

September 4 "In His Steps" 1 Peter 2:18-25

Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of **unjust suffering** because he is conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you **suffer** for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ **suffered** for you, leaving you an example that you should **follow in his steps**. ²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he **suffered**, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Talking Points:

"**Slaves**" (historical/present day relevance)

"**Suffering**" (Christ suffered for us; they were going to suffer, too; suffering = chosen; we seldom suffer)

"**Follow in his Steps**" (His Example – His Empowerment)

"**Authority**"

"**Sacrifice**" (more of our experience now)

Whiteboard:

SLAVES

SUFFERING

"**Follow in his steps**"

AUTHORITY

SACRIFICE

Slaves – Culture changes through time and this social relationship doesn't exist in the US. With our terrible history of slavery and its evil American application, I'd prefer not to even mention the word. Sadly, this and other texts, have been used at times by Christians to justify slavery. So, I feel I need to say something about this text.

"**oiketes**" (not "doulos") this word can also be translated as "domestics" or "servants." The word "**steward**," which Jesus used in some of His parables, has a different connotation. That's why we must go back to the era/culture in which Peter lived 2,000 years ago and not impose our history and perspective upon the text. Possibly ^{1/3} of the urban areas of the Roman Empire consisted of slaves. Slaves were treated in vastly different ways than what we have heard. Race had nothing to do with it. Slaves could own property. People became slaves in various ways. The majority were born to slaves, others were captured during war, while others got into debt and were either taken as slaves or sold themselves into slavery until they could raise enough money to buy themselves out of it. Slavery, of any variety, is not good. It's always been prone to abuses, primarily because it creates at least a 2nd class of citizens – the "free/slave." At its worst, it makes slaves into non-people – like cattle. Peter wasn't trying to perpetuate the institution of slavery but was writing to people who were in it. If Peter focused upon making slavery the social justice issue of his day, the message about serving Christ would have become secondary to another cause. Later in history, it did become the issue for Christian people. William Wilberforce spent his life trying to get England to repeal it. The Civil War was fought over the issue. But Peter's concern is about slaves who are working in the homes of those who aren't Christians. How is this relevant for us today? Though the 13th Amendment was passed and the Civil War was fought to end the despicable practice over 150 years ago, there is a legacy which still remains today. But what does this have to do with me?

Slavery still exists today. There's an epidemic of human trafficking. One estimate is 29 million people are slaves around the world. The 3 leading countries were: the West African country of Mauritania ranks 1st, Haiti 2nd and Pakistan is 3rd. The largest #'s are in Africa/Asia, but human trafficking is in the USA, Oklahoma and in Tulsa. Just as Christians of a previous generation worked to end slavery. There are Christians doing the same today.

Suffering Many Christians follow the “You should Prosper.” Some verses support that. However, this prosperity has all too often been linked with materialism (“Follow Jesus - you get stuff”). Peter doesn’t tell them that will prosper financially here. He says if they follow Jesus, they will suffer (4x in 5 verses).
v19 *the pain of unjust suffering* v20 *if you suffer for doing good*

v21 *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you* v23 *when he suffered*

Every human suffers. Our bodies age, break down and die. Our emotions and mental health suffers. Economic factors (losing your job or economic woes create challenges). Everyone suffers because of family. Peter isn’t talking about “normal” human suffering. He points to Jesus as our example. Jesus endured something which he could have escaped. He didn’t HAVE to die upon the cross. Likewise, in Acts, the apostles could have avoided persecution and suffering if only they’d quit preaching the gospel. But, they continued to proclaim. They were beaten, imprisoned, and beheaded. Renounce Jesus and walk away or face persecution. This is chosen suffering. That happen around the world, but seldom here. Our “suffering” isn’t something we intentionally seek. It’s a by-product of a culture living in opposition to the Spirit of God. Jesus called it “The Broad Road,” Paul called it, “the flesh,” and John called it “The spirit of anti-Christ” and “Babylon.” We all know what “The Broad Road” is and we all know what the “Flesh” is – but “anti-Christ” and “Babylon” have more sinister meanings.

You should follow in his steps. What’s this mean?

Jesus = our example. While we may suffer unjustly, nobody has suffered as unjustly as Jesus. He didn’t suffer for his sins but for ours. Jesus is our example of how we are to live.

Jesus was more than an example – he **transforms** us. Not only did he bear our sins and take our blame, he did so that: *we might die to sins and live for righteousness.* Being set free, means we are to live in a new way. We want to follow Jesus. We want to help others follow Jesus. We believe that THIS is life.

The Resurrection of Jesus makes it possible/hopeful for us to follow Jesus.

Who are you following? Why? How’s that working for you?

Jesus = empowers us. Just as He gave the disciples the Holy Spirit which changed them from the inside, He doesn’t give us an assignment and let us do it by ourselves. His power is in us, too.

Application The Bible is the guide for my life. I pay attention to what it says and want to follow it. But when it came to the application of this text, I thought: “**Slavery** doesn’t apply to me. I’m not a slave, don’t own any slaves. While I’ve heard about human trafficking that seems far outside my box. Furthermore, I’m not **suffering** for Christ. I’ve not spent a single night in jail for preaching the gospel. Nobody has thrown literal, physical rocks at me.

The two points of application for me are these:

1.) **Authority.** This text addresses is of our response to Authority. Slavery isn’t an issue for us, but all must respond to authority. Employees, students, children, citizens and in the church – God puts people over us who are authorities. Jesus was our example.

How are you following the authorities God has placed into my life? It begins with the authority of scripture. But it speaks of personal relationship. Maybe I am the boss. Am I treating people with respect and dignity?

2.) **Sacrifice.** I’m not being persecuted, but I do sacrifice for the Gospel.

How are YOU sacrificing?

***Time.** Am I willing to prioritize it in accordance with my willingness to Follows Jesus?

-Prayer, Scripture-reading, Faithful Attendance in Worship, Small Groups

***Witness.** Am I willing to speak up for Christ? In School, work, with family?

***Generosity.** Am I willing to put my money where my mouth is?

Following Jesus should cost you something. Following Jesus isn't something you did once for 15 minutes when you were 12 years old – it's something you do this day and every day. Bob Goff = Being Present = Inconvenience. Take the opportunity. Learn to say "yes!"

It's easy for the church to be like the culture. We want others to go first. You love me. You entertain me. You feed me. You serve me. Jesus says: "No. Watch me. I'm going to die for you." That's sacrifice. That's commitment. That's loyalty. When Peter was filled with the Spirit of Jesus, following Jesus was his heart's desire, not some sort of religious duty. When they beat Paul and Silas in the Philippian prison – they sang hymns of praise to God. They should've been demanding their rights, but instead they were delighting in their relationships with Jesus.

Remember that Peter (and Paul, and most of the disciples) were martyred. Peter, according to tradition, was crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified like Jesus. They began with the end in mind – resurrection. These slight, momentary afflictions weren't worth mentioning in comparison with the great result of the future.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven"

We don't end with the crucifixion. We don't end with the cross. We don't end with the bad guys winning. God won. They didn't. Suffering is worth the sacrifice because our end is glorious not empty. "What does it profit someone to gain the whole world and lose their soul?"

This morning, we share in the service of Holy Communion. This is the "New Covenant" God made with us through Jesus Christ. We invite you to receive these elements. They are gifts from a loving God to you. Jesus went to the cross to die for your sins so that you might be set free. Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus gives us the power of the Holy Spirit. Not only was he our example, but He is the one who will live within you to give you the ability to live for Him. He will empower you. What He asks from you is that you will confess your sin, open your heart to Him and let Him come into your life. We don't earn His love, but we can respond to it.