

Good Friday

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:23–24 ESV)

So That You Might Follow In His Steps

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1 Peter 2:21-25

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Introduction:

Good morning everyone! If you have your Bible with you this morning I would love for you to open it now to 1 Peter 2:21-25. Most of the Good Friday sermons that you will hear in church – and most of the Good Friday sermons that I have preached as a pastor – tend to focus on the FACTS and the EFFECT of Christ’s death upon the cross – and rightly so! Christianity is explicitly historical. It MATTERS to us that Jesus was really born of a Virgin, it matters that he suffered under Pontius Pilate and it matters to us that he was CRUCIFIED, DEAD and BURIED – those are FACTS and those FACTS have an EFFECT.

Isaiah puts it this way, he says:

“he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace” (Isaiah 53:5 ESV)

The Apostle John put it this way, he said:

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10 ESV)

A sacrifice of propitiation is a sacrifice that REMOVES OFFENSE so that the relationship between parties can be characterized by love, friendship and mutual fealty. That’s what the CROSS DID with respect to our relationship to God – that was its effect. Because of the cross – if you have appropriated the cross through repentance and faith – your relationship with God now

is not the relationship of a criminal to a judge it is the relationship of a child to a Father. That, ultimately is the EFFECT of the cross and we CELEBRATE that affect every minute of every day as believers, but we celebrate in particular on Good Friday.

So the FACT of the cross is important and the EFFECT of the cross is important but so too is the FORCE of the cross and that often goes under emphasized in evangelical pulpits. Sometimes evangelicals SHY AWAY from talking about the moral force or moral influence of the atonement BECAUSE so many LIBERAL CHRISTIANS only talk about those things. They have stopped talking about propitiation – they don't talk about the EFFECT of the cross on our relationship with God – so we overreact to that by ONLY talking about that. But this morning, because we have just dealt with the suffering of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the burial and descent of Jesus over the last couple of weeks in our Apostles' Creed series I feel some liberty to explore this somewhat neglected theme. We believe that Jesus was CRUCIFIED, that he died and was buried. And we believe – as we are going to read in just a second – that it is only BY HIS WOUNDS THAT WE ARE HEALED and restored to God. We believe that. And we believe that in doing these things – and in dying this way, Jesus set an example for us to follow. That TOO is part of the story of the cross and it is to that part that we turn our attention this morning.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 21 of 1 Peter 2.

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:21–25 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Let me focus your attention on the key verse in that passage – look at verse 21 again. Listen to what he says:

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21 ESV)

The word Peter uses here for EXAMPLE actually means “a pattern to be traced”. It refers to a tool that was used to teach little children how to write their letters.

Can you picture that in your mind’s eye? Can you see the cross of Christ drawn in dark, bold strokes upon a canvas and can you see a child with a piece of wax paper leaning over and tracing that pattern and whispering quietly this is what my life will be like as I learn to follow Jesus. That is what Peter is saying here. The cross isn’t JUST a gift to be received - it is that – but it is also a PATTERN to be imitated: “that we might follow in his steps.”

So what would that look like? What kind of life is commended by the PATTERN of the cross? That’s what I want to explore with you this morning.

The Pattern Of The Cross:

If you have an actual Bible open in front of you this morning then the outline that we are going to pursue will make perfect sense to you. The passage that we read – verses 21-25 – is the theological centre – but the wider passage is actually explicitly ethical in nature. Our passage is the HUB but there are ethical implications rooted in the hub that stretch out to the right and to the left in your print Bible – this is a very typically JEWISH presentation. You put the foundation in the centre and you build out from there. So look at verse 11 – there we have the beginning of a series of CONNECTED COMMANDS.

abstain from the passions of the flesh (1 Peter 2:11 ESV)

Then later we have:

Be subject for the Lord’s sake (1 Peter 2:13 ESV)

silence the ignorance of foolish people. (1 Peter 2:15 ESV)

Honor everyone. (1 Peter 2:17 ESV)

be subject (1 Peter 2:18 ESV)

But then on the other side of our anchor passage we have some further commands, so 1 Peter 3:1 has another:

be subject (1 Peter 3:1 ESV)

This time as a command to wives in difficult marriages and then a corresponding command to husbands:

live with your wives in an understanding way (1 Peter 3:7 ESV)

So all these commands are rooted in the example and PATTERN OF THE CROSS. This is a 7 point description of what it means to live a CROSS SHAPED CHRISTIAN LIFE. So let's take a look at that. The first thing we would want to say, going back to 1 Peter 2:11 is that a cross shaped life is:

1. A life at war with sin

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11 ESV)

On the cross Jesus was WAGING WAR against human sin – and all causes of human sin. Again, that is one of the things that we tend to talk about on Good Friday. There are two main models of the atonement – meaning, two main ways we talk about what Jesus accomplished on the cross. We talk about Penal Substitutionary Atonement – that's the MAIN MODEL – or the PRIMARY way we tend to think about the cross. Jesus SUFFERED in our PLACE – that's substitution – and he PAID for our SINS – that's the penal part. The other model we use is the Christus Victor model. That's the idea that Jesus was fighting a BATTLE on the cross.

You can see BOTH of those models in Colossians 2:13-15. Paul says:

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:13–15 ESV)

You can see the PENAL imagery there and you can see the BATTLE imagery there. Jesus DISARMED the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame – praise the Lord!

So the cross was a BATTLE! It was a VICTORY! It was a TRIUMPH – and so that means that a CROSS SHAPED LIFE will involve a constant battle and an ultimate victory over sin in the life of the believer – does it not?

It does mean that – it MUST MEAN THAT.

I will tell you this as a pastor, there are three things I look for in someone who has made a profession of faith. Of course it is easy to make a profession of faith and we celebrate EVERY profession of faith, but the Bible reminds us that NOT all initial enthusiasm is actually indicative of REAL, SAVING FAITH – so as a pastor I am looking for some tell-tale signs. There are 3.

#1. I'm looking for a hunger for God's Word. Real converts CAN'T GET ENOUGH. They eat it up. They highlight. They are at every study. They want the Word.

#2. I'm looking for love for the body of Christ. Real believers want community. They want brothers and sisters. They want to be a part of this.

#3. I'm looking for a battle against remaining sin.

Real converted people still sin – but they are not content with sin. They hate it. They are ashamed of it. They go to war against it. They will endure the humiliation of confession – they welcome the embarrassment of discipline – they don't care. They just want to be rid of remaining sin.

That's a cross shaped life.

If you are at peace with sin then you are not at peace with God. Period.

If you get the cross – then you wage war on sin. That’s what happens when you FEEL and are legitimately AFFECTED by the cross of Jesus Christ.

The second thing we’d want to say here is that a cross shaped life is:

2. A life in subjection to earthly authority

Look at 1 Peter 2:13:

Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (1 Peter 2:13–14 ESV)

Well, you might say, what does that have to do with the cross? Well, actually, quite a bit. Jesus subjected himself to human authority – unjust, ungodly, unenlightened human authority. He could have called down 10 Legions of Angels to wipe Pilate off the map and to grind the wicked Jewish Sanhedrin into dust – but instead he allowed himself to be wrongfully convicted and shamefully nailed to a Roman cross. He did that to purchase our redemption, and also, according to Peter, he did that to set us an example.

like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7 ESV)

He was silent. He submitted. He was subject.

And Peter says that this is part of what it means to live a cross shaped life. Be subject to every human institution. Wayne Grudem says helpfully here:

The inclusiveness of the word *every* makes it appropriate to apply this statement therefore to other legitimate human authorities (parents/children, church officers/members, and authority structures in businesses, educational institutions, voluntary organizations, etc.). God has established such patterns of authority for the orderly functioning of human life, and it both pleases and honours him when we subject ourselves to them.¹

¹Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 126.

Jesus did not come to the earth to burn the house down! When the crowds tried to seize him and to make him King by force - he RAN AWAY! Jesus was not interested in political revolution! He didn't want to take over the Kingdoms of this world. He said to Pilate:

“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” (John 18:36 ESV)

My kingdom is not of this world – therefore I am not fighting the government!!! So when you flip that around you understand that those who ARE fighting the government must be very confused indeed as to what kind of kingdom Jesus came to establish.

Brothers and sisters – Jesus died on a Roman cross! The King of the Universe, with all the angels of heaven waiting on his command submitted himself to death at the hands of Pontius Pilate – a generally incompetent, consistently cruel and historically insignificant Roman bureaucrat – how then could anyone justify political violence or insurrection in the name of Jesus?

That doesn't fit the pattern.

A cross shaped life involves being in subjection to every human institution. Parents, elders, police, magistrate, mayor, health unit, Premier, Prime Minister. Are there reasonable exceptions? Of course there are reasonable exceptions – but you don't live on the exceptions! You don't major on the exceptions. You might live your whole life and never qualify for a single exception – but every day – every day – if you are living a cross shaped life then you are going to be living in subjection to earthly authority. That's in the bible and it is listed here as one of the implications of Good Friday.

The third thing we'd want to say is that a cross shaped life is given over to Gospel witness.

3. A life given over to witness

We'll have to start moving a little faster here. Look at 1 Peter 2:15:

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. (1 Peter 2:15 ESV)

So Peter says that the way we live INSIDE fallen and corrupt social institutions should serve to SILENCE the ignorant bias of unbelievers against the church. We should be such good citizens and such good neighbours that the criticisms of our opponents are revealed to be hollow, ignorant and unsubstantial.

Meaning that a cross shaped life is completely unconcerned with personal liberties and freedoms but rather is focused entirely on winning a hearing for the Gospel among our unsaved friends and neighbours.

Isn't that what Peter is saying? He is saying it here and he said it earlier in verse 12:

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:12 ESV)

When the Lord comes knocking on the hearts of your friends and neighbours do everything in your power to ensure that your behaviour is never raised as a defence against his welcome and reception – that's what Peter is saying.

Jesus wasn't concerned about his rights on the cross, was he?

The Apostle Paul wasn't concerned about his rights as an apostle, was he?

Why then are we Christians so concerned about our rights as his 21st century so-called followers? That's a question that has been keeping me up at nights over the last 12 months, I will be honest with you. How did we get from dying on a cross to fighting for our rights? And yet, hasn't that been the major topic of conversation for the last 12 months?

Be assured that the neighbours are listening.

We're off the pattern here friends, and we need to back inside.

Fourthly, I think we'd want to say that a cross shaped life is:

4. A life of honour and sacrifice

Look at verse 17:

“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.” (1 Peter 2:17 ESV)

Those are all imperatives – commands. We are commanded to honour everyone. We are commanded to love the brotherhood – the church. We are commanded to fear God. We are commanded to honour the emperor.

The pattern of the cross demands it!

The cross is the ultimate expression of how much God honours and esteems human beings. Human beings must be very precious to God because he gave his only begotten Son to purchase their redemption. So we too must treat their lives as precious.

The cross is the ultimate expression of God's love for the church. Jesus DIED to purchase a people for God out of every tribe, tongue and nation on planet earth – therefore we must treat the church as precious. How we have stabbed and wounded the Bride of Christ over the last 12 months over the most insignificant of things. People have slandered and rejected their churches over MASKS and health and safety protocols – what madness is that? What blasphemy is that? To wound the Bride of Christ over such things is a HORRENDOUS departure from the pattern of the cross. The cross bears all things out of love.

The cross is the ultimate reminder that God is judge. It is a fearful thing to disregard the commandments of God to swim with the tide of culture. Ask yourself whether your behaviour over the last 12 months has been informed more by Scripture, more by the cross, or more by culture? Who justifies your actions? Your friends on Social Media? Your favourite cable news

station? Or the cross of Jesus Christ? Whoever justifies it now, be assured that you will be required to justify before Almighty God on judgment day.

So fear God – and honour the Emperor.

That's what it means to live a CROSS SHAPED life.

Fifthly, it means of course to live:

5. A life of righteous endurance

Look at verses 18-19:

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. (1 Peter 2:18–19 ESV)

The Apostles of Jesus Christ were no fans of the institution of slavery. They understood that slavery failed to reckon with the essential dignity and worth of human beings – created as they were in the image and likeness of God. Which is why we are always surprised to note that the Apostles did not encourage slaves to rise up against their masters. They went at it from the other end – they told masters to esteem their slaves as brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul told Philemon to receive his slave Onesimus:

“no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother”
(Philemon 1:16 ESV)

Well, if you are going to treat slaves like beloved brothers in Christ then the institution of slavery is going to collapse from the inside – which is exactly what happened everywhere Christianity took over a culture. There is no culture in the world that has been reached by the Gospel that has not eventually repudiated human slavery.

It doesn't fit the pattern of the cross.

So here Peter speaks to slaves and he says – you endure injustice. Don't rise up and fight it – that too doesn't fit the pattern of the cross. You undermine it from below. That's the cross way. You meet injustice with kindness, mercy and respect. That's what the cross does – so that's what you should do when you find yourself labouring inside an unjust social institution.

Sixthly, and hopping now to the other side of the theological anchor, we see in chapter 3 that a cross shaped life is:

6. A life of faithful endurance

Here Peter addresses a believing woman with a harsh and unbelieving husband. Look at verse 1:

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,² when they see your respectful and pure conduct.” (1 Peter 3:1–2 ESV)

Again, this fits everything we know about the pattern of the cross. On the cross Jesus ENDURED injustice and cruelty so as to WIN SINNERS OVER to the kindness and mercy of the Lord – Peter says to wives, you must seek to do the same with respect to your husbands. Now as always, we would want to remind women that this is not a call to endure abuse – Peter envisions a cold and hard husband but he says nothing here about criminal behaviour and we would remember all that has been said already about honouring lawful authority so we would want to say that if your husband abuses you – call the police! Make use of that civil authority that the Bible tells all people to appreciate. Call 911! That's what authority is there for!

So there is a limit here – but there is a principle that we must not ignore. The Bible is saying to the wife that she has an opportunity that no one else has. She has access to a cold heart that is very distant from most other people. Since she is saved and her eternity is secure, the cross challenges here to endure in faith and hope that her husband may be saved as he sees the power of the Gospel displayed in her transformed life.

The cross changes how we endure in unfulfilling marriages.

And then lastly, in a corresponding word to husbands who may have difficult or unkind unbelieving wives, he says that a cross shaped life commends an approach of gentleness and consideration.

7. A life of gentleness and consideration

Look at verse 7 of 1 Peter chapter 3:

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7 ESV)

The Bible forbids men to use their generally superior size and strength to intimidate or control their wives. Of course that was quite remarkable at the time. It has become generally accepted in the Western world – because of the influence of Christianity – but it was quite an exceptional thing back when people first heard it. A Christian man could not become an elder in the church if he was violent with his wife.

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,³ not a drunkard, **not violent but gentle**, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. (1 Timothy 3:2–3 ESV)

The Greek there literally means “not a striker”. If you were a striker then you couldn’t be an elder because that doesn’t FIT with the pattern of the cross. Jesus could have been a striker – if the King does not bear the sword in vain – how much more Jesus? And yet he didn’t. He didn’t strike out, he didn’t strike back – he absorbed. They struck him on the head and said:

“Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” (Luke 22:64 ESV)

Do you wonder over the fact that the God of the universe did not LASH OUT at that moment and wipe every human being off the map?

You should wonder. It is every bit a feature of the miracle of the cross.

He did not strike.

Therefore we do not strike.

If someone slaps us on the right cheek – we turn to him the other also. Jesus said that! And Jesus MODELLED THAT.

The cross shaped life is a life of gentleness, mercy and forbearance. That's the Jesus way.

“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:23 ESV)

Nobody gets away with anything. No evil deed is done in the dark – God sees, God cares and GOD JUDGES – therefore you can afford to let it go. You can afford to be gracious. You are commanded to be gentle.

Because that's the way of the cross – and to this way you were called.

because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21 ESV)

The cross of Jesus Christ IS THE PAYMENT for your sins. The cross of Jesus Christ IS your freedom and your victory. AND the cross of Jesus Christ is your example. It is the pattern. It is the way - now by the grace that God supplies let us LIVE and WALK within it.

O God, HELP! Let's pray together.