

## 1 Peter 2:21-25, Part B

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:** <sup>22</sup> *"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";* <sup>23</sup> **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;** <sup>24</sup> **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.** <sup>25</sup> **For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

In v21, it says that Christ left us an “**example**”. When we think of the “**example**” that Christ left us, it should be obvious that it is not something that is easy to embrace. As stated previously, these are not the kind of verses that people like to hear very often – especially any time the idea of “**suffering**” is included. However, if we understand what it truly means to live out the Christian life, these kinds of topics are virtually inescapable and undeniable as realities of the Christian life.

One of the realities of what Peter is teaching is really very simple. It is the reality that suffering unjustly is often times a meaningful portion of God’s will for a believer’s life, as well as a necessary ingredient for them to grow spiritually. Why say this? Well, it is simply because Christ is the believer’s “**example**”. That is the whole point here. He did not deserve one ounce of the suffering that He experienced. In fact, He never uttered one word of complaint, of objection, or of grumbling. He never murmured under His breath about how unjust His treatment actually was. As v23 says, He simply “**committed Himself to Him who judges righteously**”. The constant and overriding perspective that Christ had was that His Father was sovereign over His life, and anything that was allowed to happen to Him had to first be allowed by His Father to achieve the greater and eternal purposes that he wanted to achieve. I was remarking in one of the classes at school that perspective is everything. The way that I have stated it in the past is that “outlook determines outcome”, so having the right perspective on our life is critical if we ever want to achieve God’s greater purposes through our life.

When I read and study a passage like this, it completely annuls anything about which I find myself complaining or murmuring. It has a way of simply putting the entire Christian life into a much greater perspective than just my little complaint or grievance about someone or something that is affecting my life. In America, we feel like we have the right to complain about anyone or anything without any consequences. However, the truth of the matter is that always having a very unbiblical response to the things that may be impacting our life is the very root issue that undermines everything else in our Christian life. Personally, and I say this with grace, but I have never met someone who complained and whined all the time about anything and everything that God was actually using for His purposes and for His glory. It is not that God cannot use them, for He certainly can, but simply the fact that He generally chooses not to use them. I guess the question would be “Why would He use someone who whined and complained all the time?” It is as if they have never seen the hand of God in their difficult circumstances. Learning to commit ourselves to the much larger purposes of God always carries greater weight and substance than does my personal grievances against someone or something. Americans have to be some of the most dissatisfied people on the planet, and it would be fair to assess that our dissatisfaction is simply a testimony to our misunderstanding and lack of appreciation for some of the teaching given in

these verses by Peter. The more we magnify the minor things in life, the less we are able to see the greater things. I am personally convinced that God the Father is involved in every difficulty, in every hardship, in every inconvenience, in every obstacle, in every hurdle, in every aggravation, and in every moment of my life. They are His tools to help conform every believer into the image of Jesus Christ. So, the more that we complain about the circumstances of our life, the less useful we become to God.

In my mind, it would be close to blasphemy to say that the suffering that Christ experienced was not God-ordained or was not a major part of God's will for His life. If Christ is the "**example**" that we accept, then suffering for the sake of the gospel and both suffering for the sake of righteousness cannot be deleted from the spiritual equation for the Christian life. For instance, [Hebrews 2:10](#) says,

**Heb 2:10 (NKJV) For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**

The very Son of God was the human side of being the God/Man "**perfected**" through suffering. So there should not be a resistance to the suffering that may often times come the believer's way because of their stance for the gospel message and for the truths that are taught in the Word of God. I have no desire to be either abrasive or ungracious in presenting biblical truth to others, but I am more than cognizant of the fact that often times when that happens that there will always be a reaction to God's truth. [Hebrews 5:8](#), speaking yet again of Christ, says,

**Heb 5:8 (NKJV) though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.**

[Hebrews 12:2](#) gives even more insight and substance when it says,

**Heb 12:2 (NKJV) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Christ simply "**endured**" that which was unjust towards Him, but in the end He was fully vindicated by God the Father. If Christ was more than willing to endure unjust suffering, then that is the "**example**", the underwriting that every believer is to follow. He never opened His mouth in retaliation against His accusers or those who eventually nailed Him to a cross. To the contrary, He kept entrusting His life to His Father. The lesson in all of this should be both overwhelming and convicting at the same time. The more that a believer is willing to live for the glory of God alone, the greater they will partake and share in the glory that Christ has, but they also get to share in His suffering. The prevailing mentality of the modern Christian culture is often just one of going to church, of singing a few songs, and then going home to other things. It is not as if the honor and glory of Christ actually permeate the believer's life, but rather that Christianity is just a very small part of their actual lives. However, believers are called on by God to do everything for the glory of Christ. Listen to these three verses in [1 Corinthians 10:31](#), [Colossians 3:17](#), and [Colossians 3:23](#).

**1Co 10:31 (NKJV) Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

**Col 3:17 (NKJV) And *whatever* you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**

Col 3:23 (NKJV) **And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,**

If, therefore, believers find Christ being patient when He was wronged, then believers should do the same. The unfortunate mentality that is so often normative is to complain about everything that does not suit us, but in reality that is a grave sign of spiritual immaturity that does not honor Christ.

[Philippians 2:14](#) says,

Php 2:14 (NKJV) **Do all things without complaining and disputing,**

The word “**complaining**” means to grumble and to murmur because of personal discontent.<sup>1</sup> We all probably need to take a test this week and see if we would be willing to record all of the different times and different ways that we find ourselves complaining and protesting things that we do not like. How many times did we find ourselves being fault finders rather than building someone up with words of grace and kindness? How many times were we critical, unpleasant, and bad-tempered about issues that ultimately had no eternal value and certainly did not honor Christ? I imagine that we would all be amazed how easily we found ourselves not glorifying Christ, but embellishing our own personal grievances and objections to some miniscule issue. When that happens, no one ever sees Christ living in us or through us, and so the glory of Christ becoming visible to others is deeply compromised, if not completely forfeited.

So, what Peter says that believers are to do is to “**follow**” the “example” of Christ. The Greek word is “*epakoloutheō*” and it carries the idea of following after someone very closely by walking in their footsteps.<sup>2</sup> Christ was always compelling men to follow Him. The figurative meaning is to imitate someone else’s life and to live your life the same way that they live theirs. Paul said this in [Philippians 3:17](#),

Php 3:17 (NKJV) **Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.**

Paul says the following in [2 Thessalonians 3:6-9](#),

2Th 3:6 (NKJV) **But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; <sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, <sup>9</sup> not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.**

Without overstating the issue, every believer’s life should be a pattern for others to emulate. Every parent should be a model of Christ for their children. Every older child should be a model of Christ for their younger siblings. Every employee should be an example of Christ for others to follow. Every believer should be a pattern of godly living for other believers to follow. As I look back over my life as a Christian, it is uncanny how many people have influenced me and encouraged me by their example. God has given me a very godly wife who is always an example for me to follow. I am surrounded by godly men at every turn who have been and are following Christ. I am grateful to have a godly church

<sup>1</sup> Zodhiates, 379.

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 612.

with men and women who have never disappointed me and who have always been a testimony of faithfulness and integrity. Just seeing those examples, just being a part of the lives of others is a constant source of encouragement and it motivates me to be godly. I get to watch young pastors grow in their skills and in their faithfulness, and it encourages me. I have had several mentors in my life that have deeply influenced my life, and I would have no problem imitating their example of what it means to be a Christian. Listen to these three verses on imitating someone else in [1 Corinthians 4:6](#), [1 Corinthians 11:1](#), and [Hebrews 6:12](#). Paul is speaking directly in the first two about following the pattern of his life.

**1Co 4:16 (NKJV) Therefore I urge you, imitate me.**

**1Co 11:1 (NKJV) Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**

That is such a challenging verse, but it should be the standard by which everyone of us live – imitating Christ and imitating other godly individuals who are imitating Christ.

**Heb 6:12 (NKJV) that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

So, what does [1 Peter 1:21](#) teach us as believers? Well, first of all it teaches us that we have been called to a certain kind of life that always has the glory of Christ as its pinnacle reason for existence. It is not an optional life, but one that requires a high level of intentionality to it. It is a life that cannot be compromised and minimized because of personal fetishes or preferences. It is not a life that can be ignored because of selfish lifestyles that seem to always elevate what the believer wants and ignores what God wants. Secondly, it teaches us that suffering for the sake of Christ and righteousness is often times a normal element of the Christian life. If I can say it this way, we have to be willing to follow the leader, and in this case Christ is our leader. He was willing to give His life away so that we could be saved, and by the same token, we have to be willing to give our life away for His glory and for His greater purposes. Thirdly, Christ is our example, He is our model, He is our standard, and He is our pattern to emulate. Then lastly, we as believers are to make a willful choice to actually follow Christ no matter what the cost may be to us personally. None of these elements of following or imitating Christ and others in the Christian life are provided to be optional, but rather as opportunities to make godly choices that bring glory to Jesus Christ as we yield our lives to Him every day.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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