

# The Suffering Savior

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want you guys to open up your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 2. We're going to finish chapter 2 this morning. We've been in chapter 2 for what seems like a pretty good while. I think almost the entire summer.

But there's so much and it's such a rich chapter that we need to spend our time here in 1 Peter chapter 2. So we're going to start this morning where we left off last week with verse 21 and read down to the end, verse 25, the end of chapter 2.

So I want you guys to stand with me as we read together. Peter writes, Father, help us as we meditate on what it means to be a follower of Christ and what He has done for us in His death. Help us to rejoice this morning. It's in Christ's name that we pray. Amen. You know, you know fairly quickly, if you talk to someone for any length of time or if you talk to someone any number of times and hold a number of conversations with someone, you learn fairly quickly the things that they value, the things that matter the most to them because they talk about the things that they care about the most.

That's why grandparents put the bumper sticker on their car that says, ask me about my grandkids. But if you do, you're going to get an earful from them, all right? It's almost like a warning.

[ 2 : 04 ] If you do ask me about my grandkids, take a seat. We're going to be here for a while because I've got a lot of pictures to show you. So you know very easily what a person cares about, what they treasure, just by talking to them.

One of the things that's wonderful about reading through the New Testament and reading the writings of the apostles is that you will see occasionally in the middle of their letter, all of a sudden, they will devote several verses that almost seem a little bit disjointed.

They will devote several verses to Christ, to just talking about Him. And there's some connection to what they've been saying, but it's as if they make a brief connection and then they're just compelled to go on and talk about Christ.

So Paul does that, for instance, in Philippians 2, where he begins by telling us to have this mind among yourselves, which is yours, in Christ. It's a pretty simple command.

And you would think that he might give a brief description of Christ and the kind of mind and attitude that Christ has, but then he goes on and he devotes several verses. All of a sudden, he launches into this description of the great humility of Christ as the eternal God who yet comes in the flesh and makes Himself nothing on behalf of us.

[ 3 : 15 ] He goes off on a tangent almost. And you'll see that periodically throughout the writings of the apostles. And this is one of those places where they do that. Peter, this is not the only time he does this in this letter, but Peter mentions a connection between the sufferings of Christ and our suffering, and then he launches into a discussion of the sufferings of Jesus that take up the rest of the chapter.

It's not disjointed from the context. In fact, here, probably more even than in Philippians 2, where Paul does the same sort of thing, here it's even more connected to and crucial for understanding everything that Peter has said before and everything he's going to say leading through the beginning of chapter 3.

It's connected because we have seen that Peter has been instructing us on the issues of submission and suffering. He began with submission, submitting to government authorities and then slaves submitting to their masters and very quickly broadened that into suffering in general because we suffer as we submit oftentimes.

And so he begins to talk about our suffering in this world, and now he makes a connection in verse 21 between our suffering, our salvation, and our suffering Savior.

You can see it in verse 21 where he lays it out, and then verses 22 through 25 are really an explanation, a delving into what he reveals to us in verse 21. He says in verse 21, he opens by saying, For to this you have been called.

[ 4 : 49 ] And we saw last week that that means that we have been called to suffering. Suffering is not something that just happens to us, and God sort of comes up and cleans up the mess and does the best that he can to make some good come out of it.

This is a part of God's plan for us. In fact, in verse 19 of chapter 4, we are told that those who suffer according to God's will must entrust their souls to him.

Suffering according to God's will. So these are not just happenstance. These are not things that, well, they happen because you live in a fallen world, and it's okay because God can make something out of it.

It's more than that. God has in store for us, it's a part of his plan, that we in this world as followers of Christ, that we suffer.

But there's more to it than that. Because every other time that Peter uses this word called in this book, you have been called by him. Every time he uses that terminology, he's speaking of our salvation.

[ 5 : 54 ] So in a sense, Peter is saying here in verse 21, for to this you've been called, you are being saved through suffering. Your salvation is going to come to you through your own suffering.

Now, you have to be careful, and Peter's going to be careful as he walks through these verses, not to confuse that. To think that we are saved because of our suffering.

To think that somehow our suffering earns God's favor because it does not. We are ultimately saved solely because of our faith in the work of Christ on the cross for us.

Faith alone makes us right with God. But the faith that we have is a kind of faith that is tested throughout our lives through suffering. So that our ultimate, final salvation before God, our glorification, happens only after a lifetime of suffering.

Our present experience of salvation, in which the Spirit is working within us to make us more holy, comes about in large part through suffering. So for instance, he says in verse 7 of chapter 1, he speaks of the tested genuineness of your faith.

[ 7 : 05 ] Tested how? Well, he tells us, In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So that our faith is tested and proven to be real and genuine through our sufferings. And we have been called to salvation through those sufferings that prove the reality of our faith.

And so we have to consider and we have to ponder, what is the relationship between, and how does it work out practically in our lives, between the salvation that Christ has accomplished for us on the cross and the suffering that he calls us to endure.

And that's what this passage is primarily about. Read the rest of verse 21. For to this, to suffering, you've been called because...

Now here it is. He's going to lay it out. He's going to give us two things that are accomplished by the death of Christ and then one goal of both of those things.

[ 8 : 18 ] So here they are. He says, Christ also suffered for you. So that's the first thing. Christ suffered in our place. Or literally, Christ suffered on behalf of you. He suffered for you.

And then something else is happening in the death of Christ. Not only is he bearing the weight of our sins, but also it says that he's leaving you an example. So he's bearing our sins and he's leaving us an example.

And then here's the purpose of both of those things. So that you might follow in his steps. So two things are effectively accomplished by the death of Christ.

He suffers for us and in our place, bearing the penalty of our sin. And he leaves us an example.

Those things are accomplished. And the reason that he does those things is so that we might walk in his steps.

And that's unfolded as we walk our way through these verses. So I want to consider each one of those things and see what Peter has to say about those aspects and that goal of the work of Christ on the cross.

[ 9 : 23 ] And the first thing that we have to think about is, what does it really mean for Christ to die in our place? To die for us. All of these verses are, if you read them carefully, are a meditation of

Peter upon the passage that we read earlier from Isaiah chapter 53.

Over and over throughout these verses, he's referencing Isaiah chapter 53. And some of the most significant things that he says here in this passage about the death of Christ come directly from Isaiah.

So take a look, for instance, in verse 24 it says, that he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. He bore our sins in his body on the tree.

If you hold your place there in 1 Peter and turn back to Isaiah chapter 53, you can see that reflected here. Verse 4, Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Verse 5, He was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. Verse 6, The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[10:33] And then verse 12, He bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors. So Peter is drawing our attention to this aspect, this crucial, central aspect of the cross of Christ, that in the cross, Jesus was bearing the penalty for our sins.

In his body, as he hung upon the cross, he endured the suffering that we deserve for the sins that we have committed.

And so often we breeze past truths like that because we think, well, that's basic. Isn't that just part of the basic gospel message?

And so we should have that down by now. And so let's move on to see what else Peter has to say because we understand that and we know that. But the reality is we don't grow in our faith.

And our ability to endure through sufferings does not increase unless we spend time thinking about the basic truths of the faith.

[11:44] Unless we spend time dwelling and thinking upon the cross of Christ and what he has done for us, we will not really grow. You don't ever grow past this.

You don't ever get beyond in your spiritual walk. You never get to a place where you've moved past the basic things and now you're on to the deeper things. No, you just keep diving deeper into the basic things.

And here Peter wants us to dive deeply and to think deeply about what it means for Christ to die for us. He bore our sins in his body on the tree.

He bore them. And then he moves on and he references Isaiah again. He says at the end of verse 24, he says, By his wounds you have been healed.

Now I want you to notice the way that that's phrased. By his wounds you have been healed. It's taken place in the past. It's done. It's accomplished.

[12:45] Now I don't have any doubt here that the healing of which Peter speaks and of which Isaiah speaks does include physical healing. I know that because in Matthew chapter 8, Matthew references this same passage from Isaiah, this same exact phrase from Isaiah, and applies it to the work of Christ and physically healing people around him.

So yes, it is true that the death of Christ ensures our physical healing. That is absolutely true.

Whether we experience it now, in this life, in answer to our prayers, or whether we experience it in the new heavens and new earth when we receive new glorified bodies at Christ's return.

It will happen. Our bodies will be fully restored. All sickness, all disease, all infirmity, all the things that frustrate us and creak and make us hurt, all of those things will be healed.

All of those things will be fixed. If not in this life, then then. And the death of Christ ensures that. But that's not what Peter is referencing here in this passage.

As Peter quotes Isaiah 53, he wants to move beyond the mere physical healing and he wants us to see the deeper significance of what Isaiah is saying in context. And so Peter has in mind our spiritual healing, our forgiveness, the washing away of our sins.

[14:09] And Peter says that that is an accomplished fact. By the wounds of Christ, by his death on the cross, you have been healed.

It's done. Your sins have been born. They have been dealt with. Which means that we should not, as followers of Christ, we should not carry loads of guilt with us.

To carry around guilt for your sin after having trusted in Christ is to doubt the power of the blood of Christ to cover all of your sins. Whatever it is from your past, whatever skeletons lie in the closet of your past, there's no grounds for continued guilt for those who've trusted in Christ.

We have been healed. We have been forgiven. Our sins have been dealt with on the cross. He died for us.

But that's not all that Christ accomplished at the cross. In fact, we could take a survey through the New Testament and see all the various things that Jesus accomplished at the cross.

[15:21] He disarmed the rulers and the principalities of this world. He defeated Satan. There's so many things we could look through the New Testament and see what Christ has accomplished by His work on the cross.

But Peter here zeroes in on something that I think that we often neglect. And that is, he died leaving you an example according to verse 21.

Leaving you an example. An example of what exactly? We know throughout his life he provides us with an example of what real, true righteousness looks like.

What it looks like to be obedient to Christ. So we understand by looking at the life of Christ we can learn what it means to obey God. We can learn what obedience to God's law looks like.

We can learn what real righteousness is. But what example does he provide for us in his death? He shows us how to suffer. How to extend a righteous life into a righteous death.

[16:27] Peter describes it for us. Take a look there in verse 22. He's going back to Isaiah again. He says several things about the example that Christ leaves for us. First of all he says that he committed no sin.

He committed no sin. It's one thing to be obedient to God. It's one thing to avoid sin when things are going well for you.

It's not as difficult. But when things are tough when people are pressuring you and when you're being persecuted or when you're being harmed or when you're sick when things are going badly for you and suffering enters your life that's when your obedience and your determination to be obedient is going to be tested at that point and at that moment.

And Peter says that in his greatest moments of suffering he committed no sin. What does that mean? Well first of all it says that there was no deceit found in his mouth.

No deceit found in his mouth. That word deceit is one that if you pay attention as you read through 1 Peter it should be familiar to you because Peter talks about this in chapter 2 verse 1 he says put away all malice and all deceit.

[17:49] these are the sorts of things that ought to be put away from us as Christians these are the sorts of things that ought to belong to our old way of living the old man the old life and he says put away all malice and put away all deceit and then I don't know if you recall but we saw that word it work its way through these opening verses of chapter 2 we are told that we are to grow up we are to long for pure spiritual milk and the word that's translated pure there is the opposite of deceit in fact it's the same word with an a on the front of it which means no deceit so we are to long for a kind of spiritual nourishment that does it's not deceptive it doesn't lead you astray it's pure and that's what ought to characterize our lives this kind of purity of character where we don't mislead we don't lie we don't we don't say something that's not quite true in order to get us get ourselves out of a difficult situation we are a truth filled people just as

Christ was and in his greatest moment of suffering there was no deceit found in his mouth it would have been easy for him to lie or to mislead Pilate but he didn't there was no deceit found in his mouth in verse 23 when he was reviled he did not revile in return this is probably one of the most difficult aspects of the example of Christ for us to follow because our natural reaction when someone says something about us when somebody spreads a rumor about us our natural reaction is to respond in kind our natural reaction is to say well do you want to know I hear what they're saying about me do you know what they did I mean you think that I've done something but listen to what I know that they did the other day our natural response when we're insulted when we're reviled is to insult and revile in return and Jesus had ample opportunity for that when he was brought before

Pilate and there were false charges leveled against him by the Jewish religious leaders Jesus had a whole list of things that they had done that were inappropriate his entire trial was illegal and proceeded on false grounds and Jesus could have brought all of that up and had all of them in trouble and yet he did not revile in return they said he was a liar they said he was a blasphemer they had accused him earlier in his ministry of being led by and controlled by Satan himself they had said awful things about Jesus in the hour of his suffering brought on by their lies brought on by their slander he was reviled he did not revile in return and then it says when he suffered he did not threaten why the connection there between suffering and threaten why would there be that kind of a connection because I think there is a arises up within us when we are being put through a painful

situation because of someone else's actions so when our suffering is directly caused by someone else and we see it and we know it our natural reaction even if we're not in a position to have any power to do anything to them is to threaten them back so that when we're being forced to do things at work that are difficult and we know that we're being challenged by our boss and he's just laying more and more work on us maybe trying to drive you out of the workplace or just trying to make you miserable because he doesn't like you your natural response is going to be to try to think up some kind of threat that you might offer even if you have no standing there's nothing that you can threaten there's going to well up within you this desire to say something to threaten back it's natural for us it's our natural tendency when you're at home and you begin to have an argument with your spouse and they say something ugly to you your natural response is going to say something back or to threaten to bring something else up that you know about something from the past we threaten we revile in return it's just our natural sinful response to come out and say something back to those who cause us heartache and pain and Peter says Jesus in his greatest moment of suffering Jesus never did that he didn't revile in return he didn't threaten when he suffered and then here's the way that he was able to do that but instead says that he entrusted or continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly now the word himself is actually not in is not here in this it just says literally but he continued entrusting to him who judges justly entrusting what entrusting his own life entrusting entrusting that justice would be done by God trusting in God's judgment what was he entrusting all of that everything he was not relying upon himself to find a way out he was not relying upon some external system to make things right he just said I'm going to literally hand it over and believe and believe in him who judges justly see people on the news this week holding up signs demanding justice whether whether they were those who are who are holding up signs saying justice for Trayvon and wanting justice because they feel like a young boy was murdered unjustly and not found guilty when he should have been and so they stand on the street demanding justice with signs or whether or not they are those who are upset and think that George Zimmerman was completely innocent but now his life is ruined because of the way the media handled things everybody is crying out for justice on either side of the issue and the reality is ultimate justice cannot be found in this world it cannot be found here people's lives are ruined life has been taken and we would stand back and we would say no matter how you feel about the facts of a case like that there is there's a kind of injustice it may not be a legal injustice or it may be but there is a kind of injustice people are hurt and hurting and there's nothing to be done about it there's nothing you can do you can't give you can't give a young man back his life you can't you can't restore this person's life who's now under the spotlight probably for for the foreseeable future and his life is under threat you can't make those things right we live in a world that we can't always make right though we try and if we if we trust in our own powers to set things straight if we trust in the court system's powers to set things straight all the time if we trust in someone else to set things straight for us our trust is misplaced

[ 25 : 23 ] Jesus instead entrusted himself to him who judges justly there will be a time when everything is set right there will be a time when all injustices are dealt with when all when all acts of righteousness are appropriately rewarded and recognized there will be a time when those things happen but it is not now and it's not in this world and if in the middle of your suffering you begin to grope for some sort of justification now if you begin to grope for some sort of justice now for yourself in this life then you're entrusting things to the wrong person to the wrong institution to the wrong world Jesus was able to refrain from sin to keep deceit out of his mouth to not slander those who slandered him he was he was able to retain control over his tongue when he suffered and not to threaten those who cause him to suffer he was able to do those things because he trusted and he knew there is a God who judges justly and he will set all things right at a later time and Peter says that is that is the example that Christ has laid down for us in his death he has borne the penalty for our sins and removed the guilt that we so often carry with us but in his death he has also shown us what it is to live by faith in God what it looks like how it works itself out practically in the midst of suffering and the purpose of all of that you say why has he borne our sins other than other than to save us on judgment day is there something beyond is there something else besides salvation on judgment day the answer is yes is there a reason that he's provided us with this example yes there is he says in verse 21 so that we might follow in his footsteps but he he clarifies that in verse 24 he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree and here's the reason why did he do that why did he bear our sins that we might die to sin and live to righteousness there is a there is a goal in mind and the goal is that now while we walk in this world while we are in this life while we are strangers and

aliens in this world that we would die to sin and live to righteousness which brings us back to where we begin to this you have been called to suffer why so that your faith might be tested and so that you might be purified by the refining fires of suffering chapter 4 verse 12 beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice in so far as you share

Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed if you're insulted for the name of Christ you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you but let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evil doer yet if anyone suffers as a Christian let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in that name suffering serves a purpose it serves a purpose of making us more righteous in this life but ultimately of preparing us for glory I remember reading not long ago about a conversation between a youth pastor and a student in the middle of a Sunday school class and the youth pastor was teaching on suffering and God's goal in suffering and God's purpose in suffering and so he had one of the young girls in the class you know I asked him well why why did God if God's sovereign then why did God let my dog die and he said well he let your dog die so that you could learn from that experience and so you would be prepared later on when you lose others have you lost anyone else she said yes my grandmother passed away and he said so so it could be that God allowed your dog to die so that when your grandmother died you would be more acquainted with and more prepared for how to deal with that kind of suffering or it might be that you are being equipped to help other people as they suffer and so the young girl said so God killed my dog so that when he killed my grandma I'd feel a little bit better about it right and he thought to himself maybe maybe maybe maybe I need to dig a little bit deeper and move a little bit more beyond that surface level of he causes us to suffer to prepare us for more suffering and we do need to dig beyond that he causes us to suffer because in suffering we are made more righteous because in becoming more righteous we are prepared for glory that's exactly what he says there in chapter 4 he says if you are insulted for the name of Christ you are blessed because the spirit of the glory of God rests upon you if anyone suffers let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in that name there is a connection between glorifying God and suffering and the kind of righteousness that I think Peter has in mind here is a kind of righteousness that praises God no matter what and that praise is only strengthened through suffering our faith is tested proven genuine and strengthened through suffering so that all suffering aims at increasing our capacity to glorify God it is not it does not terminate upon us your suffering is not to make you better at more suffering later on all of your suffering ultimately aims to make you better able to praise God and that's a skill that you need for all of eternity if suffering only makes us better at suffering it doesn't prepare us for eternity because there's no suffering in eternity but if suffering prepares us to give more glory to God and makes us better worshippers then it prepares us for eternity which brings me back to last week's passage passage and if you'll remember in verse 19 we are told that this is a gracious thing when mindful of God one endures suffering sorrows while suffering unjustly and then verse 20 he says but if when you do good and suffer for it you endure this is a gracious thing in the sight of God and I told you last week that when he uses this word gracious literally it's the word grace that it's a reference to God's blessing that this obtains the blessing of God or this the NIV I believe says the favor of God this obtains God's blessing God's favor when you endure sorrows while suffering unjustly when you do good and suffer for it this obtains God's blessing what blessing what is the nature of God's blessing that our suffering obtains I'm convinced that while at times God may bless us in this life because we endure through suffering I'm convinced that his primary gift of blessing to us as we endure suffering is an increased capacity to enjoy him in eternity the Bible speaks frequently and often of rewards in eternity and it is so easy I think for us to begin to think of those rewards in the same way that we think of rewards now so that a reward in eternity must mean that I get more stuff in eternity and what sense does that make

[ 34 : 18 ] I think that ultimately God's rewards for a life of obedience through suffering in this life is an increased capacity to enjoy and treasure God's glory for eternity all of us in the new heavens and new earth all of us will experience an eternal life that is free from pain free from heartache free from sickness free from disease and filled with joy so no one will lack in eternity and yet those who suffer most in this life and endure it and follow the example of Christ and entrust themselves to God I believe will be rewarded with a greater capacity to enjoy the glory of God so that when we think of suffering we think of it as a thing to be avoided we count ourselves lucky we count ourselves

blessed when

God withholds suffering from us but from an eternal perspective there's all the reason to rejoice when he brings painful circumstances into your life because he's increasing your capacity for pleasure for all of eternity before him let's pray father what we want now and in the life to come what we want is to enjoy you and experience the great blessing of being in your presence to the full and if in this life that means we suffer then we pray for the grace to endure it as Jesus endured it following his example and walking in his steps you have not called us to a life of ease although we are easily easily lured into a life of ease you have called us to a life of obedience and righteousness in the midst of pain and heartache and our prayer is not that you would remove all of those things from us but that you would so strengthen us and so encourage us by the work of Christ on the cross that we would endure that we would rejoice in the midst of it because there is stored up for us treasure capacities for the enjoyment of your infinite goodness and we want that more than we want a life of comfort and ease we pray this in Christ's name amen