



**A Passion for Holiness – Part 7**  
**1 Peter 2:21-25**  
**GCSP – 04/25/2009**

I have mentioned to you before that I had a serious accident as a seven-year old that pretty much blinded my right eye. The severity of the injury put an immediate strain on my left eye that required me to start wearing glasses or contact lenses at that early age. Have you ever tried to talk a seven-year old into dealing with all that is involved in wearing contact lenses? Wearing glasses as a seven-year old in the sixties was not cool but it was easier and much more comfortable than the contact lenses of that time. I was shunned by the majority of my classmates because of my new look.

This drove me to books to occupy my time and a love for reading was developed. Also during this time I took up drawing pictures and I even took an interest in drafting for a while in my early teens. I practiced my writing and penmanship skills as they were a big part of my grade in drafting class.

Part of my practice involved using tracing paper. I would find the best possible examples of how letters and numbers were to be properly written, I would place the tracing paper over them and then get about the business of copying the exact curves and angles of the letters and numbers until I had it down. I don't know if teachers today encourage the use of tracing paper to help their students learn how to write or draw but it was an excellent source of help for me.

By looking at and copying the perfect examples time and time again, I developed very good handwriting. Through the years I cannot think of anything I have been complimented on more than my handwriting – with the possible exception of my wife telling me how good looking she thinks I am.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Peter**.

**1 Peter 2:21-25**

Let's pray.

We have a perfect example of how to live our lives and how to achieve holiness in the person of Jesus Christ. The Greek word from **verse 21** that is translated as "**an example**" literally means "underwriting" – meaning having something like a sheet of tracing paper laid on top so you could copy the writing or pictures underneath. The example itself was not meant to simply be admired but to be copied and followed line by line and feature by feature. Jesus Christ is not just an example to be admired by us but is to be copied and followed in every way.

But before we head down this trail we must make sure we have the context of the entire passage so that we do not make any improper assumptions or applications.

**Verse 21** begins with the phrase, "**For you have been called for this purpose.**" The rest of the verse gives us a very strong clue as to what this purpose is but it is best to also look at the verses immediately prior to this statement to ensure we have it right.

This section begins in **verse 13** with the command to submit ourselves, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution, and then it narrows the focus down to the indentured servants of those times to submit to their masters even in the face of severe treatment. Let's read the whole section so we have the flavor and context of our primary text.

### **1 Peter 2:13-20**

The first important aspect of this command is that our submission to all authority, whether deserved or not, is for the Lord's sake – meaning when you obey this command to submit to all authority you are doing so as if it were the Lord you were submitting to. This is vitally important. We do not always want to submit to bosses and police officers and government officials and pastors and parents and husbands, etc. Would your attitude be affected if you knew your submission was to Jesus instead of these others? If not, you have much more serious spiritual issues to deal with tonight. If so, then get busy changing your attitude because that is the way the Lord views submission to all authority.

The only exception to submitting to all authority is when any authority is commanding you to do or say something that is contrary to God's Word. You may suffer the consequences for your refusal to submit, but God will reward you and settle all accounts in His perfect timing.

Secondly, we notice in **verse 15**, submission to all authority is not only commanded but it is pleasing to God. And in the process of pleasing God you will silence the ignorant and the foolish, who would otherwise have something to say against you.

Thirdly, by submitting to all authority we prove that we belong to the Lord as His slaves even though we are free in Christ.

Fourthly, our submission shows that we have the proper honor for all people, we love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we fear God, and we honor those who are in power in the governments God has ordained.

Peter then narrows the focus to those who are servants – which encompassed a great portion of the Roman society in which they lived. And just to make sure we understand, the Greek word used here is best translated as servant. This is not the Greek word for slave that is usually translated as servant in most Bible translations. Most of the indentured servants in Roman times were more like a hired hand; albeit a hired hand that had no rights whatsoever. So the potential for abuse existed but they were treated much better than the pre-Civil War slaves in America.

This narrowing of the focus is specifically designed to illustrate a comparison between them and Jesus. One of the more beautiful names of Jesus is the Suffering Servant, and Peter is making this connection to encourage those who are being mistreated for no just cause. Peter tells all servants to be submissive whether they serve a kind and sensible master or an abusive and clueless buffoon. Not allowing your circumstances to alter your obedience finds favor with God. Patiently enduring injustice and even physical harm for no valid reason finds favor with God because you can now better identify with Jesus.

And that brings us to the main text for tonight.

**v. 21**

As a servant (and we are all servants in one way or another) we have been called to suffer and patiently endure injustice. Does that surprise or shock you? – It should since most of us are appalled and revenge-minded when we suffer unjustly. We rant and rave and raise all kind of commotion when we are mistreated, wrongly accused, or offended in some way. That is not the behavior of someone who knows and understands that he or she has been called to suffer and patiently endure. Instead that is the behavior of one who feels entitled to a life of comfort and ease.

And instead of becoming more like Jesus you are pushing Him away. Instead of taking that divine tracing paper and following every curve and angle you are creating a model of your own. Beloved, you cannot be like Jesus if your life is a bed of roses and silver spoons. While He lived in human flesh on this earth Jesus was the Suffering Servant, not the pampered and spoiled aristocrat.

How dare we demand comfort and justice at every minor offence in our lives. How dare we choose to cast aside the opportunity to grow more like Jesus – because that is what we are doing when we demand justice instead of patiently enduring any unjust suffering that comes our way.

Beloved, if you miss everything else I say tonight make sure you grasp this point. When you reject patient endurance through the injustices you experience you are rejecting becoming more like Jesus. When you demand justice you are demanding to be different than Jesus.

The end of **verse 21** says “**to follow in His steps.**” The Bible tells us to take up our cross and follow Him. The Bible tells us to crucify the flesh; our worldly ways. Last time we saw that we are crucified with Christ so that we can now walk and live through His power and His will for our lives. Following in the footsteps of Jesus is unconditional love for the Lord and for those around us, and undying obedience to His Word regardless of the situation, circumstances, or present consequences. It is the kind of obedience where there is never even a brief pause to consider other alternatives, because the minute you pause to consider other options you are no longer being obedient.

**v. 22-23**

There was never a single solitary reason that Jesus should have suffered anything. He never sinned. He never did anything that should have justly caused retaliation against Him. He never spoke a misplaced, malicious, or slanderous word. He never had a stray or sinful thought. Jesus never did or said anything that was deserving of rebuke.

And while there are times we may suffer unjustly there are also times when we get off easy or scot-free for wrongs we have done. If you believe the Bible, and I trust you do, then you believe that all accounts will one day be settled for the wrongs you have done and the wrongs done to you. Sin has consequences; even the sins you commit after salvation. These sins will not keep you out of heaven but they have consequences

nonetheless. So even if you take the time to weigh things out, humanly speaking, the injustices in our lives are typically balanced out with undeserved pardons.

Jesus never received pardons, first because He never did anything that needed to be pardoned, and second because even the injustices against Him were done by those who had no intention of offering a pardon or even an apology.

Jesus never sought revenge. He never looked to balance the scales. He didn't yell back when yelled at. He didn't strike back when struck. He didn't threaten when abused. It simply says that Jesus left everything, every offence, every slander, every curse, every slap, every spit in His face, every abuse, every wrong, every careless word, every stripe on His back, every blow to the head, every pounding of the nails; He left everything to God the Father. Jesus took nothing in His own hands to mete out His own justice.

So again, do you desire to be like Christ? Every time you take matters into your own hands as opposed to leaving it in God's hands you are proving emphatically you don't want to be like Christ.

#### **v. 24**

I am going to have to ask some of you to hang in there with me on this verse. Don't allow personal theology to hinder what the Spirit has to teach you. Don't hone in on the last phrase and miss the key point of this entire passage. All of you should know by now that I am a strong believer in the spiritual gift of physical healing, so as I apply this verse to something other than that tonight, do not take it as anything than what it is.

Regardless of how you interpret the phrase, "**by His wounds you were healed**" this is not a sermon about physical healing. So please lay that aside for now, tear down those walls you may already be erecting, and pay attention to the beginning of the verse. I am not out to attack or even change your viewpoint, I simply want us to see the aspect of living holy and being holy because of what Jesus accomplished for us.

Let's take this verse a phrase at a time.

"**And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...**" Every one of the cuts, bruises, gashes, and punctures; and every drop of blood that was spilt was for your sins and mine. I wonder how it would impact our lives if every time we sinned we could actually hear the snapping of the cat of nine tails as it tore away at our Savior's back. I wonder if our gossip and our lies and our slander and our evil thoughts were followed up with the sound of a spike tearing through the flesh of Jesus and being pounded into the wood, if it would change our ways. I wonder if we could hear Jesus gasping and heaving for breath every time we lusted or coveted or envied, if we would see these sins for what they truly are.

What do you think it means that "**He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**"? Do you think pursuing holiness in your life is a part-time venture? Is the pursuit of holiness something we will one day get around to when our schedules are a little less packed? Can the fact that "**He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**" add some urgency and some focus to our half-hearted efforts to become holy as He is holy?

Yes, these are strong and uncomfortable words, and I agonized over whether to go in this direction or not, but beloved, we have been comfortable for far too long! We have marginalized and minimized the truth about how wrapped up in the world we are. We have justified and rationalized our sinful behavior. We have made excuses of every color and flavor, shape and size, for why our lives are just fine the way they are.

Beloved, it is true that God loves you just as you are but it is also true that He loves you too much to leave you that way. We are called to be holy and I can't vouch for you but my pursuit of true holiness is pathetic at best because I avoid spending much time counting the cost Jesus paid on my behalf. I don't want to know the pain and the agony He willingly took in my place. I bow down to the sins of my life much too easily and refuse to see them for what they really are. I casually ask the Lord to forgive me and take for granted the unbelievable and unimaginable blessing and privilege that He does forgive me.

**"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross."**

Next it says, **"So that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."** There is a reason beyond securing our inheritance in heaven that Jesus suffered in our place. There is a reason Jesus went through all of the injustice and the pain other than protecting us from the fire of hell.

Genuine Christianity is so much more than just being forgiven. Genuine Christianity is so much more than having a home in heaven after life on this earth is over. Genuine Christianity is so much more than going to church once a week or attending Bible studies. **"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."** Jesus endured the humiliation and the agony, and still endures the humiliation today, so we would die to sin and live holy, holy, holy lives.

I have heard Christians say they do not believe the dead can be raised today yet they see it happen in their own lives all the time. How can we die to sin and then go out and sin again? It's like we carry a defibrillator around with us everywhere we go. When we are tempted to sin and decide to go ahead we pull out the paddles and yell, "Clear" and thus resuscitate the sin we were supposedly dead to long ago.

Beloved some things should be left dead and buried. Some things should not rise again in our lives. We should never experience the resurrection of pride or deceitfulness or selfishness. The resurrection of the power of Jesus Christ in our lives is the only one we should experience. **"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."**

Sin is a cancer that eats away at everything that is holy. Sin is a wound that oozes and has a vile and putrid smell that you can't cover up with perfume or cologne. Sin is a disease that saps your strength and destroys your energy. Sin blinds you to the truth of God's Word; it deafens you to the call of the Holy Spirit; it ruins your ability to smell the sweet fragrance of Christ and to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Jesus bore our sins in His body so that we could die to the disease of sin in our life, and he bore our sins in His body so that we might live to righteousness and holiness. Jesus'

pain and death give us the blessing and the benefit and the privilege to live in holiness. It may be a slight stretch, but isn't our refusal to live in righteousness and holiness just like spitting in His face, hammering the crown of thorns in His head and pounding the nails into the cross? Because aren't we in essence somehow refusing His sacrifice when we refuse to accept the responsibility that goes along with it?

Living in righteousness and holiness is relying on His power in all things which includes relying on His power to walk in obedience to His Word. And we must realize that His power is limitless and thus there is no temptation and no sin that is too big for us to overcome. The disease of sin is no match for the power of Jesus because next it says, **"for by His wounds you were healed."**

You are healed from the disease of sin. Sin's power over you has been removed just as a skilled surgeon is able to remove cancer from your body. Just as the victory over death and sin has already been accomplished, so too, you have already been cured from the curse and disease of sin. It has already been done folks. It doesn't say you will be healed but that you were healed – a modification from the original statement made by the prophet Isaiah, who said, **"By His wounds you are healed"** because Isaiah was looking at things before the Cross while Peter now sees things after the Cross.

Scripture at times has several applications so I am not going to say you cannot apply this verse to physical healing, I simply do not see that as the proper context in this passage. Peter's whole point in this section of Scripture is in regards to living a submissive and holy life.

#### **v. 25**

Beloved, the bottom line for the vast majority of Christians is that we simply must stop straying away from our Shepherd. The Shepherd leads you to places of safety and away from danger. The Shepherd fights against those who would seek to do harm to you and destroy you. The Shepherd provides for you. The Shepherd comforts you. The Shepherd lays down His life for you. The Shepherd only does what is best for you.

Why would you even consider straying away from the Shepherd?

And it also says He is our Guardian. The Guardian is always on the watch. The Guardian is focused on your protection at all times. The Guardian points out all things that are dangerous and harmful. The Guardian sees danger where you may not. The Guardian gives His life for yours.

Again, why would you even consider straying away from the Guardian?

Yet we do stray. We stray because we like doing things our own way. We stray because the allurements and enticements of the world have captured our fancy. We stray because we think we know what is best for us. We stray because we truly do not think the Shepherd and the Guardian are real. We stray because we do not believe what the Bible says. We stray because we prefer to walk by sight and not by faith.

We stray because we simply do not believe.

Jesus Christ suffered and died so you and I would live to righteousness, not just as a fire escape out of hell.

Let's pray.