

Faithful That Perseveres

Our Identity in Christ

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2. We're looking at verses 21 to 25. The title of the message is "Faith That Perseveres." Faith that perseveres. We come to a passage this morning that really sets before us some some foundational, fundamental principles to help us to endure difficulty and suffering and how can we persevere as followers of Jesus. We believe that the Scripture teaches that true believers will persevere, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but though God does promise to keep us to the end, he tells us to attend to his means of grace and his Word and this passage has some wonderful truth for us to help us to persevere in the midst of suffering.

I want to begin reading, we're focusing on verses 21 to 25, but I want to start reading at verse 18 to set the context for us. We looked at this passage previously, but I think it leads in an important way to our text. So, 1 Peter 2:18.

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this finds favor, if for conscience sake 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. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered 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.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we come before Your word today mindful of our need of grace. We're thankful for the gift of the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth. We pray that our hearts might be

open, attentive to Your word, that we might be ready to repent more deeply and trust more completely in the great work of our Savior. For His glory, we pray in His name. Amen.

So faith that perseveres. One of the things that we see when we read this passage is that one of the concepts Peter is really concerned about is the faithfulness of those who are following Jesus, those to whom he writes. He knows that suffering is a part of their life and suffering is going to be a part of their life, and he's concerned to help them persevere. In fact, that's one of the things you see as you look at the book of 1 Peter is the emphasis on suffering. I just want to show you this, walk through it and see how often the word "suffering" or "trials" occurs. Back in 1 Peter 1:6, he said, "In this you greatly rejoice," that is your salvation, your future glory, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials," these have come, "so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire." You're experiencing various trials. You're being tested by fire. Then in chapter 2, verse 19, you're suffering unjustly. Verse 20. The word "suffering" occurs 13 times in the letter. The second one is in verse 20, but if when you do what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. Verse 21, Christ also suffered for you. Verse 23, while being reviled, he did not revile in return. While suffering, he uttered no threats. Chapter 3, verse 13, and 14, "who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear their intimidation. Do not be troubled." Verse 17, "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong." Chapter 4, verses 1 and 2, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." Since Christ suffered, arm yourself, prepare yourself to suffer, he says. Verse 13. Well, actually, verse 12. Read verse 12 too of 1 Peter 4. "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you." Don't be surprised when you encounter a fiery ordeal. You shouldn't be surprised, "which comes upon you for your testing, as though something strange were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing." Look at verse 15, "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed." Verse 19, "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God are to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." Chapter 5, verse 1, "Therefore, I urge elders among you, as your fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ." And then near the end of the book, verse 9. He speaks in verse 8 about Satan being a roaring lion, and he says in verse 9 of 1 Peter 5, "resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brothers and sisters who are in the world." Verse 10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." This is why we noted that the purpose of the book is to help believers stand firm. Verse 12, actually, of 1 Peter 5, he reminds of his purpose in writing. He says, "I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!"

Stand firm, why? Because you're going to be suffering as Christians. Paul makes this clear. Jesus makes this clear. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All who desire to live godly in Christ will suffer persecution." Jesus said, "A servant is not greater than his master. If they hated Me, they will hate you." And so, we are going to suffer in this world. We're going to suffer for doing what is right. And as Peter writes, we've noted that the particular time in history in God's providence that he writes, the church has experienced increasing opposition from the world, increasing cultural hostility, hatred, animosity and he's writing to them to bear up under it. He's showing them how to bear up and persevere in suffering. In verses 21 to 25 of chapter 2, our text this morning, focuses our heart in such a helpful way on the real, just the fundamental truths that will help us endure.

This passage, as much as any passage in the whole book, is one we need to wrestle with and to understand. This is the key to a persevering faith. We're going to see that as we read this. We're called to suffer. How do you bear up under suffering? How do you persevere in faith? How do you do that? We're going to look at this text under three points this morning. Three points, verses 21 to 25. If we're to have a faith that perseveres, we need to understand, first of all, the call of discipleship. The call of discipleship. We need to face squarely the call of discipleship and the call is to follow Jesus. He says, "For since you have been called for this purpose." It's a very important word to Peter, the call that is placed on the Christian's life. It's not that we so much choose him as he calls us. Yes, we have to call upon the name of the Lord to be saved, but we call upon him because he has called us first by the power of his Spirit. And this idea of calling is an important word to understand what salvation is. Peter used it, the same idea in 1 Peter 2:9, just a few verses back, when he says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And here in verse 23, he says, "for you have been called for this purpose." He's going to say something similar in chapter 3, verse 9, when he says that we're not to return evil for evil, or insult for insult, but getting a blessing instead, "for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing." In chapter 5, verse 10, which we read a moment ago, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory."

So God calls you when you become a follower of Jesus. You are a called person, puts the initiative on God. He has issued a call, and the call is to follow him. This is how Peter thought about that, too and it's interesting, you see it in the text, because he says, "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in His steps." That to be a Christian, you know what it means to be a Christian, it means to be called, and it means to be called to follow. It's not that you merely accept some things as true. It's not merely that you pray a prayer and ask Jesus into your heart. It's not merely that you change your worldview. It is that you are called actively as a believer to follow Jesus, to walk the same way he walked, to walk the same path he has walked.

In fact, you think about this in Peter's own experience. Turn with me back to Matthew 4. What does it mean to be a Christian? There are different ways the Bible describes what it

means to be a Christian, a believer, a holy one, a saint. Other passages speak of Christians in various ways and they fill out what it means but one of the ways that the Bible calls us to think of ourselves as Christians is as followers of Jesus. When you look at Matthew 4 and you look at the call of Peter, he's saying to us, "You have been called for this purpose to follow in Jesus' steps in suffering, to be submissive, and to be holy in the midst of suffering, just as I have been called." He thinks back to his own calling. Matthew 4:18, "Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter," the author of 1 Peter, "Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of people.' Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets; and He called them." Other text tells us the same thing, "Follow Me." And Matthew tells us, "Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him."

The call of the Christian life is a call to follow Jesus. In fact, back to our text, well, before we do that, before you turn back over to 1 Peter, chapter 9, verse 9, Matthew records his own, the author of Matthew's gospel, Matthew records his own call. Matthew 9:9, "As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting in the tax collector's office; and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he got up and followed Him." That's the power of our Savior. He says, "Follow Me," and people follow him. Those who were formerly in darkness, wrapped up in themselves in sin, bound in darkness, the kingdom of darkness, in a moment, they're translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's Son by the power of the Savior's words, "Follow Me." And in one sense, or in the truest sense, if you are a follower of Jesus, you may not have heard those words themselves, but when you responded to the grace of God in your life, when the Spirit worked, you were actually hearing that calling, "Follow Me." That's the call of discipleship, to follow Jesus.

In fact, let's look a little more at Matthew while we're here. Look at Matthew 16. It's interesting to study Peter's own understanding of what discipleship means, what does it mean to follow Jesus. In Matthew 16, Jesus asks the question in verse 13, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Matthew 16:13. Verse 14 says, "And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Peter has it right. He knows who Jesus is. "And Jesus said to him," verse 17, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ." Now look at verse 21, from that time Jesus began to show his disciples, right after this moment, this high point in Peter's life, "From that time Jesus began to point out to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things." The path that Jesus is going to walk is a path to Jerusalem, a path of suffering, "suffer

many things from the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You!'" "You can't go that path, Lord." After he had just said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," now he's saying, "You're wrong in what You're saying. It can't be that God would want that. In fact, God forbid that!" Jesus turns and says to Peter, "'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's purposes, but men's.'" Then Jesus said to His disciples, "after he said that stinging word to Peter, look what he says next. What does it mean to be a follower, a Christian, a follower of Jesus? Verse 24, "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"

The path of discipleship is the path of following Jesus, and Jesus' path leads through suffering. This is something that Peter has come to understand in such a painful and powerful way. He was the one who rebuked his master and heard those words, "Get thee behind me, Satan," because Jesus recognized the spirit of Satan was at work even in Peter's heart at that moment. In fact, turn over to the Gospel of John as we work our way back to 1 Peter. The Gospel of John 21. What does it mean to follow Jesus? What does Peter...how does Peter understand what it means to follow Jesus is what we're looking at from his own life experience. You remember that Peter denied Jesus three times on the night before he was crucified. Earlier we read the Gospel where he promised that he would not deny Jesus and Jesus said, "Surely you will deny Me three times before the rooster crows." John's Gospel records each of those as all the Gospels do, each of Peter's denials. Interesting, all four Gospels record that.

But then you have in John's Gospel this wonderful recommissioning of Peter in 21:15. Jesus appears to the disciples after his resurrection, meets them by the Sea of Galilee, eats fish with them. He started a charcoal fire. He's already cooking fish when they come. They eat together. They have breakfast together. Then in verse 15, so when they had finished, this is John 21:15, "when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.' He said to him again, a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'" The amazing grace of our Savior. Threefold denial. Peter's given the opportunity to three times affirm his love for Christ. I'm sure he didn't understand at the time, "Why did He keep asking me the same question?" But how it must have blessed his heart as he thought about it later. Jesus was offering him the opportunity to say three times, "Yes, I love You." Fully recommissioned.

And one of the Gospels reports that when he told Peter he was going to deny him, "You're going to deny Me but after you have returned, strengthen your brothers." Peter played a key role among the apostles. He was a key leader. But reading on down, what

does it mean to follow Jesus? Look at verse 18, John 21. After he said to him three times, "Tend My sheep. Feed My sheep." Now he says, "Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." John comments on that and says, "Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me!'" "You're going to die on the cross." He's saying, "You're going to die a death of crucifixion. When you were young, you did what you wanted to do but I'm telling you now, when you grow old, this is going to happen. Follow Me."

"Peter turned around and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them--the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper," that is John, "Lord, who is the one who is betraying You?" That's talking about John, the author of this Gospel. Peter, seeing John, said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" I love that. I love Peter's candor. "You know, I'm not really crazy about what You said is coming up with me, but what about him, now that we're talking about our futures?" Look at verse 22, "Jesus said to him, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!'"

The call of the Christian life is an individual call to each individual believer and that call is to you and me, and Jesus says to you and me, "You follow Me." That is the call. And so when you have been born again, you have been brought to a relationship where that is to be the pattern of your life to follow Jesus. It's going to mean suffering at various times and in various ways. Sometimes it will mean persecution, other times it will mean just the difficulty of broken relationships, but it will mean if you're going to follow Jesus, you will have to follow him wherever he leads.

Now, that's the call of the Christian life. If we're going to persevere, we have to understand this is what we signed up for. We signed up to follow Jesus, and following Jesus means following behind. In fact, I didn't mention this, the word translated back to 1 Peter 2, the word translated "follow," when he says "follow in His steps," the verb "follow" itself is an intensive form of a word normally translated "follow" and it's a preposition added to the front of it which literally means "follow upon." Follow upon in his steps. He's using language to emphasize the urgency of this command, this instruction. It's an intensive form. It means to follow closely after. It doesn't mean you're just following, you're following right behind Jesus. That's the call.

And look at, look at the wording he uses as he's leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps. An example. This is a word that's very interesting. It's not used much in the New Testament, but it speaks of tracing or an outline. In fact, when we look at how it was used in Greek culture, it was used to teach children how to write the Greek alphabet. They would sometimes have, you know, dotted Alpha and Beta and Gamma and Delta, the Greek letters from Alpha to Omega dotted. And so this word is talking about that kind of thing and what it means is the dots are there and you trace over those dots. Other times, this same word was used to speak of, they might have the whole alphabet written out perfectly above, and now there's lines of paper, which you're supposed to then copy those letters over and over and over again. There's the pattern, now copy it. He says,

"Jesus suffered for you, leaving you an example like that, that you're to trace over exactly what He has done."

In fact, I said that verb "to follow," translated "to follow," is an intensive form of the word "to follow after," but then he even adds the prepositional phrase. It's not enough to say an example for you to trace over, to follow after, he adds "in His footprints." Do you see the emphasis, the force of this? The call is not just to follow kind of leisurely, occasionally checking out. You know, if you're following somebody in a car, this doesn't happen anymore, young people, before we had GPS. Some of you remember this. You would get in a car and there's another group of people behind you and say, "Well, just follow me," right? You remember that? Okay. And so you would have to keep an eye on the car. But, you know, if you're going to be wise about that, you don't stay right on their tail. You stay back a little bit and you're just kind of making sure you know where they turn. You may be having a conversation with people in the car, but you're keeping an eye on that. This kind of following is not that kind of leisurely following. This kind of following doesn't mean just occasionally I'm going to check back and see what's happening. Make sure is he turning up there? Okay, no. This is follow hard after. Trace exactly what. Be just like the one you're following. That's what he's saying.

That's the call of the Christian life. So a life that perseveres through suffering is a life that says, "My duty is to follow hard after Jesus." That's what I'm here for. That's what you're here for. That's the call of discipleship. The second thing we see in this passage is the formula for discipleship. The formula for discipleship. I use that word very advisedly. I don't like the word formula. It doesn't occur in many sermons because I think it's way overused. Christianity is not something we're supposed to approach as formulaic. That is, that if you do this and you do this, this is going to happen. You do this and this and this is going to happen. You get these two things right and everything else is there. But I want you to hear me out. Knowing that I'm skeptical of that, the formula for discipleship, this is the formula, and I think this is right because what he's saying here in this passage is, know the call, what you're called to do is follow Jesus. How do you follow Jesus? Here's the formula: keep looking at Jesus. That's it. Keep looking at Jesus. Always looking to Jesus. Always looking at Jesus. How do you do that? You do it through his word. Meditating on his word. Memorizing his word, reading, studying his word, pondering his word. You follow Jesus, that's the command, and the way you do it is you keep looking at Jesus. But it's not that you look at his word in a distant way. You go to his word to see him, to meet the risen Christ in his word. The written word leads you to the living Word.

But I think Peter's calling us to this. He says, "He set an example to you to follow in His steps." That first point, the call of Christian discipleship, was really what verse 21 was talking about. I think the formula for Christian discipleship is verses 22 to 24. It's because what Peter does here, it doesn't show in most translations as well as it should. I think, actually in this situation, I think the King James, the New King James, get it best of all the translations because what Peter does, after he says, "Christ suffered for you, leaving an example to follow in His steps," in verse 21, the next three verses are all introduced in the Greek, you see this, and you see it in the King James, and the New King James. This is one of the reasons I like to study the Bible, and I think you should study the Bible with

multiple translations. When you're really trying to dig into something deep, look at multiple translations, because it'll help you see what the Scripture really says. You don't have to be a Greek scholar, but the things, if you look at them, you'll get the sense by looking at multiple translations. But here, the reason, what happens here is he says, "Follow in His steps." That is, "Follow hard after Him, step right where He stepped." That's the command, right? That's the instruction. How do you do that? He then uses three relative clauses, each begin with the word, "who" in Greek. It doesn't show up in the New American Standard. It should, it does it, verse 22 does, "Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth." I'm reading the New American Standard. Verse 23 should say, "Who while being reviled did not revile in return, while suffering He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Verse 24 should say, "And who Himself bore our sins." So what I'm saying is he uses the relative pronoun "who" three times. "Follow hard after Him." Follow who? "The One who committed no sin was nor deceit found in His mouth." Follow who? "The One who while being reviled did not revile again." Follow who? "The One who bore our own sins in His body on the cross." That's who you're following. So he structures it to help us see the way that you carry out the call of discipleship, the way that you follow hard after Jesus is you keep looking at Jesus. Look at who he is.

He says, first of all, "He committed no sin nor any deceit found in His mouth." He's speaking of the sinlessness, the holiness of Christ. You're called to follow in that. You're called to pursue holiness. That's what it means to be a Christian. And you don't pursue holiness so that you look better, so that other people think that you're a good Christian so that you can have more ministry opportunities. The reason you should pursue holiness is because you want to be like your Master.

Like Jesus in Matthew 10:24 and 25 says, it's enough for a teacher, I mean, it's enough for a student or it's actually disciple is the word, it's enough for a disciple to be like his teacher and it's enough for a slave to be like his master. He's been talking to his disciples about what their discipleship's going to entail. They're going to encounter difficulty. And he brings that up and he says, the reason he says that, it's enough for a teacher, I mean a student to be like his teacher, a disciple to be like his teacher, a slave to be like his master, because you're going to suffer just like I suffered. But he gives the objective. The objective is Christ-likeness. And so if you're going to follow after Jesus, how do you follow after Jesus? You keep looking at Jesus.

You keep looking for Jesus and this is how you bear up. In fact, turn with me from 1 Peter if you turn back toward the front of your Bible, past James, you come to Hebrews. Look at Hebrews 12. The author of Hebrews is writing to Christians who are also suffering. He's given the great chapter 11 of Hebrews is the Hall of Faith, how people of great faith persevere through difficulties. Then he comes in chapter 12, verse 1 and look at how this sounds like what Peter is saying. Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses," that is, all that I've just testified to you, all of these men who testified by their faith, all of these women who testified by their faith in the trustworthiness of God, you have all these witnesses you've just heard from in chapter 11. "Now let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us,

and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." How do you endure? How do you persevere? You think about all of God's faithfulness, you lay aside sin, but look what he says in verse 2. After he says "run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The way that we persevere, the formula is keep looking at Jesus. Keep marveling at the glory of his person. Keep marveling at the majesty of his work. The sufficiency of Christ. Treasure that.

You know, when you look back at 1 Peter, he says you and I need to know how to bear up when we're treated unjustly. That's the context. Remember, he's talked about how we might be mistreated by the government. We might be mistreated by bosses in employment situations. And he says, "When you suffer for it and you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God," verse 20, for to this you have been called, for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you leaving the example, how do you suffer injustice? You do it just like Jesus did. You do it just like Jesus did. You look at him and in looking at him, you become like him. So you're dealing with somebody who's mistreating you. Someone who's heckling you, like our hymn writer, or someone who's belittling you or rejecting you because of your faith, you look at Jesus and you see that though he was far more pure than you, he was perfect purity, he never did anything wrong, he never deserved any kind of mistreatment from anyone. He deserved only worship and honor and glory from everyone he met. They should have worshiped him but what did he receive? He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was despised and rejected continually. He went through life, though he deserved glory and honor, he was despised and rejected and Peter says, look at him while being reviled, he did not revile in return. While suffering, he uttered no threats.

In fact, it's interesting that the way that he says this in the original, it emphasizes the ongoing nature of the action. You see it a little bit in verse 23, "while being reviled." It was a continuous, ongoing reviling. His life was characterized by being slandered and blasphemed and while that was continually ongoing, translates here, he did not revile in return, it would be better translated, he was not reviling in return. He went on not reviling in return. It speaks of a continual willingness not to retaliate. It's not like he just decided one time I'm not going to retaliate. People kept stuff. No, he continually determined not to retaliate. He continually determined not to revile again. You see how much harder that is? That's what Jesus, that was his life.

So you and I, we go through what we go through, but we have a Savior who has gone ahead of us. He's the author and perfecter of our faith. I love that. Go back to Hebrews 12:2. The author means the pioneer. He's the trailblazer. The idea of that word that's used in Hebrews 12:2 is he has made the way for us to follow in his steps. The pioneers, they go out and they tame the land and then the settlers follow in. Jesus is the pioneer. You and I are the settlers. Still hard work to settle, but we have a great pioneer who's not only the pioneer, he's the target. He's the goal. He's the author and finisher of our faith. You keep your eye on him as you follow in his wake.

Keep looking at Jesus, his sinlessness, his meekness in verse 23. He was reviled. He didn't revile, he went on not reviling as he continually was suffering again, ongoing suffering while suffering here again, uttered no threats would be better translated he was continually uttering no threats but kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously. He kept entrusting. It's actually interesting, you may, if you have some translations, the New American Standard, King James will italicize the word "Himself," do you see that? Some translations italicize the word to tell you that that word's technically not in the text. It's inferred from what's said before that. And so what it tells you is, it's a little bit ambiguous. All the translations, all the major translations assume he's saying, kept entrusting himself, except for one. There's one translation, the RSV, that leaves it open. And I think it's actually, I think it's better to leave it open. Kept entrusting what? I think the word "entrusting" means "to deliver over." So, Jesus is being reviled, he's being mistreated, he's suffering injustice again and again and again, and he keeps turning it over to the Father. Not just himself, the situation. Not just himself, but his right to retaliate, his right to justice. He keeps turning it over. His life was a life of continually releasing his rights for the sake of the glory of his Father and Peter's saying as you and I look at Jesus enough, we marvel that he did that. We go to him in our present circumstance and we receive from him, through our union with him, the ability to walk just like he walked.

It's union with Christ. You can't make yourself able to not revile in return when you're reviled. You can't make yourself able not to threaten someone when you are suffering great pain, but Jesus can, and if you know Christ, you have the Spirit living inside of you, the Spirit of Christ, and he will empower you. And the more you look at him, the more you will glory in him, the more you will want to be like him. In fact, 2 Corinthians 3 has a beautiful picture of this, and I encourage you to look at it this week. He basically says in 2 Corinthians 3 that as we come to the law, we come to the Word of God, we see Jesus in it, and it's a mirror. James uses the same idea of the Word of God's like a mirror, James 1. We look at it, we see ourselves in the mirror too. But he's saying, as you come to the mirror, and this is what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 3:16 to 18, he says, when you look into the Word of God, you see Jesus, in the Word of God, you see yourself in the mirror as well, and the more you keep looking at Jesus, the more what you see of yourself begins to look more and more like Jesus. You are transformed into his image from glory to glory. That's what Peter's calling us to. He's saying the same thing right here. He's saying, listen, you're called to follow Jesus. You're called to follow hard after him. You're called to follow him wherever he leads. No matter where he leads you, you're called to follow him. How do you do it? What's the formula? Keep looking at Jesus. Keep looking to Jesus. That's the answer.

You see not only his meekness that he will give you in verse 23, but you also see his sacrificial love. This is so important. Verse 24, he says so remember Peter says follow Jesus and then he says who am I talking about? He who never sinned. Who am I talking about? He who never reviled or threatened. Who am I talking about? He who bore your sins in his body on the cross. We're talking about following the one who poured out his life to death for you. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross. Here, Peter is making clear that the Gospel, the atonement, is not merely an example. He's telling us follow Jesus' example, but he's really talking not about his example of dying on the cross.

He's talking about his example of suffering through his whole life. He was reviled, he reviled not again. Now, yeah, we have to lay down our lives, but we don't save anyone. But it's not merely that Jesus is an example. Some people will teach that, and that's all they look to for the cross for, just for an example. No, that's not it. The cross is an example, but it's something much more glorious than an example. It is salvation. It is substitutionary atonement. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. How does he do that? Because he bears our sins in his body. Our sins imputed to Christ, credited to his account. In his body he bears them. He becomes the sin bearer. Just like the imagery of the Old Testament from Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement, the one day a year where the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies. One day a year out of 365 and a quarter days, one day the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies. One time he's able to go in the presence of God and that one time he's able to do it is because of the offering, of the sin offering, the atonement. The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, where two goats picture what happened on the cross. Two one-year-old goats that are spotless, without defect. One is killed and the blood is taken behind the veil. The other, the high priest confesses the sins of the people. He puts his hand on the head of the goat. He does like what we do when we, similar, when we do our corporate confession, we're confessing our sins together, right? The high priest actually confesses the sins with his hands on the head of the goat, the scapegoat. And that goat is at the same time as the other goat, there's two goats that are here for the atonement. One goat is going to be taken to the temple or the tabernacle and offered. The blood is going to be paying for our sins. But this goat that the sins are confessed over is to be driven away from the camp out into the wilderness. And in both of those goats, you see the reality of what our sin is and deserves. Our sin deserves death and our sin deserves eternal separation from God because to be sent outside the camp is to be sent away from the presence of God. In the very center of the camp is the tabernacle, the dwelling of God and to be sent out from the camp is to be sent out into utter spiritual darkness.

Peter is hinting at that when he says he bore our sins in his body on the cross. In the moment on the cross, when Jesus hangs on the cross bearing our sins, the Father in some way we cannot fully comprehend, turns his back as it were on the Son because Jesus, as 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, became sin. In some way he's bearing our sins with such a reality in his humanity as the sin bearer that he's like that that goat must be driven away, and that's why he cries out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" That's why the sky is made completely dark at 12 noon and we're told about that. Why does it get dark? It's not just because God's unhappy. It's because God is turning his back, as it were, in some way on his Son and this is why Jesus so dreaded the cross. It wasn't merely the physical agony that overwhelmed him in Gethsemane. It was the spiritual agony of seeing the Father's displeasure and communion taken away from him and being under the Father's displeasure and bearing our sins in his body. That was what made him languish and tremble before the cross with such anguish that Luke tells us he sweat drops of blood as he considered the agony of the cross, the spiritual agony of the cross.

Peter says, as you and I go through suffering and we have to follow Jesus, the formula is keep looking at him. You keep looking at him and his example and know that he will empower you to walk in that, but keep looking at him and marvel at his love. He loved

you this much. That kind of love, when you keep looking at that kind of love, you know what you do? You start loving him. You love him more and you want to follow him more. It's this kind of love that draws out a heart that wants to obey. See, we don't obey God to earn anything from God. We could never do anything to earn anything from God. The true believer, because of the great love that you've received while you were yet a sinner, Christ died for you, you receive that love, and now in the overflow and wonder of that love, now we lay down our lives for him. Love so amazing, love so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Peter says that's the formula. Just keep looking at Jesus. And then the third point, the joy of Christian discipleship. The call of Christian discipleship, the formula for Christian discipleship, and the amazing joy of Christian discipleship. We're going to look at this passage a little more next week, but I want to end up with this. Verse 25, "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." I love this. He puts this on here at the end. Sheep. We know how Peter thinks about sheep. I mean, Jesus told him, "If you love Me, what do you do? Feed My sheep." It's going to keep coming up again and again. He thinks of himself as a shepherd and thinks of followers like you and me as sheep. But he says, look, when you're thinking about how much you're suffering, when you're thinking about how difficult your life is, when you're thinking, can I go on, first of all, keep looking at Jesus. But it doesn't mean it's going to get easier. It doesn't mean it's not going to be painful. It doesn't mean it's not going to be agonizing at times, because his path was that way. But keep looking at Jesus. But listen, what he's saying here is, he's saying, compare where you are now to where you were then. You're suffering, you think you got it bad? Think about where you were before he found you and said, "Follow Me." He said, you were continually straying like sheep.

In fact, I want to give you in a homework assignment for next week. I think Peter is so filled with Isaiah 53 in this passage. Just start reading Isaiah 52:14 or 52:12 through chapter 53 for next week. We're going to unpack more of that next time. But he's thinking about that. Isaiah 53:7, "All we like sheep have gone astray, each to his own way, but the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." You were continually straying like sheep. Your life and my life before we knew Christ, was like a sheep that is wandering away from the flock, meandering. And think about a sheep on his own. Sheep, not the brightest animals. No ability to defend themselves. Don't run that fast. They're not like gazelles. They run slow. They've got nothing to defend themselves. A sheep on his own, and they're stupid. And so they're doing all kinds of things. He said, that's what it was like. You were formerly like a sheep, continually going astray. You were straying from bad to worse. That was what your life was. But now, though you may be suffering and you're following Christ, the reality is you've gone from being a sheep out there hopeless in the dark, dying and experiencing the misery of death, now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. You've been brought home into God's precious flock.

Jesus has brought you to himself and he is your Shepherd and literally the overseer of your souls. Your souls used to be distressed and hopeless without God, without hope, and now you have come to the one who laid down his life for you and who even now is

shepherding you. Wherever you go, wherever you find yourself, you find yourself because Jesus has led you there. He's the Shepherd of your souls. He's not just a shepherd, he's also the overseer. He's using two different nouns to kind of picture one truth. He's such a marvelous shepherd. The overseer looks out and cares for all of the details. The shepherd leads the sheep, defends the sheep. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, John 10:10, right? He is the Good Shepherd.

So you have gone, and I have gone, from being without hope, maybe our lives were relatively, you know, you may look back and say before I came to Christ my life was pretty easy. Sometimes that really looks that way because God does things through suffering. He takes you through trials to purify your faith. And so you can look and say, yeah, in some ways it looks worse now, if you're looking with natural eyes. But if you're looking at reality, you went from being gripped with despair, overcome by the fear of death and hopelessness, wracked with guilt, purposelessness. Now you have come home to a God who loves you and treasures you, who died for you and who broods over you and cares for you and will see you all the way home. You have so much to be joyful about. That's why I say the joy of discipleship. Think about where you were to where you are now. What are you facing? Some of you are facing agonizing circumstances that when we look at them, we weep with you, we mourn with you, and yet in reality, that, even that real sorrow leads to greater rejoicing when you put it in context of what Christ is doing. "Somehow this is sent from my loving Shepherd who's overseeing and watching over my soul to bless me, to bring me more and more grace, and to bring me and reveal to me more and more of Himself, more and more of His beauty, more and more of His glory."

When we know that, we have so much to be joyful about. This is why we have hope. The world may fall apart, our world may fall apart, but we know if it does, it's just because my Shepherd is leading me through a new chapter. "What are You going to do, Lord? I'm going to trust You. You've been faithful to me all the way till now. You've been faithful from eternity past, faithful to everyone who's ever followed You. You're not going to disappoint me." The blessedness and joy of discipleship. We need to know the call, the call is follow Jesus. The formula is keep looking at Jesus. And the joy, the joy is really in growing in your love for Jesus along the way. Our God is so good.

Let's go to him in prayer.

Our Father, we rejoice in the glory of the Gospel We see things in Your word and we just marvel, Lord, at Your perfection of Your wisdom, the exceeding greatness of Your lovingkindness, the unsearchable depths of Your love that You would set Your love on people like us, bring us to Yourself and call us Your own sons and daughters. Lord, we confess we so often are foolish of heart, slow to believe, slow to trust. We grumble and complain. Make us more like Jesus. Help us purpose in our hearts to follow Him above everything else. Help us keep our eyes fixed on Him. And Lord, fill us with His joy. For those here that have not yet bowed the knee to Jesus, Lord, give them grace today, even now to stop living for themselves, to stop trusting in themselves, and to put all of their

hope in His great work, all of their hope in His power to save them. And Lord, make us, make us more like Him every day. We pray this in His name and for His glory. Amen.