

1 Peter 2:21-25

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, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 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; 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.

We touched on this passage last week with the idea that we were always called for this purpose: suffering unjustly and patiently enduring under its sting. The context falls immediately after the Lord told us that He is pleased when we endure suffering at the hands of a cruel and unjust master (**2:18-20**). And since “called” is in the *aorist passive indicative* we know this is our way of in life. How it comes into our lives is left to the wild imagination of God (which, we have learned, is quite creative); but we can be assured that God has called us to suffer and that is a statement of fact.

We have been called to do what is intrinsically good (“*agathos*”) (**2:20**) and to suffer for it at the unjust hands of those who are warped and twist light into darkness and distort all that we do, even slandering us as evildoers (**2:12**). This pattern of living was established for us by Jesus. Christ also suffered for you. Now

you would think this would be in the past tense (the Greek *imperfect*), which is actually used later in this text, but it is not; it is in the *aorist active indicative*. Thus, “suffered” is a poor translation choice. Contextually, I believe this communicates that suffering is Jesus’ way of life. Now technically, the *aorist* can generally be used to describe the past, present, or future. But in this case, we will find that the example of suffering He leaves us is in the *present* tense. Yes, He suffered, but He still suffers, and being in the *indicative*, it is a statement of fact.

Jesus absolutely suffered. **Isaiah 53:2** says that He was despised and He was forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with the deepest grief. **Isaiah 53:9-10** says that the Father put Him to grief and His soul was filled with anguish. It is hard for us to fully understand His suffering or His anguish. Yes, we can grasp the fact that at the end of His life Jesus was brutally beaten, scourged, and His body was pierced and hung on the cross; but I want you to also think of the emotional suffering which Jesus endured. He came to His own people to love them and to die for them; He came to be their sacrifice. Yet, for the most part, He was faced with utter rejection. Listen to the pain in His heart:

Matthew 23:37-39

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!

It is clear that His heart was in torment over those whom He loved. They did not want His love, they did not want His sacrifice, they did not want His provision, they did not want His protection and comfort, and they simply did not want Him. Nevertheless, He loved each and every one of them. But He also knew that even His love was not going to retard the righteous judgment of His Father. They were going to face a horrendous judgment because of their choice to reject Him and that caused Him great grief.

Furthermore, according to ***Zechariah 13:6*** it was prophesied that Jesus would be wounded in the house of his friends, or in the Hebrew, in “the house of those who love me.” And that is exactly what happened. He was anguished by the rejection which came at the hands of His friends, those from the house of Israel, those whom He chose and set apart from all others, those who said they loved God, served God, and wanted God, and those who claim their distinction in this world by their religious duties and passions. It was at their hands that He was wounded. In contrast to Jesus’ compassion expressed though His desire to just gather up the children of Israel and keep them close and safe and comfortable under His protective wing, their hearts were filled with vile, hate, and contempt.

John 19:14-15

Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

Can you imagine? Wow! But here is the thing, He still suffers. This same rejection is going on today and it comes from those who claim to love Him, from within His own house. We read about this in the letters to the churches in **Revelation 2-3**. He still suffers rejection, but He experiences it in and through the lives of true believers—those who live by faith. Let me explain. He did not leave us an example to follow (as in the past tense), but He is even now continually leaving us an example to follow, as “leaving” is in the *present active participle*; it is happening now. Again, we are not talking about the past but the present. Think of the implications of this statement because it goes to the heart of our motto: I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me (**Galatians 2:20**).

The idea is that as we give way for Christ to actually live in and through our lives (through putting away the fleshly lusts of self-pity and self-love which rule in our souls), then when we suffer He suffers. Paul expresses this idea in **Colossians 1:24**, “I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.” Your translation might say, “...in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.” But either way, the point is that when we give Him the control of our lives, He lives in and through our lives; therefore He is continually suffering. It is His suffering, we just share in it. And when, by the Spirit of God, we patiently endure, through our lives He gives others a real-time *present active* example to follow.

If you can imagine, Paul declares, “I want to suffer with Him sharing in His death so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the

dead” or experience the mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead (***Philippians 3:10-11***). The design point has always been His life in ours, which is why Jesus said in ***Matthew 10:40-41***, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me,” leaving us with the implication that He who rejects us is in fact rejecting Jesus. It is all so fascinating and personal.

Now I want you to keep in mind Jesus’ pattern of suffering as we will also endure suffering at the hands of those who say they love and serve God. Our studies in the book of ***Jude*** and ***Revelation*** made this abundantly clear. As we get closer and closer to the end and closer to the great apostasy, our persecution will come at the hands of those who claim to love the Lord and serve Him—from the house of our friends or our loved ones. Jesus also made sure we understood this reality. He told us to be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves, wary of religious men for they will hand us over to the courts or scourge us in their synagogues (places of religious gathering), believing—fully convinced—they are doing a service for God (***Matthew 10:16-17; John 16:1-2***). It’s the pattern.

The Spirit tells us to follow in Jesus’ steps. Let’s consider Jesus’ example: He committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth. This is a quote from ***Isaiah 53:9***. Both of these statements are in the *indicative* so they are presented to us a bone fide statement of fact. This is the example we are to follow. Now before you roll your eyes thinking that this is too much or merely a suggestion, we have learned that this way of living is entirely possible. If we let Jesus dominate our life, we know that He does not sin nor does He deceive; we just have to get out of the way and let Him have His rightful control as our Lord and Master.

Of course this goes back to everything we have learned about our need to walk

in the Spirit of God and not in the flesh. As it says in **Galatians 5:16**, if you walk in the Spirit you will not carry out the deeds of the flesh. So it is possible to live this way. **1 John 3:6** says, no one who abides in Him sins. And this is also presented as a statement of fact. If we “abide” (*present active participle*)—continually, in every moment of our now—we will not sin (*present active indicative*). As Paul says, it is no longer I who live but Christ in me. And if Christ lives in me, then as it says in **1 Peter 1:16**, we can be holy as He is holy and follow in His steps.

We must always remember the design point when we read the scriptures: His life in ours. To experience this reality, it all goes back to that decision we need to make to abstain from the fleshly lusts which wage war against our soul (**2:11**) and to remove from our lives all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander (**2:1**). Remember, both “abstain” and “remove” are in the *middle* voice, which means we need to dig in deep down into our souls and make the choice to no longer give ourselves to all our self-pity and self-love which seduces us to trust in ourselves and what we can do (which is always twisted). Instead we are to throw ourselves upon the Rock to be broken trusting that He will heal every wound since as living stones He is building us up as a spiritual house, for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (**2:5-6**).

The point is that this kind of living (without sin or deceit) is not just a religious platitude nor is it a religious fiction; it is possible and it is to be our way of life. We are to follow in Jesus’s steps. This way of living is to describe you. If you cannot practically declare, “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ in me,” then you need to start digging. You need to accept your identity as the Lord’s **beloved**, challenge the fear that keeps you paralyzed and immobile,

and deal with all the inane reasons you chose to trust in yourself, in religion, in the traditions of men, and so on. Get it out of the way so you can start digging deep and make the decision to let go of all that you hold to which is not of God.

Why do you think the Spirit did not just leave it as “who committed no sin”? Why add, “nor was any deceit found in His mouth”? After all, clearly deceit is sin; it’s not like you can have deceit without sin. Perhaps the Spirit is taking note of the fact that so many people who are engaged in serving God, say they love God, and are even shepherding others in the name of God, don’t really know Him. Remember, He suffered at the hands of His friends and still suffers at their hands. But their mouths are filled with religious deceit as they have covered over “doing” for God with truly having an active relationship of faith with God. They know they have sin evidenced by the fact that they don’t have His promise of peace resting on their lives; but they don’t want you to know it; thus, their mouths are filled with all manner of religious platitudes. But Jesus had no deceit; He and the Father were one and He only did what His Father told Him to do (**John 17:22; John 5:19**). This is the example we are to follow—a relationship of faith.

2:23 provides a further explanation of the example which Jesus now sets for us and which we are to follow. It’s a bit bizarre and difficult to understand because we have a strange contrast in the use of the Greek *present* tense and the rarely used Greek past tense, the “*imperfect*.” This is the first time we have encountered the past tense in this book and it is now used three times.

“And while being reviled [*present passive participle*], He did not [*imperfect active indicative*] revile in return; while suffering [*present active participle*], He uttered no threats [*imperfect active indicative*], but kept entrusting [*imperfect*

active indicative] Himself to Him who judges [*present active participle*] righteously.”

We can now understand that His being “reviled” and His “suffering” is in the *present active participle* because such things are continually being experienced real-time by those who are truly His **beloved**. As they are reviled, He is reviled; as they suffer, He suffers. Remember the design point, His life in ours. But then in each instance we are thrown back to what He did in the past. He did not revile in return and He uttered no threats. There is no congruity in the tense of these verbs. It does not say, “As He is now reviled He is even now not reviling.” That would make sense; but again, we are taken back to what He did in the past.

I believe this incongruity is intentional and the Spirit wants to drive home the point He always seems to make regarding that strange intersection between the works of God as He lives in our lives and our choice to submit to the Spirit in order that the works of God might be made manifest in our lives. All throughout the Bible there is this intersection that cannot be denied between God’s actions and man’s choices. We are not robots and He does not force us to do anything; His love forbids it. Rather, He induces us and gives us every reason to choose Him; but when it is all said and done, we still need to make that choice.

Accordingly, we are given the example to now follow in His present sufferings. We must like Him make the choice not to revile in return and choose not to utter threats. We have a role to play. We must make the choice to walk in the Spirit of God, for then we will not carry out what we would otherwise want to do, which is revile in return and utter all manner of threats. In this passage, I believe we see the beautiful relationship between a God who loves and chooses to let us

experience His life and man who must reciprocate in this relationship and choose to experience God as He wants to be experienced.

Instead of reviling in return and uttering threats, Jesus kept trusting Himself (again in the “*imperfect*” or past tense) to Him who now and continually judges righteously (*present active participle*). Clearly, God made all of us with a deep rooted sense of justice; which should not surprise us since man was made in His image and justice is near and dear to His heart. But we have taken something that is part of His nature and decided that we are somehow impartial enough or good enough to be our own justice; hence, we take matters into our own hands and far too often retaliate when someone hurts us, afflicts us, persecutes us, or is nasty to us. It makes us so mad and we just have to say something or do something in return. Quite often it comes out in passive aggressive ways like in separation or the silent treatment or snarky comments, because in our “deceitful spirituality” we don’t want to be caught retaliating. Regardless of how it is expressed, we love to retaliate and exact justice. In those moments it seems that every fiber of our body wants to say or do something in retort.

But that is not what Jesus did. Being God, He obviously had every right take justice into His own hands; after all, **John 5:22** says that the Father has given all judgment to the son. But still He waited and He yielded His own sense of justice to His Father who according to **1 Peter 1:17** is always impartially judging each one's work. And this is the example we are to follow. Jesus chose to yield His rights in order that we might have an example to follow. He entrusted Himself to the one who judges. Jesus the man exercised faith in the one who is His justice. In like manner, we are, by faith, to yield our own sense of justice and trust that our

Father, who adores His **beloved** (remember, we are His precious possession), will judge—even in our now—and take action on our behalf.

This tells us that our Father will, in His own way, make things right. It may not look like you want it to look from the eyes of your own justice; in fact, you may not even see it, but we are to trust that it is happening in our now and He is judging thus we don't have to. We can simply move forward with the assignments which the Father has given us trusting that He is so clever and creative that He will exact justice on our behalf when we trust Him to deal with those who unjustly revile us and hurt us. If we take the action out of His hands, shame on us. We are not nearly as good at exacting justice as He is and we have no right acting like God; that is not our role. He is our justice and we need to let Him be our justice. Besides, the Lord takes His role quite seriously. **Isaiah 30:18** says He is a God of justice. **Psalms 37:28** says, "For the Lord loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones." In **Isaiah 61:8** He says, "I the Lord love justice." Accordingly, we can rest in this truth. Justice is the foundation of His throne (**Psalms 97:2**) and the works of His hands are truth and justice (**Psalms 111:7**). Listen to what Jesus said:

Luke 18:7-8

Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.

When we are reviled, hurt, taken advantage of or unjustly suffer at the hands

of others, we are to turn to our Father and let Him be our justice. We are to cry out to Him—day and night—expressing ourselves to Him. And this does not apply only to the huge big incidents, but also in the little things we encounter with one another on a day-in-and-day-out basis. How many times do we just so quickly react to some comment, some look, or some gesture without even thinking? Instead, we need to stop, we need to take our hurt and our pain to our Father and ask Him to handle the injustice. And when by faith we are free from the need to revenge in anyway shape or form, we will find that we will be free to focus on the relationship, free to love with God’s agape love, free to correct, encourage and exhort. This is what it means to live like an alien and stranger on this earth; this is what it means to live as a child of God, the Lord’s **beloved**.

Let’s move on to **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.” First of all, I want to note that when it says He bore our sins, it is not in the *imperfect* or the past tense. It is in the *aorist*. The implication is that even though He died once and for all as a sacrifice for our sin and to break the power of sin (**Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:28**), this act has ongoing and continual effect for you and for me. Thus, as it was in the past so it is in our now and forever; it is our ongoing reality, our way of life if you many. He bore our sins in His body on the cross and there is nothing we have done or will do that is exempt from this one act which has an ongoing effect. We need to trust in this truth!

And talk about suffering, He bore our sins in His body. The sins of every man, woman and child who ever lived, or ever will live, was in His body. **2 Corinthians 5:21** says, “He made Him who knew no sin **to be** sin on our behalf, so that we

might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Imagine how awful we feel when we sin. You know what I am talking about, that pain that hits you deep in your soul. Then multiply that pain by unfathomable numbers of humanity and then magnify it by unfathomable sins which man has performed in the dark corners of this world. All of that was not just in Him but became Him. That is a suffering which you and I will never know and it is not to be wasted. This suffering was with purpose. He bore our sins so we might die to sin and live to righteousness as we have become the righteousness of God in Him. How amazing is that! Again, the Spirit wants you to grasp a hold of your true identity. This speaks of you.

Let’s start with this idea that He bore our sins so we might “die” to sin. Being in the *aorist middle participle*, dying to sin is to be our continual way of life (hence, the *aorist* and the *participle*). We are to always be putting to death the deeds of the flesh. For example, after being instructed in **Romans 8:5-8** to set our minds on the Spirit and not the flesh, since those who are in the flesh cannot please God, the Spirit goes on to say:

Romans 8:12-15

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Putting to death the deeds of the flesh is to always be our life from beginning to end. But “die” is also in the *middle* voice. Thus, dying to sin does not happen by magic or as a consequence of Jesus dying; rather, this means that we have been enabled through His death to make the choice to be dead to sin. Thus, once again we find that we have to dig deep down inside our soul and say no to those fleshly lusts of self-pity and self-love, we have to dig deep down inside our soul and put aside all the malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander, and we have to embrace who we are in Christ and choose to live in that reality. Once again, there is that mysterious intersection between what Jesus does for us and our choice to embrace what He does. He does not force us to die to sin; He enables us and then it is our choice to take advantage of this opportunity.

He became sin so we would not have to live in sin but instead “live” to righteousness. And we know that we have no righteousness in and of ourselves (***Romans 3:10-18***), which is why we can have no confidence in the flesh (***Philippians 3:3***). But we have become the righteousness of God, but in order to live to righteousness, it must be through faith—through betting our lives on all that He says is true (***Philippians 3:9***). For God’s way of making us right depends on faith not our own efforts at doing it “right.” Thus, “living to righteousness” depends upon our willingness to dig down deep in our soul and choose to act upon what we believe. For example, if we believe He is our justice, we need to bet our lives on this truth and refuse to retaliate when hurt; retaliation is His job, living to righteousness is ours.

Next it says that by His wounds we were healed or made whole. I know some people try and teach that this proves we are not to be physically sick and if we

had enough faith we would not be sick. But contextually, there is no way one can honestly, without deceit, come to this conclusion. Such teaching is a lie, it is heresy, and it will trap you in a guilt ridden life of failure. If you ever hear it, reject it and walk away as fast as you can.

Contextually, the Spirit has been addressing what it means to truly live as an alien and stranger on this earth, as the Lord's **beloved**. As He says in **2:9-10**, we were once not a people, but now we are the people of God. We once had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy. We once had a serious problem, a rift caused by sin, which eternally separated us from God. But since Jesus became sin on our behalf and the Father judged and condemned that sin on the cross, the breach has been healed. By His wounds we have been healed. As such we have been made whole and have become the righteousness of God such that we are now enabled to continually put to death the deeds of the flesh and live to righteousness. By the way, "were healed" is in the *aorist passive indicative*. Healing now describes our life, God has done it, and it is a statement of fact. We must now choose to live in our healing as we have been made whole.

In terms of the nature of this healing, this passage also sets the context for us: "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." Once again, the context is not physical healing, but spiritual healing. We were continually straying like sheep. In our sin nature, we would just would wonder off. But that no longer describes our life. The Spirit used the technical past tense, the *imperfect*, since it is something we did; but that description no longer can be put to our lives. It is our past; it is not our now and never will be our future. We are the Lord's **beloved**, His precious

possession and can't go astray as our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away reserved in heaven for you who are protected by the power of God for a salvation to be revealed in the last times (**1:4-5**). Get this please: whether you do it "right" or "not" is not the issue; this is an issue of possession. If you are a true believer, you are the Lord's precious possession and will never go astray. Now, it's all about learning to live as His possession—living to righteousness. But if you are one of those so called "friends" with religious deceit in your mouth, I would be worried—very worried.

We have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. I want you to note that "returned" is in the *aorist passive indicative*. Therefore, "returned" is not something we did in the past; it defines our life (*aorist*). We are returned and God did it (hence the *passive* voice), and it is a statement of fact—the *indicative*. We are the returned. Hallelujah. God saw to it.

When you read the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls, I want you to think about the imagery. Sheep have no idea what they are doing. They are helpless with no ability to defend themselves. They are prey. They just wander around looking to be satisfied, to find another green field of sweet grass or a pool of fresh water. They have no idea where to go, they just wander. That is how humanity lives. Man just wanders seeking something to fill that hole in his soul, but He has no idea where to go. He tries this and that but he does not find satisfaction. And he is totally unaware of how vulnerable he is. Unbeknownst to Him, the enemy prowls around like a lion seeking those whom he can devour.

But Jesus not only guides us to the green pastures and the fresh clear water that satisfies, He also guard us. He ensures that those who have been marked by

the Father are protected such that they come to Him and respond to His voice. He only lets His sheep go through what is necessary in order for them to decide that they need Him. And that is what Jesus is always doing; as with our past, He only lets us go through what is necessary for us to decide that we need Him. It is a powerful picture. He wants us to trust in this. He is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls; and rest assured, if we do not trust that He is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls, then in His love and mercy He will lead us to fields that will help us truly believe this to be true. You can always learn by experience; but hopefully some of you will choose to learn and believe by instruction.

I know this was thick, so thick, but I do not want us to ever miss the layers through which the Spirit communicates to us. We have been appointed to suffer, but it is ok, Jesus is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. Thus, we don't have to fear, we don't have to fight to protect ourselves; rather, we can die to sin and live to righteousness. After all, we are the righteousness of God.

Let's Pray.