

Grace to Endure: Christ's Example in Unjust Suffering

Lessons from 1 Peter 2:18-21 on Submission and Witness

By Anthony Kim

Please go ahead and turn with me in your Bible to First Peter chapter 2. We will be continuing our study in verse 18 of First Peter chapter 2, beginning with verse 18. As I mentioned in last week's message, we are starting a new subsection. As of last week, we went over the social order of how as believers we are to conduct ourselves in the civil order of government. That's namely nationally, right? As well as locally, state, and city. We're going to touch on something that's not common here in the western culture, and that's the second social order of the relationship between master and servants. Just to kind of look at it from the context of in Peter's day, this was all very much common in the Greek or Roman world. There were many, in fact many, that were servants that became Christians amongst those that Peter knew, and that is why he is writing to them. Although that again this dynamic is not common in the western culture, we will see we will still see some biblical principles that still apply to us in our day and in our age.

Read with me verse 18 if you will silently. It says this: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." In this verse, after Peter explained how you and I as residents relate to government's authority, he's now shifting gears to another authority dynamic, and that's namely he wants us to draw our attention to the authority of the relationship between servants and masters. Just like the government is an appointed authority namely by God, one thing that is different in the servant-master relationship is the result of sin. Here's another distinction between the authority of the government and masters. The government is appointed by God as a judiciary authority, and we see this all the way back beginning in Genesis chapter 9 all the way to Joshua where we see this played out. It's nothing new in the New Testament. It has been settled as important all the way in the Old Testament beginning in Genesis chapter 9. But when it comes to a servant and a master, that's different. God never really intended to make a man a servant of another man. That was never His intention. However, God doesn't just take away the consequences of sin. There are repercussions that still reverberate to today's age and time that we live in, and I'll explain that as we go further into the text. Instead He instructs people who know that they are bought with a price and are freed from their sin by the washing of their sins by the blood of Christ. He's speaking to believers as servants at this particular time and period and how to live in a way that honors God and even when they're dealing with those really bad outcomes of a servant and a master's relationship.

There's a nuance to it as well in the New Testament. There was opportunities for servants to be free. There are passages about that, and God gives them room to take it. They're not forced to stay in that servant-master relationship. But for the servant who can't get free, God has

something in mind. That servant actually gets a special unique opportunity especially in their work as a servant to really show what it means to be a Christian. 1 Corinthians 7:22 emphasizes the servants belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ to be employed and disposed of according to His wisdom, Christ's wisdom, finding that this is an opportunity to serve even though again there's no obligation to stay in that dynamic relationship of master and servant that ultimately we are Christ's servant, we are Christ's slave, we're living under the righteousness of Him. That's what 1 Corinthians 7:22 says, there are certain great opportunities to display Christ in that dynamic.

Let's go back to now Peter's time where masters held absolute power and servants had no recourse. Again, that dynamic of similar to an employee and employer relationship if we would bring it up to our situation. There is some partial comparison to be made with the analogy of the modern employer and employee relationship in this is that look we also have the opportunity to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in Titus 2:10 that we don't go and defend ourselves against our labor circumstances and including the right to strike which in America we have that great privilege, don't we? And so forth, but remember there was no such thing in Peter's day. No such thing about doing a strike. Even though it is now our privilege to do it in a sense, not really. Let's go by Scripture. Let's go by Scripture. That is a timeless lesson for all of us to know that we're doing it to be a testimony that maybe if it's in God's will that He would use you to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ and they will be saved, your boss for example. What a wonderful way that would work out to be, right? Even though times have changed, the principles again from Scripture are still totally relevant to today.

Believers don't go on strike if you can't resist. Christians are not to strike but to work. Right? That's the main call. Our main call is to work. That's the reward we see in 2 Thessalonians 3:10. This passage just talking about working hard. We are capable of working hard. God has given us the strength and the ability and the know-how to not choose idleness. Right? The passage is talking about you're not going to get fed bread if you don't work. Don't choose idleness. You're not going to get a free lunch. You got to work for it. That's what the thrust of 2 Thessalonians 3:10 is. Don't stay in idleness. Don't choose to do that. You have a choice to work. You're not entitled to get support from the church. Let's not make this, you know, what's the expression today? It's not coming to my mind, but the idea you're freeloading. There you go. That's the word. That you're not just freeloading from people in the church. That you're not making excuses because you're lazy or you want to stay idle. You want to choose to live like that. No, as Christians, we're not to live that way. We should be enabled to refuse laziness, to refuse idleness and work with our hands. We got that wonderful testimony earlier today, right? That wonderful Christian example of the Flores. Praise God that all of us would take that example. Let's continue to refuse that idleness that creeps up. Sure. That's a sin, and it is called out as a sin in that passage. Let's call it what it is. It is sin, and let's refuse to go in that direction. Paul isn't talking about in this text, by the way, about servants' rights. You don't see any of that here in verse 18, but primarily why he brought out 2 Thessalonians 3:10 because the primary thrust of it is what's your responsibility as a servant and your attitude towards your boss. Your responsibility is just continuous to work faithfully to continue to serve the Lord and to have a right attitude toward whoever your master is or in our case our employer to be a good witness.

Let's now go into verse 19, and I'm going to read verse 20 at the same time and then comment on it. Verse 19 says this: "For this is thankworthy," or another way of saying "this is gracious,"

“if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” Let’s unpack this with verse 19, beginning of verse 19. In verse 19, it’s talking about a situation where someone above you is being unfair or treats you unjustly. You have a couple of attitudes to take. One is you can fight against it or secondly endure the hardship or grief. This is wisdom. Whenever you hear wisdom, there’s always two paths and only two paths. There’s a contrast. There’s no middle ground. You got to take one course or the other. This is the passage in verse 19. This passage tells you what God expects. This is God’s expectation upon you. You as a servant in that time, but here in our context employee, says that this unfairness makes you have grief. He’s saying yes, you’re going to feel grief. Absolutely. You’re not supposed to feel happy that you’re being treated unfairly. He puts there, you’re going to endure grief. Another way of saying you’re going to be sad. You’re going to be crying after a session with being treated unjustly. You must be feeling like giving up. Another way of putting it, right? He tells the servants there he understands them. He feels their pain. It’s important not to let that injustice, although you feel that, make you stubborn. You know that feeling of stubbornness: “I’m not going to learn from this. I’m just going to resist, resist, resist.” That’s the first foolish attitude, right? “I’m not going to learn from this. I’m just going to be stubborn and resist learning from this.” But as a Christian, as taking the wise approach, is the right attitude to accept the suffering, to accept it that comes from being treated unjustly, to accept it instead of resisting and being stubborn about it. Because enduring suffering for the sake of conscience toward God, you see that “for the sake of conscience toward God” means acting according to God, maintaining God’s expectation of us, not our expectation, not the master or employer, but God and how He wants to be influenced upon at the heart level. Grief is at the heart level. You ever noticed that grief is at the heart level? He wants to strike at the heart, and He’s saying reflect on this word “thankworthy.” I mentioned it’s the word also means “gracious” or “graciousness,” the grace that is given to you if you endure the suffering as part of my sermon text, “grace to endure.” That’s where I got it from, is from this part of the passage.

While the world may see bearing upon this kind of sorrow, this kind of grief, as foolish, right? “Why are you going through this? Why don’t you just strike?” Instead of that, you’re just enduring it because you’re thinking it long-term. What God wants and God’s Word you consider as favor upon your life. He’s using you to be a witness in where you are at to share the gospel. This is commendable to God, and He will give you grace to suffer that endurance with that kind of attitude. Yes, you’re going to have grief; that’s not going to go away, but are you going to do it for the cause of Christ? That’s where this text confronts us with. You’re suffering unjustly. He wants us to align ourselves ultimately to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants us to align ourselves to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ who endured such trials. Was He not mistreated? Was He not suffering unjustly while He was on the earth? Responding otherwise would prioritize defending one’s right. Did Jesus defend Himself over adhering to His conscience? You know, He felt the same temptation. There’s a verse about that. He felt the same temptation that we do, the grief and the sorrow. He was a man acquainted with grief in Isaiah 53. Yet, He endured the grief. He is our example. He is our perfect example. When you’re experiencing it the way Christ led, gave us the example, this is God proving that God’s grace is in your life. When you’re living out this way, you are proving that you are God’s child and you are a recipient of God’s grace to be able to endure unjustly. Think about that. Think about the great freedom we have in Christ that may not look to the world as right. “Why are you living like

this? This is foolish. Why are you just sucking it up?" The world won't understand just like they didn't understand Jesus. They won't understand you, but they will look at your life like they would hopefully see one day Jesus. What a great privilege if that connection happens. Amen. What a great privilege if that connection happens in your life. Again, a wonderful opportunity to proclaim His virtues as visible in Christ. This is truly great grace to resemble Him, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He will give us the grace to endure. He will give us the strength to persevere when we are suffered wrongfully.

Let's go into verse 20 now. Verse 20 in this part of the text is talking about if a servant decided to rebel that he will face punishment, probably a beating. That's what that word you see in verse 20, "buffeted," if he rebelled. He will receive beating from the master. Those beatings will be what that specific servant deserves. He's rebelling. He's not working. He's lazy. He's being stubborn. He's saying, "Yeah, that in those days masters beat their servants, not only slaves, but were beaten." He's saying, "You're right to be beaten. You're rebelling. You're not being a witness for Christ." That's another way of saying what Peter is trying to demonstrate here in this text. Even if someone suffers that way, they might just, who's rebelling, might just even dig deeper. There's a warning here that if you continue to do that, you'll just even get worse. That's the kind of expression this passage is talking about. If you're going one direction, you're going to keep going in that direction. That's the idea. It's important how one starts. That's wisdom. Amen. You start well. He says, "Man, if you're already being beaten, you started off wrong. You didn't take the right course." He's saying, "Look, if you're being beaten now, think about why because you didn't start right." Let's go back. Let's trace our steps back. He's saying there's grace here. There's still an opportunity to change course. Even if someone would be suffering in that situation, they have an opportunity to change course as I mentioned because it's not pleasing to God right where we're putting God before our conscience. That's that passage in verse 19. We're thinking about God in this moment of being treated unjustly. Those beatings, although deserved, God also extends mercy. Obviously we're not being beaten in our common western culture, but are you getting probation? Are you being reprimanded for not doing your work? You know, not doing what was instructed of you if it's good work. Obviously, that's the implication being implied here. Is that part of your situation? But in that situation, go back and go back to the beginning.

This kind of attitude is completely contrary to God's grace. Another way of putting it, God's not going to give you grace to endure something that you rightly deserve because of your laziness or because you're just rebelling or you don't want to be a good witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Why would He give you grace? Why would He give you even more grace in that situation? You're not going to be able to endure it. You're going to give up. Give up. There were servants that were giving up. That was something that he wanted to say, "Look, you're way out here now. Think about it. Why you're feeling like more grief and you just feel like alone and no one's helping me." Well, maybe because you need to go back, repent, turn back, and start the right way. Amen. They can receive God's grace to endure.

This is the kind of attitude and total dependence that God wants out of us. Not to think about inherent rights, which is a great temptation here in America, right? Let's not go to that course. Let's go to the bigger picture about our witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. That's a biblical principle that is unchanging as we're dealing with a sinful world. When you suffer in this way,

when you suffer in the right way, it brings joy. It ought to bring joy towards God that you're not receiving by the unjust suffering. Have you felt that way before when you know you're being unjustly suffered and you feel this great joy? "Oh, I'm doing what God wants me to do. Yeah, it doesn't make any sense in the moment, you know, but I am in the will of God." That's what Peter wanted to comfort them with. God's going to give you that joy that they can't give you. Even if the circumstances turned out the right way, you're not going to get the kind of grace, the kind of joy that God gives you than what will be merely a human being. That's what Jesus received, right, from God the Father. It mirrors the suffering of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how we should live our lives as He is our example.

A harsh employer can be another way of putting it, a harsh employer can be God's training ground to help you become more like the Lord Jesus. Have you considered that more and more as a believer as you mature in Christ, how important it is that you're a witness for Him? Is that burdening you more and more? That's God's grace when He shows you that. He doesn't just show that to everyone. Take that with humility that you get to be that witness for our Lord Jesus Christ and for God. This is precisely what God intends for you when He places you in situations where you suffer for the sake of your conscience. You have that kind of conscience, that sensitivity, again that is God's grace on you that your conscience is not seared where you're not receiving and understanding what grace means in your life.

Let's go into verse 21. Verse 21 says, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." I want to end it in this verse even though it's really connected with verses 22 to 25. This is going to be the bridge for next week's study when we talk about Christ as our example in greater and greater depth. I want to end with this introduction as it were to be looking forward to our next week's message on this passage. Verse 21 looks at the suffering that is part of being a Christian. It's just part of being a Christian is this life of suffering. It's not something you just try to avoid the inevitable, meaning like you see suffering coming at you, and you're trying to avoid it. That should not be a mark of a Christian. A mark of a Christian is you see the suffering coming head on, and you're going, "Lord, help me through it." That's a mature believer. You're not thinking about yourself. "Help me to go through this situation for Your sake, for the Lord's sake." That's the kind of idea that verse 21 is helping us to remind ourselves of that we're not just trying to get through this suffering as quickly as possible as well. I love this analogy of steps. It's not a leap. You notice which most people call it a leap of faith. That's not strong. It's the steps. It's whose steps? The Lord's steps. I love that incremental movement and direction because it feels hard. You want to just get out of the situation. I've been there. I know how that feels. But take the Word of God as it is, and you'll actually want it.

You don't want to quickly avoid it. You want to process it step by step as it were. The Apostle Paul puts it like this in 1 Corinthians 6:7. He talks about why not rather be wronged, and this whole passage is about believers. It's such a terrible thing that in this church in Corinth, believers are taking each other to court. Even if you had won in that court, it's like he's saying, "Why not rather be wronged?" Even if you think you're going to win, why not rather be wronged? He says in 1 Corinthians 6:7, and sad that in the context of Corinth, they were thinking like that. "I'm just going to win in this way," not winning for Christ, not winning other people to Christ, but to just win for my rights as it were. They were an immature church. They were believers, but they were

immature in many ways. This was one aspect that they fell short on over and over again. Paul had to call them out. He had to call them out. Paul basically says Christians should rather suffer wrong or get another way of saying ripped off. You ever been ripped off in your business or something? Say it's better to be ripped off by even another believer because believers are taking each other to court, saying, "Wouldn't you rather be ripped off and not be dragged into a civil lawsuit?" Instead, think about this because later on the passage, I don't have time to go into it, but he's saying the main point is to keep the unity and trust in God's ultimate justice. Don't short-circuit this process. He's saying to the Corinthians, "Let it play through. See what God does with this with justice. Wait for Him." They were just too quick again. "I just want to—I don't want to suffer. I'm being unjust even amongst believers." Okay. Understand God's ultimate justice in this.

Paul's kind of calming them down, saying, "Give Him a long view," and instead of fighting for personal rights and payback in secular courts, he's saying you are hurting the church's witness to the lost world. You are doing exact harm to the lost that are coming in because they had lost people coming into that church, and there were terrible witnesses to them by their acts, their attitude. It's tough. It's tough to naturally accept injustice. In the flesh, we hate it. It's in this text for us to examine it and going, "Yeah, it is tough. Yes, we're going to endure grief. Yes, it's sad. But it's something we really have to learn again and again and again because sin creeps up, doesn't it? And all sorts of things can cause harm to the witness of Christ and the church's witness to the lost world." The real question is whether you and I are up to it to take and consider the Word of God over our rights and our wants. This is what this text continues to confront us with. As Christians, suffering is an intrinsic part of our calling. It starts right there with it's a calling to suffer. It is actually God's call on your life.

To truly understand endurance and suffering and how to embrace them, we must look to Christ. This is the text. It's like, yes, you're going through all of this, but remember this. Peter says, "I'm going to help you to focus on Christ in your suffering." He says in this text, "Look to Christ." It is only when suffering and endurance are connected to Him that we can gain value and bring joy in our hearts regardless of the intensity of the suffering. How much did Jesus suffer all the way up to the cross? Yet He had joy. Remember that text, the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. That's contrary to man's thinking, right? The more suffering, the more pain. But yet with Jesus, He had more joy when He was approaching greater suffering. We've got to think of it that way, brethren, that it's countercultural the way we as Christians ought to live. But it's not for our sake again, right? It's for the Lord's sake. Christ's suffering because He never yielded to the world's evil. He never yielded to the world's evil and desired nothing more than to follow God's plan for Him. His journey through the world serves us as our example. He committed no sin either in deed or in word because He was completely devoted to God's will, and He completely entrusted everything to Him. "Not my will but Thy will be done" was His prayer. Knowing that God judges righteously. He knows that God will ultimately fulfill His justice.

When it says here that Christ suffered as an example for us to follow in this text in verse 21, it's definitely not talking about His suffering to reconcile us as a substitute. That is not that suffering that is holy of Christ, what He did on the cross. We absolutely cannot follow that part, that pattern, because we will learn what that suffering is in 1 Peter 2:24, the kind of suffering we cannot and should not endure because we can't. Here it's mainly talking about the suffering

where He is an example for you to follow. That is about His entire life leading up to the cross. Everything leading up to the cross was for our example. Everything on the cross, no. That's our example. He is our example, our whole life during our time here on earth is His suffering leading up to the cross. He lived in an absolutely sinful world, unclean world, just as ours. He was tempted by Satan. He was hated by people even though He loved them. At the same time, He went through the suffering as He could as a merciful and faithful high priest. Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 4:15. This text talks about Jesus' sacrifice to become compassionate high priest for us who could sympathize with human weaknesses and sin. Right? He was sent just as much as we were yet without sin.

He's become our merciful mediator between God and humanity. He's the only go-to, another way of putting it. He's the only one that can sympathize with us that we don't want to sin. We don't want to sin. We don't want to be rebellious. We want to be like Christ. He says, "Think of Christ when you're going through what you're going through and enduring suffering because He understood all the trials. He's the only one that understands." He's the only one that experienced what you're experiencing and every detail yet without sin. His entire journey on earth is an example you and I can follow. That's the hope. That's the courage. That's the encouragement in this part of the text. When you do that, you are fulfilling God's calling on your life. That will be on your mind, on your conscience. "I am fulfilling God's calling by doing this." God is pleased. That's God's plan for your life. If you're looking to understand how to follow Christ's example, seriously, I would admonish you to go over the Gospels again and again. That is where you will find Christ and His example for us. Seriously, consider reading the Gospels again and again and again. You'll see exactly how He responded to all the suffering. Look at how He responded to all the suffering without sin because they all came, all types of suffering He endured.

The word "example" again is used to refer to those in a way they use this all the way back then. We still use it today. It's the idea of drawing something for a child, and then you would put a piece of paper on that model, and then you will trace over it to create the same model for yourself on your piece of paper. That's exactly the same way that you're doing step by step, one part after the other. You might not see everything clearly at the first step, nor would you be it halfway, but as you complete the full model, you see the picture, and you go, "Ah, that's what this part of my life was for. That's what this part of my life of suffering was for. That's what this was in my grief." I see it completion in the example of Christ now seen in my life. When you end with that kind of hope and you end with that completion step by step in your life, what hope and more assurance and greater joy that you will see that you have fulfilled God's plan for your life and His calling. That's what it means to follow these examples step by step.

If you order your life in that way and you endure it, yes, it will be there will be time and time and time of this again and again. But don't keep your distance from Him like Peter did. Don't keep your distance like Peter did, which led him to denying his Lord. In Luke 22:54, after Jesus being arrested, His disciple Peter followed the arresting officers and Jesus went to the high priest's house. Remember that? But he kept a distance because of fear. That's not what we see here in the text. You can only truly follow Christ by example by sticking close to Him. By sticking close to Him, then you'll be able to follow in His footsteps. Imagine seeing His footprints in the sand. That's where you put your feet. The further you get, the fainter those footprints become. When you walk behind or right behind Him, His example stays really clear, and that helps you walk

confidently in the right direction to the end goal to fulfill your calling in this life. You have a new life. There's so much more about this life that we are to unpack, but it's going to be suffering along the way that's going to be consistently part of it.

I hope that this message is encouragement to you and that you would reread this passage 18 to 21. Reflect upon it. Look over your footsteps. How close are you in proximity to Christ? How are you in your current situation? May the Lord help you to stay close to Him that you will see His footprints clearly and that you will be able to endure the completion of your model in your life. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank You so much for the Lord Jesus Christ and His example that we have the awesome privilege to follow in His footsteps. Father, there are many people here, God, because You have called them to suffering, and many here that are suffering unjustly. I pray for them. Lord, give them the grace to endure as You have been. Help them to be reminded of that grace, to live it out with joy, just like Jesus and His example all the way leading up to the cross. Father, I pray for them. Pray for more grace. Pray for more endurance. Pray for a greater witness to their respective bosses if they have a boss, to their respective other employees. May You bless them in their workforce. Bless them as well as students here as well. I also do pray for those that are being rebellious in some way. Father, help this passage to remind them that they have mercy available to them, that they can repent and they can go back and start off right where they began. I also pray for the lost, Lord, that haven't even started, don't even know what it means to follow after Christ. God, I pray that You would work upon their hearts with this message. Show them that they can live with joy and live in a way that doesn't make sense in the world. If they have that sense of that this doesn't make sense, Father, I pray Your Holy Spirit work upon their hearts and help Your, I pray Your Holy Spirit will help clarify these things as You did with us, Lord, as believers because only Your Holy Spirit can direct them to the truth, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. None of us can do that here in this room. I pray for Your Holy Spirit's presence also in their life and help them to start with trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for the finished work that was done on the cross. The suffering that we could not have done, only Christ can have was able to endure. Help them to see what He endured for them as a substitute on the cross for the payment of their sin so they don't have to receive the wrath of God in judgment. Bless in this way, Father, in this mighty way. We'll thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.