**1 Peter: Christ’s Suffering as our Model**

1 Peter 2:21-25

**Context**

**1 Peter 2:21-25**—For to this you have been called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps, **22**who did no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; **23**who being reviled, was not reviling in return; while suffering, He was uttering no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; **24**and 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. **25**For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

The culmination of the incarnation of Christ was His suffering and death. He is the suffering Servant and crucified Savior. Without a right understanding of these events and the implications to our standing before God, we have no salvation and are without hope. It was at the cross that our atonement and redemption was secured. It is the defining moment in human history.

**1 Corinthians 2:2**—For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

In this text, Peter brings the suffering of Jesus into focus as he talks about how to suffer well in looking at the perfect example.

**Suffering as Christ**

1. **The example of Christ’s suffering**

**1 Peter 2:21-23**—For to this you have been called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps, **22**who did no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; **23**who being reviled, was not reviling in return; while suffering, He was uttering no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

1. We have been called to suffer, as our Savior (cf. **20-21a**)

**Luke 24:25-26**—And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! **26**Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

1. Since Christ suffered for you
	* + 1. Peter is reminding his readers of the finished work of salvation through the suffering of Christ
			2. His suffering was the necessary substitute for our sin bearing
			3. His death paid the penalty for our sin
			4. His suffering has no parallel for His followers
			5. However, we can (and should) learn from His life and example
				1. His death was based on no wrong

**Luke 23:4**—Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.”

* + - * 1. He was crucified as a criminal

**2 Corinthians 5:21**—He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**Hebrews 7:26**—For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

**Isaiah 53:12**—Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

**Matthew 27:38**—At that time two robbers \*were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.

* + - * 1. He was faithful to God’s will, yet suffered unjustly

**2 Timothy 3:12**—Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

* + - * 1. As such, He leaves us a clear and perfect example of how to respond to unjust treatment

**Hebrews 12:3-4**—For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. **4**You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin

1. Leaving you an example
	* + 1. Believers will never suffer for their own salvation
			2. Believers will never suffer for another’s salvation
			3. Salvation is not as a result of works—including suffering
			4. But there will be a suffering for the name of Christ
			5. Example—a writing copy, including all the letters of the alphabet, given to beginners as an aid in learning to draw them; an example set before one[[1]](#footnote-1)
				1. A paper placed under a sheet of tracing paper so the original image could be duplicated
				2. In ancient times, this was done for children to trace the letters of the alphabet to learn them
			6. Follow in His steps—“footprints” or “tracks”[[2]](#footnote-2); metaphorically, of imitating the example of someone

**Romans 4:12**—and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

**2 Corinthians 12:18**—I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?

* + - * 1. These dear ones had endured much and would likely face greater persecution
				2. Peter was setting their gaze on the greater suffering of Christ so as to think rightly of their suffering
1. **22**who did no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth

**Isaiah 53:9**—His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

* + - 1. No deceit found in His mouth

**Luke 23:41**—“And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

**John 8:46**—Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

**1 John 3:5**—You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

* + - 1. Not so with us

**Isaiah 6:5**—Then I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

* + - 1. The expression of our sinfulness is often seen in our words

**Matthew 15:18-19**—But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. **19**For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

**Luke 6:45**—The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.

**James 1:26**—If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.

**James 3:2-12**—For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. **3**Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. **4**Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. **5**So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! **6**And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. **7**For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. **8**But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. **9**With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; **10**from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. **11**Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? **12**Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

1. **23a**who being reviled, was not reviling in return

**Isaiah 53:7**—He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

* + - 1. Although pushed hard so as to retaliate or respond harshly, Jesus did not
			2. He was significantly provoked by their mockery and physical torture; yet, He did not respond in kind
			3. He did respond with truth claims (as always)

**Matthew 26:64**—Jesus \*said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

**John 18:33b-37**—…“Are You the King of the Jews?” **34**Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?” **35**Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?” **36**Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not [[l](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=jn%252018&version=NASB1995#fen-NASB1995-26822l)]of this realm.” **37**Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

1. **23b**…while suffering, He was uttering no threats
	* + 1. Instead, He is praying that the Father would forgive them

**Luke 23:34a**—But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

1. **23c**…but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously
	* + 1. Entrusting—to give into the hands (of another); To give over into (one's) power or use; to deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of, manage[[3]](#footnote-3)
			2. Jesus handed himself over with every wave of abuse to the loving care of His Father through the power of the Holy Spirit

**Luke 23:46**—And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Having said this, He breathed His last.

* + - 1. The Father’s plan was good and just
			2. Jesus did only the will of His Father

**John 4:43**—Jesus \*said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

**John 15:10**—If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

* + - 1. Jesus knew He would be vindicated and His vicarious work would atone for sins
1. Other Examples:
	* + 1. Stephen in **Acts 7:54-60**
			2. Paul’s words to the church in Corinth

**2 Corinthians 4:17-18**—For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight [lit: “heavy mass”] of glory far beyond all comparison, **18**while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

1. **The purpose of Christ’s suffering**

**1 Peter 2:24**—and 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.

1. Substitutionary atonement—He bore our sins in His body on the cross

**Mark 10:45**—For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

**Romans 5:8**—But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

**Ephesians 5:2**—…and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

**Hebrews 2:17**—Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

1. The significance of this work cannot be overstated

**Galatians 3:13**—Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

1. He Himself…
	* + 1. Emphasis on the willing voluntary nature of His act
			2. Done without coercion

**John 10:15, 17-18**—even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep…. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. **18**No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

1. Bore—to carry or bring up, to lead up[[4]](#footnote-4)
	* + 1. He alone was qualified to carry the massive weight of sin
			2. The creation groans under the enormity of its weight

**Romans 8:22**—For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

* + - 1. Christ not only endured the death of His own body (in horrific fashion) but additionally bore the full wrath of the Father for sin
			2. The full punishment that we deserved, He bore, thus satisfying the Father’s divine judgment and freeing God to forgive those who repent and believe

**Romans 3:24-26**—being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; **25**whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, [[p](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=rom%25203&version=NASB1995#fen-NASB1995-28017p)]because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; **26**for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

**Romans 4:3-8**—For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” **4**Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. **5**But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, **6**just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: **7**“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. **8**“Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.”

1. The reason: so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness

**Romans 6:3-11**—Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4**Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. **5**For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, **6**knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; **7**for he who has died is freed from sin. **8**Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, **9**knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. **10**For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. **11**Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Union with Christ in His death and resurrection does not change only believers’ standing before God (who declares them righteous, since their sins have been paid for and removed from them), but it also changes their nature—they are not only justified but sanctified, transformed from sinners into saints (**2 Cor 5:17; Titus 3:5; James 1:18**).[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. Might die—(only used here in the NT)—“to be away from, depart, be missing, or cease existing”[[6]](#footnote-6)
	* + 1. Sin’s penalty will never condemn the saint
			2. God removed it from us

**Colossians 2:12-14**—having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. **13**When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, **14**having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

1. Live to righteousness
	* + 1. Believers are free from the dominating power of sin as well as the penalty of sin
			2. We are made alive to God

**Romans 6:16-22**—Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? **17**But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, **18**and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. **19**I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. **20**For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. **21**Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. **22**But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

1. for by His wounds you were healed

**Isaiah 53:5**—All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

* + - 1. Wounds—a bruise, wale, wound that trickles with blood.
			2. Used here in a general sense—a synonym for all the suffering that brought Him to death
			3. Healing here is spiritual, not physical
			4. Neither Isaiah nor Peter intended physical healing as the result in these references to Christ’s sufferings
			5. There will be a physical healing in the resurrection for all believers

**Revelation 21:1-4**—Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

1. **The blessing of Christ’s suffering**

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

1. You were continually straying like sheep

**Isaiah 53:6**—All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

* + - 1. We are pitiful, wandering sheep

**Matthew 9:36**—Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.

1. But no longer; you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian
	* + 1. Have returned—transitively; to turn to; to the worship of the true God[[7]](#footnote-7)
			2. Has the idea of repentance, and turning from sin and in faith toward Jesus, the Great Shepherd

**Ephesians 2:1-7**—And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, **2**in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. **3**Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. **4**But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, **5**even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), **6**and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7**so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

1. Shepherd (poimen)—a herdsman, esp. a shepherd[[8]](#footnote-8)
	* + 1. He is the feeder, leader, protector, cleanser, and restorer of His flock
			2. Good analogy given the nature of sheep
2. Guardian (episkopos)—bishop or overseer[[9]](#footnote-9)
	* + 1. Synonym for Jesus’ care for His flock
			2. These terms (Shepherd, Guarding, Bishop, Overseer) help describe the responsibilities of the Lord
			3. They also are used of the pastor (under-shepherd) of the Great Shepherd
			4. (Cf. **1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**)

**1 Peter 5:1-2**—Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **2**shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness

**Conclusion**

By the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for His flock, He became the Shepherd and Guardian of their eternal souls. It is through His suffering that we learn what it means to suffer well. We can and should entrust ourselves to His care in the midst of our hardship knowing we have One who deeply cares for His own. Might we look to and cling to Him, knowing He will be honored and pleased with our response to follow His lead.

**Source**

Most of the message and notes come from:

Richard W. DeHaan, Good News for Bad Times: 1 Peter

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude

John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Peter

John MacArthur, Christ: Our Example in Life and Death, April 15, 2022, gty.org

John MacArthur, Glory Through Suffering, May 14, 1989, gty.org

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[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

1. Strong’s G5261 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Strong’s G2487 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Strong’s G3860 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Strong’s G399 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. MacArthur, 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Strong’s G581 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Strong’s G1994 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Strong’s G4166 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Strong’s G1985 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)