

1 Peter 2:21-25 | “Christ Suffered for You”¹
Preached on April 25, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2, verses 21 through 25.

Peter, in his letter, has really gotten into how Christians are to conduct themselves, as he has been talking about how we are to relate to others in our different relationships.

He talked about how we are to relate to unbelievers in general, and then how to relate to the government, and now he has been talking about how servants are to relate to their masters.

For our context, we applied it to the employee-employer relationship.

And now as we get to verses 21 through 25, these verses are actually the conclusion to his exposition about how servants are to relate to their masters.

But what he has done is in talking about the relationship of servants and masters, he’s using it as a springboard to speak even more broadly about how to respond to mistreatment in general.

Let’s READ THE PASSAGE. *[pause]*

When someone does something substantial for us, it makes a big impact on us.

Think of those times that someone sacrificed greatly for you.

Maybe they sacrificed their money by buying something expensive for you, or paid for something that really made an impact on you.

Maybe they sacrificed their time, as they spent their precious time with you, figuring out a dilemma that you were facing, and you can’t forget that sacrifice.

Or maybe they sacrificed their energy, as they spent most of their day working hard to fix something at your house or help with a project.

These examples of sacrifice impact us greatly, and endear us to others.

So also, Jesus Christ’s great, history-changing sacrifice for our sins has made an eternal impact on us.

Peter can’t help but speak of Christ’s suffering for us when talking about the Christian life, for it is the center and foundation of our very Christian lives.

He must keep going back to it, for it is one of the most important moments in history. *[pauseeee]*

¹ In this passage, Peter relies heavily on Isaiah 53. It would be helpful to read that chapter and see the connections between what it says and what Peter says here.

What many of the New Testament authors do is they take a practical problem, sin, or relationship and use the grid of the Gospel to solve it.

Paul does this all the time.

Well Peter is doing the same sort of thing, using the good news of what Jesus Christ did for us as a way to show us how to respond to mistreatment.

And so Peter goes back to what Christ did to help teach us how to respond well.

First, he shows us that...

I. Christ is your example, showing you how to respond to unjust suffering.

Last week, I made the point that when Jesus says to “Follow me,” we say, “Yes, I will!”

But when we see his suffering, we say, “But not in that way.”

And I want to expand upon that point because it’s so very true in regards to what we do.

We want to follow Jesus in all the easy and glorious ways, but not in the hard ways.

We like to pick and choose which areas we will imitate. *[pause]*

We want to follow Jesus when we see those times that crowds came flocking to hear him, but not so much when the crowds deserted him.

We want to follow Jesus when we see him humiliate the Pharisees in front of everyone, but not so much when he calls out specific sins that we commit.

We want to follow Jesus when he rides on the donkey in his triumphal entry, but not so much when he carries his cross alone on the way to Golgotha. *[pause]*

We know that the life of Jesus was often difficult, as he was criticized, rejected, and suffered.

But we seem to ignore those facts when we think of how our lives ought to be imitating his.

Jesus says, “Take up your cross and follow me²,” and with our mindsets about the Christian life, we say, “How about I leave out the cross part?” *[pauseeee]*

Now our lives don’t imitate his in the sense of bearing the sin of others on a Cross, but rather, his example of handling unjust suffering is how we are to live.

Peter makes this clear in verse 21, “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.” *[pause]*

² Matthew 16:24b.

Peter is telling us that as a Christian, you are called to follow Christ's example of how to respond to unjust suffering.

This isn't an optional way of handling mistreatment.

Peter *isn't* saying, "Jesus handled it this way, but you're allowed to handle it differently by retaliating and threatening back."

No, Peter says that Jesus' example of handling mistreatment is *exactly* the way that you are called to imitate. *[pause]*

Yikes, that's a challenge!

When we respond to mistreatment with revenge, reviling, threatening, or bitterness, we are not only living contrary to Jesus' example, but we are living contrary to our calling.

This means that when you endure mistreatment *rightly*, you are, in effect, following in the footsteps of Christ.

You are living according to how Christ lived.

You are living according to how God has called you to live. *[pause]*

So we don't say, "That was how Jesus responded, but not me."

But we say, "Jesus responded this way, so I need to respond this way."

He's our leader, who showed the way we ought to live in this world, and we follow our leader. *[pause]*

As a kid, sometimes you play that game called, "Follow the leader."

And really, that's what we are doing with Christ, we are following our leader, imitating his character and responses. *[pause]*

When people see how we respond to difficulty, they should see a replica of how Christ responded to difficulty. *[pauseeee]*

Christ's handling of suffering is our example of how to conduct ourselves in mistreatment.

In fact, Peter tells us that Jesus' example has a purpose - "so that you might follow in his steps." *[pauseeeee]*

As you know, this past winter we had a lot of snow and there was one point where the snow was pretty deep.

Well I was out playing with my 4 year son and we decided to go over to the park.

But the snow over there was extremely deep, too deep for him to walk well.

So I walked first and I told him to walk in my footsteps.

That's the idea here: we are to walk in Jesus' footsteps.

We follow his lead and his example.

His example helps us to follow in his footsteps because we know how to live by learning about how he lived. *[pause]*

This is a great part of following Christ - we have an example to follow!

We aren't floundering, wondering how to live the Christian life, but we can look to his example, for he lived perfectly as a human in this sin-cursed world. *[pauseeee]*

There's that popular phrase, "What would Jesus do?"

And according to this passage, it should be phrased instead, "What *DID* Jesus do?" *[pause]*

In order to follow in his footsteps, we need to know exactly what he did, and not guess what he would do.

This isn't a subjective thing, where we get to decide for ourselves, but it's based on the objective truth that this is what Jesus did, and I should follow in his steps. *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, imitation is a huge part of discipleship.

We look to how he lived and responded to situations, and we strive to copy his example in our own lives. *[pauseeee]*

Are you striving to follow in the footsteps of your Savior?

Don't try to pick and choose which parts of his example you want to follow, but follow his steps.

Just as my son was in the right spot when he was walking in my footsteps in the deep snow, so you are in the right spot when you walk in the footsteps of Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Peter has just told us that Jesus gave us an example of handling unjust suffering and that we ought to follow in his steps, but now he gets detailed.

For he describes Jesus' example in verses 22 and 23.

"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

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." *[pauseeee]*

Jesus was reviled and suffered.

To be 'reviled' here speaks of being verbally abused and insulted.

He was mocked, made fun of, accused of things he didn't commit, and insulted.

People walked by, derided him, and wagged their heads saying that if he was the Son of God that he should just come down from the cross.³

And yet he didn't revile in return! *[pause]*

The natural, sinful human response is to get them back, to revile back.

When someone says something insulting to us, we try to insult them back.

We try to think of that amazing comeback that will humiliate them in return. *[pause]*

So if any of us would have been in his position, we would have been seeking ways to retaliate at every turn. *[pause]*

Jesus could have thought up the perfect comeback, and reviled in return, but he didn't. *[pauseeee]*

He was verbally abused, which is bad, but he was also physically abused and suffered at their hands.

He was beaten, spit upon, stripped, slapped around, hit, tortured, nailed upon a cross, and yet...and yet he didn't threaten!

He could have threatened to have them wiped out right then and there.

He could have threatened to send legions of angels to come and bring justice, and he would have been 100% righteous to do so, and yet he didn't do anything.

He could have even threatened future judgment, but he kept quiet.

The amount of self-control needed to do this would have been astounding!

And in all of this, "he committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth."

He didn't try to deceptively get out of the situation, but always spoke the truth. *[pause]*

Peter lived with Jesus for years, and yet he could say that he never sinned, neither was deceit in his mouth.

Not even a hint of deceit could be found in him. *[pause]*

And he did all of this for you - "he suffered for you."

³ See Matthew 27:39-44.

It was only because of your sin and my sin and everyone else's sin that led him to go through this. *[pauseee]*

So Peter tells us what Jesus didn't do in his suffering, but he also tells us what he did do - "he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly."

Instead of getting back, instead of holding in his anger leading to bitterness, he handed the situation over to the Father.

He didn't have to respond because he knew His Father would deal with it. *[pauseee]*

Jesus' example of handling mistreatment shows us beyond a shadow of a doubt how we ought to respond to mistreatment, for he gave us a perfect example in his suffering for us. *[pause]*

When you are mistreated by someone else, you are not called to revile in return and get back at them.

When you are mistreated by someone else, you are not called to threaten, taking things into your own hands.

When you are mistreated, you are called to endure it with faith, entrusting the situation with the one who judges justly.

Hand the situation over to him.

Don't respond in anger seen outwardly in retaliation.

But also, don't respond in anger seen inwardly in bitterness.

But give it up to the Lord, knowing that God will bring justice.

God will right all the wrongs done, either by his judgment in the future on those who don't know Christ, or Christ has taken the punishment in his sacrificial death for those who have trusted in Him.

God will take care of it, either way.

He never lets sin slide, and he is the only One who judges justly. *[pauseeee]*

And so even when you are suffering some of the worst things at the hands of others, you can live this way by faith.

For Christ has shown you the perfect example of how it can be done, and we are to follow in his steps. *[pause]*

But how can we do this?

Do we just muster up the power to do it in ourselves?

No, as Peter continues, he shows us that Christ's suffering was much more than just an example to follow, for it did something much more significant...

II. Christ is your substitute, taking care of your sin problem.

The previous aspect of Christ's suffering, which is his example, we can strive to follow.

But this next aspect of Christ's suffering we can't follow, for it could only be done by him.

Only he could be our substitute, taking care of our sin problem. *[pauseeee]*

You see, the Cross of Jesus is an example, but it's much more than an example, it's the very way that God deals with our sin problem. [pause]

If it was only an example, where would that leave us? Helpless and hopeless.

If it was only an example, how would we even have the power to follow his example? We wouldn't because without him, we are dead in our sins.

His suffering is much more than an example, for he suffered for us. *[pauseeee]*

It's said somewhere that, "If you were to look at Rembrandt's painting of The Three Crosses, your attention would be drawn first to the center cross on which Jesus died.

Then as you would look at the crowd gathered around the foot of that cross, you'd be impressed by the various facial expressions and actions of the people involved in the awful crime of crucifying the Son of God.

Finally, your eyes would drift to the edge of the painting and catch sight of another figure, almost hidden in the shadows.

Art critics say this is a representation of Rembrandt himself, for he recognized that by his sins he helped nail Jesus to the cross."⁴ *[pauseeee]*

As we look at the Cross, we see Christ's great example of how he handled unjust suffering, but we see much more than that...

We see how it was our sin that led him to the Cross, as he bore our sin on the Tree.

He truly suffered for us. [pauseeee]

What is our hope? Is it that Jesus merely gave us an example, or is it that Jesus bore our sins on the Cross?

We can only live to righteousness and follow his example because of his death and resurrection.

⁴ Author Unknown. Taken from Bible.org, <https://bible.org/illustration/rembrandt%E2%80%99s-painting>.

That's why even though Peter has talked about Christ's example of suffering unjustly, he can't stop there because Christ's sacrifice was much more than an example.

He can't help but speak of Christ as our substitute for sin. *[pauseeee]*

When you think about Jesus suffering and dying on the Cross, you can't leave out our sin problem.

Although others may downplay sin and not want to talk about sin, we must never downplay it, for it is a big part of the news of the Gospel.

It was because of our sin that we needed to be saved, and it was because of our sin that Jesus had to die. *[pauseeee]*

This passage shows us that it was our sin that he bore on the Cross.

We are people who needed healed, as our sin created brokenness that needed healing.

We were people who were slaves to sin before Christ.

Instead of obeying God, we obeyed our sinful passions.

Unlike Jesus, there *is* deceit in our mouths, we have committed sin, we revile and threaten in return when people do us wrong.

We were like straying sheep, turning to our own way.

We wanted a way that is our own, and not God's way. *[pause]*

Essentially, we are sinners, who deserved the punishment of God.

There's no way to avoid this reality, there's no way to brush it under the rug, or smooth it over.

We have sinned against a holy God, and sin must be punished.

That's our sin problem that led to the necessity of Jesus suffering and dying for us. *[pause]*

But that's why Christ's work was essential.

He bore our sins in his body on the tree.

Our sins were placed on him on the Cross, and God punished our sin then and there, with Christ being our substitute.

Instead of us paying the penalty for our sin, Christ bore our sin and paid it. *[pause]*

Through his bearing of our sin, we are forgiven!

This is great news!

We are forgiven and declared righteous in God's sight simply because we trusted in the One who bore our sin for us.

This is the miracle and good news of the Gospel, this is substitutionary atonement - he suffered and died for me. [pause]

But this bearing of our sin wasn't *just* for forgiveness, but it was also to empower us to live righteously.

Did you know this?

Christ didn't just die so that you could be forgiven, but he died so that you could be empowered to live differently.

And yet many people ignore that aspect, and continue in sin. [pauseeee]

The text tells us that he bore our sins for a purpose - "that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." *[pause]*

The idea is that because we are united with Christ through faith, it's like our old lives have died with him on the Cross.

And our new lives were raised when he was raised. *[pause]*

So we have died to sin, meaning, we have died to the dominating power of sin.

We are no longer slaves to sin, but free from sin's hold, and now we are able to walk in newness of life.⁵

We are empowered to live godly lives because of his death and resurrection. [pause]

So as you can see, morality by itself is futile to deal with getting one to live righteously.

It is the Cross which empowers someone to live righteously.

Faith in Christ's work on the Cross gives you a new life, which leads to new behavior.

Sin used to reign in our lives, but now we are empowered by Christ to live righteously.

By believing in Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross, now we are empowered to respond to mistreatment in the right way. *[pauseeee]*

Not only have we died to sin so that we may live to righteousness, but also, we were wounded, but now we are healed.

It is by his wounds that we are healed.

⁵ Paul also makes these points in Romans 6:1-11.

Usually by wounds, you are hurt, but here, it's his wounds that heal us. *[pause]*

We needed healed because we were weak and unable to resist temptation and live rightly, but now through Christ's wounds, we are healed.

That is, we are forgiven and made well to live for God. *[pauseeee]*

Christ's death brought forgiveness, empowerment to live righteously, healing, and fourthly, reconciliation. *[pause]*

Peter speaks about how we were straying sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. *[pause]*

In 2004, a sheep named Shrek in New Zealand became famous because he escaped his enclosure and evaded being sheared for 6 years by hiding in caves.⁶

When he was finally found, he had so much fleece that he was unrecognizable.

Shrek the sheep was a straying sheep, and was finally reunited with his shepherd.

So also, we were straying sheep, evading our Shepherd because we wanted to go our own way.

But now because of Christ, we have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. *[pause]*

It was sin that made us each stray.

We wanted our own way, and this wanting our own way leads to destruction as we can't protect our own lives.

Straying sheep just wander about directionless, not able to find good pastures, and they walk straight to a wolf or off a cliff.

That's the image of our lives before Christ - we were straying sheep.

But because of Christ's work, we are brought into the fold with Christ as our Good Shepherd.

He has reconciled our relationship with God that was broken because of our sin, seen as straying away from God.

We weren't seeking him, but wandering, and it was his initiative that brought us back into the place of life, peace, and safety. *[pause]*

What a blessing to know that we have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

We are cared for and guarded forever by Jesus!

⁶ Patowary, Kaushik. "Shrek, The Sheep Who Escaped Shearing for 6 Years." *Amusing Planet*, 23 July 2014, www.amusingplanet.com/2014/07/shrek-sheep-who-escaped-shearing-for-6.html.

Once you repent of your sins and believe in what Jesus did for you on the Cross, you have now been brought into relationship with your God.

You have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul. *[pause]*

As our Shepherd, he leads us and cares for us as we go through each day.

So as you face each day, go to your Shepherd whose rod and staff comfort you.

Go to your Shepherd, who makes you lie down in green pastures and leads you beside the still waters.

Go to your Shepherd, who cares, guides, leads, and protects you, so that when you go through the valley of the shadow of death, you don't have to fear evil.

For He is with you. *[pause]*

Go to Christ! The Good Shepherd who laid his life down for you, and even now cares and comforts and knows you.

He knows what you are going through right now.

He knows your grief, he knows your struggles, he knows your concerns, stresses, and fatigue.

And as a Good Shepherd, he's going to shepherd you all along the way, so trust your Shepherd. *[pauseeee]*

Not only is he our Shepherd, but he is the Overseer of our souls.

He is the guardian of our souls, and there is no better guardian.

The all-perfect, all-powerful Son of God, who upholds the universe by the word of his power, guards your soul. *[pause]*

If you have trusted in Jesus Christ to be saved, your soul is guarded forever by Christ!

You never have to worry about losing your salvation.

You never have to worry that something will happen to change the fate of your soul.

No threat by another person. No danger. No uncertain moment. No unforeseen event will threaten the state of your soul.

But he guards your soul.

He oversees it so that what he wants to happen will happen.

And what has he promised to those who believe in Him? Eternal life. *[pauseeee]*

You see, this passage teaches us that...

Christ suffered for you, not only showing you how to respond to unjust suffering, but taking care of your sin problem!

Thanks be to our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ!

What grace and mercy he has shown us!

He not only gave us an example to follow, but he took care of the most important thing: our sin problem.

And he did it out of love. [pause]

We were under the penalty of sin, but Christ bore our sin on the Cross and now we are forgiven.

We were under the slavery of sin, but Christ bore our sin and now we are dead to sin, so that we can live to righteousness.

We were broken and wounded because of sin, but by *his* wounds, he healed us and made us whole.

We were straying sheep on our way to destruction, but he turned us back to Himself, our true and good Shepherd and Overseer. [pause]

Christ has taken care of the most eternally significant problem in our lives - our sin problem.

So now we stand forgiven, free, healed, and reconciled to God.

But how does this all relate back to responding to mistreatment?

Because Peter is recentering us on the Cross, so that we think in these ways...ways like...

Others may commit sin against you and have deceit in their mouths, but look to the One who committed no sin neither was deceit in his mouth.

You may want to take things into your own hands, but look at how even Jesus entrusted himself to the One who judges justly.

You may be mistreated by others, but think about the ultimate mistreatment of the Son of God for *your* sins.

*You may be mistreated by others, but you have not been mistreated by Christ, who bore your sins and treated you with grace and mercy in a way you *didn't* deserve.*

You may be reviled by others, but you are cared for by your Shepherd.

You may suffer at the hands of others, but because of Christ, you won't suffer the punishment and penalty for your sins. *[pause]*

We were the ones who mistreated Christ, yet thankfully he didn't give up on his mission to die for our sins, but he suffered for us. *[pause]*

If you are here today and you are struggling under the weight of your sin and fearful of the punishment of God...

...then find forgiveness and freedom today by turning from your sin which has led you astray, and turn to Christ, your true Shepherd.

There are marks in his hands and in his side, showing what he went through to pay for your sins, and demonstrating that the price has been paid.

His arms are open wide, will you run into his arms today?

If you do that today, you will return to the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul, who will care for you and guard your soul into eternity. *[pause]*

For the Christian, struggling because you have been mistreated by others.

It hurts, it's painful, God doesn't deny that.

But he simply says, "Don't retaliate, don't be resentful. Give the situation to me, and look at what my Son has done for you."

Look at the lengths that Christ took to deal with your sin problem, amidst the greatest of mistreatment, even to the point of death. *[pause]*

The most important, eternally significant problems that came from your sin are dealt with in Christ, so now will you entrust Him with the mistreatment you are experiencing?

If you could trust Him with your sin problem, don't you think you can trust him to be good, loving, caring, and just in the situation you are facing?