important about this verse doctrinally is simple. Whenever a believer embraces the act of patiently enduring unjust suffering, what is actually taking place is that they are providing a very powerful testimony of the grace of God that allows the believer to do those things that are actually unnatural to them. At a personal level, this whole idea of suffering is something that is far outside of the boundaries of my normal experiences. For the most part, any suffering that I have experienced has been self-inflicted, not God ordained, and none of it has ever come close to approximating the kind of suffering that Christ or the apostles endured because of their faith in Christ. It could easily be surmised that this kind of endurance is a very supernatural kind of endurance that can only come from Christ Himself. However, when we as believers willingly embrace this, God is deeply glorified in our lives.

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