

## I PETER

Christ Our Example

March 24, 2013

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
  - A. **I Peter 2:21-3:1** . . . 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 found 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. [3:1] In the same way, you wives, and then you husbands . . .
  - B. Pray
- II. Christ Our Example In The Face Of Suffering, and Our Savior
  - A. Last Sunday we looked at the fact that one of our callings as Christians is to persevere in doing good in the face of ill-treatment and injustice brought upon us by those in authority over us. Today, we are going to look at the example of Jesus Christ in overcoming evil by humbly and respectfully facing unjust, cruel, and physically painful treatment. And though it may seem like Jesus was the one overcome by what he suffered, let me remind you that our salvation – and all that goes with it – is a direct result of His overcoming evil with good.
  - B. Now if we are to gain a useful understanding of this example of Christ doing good in the face of ill-treatment, we must identify the evil that we are overcoming. Or in other words, we must identify the enemy.
    1. Our tendency is to see the enemy as those inflicting the pain. For example, we naturally look at the Jewish religious leaders, Pilot, Judas, some of the Roman soldiers, and the supporting crowd of people as the evil enemies who inflicted this unjust suffering on Jesus.
    2. But were they the true enemy that God wanted Jesus to overcome by persisting in doing good? Regardless of their participation in the evil done to Jesus, were these people the enemy He was seeking to overcome when He refused to revile and threaten them?
    3. The answer is a clear no. They were the enemy's representatives, the enemy's tools or servants. Yes, they are guilty of doing the bidding

- of the enemy, but they are not the ones Jesus was seeking to defeat by remaining humble, meek, and respectful throughout his ordeal.
4. The enemy of Christ was the devil, which is the very same enemy we face when passing through times of ill-treatment and injustice at the hands of those in authority over us. And so when God tells us we have been called for the purpose of overcoming evil with good, in the face of ill-treatment, it means He is calling us to behave in ways that further defeat the devil in the midst of his efforts to defeat God.
  5. Therefore, as you consider how Christ's example might be applied in your life, remember that the true enemy is not the person or people making your life difficult, it is the one who is active in motivating and directing those people – and that is the devil.

C. **I Peter 2:22-23a** . . . Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; [23] and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats . . . **He had done nothing wrong, that is, He had done nothing to deserve such treatment!**

1. I understand that this is how many of us feel when caught in a situation where the authority is mistreating us. Now I am not saying that there aren't those situations where we are completely in the right and the authority is simply in the wrong.
  - a. But before we conclude we are as innocent as Christ, we should prayerfully and honestly examine ourselves. And our examination should include hearing the authority's side of the story – to see if we have in some way contributed to the authority's motives or reasons for mistreating us.
  - b. And should we be in the wrong in any way, as Christ-ones, we are duty-bound to correct our ways and make right whatever harm we have done, whether the authority changes or doesn't change.
2. Now you may be thinking that the "two wrongs never make a right" principle should apply to the authority as well. And it should. Just because we have done wrong does not give the authority the right to mistreat us or deal with us in an unjust or even cruel way.
  - a. And yet, we are the born again ones. We are the ones who have repented from rebellion against God and the practice of sin. We are the ones who have committed ourselves to a serious and life-long pursuit of godliness. We are the ones who have received mercy and forgiveness. We are the humble and submissive ones. And unlike the one mistreating us, what we lose by doing good

is temporary and confined to this life, while what we gain is eternal.

- b. So though two wrongs never make a right, our wrong is more inexcusable because we are serving God, while their wrong is more understandable because they are serving the devil. And as for what is gained or lost, no earthly authority can take away what is eternal, so our losses are only temporary, while their losses will extend into eternity.
3. Now, returning to Christ as our example, notice the extent of the injustice and cruelty which He endured.
  - a. He was sinless, yet judged guilty of a death-sentence crime.
  - b. He was honest, yet called a liar.
  - c. He was reviled, that is, His character was attacked and discredited, yet He did not revile in return. In other words, Jesus did not attack their character.
    - (1) This is pretty amazing from an earthly standpoint, because it is common for those attacked to attack back in about the same way as they were attacked.
    - (2) In other words, if the attack on our character is angry, derogatory, exaggerated, or includes outright lies, our human tendency is to respond in angry, derogatory, exaggerated, and sometimes even dishonest ways.
    - (3) But Jesus resisted that common temptation and chose to say nothing about their character.
  - d. He was forced to suffer very cruel, inhumane treatment – today we would call it torture. Yet He never threatened to get even with those inflicting the pain, or with the authorities who wanted this evil done to Him. In fact, He never spoke or acted as if He had any intention of seeking revenge.
4. So how did He do this? How did Jesus remain faithful to overcoming evil with good while enduring such ill-treatment?

D. **I Peter 2:23b** . . . [He] kept entrusting Himself to Him [God] who judges righteously.

1. You see from these words that the answer to “how did Christ do it” is simple. **He trusted in God!** He put His faith in God to judge everyone involved righteously – including himself. And He trusted God to somehow and in some way and at some time, bring such a good out of this great injustice that it would make enduring the evil seem

- worth it. And of course, we think His suffering was worth it because it purchased our salvation and made a way for our sanctification.
2. Now if Jesus is our example, than we can remain humbly submissive and respectful toward uncaring, self-serving, unjust, evil authorities the same way He did – by trusting in God.
  3. Pretty simple isn't it? Well yes, it is simple on the one hand, but very challenging on the other. You see, this is one of those truths that is easy to teach and somewhat easy to understand, but very challenging to live, especially when your sense of well-being or sense of security or sense of justice is being threatened by someone over you.
  4. It is a bit like being told to bless those who persecute you. Hearing what we ought to do is easy. Doing it as if it were your natural response to persecution takes a good bit of spiritual maturity – and as those who are older know, maturity comes from a diligent, persistent effort over an extended period of time.
    - a. My point here is that even though living up to God's word can be reduced to the simplicity of faith, getting to the place where we trust God enough to live that way is not so simple.
    - b. For example, it is not so simple to die to self, or to keep denying self when you feel a great sense of need, or to continue doing good in overcoming evil when that evil is injustice, or outright lies about your character, or the horror of physical pain and torture.
  5. And yet, this is our calling, this is what we are to pursue and rise to, so that when the time comes to live up to this exhortation – and such times will come – we are prepared to trust in God and behave as those committed to overcoming evil with good.
    - a. You may not, at this time, be spiritually mature enough to closely follow Jesus' example in such a situation.
    - b. But neither will tyou get to that level of Christian maturity without making it your aim to get there, and then putting in the effort required, for as long it takes.
  6. And let me remind us all that just as God calls us to a high standard of holiness , so God makes it possible to attain the standard He sets. However, we must do our part, and when we do our part, here are some of the ways God helps and empowers us:
    - a. Every new day God gives us is another day to grow toward a holiness that is like His holiness.
    - b. God gives us a new birth, making us a new creation in Christ Jesus – and He implants His divine nature within us.
    - c. He breaks our bondage to sin.

- d. He gives us the leading, instructing, and convicting work of the Holy Spirit.
  - e. God gives us a living scripture, that is, the living word that teaches, and judges, and exposes, and shows the way.
  - f. We have the power of prayer – anytime and in any place.
  - g. He gives us fellow believers to help us along the way.
  - h. He protects us from temptation stronger than our current spiritual ability to resist.
  - i. And He gives us His empowering grace, day by day.
7. My point here is that we can do this, if we will. In other words, the will to grow to the level of spiritual maturity required to follow Christ's example is the first step toward gaining that maturity.
- a. And so I ask you, will you hunger and thirst for this kind of righteousness, this level of Christian maturity, this strength of faith in God, and this depth of humility?
  - b. If you will, you must start now, if you haven't started already, to pursue a meek and humble of heart, like Jesus', so that when ill-treatment strikes, you are able to remain humbly respectful.

E. **ONCE TO EVERY MAN AND NATION**, by James R. Lowell, (*Changed from the current Hymn words to Lowell's original words*)

(1) Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide,  
 In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;  
 Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,  
 Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right.

(3) Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 'tis Truth alone is strong;  
 Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,  
 Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
 Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

*[The above poem is derived from the original eighteen stanzas of "The Present Crisis", a work by James Russell Lowell that addressed the national crisis over slavery.]*

F. **I Peter 2:24** . . . 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. **For you were continually straying** like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

1. I want to point out three important truths from these two verses.

2. **First**, Christ suffered severely in overcoming evil with good, and we should expect to suffer, at least in some way and to some degree when faced with the same kind of situation.
  - a. It is unlikely you will suffer to the extent Christ suffered – it seems few Christians do. But you will pay a price for remaining humbly submissive and respectful when being ill-treated by someone in authority – and the price most often is continued ill-treatment.
    - (1) Feeding your enemy or giving him a drink is not guaranteed to gain your enemy’s favor, but it is guaranteed to demonstrate your willing submission to the will and ways of God.
    - (2) Therefore, we should not expect that doing God’s will guarantees protection from suffering in this life. It may, and Daniel’s three friends give us an example of that. But it may not, and the suffering saints mentioned in **Hebrews 11** and the martyred saints down through the centuries are an example of that.
  - b. The point here is that humbly suffering injustice and ill-treatment is not about relief. It is about joining Christ in doing battle with and overcoming our most powerful enemy, the devil.
    - (1) This does not mean we cannot flee persecution or take God honoring steps to end it.
    - (2) Nor does this mean that those who are mistreating us are getting away with their sin. The scriptures confirm that God will judge them and avenge you.
  - c. But what it does mean is that in this life, overcoming evil with good most often includes suffering on our part. However, do not let that discourage you, for whatever you lose in this life is nothing in comparison to what you will gain in this life and the next. For me, the growth of the church in China after communism took over is an inspiring example of this.
3. **Second**, Jesus humbly endured ill-treatment so that we would have the privilege of dying to sin and living to righteousness. In other words, His suffering overcame evil with good – a good that is able to free us from sin, transforms our lives, reconcile us to God, and brings us safely into God’s eternal kingdom to life with Him forever.
  - a. Now think about this for a moment. This is outcome was hardly visible, if not totally missed by everyone, other than Jesus, who

was there at his trial and crucifixion. What they saw, they saw from an earthly, temporal perspective.

- b. Even Jesus' most spiritually minded disciples did not see, at that moment, the amazing defeat of evil by good brought about by Christ humbly enduring His suffering.
  - c. And unless we have grown sufficiently in Christian maturity, when we suffer ill-treatment at the hands of those in authority, it is likely that we will not see how remaining humbly submissive will in some way overcome evil with good. However, not seeing it does not mean good is not prevailing in some way – just as it prevailed through Jesus' suffering.
4. **Third**, we need more than Christ's example to persevere in humble submission, we need His indwelling presence and His empowering grace to assist us, for we are weak apart from His outpouring of daily grace into our lives.

### III. Conclusion

- A. What Jesus did in remaining humble and respectful in the face of ill-treatment by those in authority, He did for God, first and foremost, and that is Who we are to do this for as well.
- B. But Jesus also did this for us, for through His suffering, His wounds, God has healed us and continues to heal us, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, morally, and relationally. In this same way, when we follow Jesus' example in the face of ill-treatment, God will use it to bring blessing to others.