

OBEDIENCE

MAY LEAD TO SUFFERING



It is not popular to tell Christians they have been called to suffer for their faith and may even have to endure persecution. Nevertheless, we are to obey the LORD, no matter the cost. When hostility occurs in the workplace, or in any other realm of life, we are called to graciously stand firm.

This message runs countercultural in our entitlement society. Furthermore, it is diametrically opposed to the growing popularity of the health, wealth and prosperity gospel, and the convenient Christianity often practiced in the church.

However difficult as it is to hear, and even harder to practice, we are called to obey. Even if we suffer because of it. It is biblical.

Peter wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

“This is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called . . .”

1 PETER 2:21A

“For even hereunto were ye called” – 1 Peter 2:21

Even Jesus said,

“Blessed are they which are **persecuted** for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and **persecute** you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so **persecuted** they the prophets which were before you” - Matthew 5:10.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his **cross**, and follow me’” - Matthew 16:24.



Our context surrounds the 1st Century Christians who were persecuted for their faith. As a result, many were scattered into other countries. Unfortunately, their dispersion did not end their suffering. In some instances, it only intensified. It was like moving from the frying pan into the fire.

So, after reminding his audience of their privilege position in Christ (1 Peter 1:1-2:12), and their duty to obey the civil authorities (1 Peter 2:13-17) and those over them in the work place, even if their superiors were harsh and abusive (1 Peter 2:18-20a). He now explains the foundation for this obedience.

“... because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us and example, that ye should follow his steps” – 1 Peter 2:21b.

Study Questions

1. In what ways are we to follow in Christ's suffering?

“... because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us and example, that ye should follow his steps” – 1 Peter 2:21b

HOW CHRIST SUFFERED FOR US

I think we understand this fact, but allow me to elaborate. 2

- a. He is our sin-bearer. His atoning work on the cross was efficacious. It was a substitutionary work. He bore our sins.

1 Peter 2:24 – “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree”

- b. This is something we cannot do for another. Only Christ, who is God and Man can do this for us. However, there are certain facets we need to observe in Christ's suffering and death.

First, He was crucified as a criminal even though He committed no crime. He was perfectly sinless.

Second, we already know that life in this world is filled with injustices. Yet, His life demonstrates that one may be absolutely faithful to God's will and still experience unjust suffering.

Third, Christ's attitude in His death on the cross provides us with the ultimate example of how to respond to unmerited persecution and punishment.

Finally, Peter says, that Christ left us an "... example, that ye should follow in his steps" - 1 Peter 2:21b. The term, "example" literally means, "writing under." It refers to the practice of placing tracing paper over an object in order to copy it.

When we face trials and suffering, we must copy the action and the attitude of our Savior.

2. What aspects of Jesus suffering are described by Peter - 1 Peter 2:22-23?

i.e no sin, no guile, no reviling, only complete surrender to the Father's sovereignty.

When we face trials and suffering, we must copy the actions and the attitude of our Savior. Who committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22a). "Nor was there found any guile in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22a).

Therefore, He has provided an example to follow.

- a. Both terms, "no sin" and "no guile" come from Isaiah 53:9 – where it says, "because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."
- b. It refers to Jesus when examined by the priests and Pharisees they could find no violation of God's law nor did they find any words that were deceitful or untrue. So they had to make up false charges.
- c. Jesus was a man of clean lips and upright heart. There was no charge that they could bring against Him that held. All accusations against Him were false.

Peter continues, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again." – 1 Peter 2:23a

"Revile" means to use abusive and vile language over and over again. In other words, people were hurling blasphemous and the most abusive language one can imagine at Jesus. And He did not return or rebut the accusation.

Furthermore, while suffering 1 Peter 2:23b says, "He threatened not."

He is the sovereign omnipotent Son of God and the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Jesus could have blasted His accusers into an eternity in hell. But while He suffered, He uttered no threats. He chose to accept the suffering.

Ultimately, "He committed himself to Him that judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23c). Jesus handed over His life to the safekeeping of the Father. He had the unshakable confidence that He who judges rightly would vindicate Him in the end.

3. Why didn't Jesus respond to the charges brought against Him?

Two things are going on in this passage.

ON ONE HAND, Jesus did not respond to the false charges because He was acting as our substitute. He was not guilty of any of the charges, BUT we are.

He, as the sinless Lamb, had to trust that the Father in His holiness and justice would one day vindicate Him. He was taking our place and bearing our sins. He did not protest at what He had to suffer for our sake, and for the glory of God.

ON THE OTHER HAND, Jesus is our perfect example in suffering for righteousness. The world is full of injustices. He sets the example in how we are to trust in God when falsely charged.

Though we have been made holy, we are not sinless as is Christ. What we can glean from this passage so far is that we need to trust in the Father's sovereign plan. In this life we may experience suffering, however, when that time comes, we are given a living example in how to conduct ourselves.

4. What is the purpose of Christ's suffering as stated in 1 Peter 2:24?

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed"
 – 1 Peter 2:24

- a. Redemption is substitution because He paid the price that we could not pay. He paid it in our stead, and we go free.
- b. Justification interprets our salvation judicially. Christ took on our legal debt.
- c. Reconciliation means the taking away of the hostility that separated us and bringing us together again. Our sin is what separated us and Christ removed that cause. We could not deal with the sin. He could, and He did.
- d. Propitiation points to the removal of the divine wrath. Christ bore the wrath that was due us when He hung on the cross.
- e. He paid the price and laid the foundation for a new life in Him.
- f. Christ died so that we might live to righteousness.

5. What is the meaning of the phrase, "we were as sheep going astray" - 1 Peter 2:25a

"As sheep going astray" – 1 Peter 2:25 is another reference to Isaiah 53 where it says,

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way”
Isaiah 53:6.

- a. The passage refers to our rebellion against God and turning to our own ways. It is a picture of a pathetic sheep who wanders aimlessly from the flock by moving thoughtlessly, and at times rebelliously, from one clump of grass to another. It eventually looks up only to find itself hopelessly lost or mortally in trouble.
- b. Just like a foolish sheep we have gone astray. Every one of us have turned to our own ways.
- c. But Isaiah 53:6b continues to say, “and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Again this is a reference to the Lord bearing our sin in His own body of the tree.

6. What is the connection between “we are as sheep going astray” and the Lord being our Shepherd and Bishop - 1 Peter 2:25?

The good news for Peter’s audience is that they have now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their soul.

The term “Shepherd,” conveys His role as feeder, leader, protector, cleanser and restorer of the flock. Later, this word is used to describe the role of a pastor or an elder. Bishop describes His role as overseer. It is to Him they have returned.

7. What insights can we glean from this passage? (1 Peter 2:21-25)

- a. We should not shy away from doing what is right even if it means we will suffer for it.
- b. This passage should impact the way we conduct ourselves in the workplace, in our homes and towards those in civil authority. It should cause us to temper our tongues and weigh our words even when being falsely accuse. It should cause us to carefully consider our actions towards those over us. We should pray for them. We should obey them in all things that do not violate God’s holy standard.
- c. We need to distinguish between what is our preference and what is clearly unbiblical. Often our conflict over doing or not doing something is rooted in the fact that we just don’t like what those in authority have decided. It’s not the way we would do it. For of course, our way is always better. Sometimes our rebellion is ignited because we feel slighted, or because we were not asked.
- d. I saw this happen at a town meeting. Some people did not like the decisions made by the town council. Each meeting I attended got more aggressive. The few who did not like what was proposed were going to stop at nothing to block the council’s decision from happening. Because they could not get what they wanted at previous meetings, some brought false charges against a council member. The idea was, if they get rid of him they may be able to sway the council to their way of thinking.

I also found a previous board member expressing hurt over the board hiring several reputable consulting firms with out personally consulting him. However, when you are

working under someone's authority, unintentional slights can easily happen. This does not give us any reason to rebel.

- e. When asked to do something contrary to Scripture we should take our cue from the pages of Scripture. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their response to authority was measured and respectful when speaking to the king. Even when refusing to worship the golden image.

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. It that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O King. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” – Daniel 3:16-18.

Yes, we may suffer for refusing to do something unrighteous, but when this happens, we have Christ as our example.