

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

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.**

As we continue in our study of this very important passage, we want to focus on v25 simply because it provides us with one of the primary reasons why Christ “**bore our sins in His own body**”. Peter uses a very descriptive phrase that everyone in his day would clearly have understood – “**For you were like sheep going astray...**” The word “**for**” that begins the sentence is called an “**explanatory conjunction**” which simply means that it is used to introduce an explanation of something that was previously mentioned. We could just as easily use the phrase “**It is because...**” and it would be perfectly correct. Whenever we see the word “**for**” we have to ask the simple question “*What is it that is being explained?*” What Peter is explaining is that it was our condition before salvation that need spiritual healing. Peter is explaining that the reason that Christ “**bore our sins**” is because we were always “**going astray**”. So, what Peter is clearly saying is that the healing in v24 is from the punishment that was deserved from our going astray – which is clearly a reference to our state as believers before salvation.

I have always said that one of the things that I have so enjoyed over all of the years of going to Romania is what I have learned from the sheep and the shepherds. They are everywhere. I see the sheep early in the morning when they take them out to the fields. I see them grazing all day in the fields. I see them on the way back to the fold in the evening. I see them outside in every conceivable kind of weather possible. I see them being sheared. I see the shepherds and how they live with them around the clock, and how dirty and sun-scorched each of them is. I have learned a lot, and it has helped me to deeply appreciate Scriptures exactly like this.

However, before we go too far talking about sheep, we have to keep in mind that Peter is not really talking about sheep at all. This is not a subtle digression on sheep. To the contrary, he is talking about what we used to be like before our conversion. We were just like sheep for which it is normal for them to constantly be straying away from the flock. The problem with sheep is that they simply have no idea where they are going or how to even get back from where they came. If you left a bunch of sheep in the field overnight without the shepherd, there is a good chance that most of them would be totally lost the next day – just wandered away. These shepherds never leave the sheep out in the fields at night, but always bring them back to their fold.

So, the picture here is that of “**going astray**” and sheep are simply the illustration of what that means. The combined verbs “**were**” and “**going astray**” make up an interesting combination. “**Were**” is in the imperfect tense which means that it was a continuing action in the past. However, the words “**going astray**” are a present tense verbal participle which simply means to continually be straying away. One verb speaks of the past, the other of the present. It is important to understand that the thrust of this verbal combination is governed by the verb “**were**” which is clearly speaking of a condition that we were in

before salvation. Before we were saved, we were always going astray, always being misled, always being spiritually deceived. I like the NASB translation the best when it says,

1Pe 2:25 (NASB) **For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.**

I really like that translation because it combines the primary verb and the verbal participle into one thought that correctly captures the past tense, but continuing nature of our condition during that time of our life. We were always going astray, always wandering, always meandering spiritually, just kind of casually rambling along in our life with no concept of who God was, what He desired, or what we had to do. We had no idea what God's life was about. We had no spiritual roots, no anchor, nothing to keep us from wandering. Everything that is important to us now was what Paul called mere "**foolishness**" to us before we were saved. To us spiritual realities were meaningless. Peter, however, is making a contrast, and the contrast comes from the words "**but now**" which indicate our present condition vs. our former condition. The contrast is the point. We use to be one way, Christ healed us of our spiritual sickness (v24), and "**now**" we are completely different. We were in one condition, but now we are in a completely different condition. "**We were**" lost, "**but now**" we are saved. We used to always be going astray, but now we are not.

The Greek verb for "**going astray**" is "*planao*" and it has a very important nuance to it because it is in the passive voice – which means that the subject is being acted upon by an outside source. The passive voice clearly represents that before our salvation that there were other very deceptive forces which were working in our life – the world, the flesh, and the devil. I am often amazed at how well the enemy has blinded people to the truth and how desperately easy it is for men to believe everything but the truth. Men will believe anything and are willing to do everything that is opposed to God, and that without any guilt or remorse – and we were all just like that. I have heard it said that from the "womb to the tomb", men will continually defy God no matter the evidence before them.

The words "**going astray**" mean to be led astray, to be led into error.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, it carries the idea of just wandering away, of constantly going astray, but it retains this underlying idea of actually being misled and deceived. Some of the other biblical forms of the word that may give us more of a flavor for what Peter is describing are words like "**delude, err, trick, deceive**", and "**cheat**". These are all words that come from the same root word and they are consistently used in the New Testament. This Greek word "*planao*" is not a nice word. In other places in the New Testament it is actually translated as being "**seduced**" by someone. We all know and appreciate that the Christian landscape is filled with false teachers who are constantly leading people away from the truth. The false teacher always deceives people into following some unbiblical teaching that ultimately is divorced from the truth. I can deal with error, but I have no patience with these spiritual charlatans and false teachers who are always exploiting the flock for money. For instance, [1 John 2:26](#) says,

1Jn 2:26 (NKJV) **These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to deceive* (*planao*) you.**

It is clear that the false teachers that the Scriptures address are people who know exactly what they are doing. However, I certainly do not believe that [1 Peter 2:25](#) is a digression on false teachers, but we

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<sup>1</sup> Vine, 369.

simply cannot take lightly that there are many people within the pseudo and pop-Christian culture who are fully capable of deceiving and leading people astray. From a purely exegetical understanding, v25 is clearly talking about what the nature of our life was like apart from a genuine faith in Christ – we were just wandering and had no idea where we were going.

The next important word that we want to address is the word “**returned**”. It is the Greek word “*epistrepho*” and is in the indicative mood, aorist tense, passive voice. The word means to turn oneself toward or unto something or someone.<sup>2</sup> In a doctrinal sense it is the idea of being converted, of being saved, of being born again, of turning from sin to Christ. For instance, [Acts 11:21](#) says,

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Ac 11:21 (NKJV) **And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned (“*epistrepho*”) to the Lord.**

[Acts 26:18](#) says,

Ac 26:18 (NKJV) **to open their eyes, in order to turn (“*epistrepho*”) them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'**

[2 Corinthians 3:16](#) says,

2Co 3:16 (NKJV) **Nevertheless when one turns (“*epistrepho*”) to the Lord, the veil is taken away.**

The idea in this word is not just the idea of turning from something, but it means to turn to something. We did not just turn from sin, but when we were saved we turned to Christ, we turned to God, and we submitted ourselves to Him. We repented of sins in our life, forsook them, and turned to Christ for our life. In [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#) Paul is encouraging the Thessalonian believers and says,

1Th 1:9 (NKJV) **For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned (“*epistrepho*”) to God from idols to serve the living and true God,**

This word “*epistrepho*” is a technical term consistently used in the New Testament to for the idea of conversion with all of its implications. It is critical to understand that it is actually not possible to say “yes” to God, but not say “no” to sin. Turning from sin and turning to God are integral elements of salvation and cannot be separated from one another relative to the work of salvation.<sup>3</sup> [Acts 3:19](#) is clear when in it says,

Ac 3:19 (NKJV) **Repent therefore and be converted (“*epistrepho*”), that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,**

[Matthew 18:3](#) says,

Mt 18:3 (NKJV) **and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**

[Acts 17:30](#) says,

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<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 693.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, *epistrepho*, ep.

Ac 17:30 (NKJV) **Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,**

One very interesting element of this word is that it is in the passive voice, and everytime that I see that I have to ask the question as to who or what is it that is actually acting on the subject. Listen very carefully. It is God who is acting on the unbeliever. It is God who is working in the life of the lost. It is God who is irresistibly drawing a man to Christ. It is the power of the gospel that is being released in a person's heart that is drawing them to Christ and helping them to turn to God and be converted. I love that place in [Acts 2](#) where Peter is simply preaching the Word of God to the crowds at Pentecost, and it is so convicting that they cry out to him in [Acts 2:36-39](#),

Ac 2:36 (NKJV) **"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."**

This is God at work. This is God doing for man what man could not do for himself. This is the passive voice – God acting on the human heart and creating a conviction that led to eternal life. I figured out a long time ago that I could not save anyone. The only thing that I can do is to make the truth both clear and simple. It does not need any window dressing or embellishments. It does not need to be decorated with all of our little anecdotal stories or spiritual beautification projects to make it more palatable and attractive to people. To the contrary, all that does is simply disguise it and delude it of its convicting work and power on the human heart.

It is always troubling to see people who believe that they are saved, but there is no redeeming evidence of their supposed salvation in their life. They simply made a decision at some point in their life, but they were not actually converted. They implemented someone's salvation formula in their life – they repeated the sinner's prayer, or they joined the church, or they were baptized, or they did all of those. However, after those supposed life changing events, there was no clear evidence that they were saved at all. This church age has been extremely guilty of trying to convince goats that they are sheep, and the consequences of that is brutally frightening to say the least. The last thing that we want to do is to somehow give someone assurance that they are saved when there is no visible evidence or fruit of the Holy Spirit's transforming and ongoing work in their life. We do not want to give assurance to someone simply because he or she checked off all of the salvation boxes on the card.

Unfortunately, and this is just my opinion, but I think that this generally happens with our children. We love them and we want to believe that they are saved because we raised them to be saved, but too very often once they reach a certain age there simply is no visible validation and confirmation of salvation in their life. Yet we keep telling them that were saved at such and such an age when they did this and that. That really can be a spiritual disaster. Genuine biblical salvation is always self-authenticating. If an individual's salvation was genuine, then there should be no doubt whatsoever of that reality. We do not want one of our children or anyone else we may know to be standing before God exclaiming all of the

things that they did at the church, but then hear God say the most fateful words possible – “**Depart from me, for I never knew you**”. The tragedy of that cannot be measured.

Here is what Peter says happens. He says that when someone turns toward God (“*epistrepho*”), that they return to the “**Shepherd and Overseer of their souls**”. They come to Christ and they stay with Christ. They constantly give evidence of their salvation and there is no place for doubting and questioning its reality. They trust Christ with their goals, with their decisions, with their time, with their resources, with their families, and with their very life. As new creations in Christ, as men and women who are divinely indwelt with the Holy Spirit, their entire life becomes a testimony of their turning, of their repentance, and of their submission to the living God. In all of this, we do not want to lose sight that one of the primary topics has been and will continue in [1 Peter 3](#) to be the idea of “**submission**”. In this final verse of [1 Peter 2](#), it is the believer’s submission to Christ and to His redeeming work in their life.

Men and women, please do not take lightly what God has done for you by helping you to turn to Him. I find in my own life personally that turning from sin and turning to God after my initial salvation is just as much a part of my life as breathing. It is what God uses to continually sustain and strengthen our lives, and as we willingly and humbly come to the one who is the Overseer of our souls, in that decision we will find strength, courage, resolve, and grace from God to live our lives fully submitted to Him despite all of the lies and distractions that the world and the enemy will place before us. May God greatly strengthen you as you choose every day to be submissive to His precious will for your life.

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