

1PETER 2:19-25 "Jesus Christ, Lord, Savior And Supreme Example"

One of the interesting things about this portion of Scripture is that in the midst of Peter encouraging these Christians to trust God, to keep their eyes on the race set before them instead of on their trial, he tells them to submit to those in authority over them, whether masters or the government.

This would seem like an odd way of keeping their spiritual focus in tact as they must also consider the earthly realm in which they live and its authority. But the point Peter is making is that all of life is spiritual. All authority ultimately comes from God and the way we live in this world will in fact give people a glimpse into God's spiritual reality.

And so, it really does make a difference how we live in this world because it will show the world how we are in submission to our God as we bow before Him and love Him above all. This distinguishes us as a people, not of this world, but belonging to our King of kings and Lord of lords.

And so, this is why Peter can encourage slaves to submit to their masters, even masters who are not so kind. We ended last week with verse 18 "Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh."

In this way they are able to glorify God and point their masters to the One who has given them life eternal and freedom from the penalty of sin despite their slavery to men. But then Peter goes on to expand on this as we see in our text today.

1 Peter 2:19-20 ¹⁹ For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

Here we've got two different situations with the same result. In one case there is bad treatment being received unjustly and bad treatment received for sinning. Again, this was very frustrating for some of these Christians because they were trying to live godly lives and yet it still didn't seem to make any difference in the way they were being treated by their masters.

Peter recognizes this and explains that there are injustices in life. You don't always get the desired result. But that's not an excuse to cop an attitude and rebel, because you still represent God in that particular situation.

And if you can honor the Lord in the midst of an injustice God is magnified through your life and He is able to accomplish His will, which could include a variety of things we may not have even thought of.

He may bring shame on that one who acts unjustly towards you. He may humble him and ultimately point him to the One who can forgive him of his sin, Jesus Christ. But in the process you are being obedient and the Lord can use that and bless you in the process.

We read in Pro.25:21-22 "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. 22 In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you."

Paul talked about this very same thing when addressing governing authorities and the way we must submit to such authorities even when you're treated unjustly.

ROM 12:17-21 "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

I'm sure there was the temptation by some of those slaves to want to return evil for evil. But God reminds them that He knows what's going on and that He desires to use that situation to glorify Himself and He's asking them not to get in the way with their fleshly approach to the situation.

That doesn't mean that we look forward to injustices done to us, it simply means that when those things are beyond our control and we have no earthly recourse we are to endure for Christ's sake and

honor Him in that situation. That's the tough part, but whatever we do in life we must be doing it ultimately for our Lord.

This is what Paul meant when he said in COL 3:17 "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

We also read in 1CO 10:31 "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

It's that kind of an attitude which will guard us against being fleshly when it comes to dealing with people. I'll be the first to admit that when someone gets in my face or deals unjustly with me there's the temptation to get ugly. What God says is, 'let Me deal with it. You just reflect My love and be patient with that person.'

The alternative is to get ugly and suffer the consequences. That's what Peter is pointing out in our text.

1PE 2:19-20 "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."

Jesus put it this way in his sermon on the Mount.

Mat.5:10-12 "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Suffering for righteousness' sake may not be very pleasant but God can turn it around if we'll submit to Him and trust Him in that situation. In fact, He tells us that suffering unjustly is something which we can expect if we're following Him faithfully.

1PE 2:21-25 "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;

by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

"To this you were called...." Called to what? Called to suffer. Oh, isn't that wonderful. I thought I was coming to Christ to get away from all that nonsense in the world and now you tell me that I can expect suffering? No, I don't tell you that at all. God does.

Does He not tell us in JOH 15:20-21 "Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me."

I know this can be hard for us to get excited about, but what Jesus is saying is that you are not of this world. As a result this world will sometimes use that as an excuse to take advantage of you or abuse you or insult you.

And the reason they do that is because we belong to Christ. Light and darkness will clash at times and we shouldn't be too surprised. But we shouldn't use that as an excuse to sin either. That's Peter's point.

He wants us to be conscious of God's working in our lives and conscious that He is in total control. That's what Peter meant in the beginning of our text in verse 19 "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God."

Dr. Hiebert in his commentary on Peter makes this comment on this phrase, "he is conscience of (or toward) God..." "The Christian servant's knowledge of God, shared with fellow believers, and his inner awareness of God's will and presence stimulates and enables him to endure such suffering. His enlightened conscience prompts him to accept that as his duty; his personal awareness of God's approval enables him to do so."

It's a reliance upon the Spirit of God who gives us the grace and strength to endure under such circumstances. But as Dr. Hiebert points out it's being "God conscious", instead of "self-conscious" in any given situation, knowing that God is always there for us.

But Peter goes on to show how Jesus Christ is our example of how we can glorify the Father despite how unjustly we're treated. We read in verse 21 "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

We need to be careful here not to think that Jesus Christ was sent into this world simply to be the great example. In fact, many people in the world think that's the extent of what He did. And so they assume that as long as we aspire to this great example that's all that He expects.

No, Jesus Christ didn't come to simply be an example, He came to die for the penalty of our sins so that we might be reconciled to the Father and share eternity with Him. But that doesn't mean He didn't set examples for believers to follow.

The word "example" in the Greek is *hupogrammos*. And it was a term in the ancient Greek world to explain to little kids how to do their grammar work.

William Barclay suggests that it has two meanings. 1) An outline sketch which the learner had to fill in or 2) the copy head of copper plate handwriting in a writing exercise book which the child had to copy out on the lines below."

It's kind of like when you and I were in grade-school we learned to make our letters by having a piece of paper with the correct letter above our work and we were to copy exactly that same letter just below it.

That's what this word, *hupogrammos* infers. Jesus Christ is like that letter on the paper which shows correctly what we are to imitate. He has shown us what it's like to suffer unjustly. And as our example, from that standpoint, we are called to follow Him.

Now, what kind of example was He? Well, Peter explains what He did. Verse 22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

Oh, well that's easy enough. I just won't commit any sin. No, that is not to suggest we will never sin. It simply contrasts the injustice with His actual life, which makes Him the ultimate example, to which we have the ability in the Spirit to aspire to.

We will never be sinless, but we have the power to flee from sin and to seek His righteousness. That's an example we shouldn't take lightly. In other words, His example tells us that instead of sinning we can honor Him with our obedience and allow the world to see that He is our Master.

It also says that "no deceit was found in His mouth." Imagine a man being able to live His entire life without ever sinning and ever having any deceit in His mouth. And yet that's exactly what Jesus Christ did. For Him to be our substitute He had to be sinless. That made Him the perfect sacrifice to take our penalty for sin and perfectly satisfy the Father's justice.

But of course we know that no man could have done this, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That speaks of mere men. Jesus Christ was not a mere man. He is also God. He is fully man and fully God.

Paul brings this out quite clearly in COL 2:8-9 "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. 9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,"

The tragedy in all of this is that despite His sinlessness He still suffered unjustly. But that was precisely what the Father planned for His Son so that in Him we might not have to suffer the penalty we deserved for our sin, which is His wrath and eternal separation from our God.

Paul brings this out when writing to the church in Corinth.

2CO 5:20-21 "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

And so what Peter wants to do is to remind us that what we deserved, because of our sin, Christ took on our behalf and in turn gives us His righteousness. This is known in theological circles as double imputation. Our sin was put to our Savior's account as His righteousness is put to the account of all who believe.

But simply because we're sinners he doesn't want us to think that we don't have the power over sin in Christ or that we take the

attitude that, well, 'I'm a sinner and that's just the way it is, so I won't be too concerned if I do sin.'

No, Christ says, 'look to Me as your example and pattern your life after Me and I will enable you to walk in My steps even though you won't be perfect in this life. But through the process I will accomplish My will through your life.'

And then Peter raises a very practical part of life which we all need to practice. Verse 23 "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

What a lesson this is for all of us. We as people don't normally take insults in stride without wanting to get a jab in ourselves. Our first reaction is to retaliate with words of our own. Insults are demeaning, they're hurtful and the best defense, (at least in worldly terms), is to be to make the other person feel just as bad.

But Christ doesn't retaliate. Like a lamb that was led to slaughter He didn't open His mouth. This doesn't mean that when we receive insults that there may not be appropriate responses. But those responses shouldn't include sinful responses.

The way we use our mouths is pretty important to God. The tongue is one of those members of our bodies which seems to be the last hold-out for being tamed. James has much to say about our tongues.

We read in JAM 3:3-11 "When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?"

MAT 15:11,18-19 "What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'" 18 But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

The tongue can be a pretty good barometer of what's taking place on the inside of the heart. If the heart is full of envy or bitterness then you'll often see that coming out in their speech that is indicative of a person full of such envy or bitterness.

If the heart is full of hate then believe me you will taste it in the way that person speaks to you. When Christ was going to the cross for you and me His heart was set on pleasing the Father and He endured the cross for the joy set before Him. And that joy was you and me.

Whenever Christ spoke to people during His earthly ministry He always had their best at heart. Even when He spoke harshly to the Pharisees, He had no hate in His heart. He was being very gracious as He tried to get their attention and to address their folly. It was out of concern for their eternal well being.

But notice too that He uttered no threats as He was being unjustly abused during His crucifixion. Believe me, any threat Christ would have given would not have been empty. He had the power and the authority to call down fire from heaven and make toast of every one of His enemies if He decided to do so.

But, instead of that what do we see Christ doing? Verse 23...
"Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

In other words He put Himself in the Father's hands. Sometimes that's hard for you and me to do because it takes faith and a trust that He knows our situation and He is actively at work with us in that situation.

We may not know everything that God wants to do with us through any particular situation in our lives but believe me He is at work. For all intents and purposes it looked as though Jesus was going to be abandoned by the Father, but we know what happened three days later. God had no intention of abandoning His Son and He has no intention of abandoning you or me in Christ.

We now come to verses 24-25.

24 "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

<P>

By His wounds you and I have been healed of a deadly malady called sin. The wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. And like sheep wandering around without a Shepherd Jesus calls us unto Himself to give us eternal life and direction so that we may follow Him and glorify Him in the process.

He is our Shepherd as well as our Overseer. This is an interesting word in the Greek. It's *episkopos* and it's the word we sometimes use for Bishop. But it carries with it the idea of one who is a Guardian. In fact the NAS uses the word Guardian.

Jesus Christ is personally guarding that which the Father has entrusted to Him. He is guarding you and me and watching over every detail of our lives and encouraging us to follow Him. He is our example of how we too may glorify the Father with our lives.

Like a good Shepherd He will never leave us out of His sight. He will always be there for us. He is the author and perfecter of our faith and He has every intention of bringing us home one day. But until that time He has still called us to be His ambassadors, to be His soldiers, His representatives in a dying world which needs to, not only hear about Christ, but to see Him as He is seen through us.

We have all we need to accomplish this task. We have the Spirit of God, we have the power of our Lord, we have the full armor of God to go into battle every day and be more than conquerors in Christ as we do His will. But we must be willing to follow our Lord in the power of the Spirit.

Let me end with a benediction from the writer of Hebrews... This is a prayer, but it also shows us the heart of God and what He has every intention of doing in our lives.

<P>

HEB 13:20-21 "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."