

1 Peter 2.24-25 Proclaiming God's Excellence Through Honoring Authority Part E WWC 09.05.20

For what are we willing to struggle? What is worth our pain? We may not ask ourselves the question like that, but our life patterns always distinguish a battle to which we are willing to struggle. Think of the part-time jobs in order to pay for a vacation that you've been wanting. Think of the sacrifices that are made for a down payment, or the sacrifices for the education. A few years ago I was walking near the Rec. at USI and as I walked passed a spot where students scurried by to classes, I saw it, the money saver but I still have to eat survival food, a seemingly full jar of peanut butter that had fallen out of some poor kid's backpack. Kids trying to keep school on the cheap so that they may manage their debt exposure as much as possible, that is a simple example of the things that we struggle for.

We all understand very quickly that there are somethings that are worthy of our sacrifices. This is true of true Christianity. Here in our text we have understood that the context distinguishes the call to honor authority in submitting to those requirements that are not sin, even if we suffer for it. And we understand that this is all undergirded by the beauty of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This is so intertwined with our Christian life and salvation, that it could be said that a Christian who refuses to capitulate to this command of submission is really not a Christian at all. Here I bring to mind the teaching of Jesus in the gospels, that whoever does not take his cross and follow Christ is not worthy of Christ. This is not a tertiary teaching from Jesus. In point of fact, it is recapitulated two times in Matthew and both with outright teaching about suffering because we are Christians. **Matthew 10:34-39** is the first place we see this language of taking up our cross. In that context Jesus has already warned of coming persecution and of the division that will take place between the closest of relationships because of Jesus Christ. The second occurrence is in **Matthew 16**. In the section of teaching between **Matthew 16** and **Matthew 18**, Jesus underscores His calling to the cross.

Now this isn't to say that we are to seek out suffering. It simply means that the life that we are called to as Christians is really contrary to the normal desires and aspirations of life without Christ. You see, Christianity is a change of the affections towards all that Jesus Christ is, does, and calls us to. Christianity is an aligning with the person of Jesus Christ in name and practice. It is not religious in that sense in as much as it is not religious to adjust our lives and actions for the people that we love. For example, it is an adjustment to our lives to bear up under the load of children that have special needs, but we are not only unashamed to call them our children, but glad to be their advocates. Though it may be that at times the burden of care may be wearisome for us from a physical and emotional perspective, yet we serve them out of love, and strangely, that sacrifice only increases our affection for them. Their inabilities become our own because these children are ours. We unabashedly claim them and bear their needs because we love them. We are vigilant to protect them, to seek their wellbeing. This is not religious, it is affectious. That is Christianity, because Christianity is not about a system. Christianity is about seeking to identify with and serve the person of Jesus Christ **because** we love Him, **and that irrespective of the cost to us**. The difference is, Jesus Christ is not the broken one we are called to serve. We are the broken ones that Jesus served to the point of death. It makes our initial question weightier. Are you a Christian? Are you a lover of Christ? The answer can only be yes if you can identify where you are bearing up your cross and following Christ because you love Him. Christians do fail in this, but we can identify it at least. And as in all relationships, we learn how to ask for forgiveness for failing to do and be what that relationship rightly requires of us.

I say these things because when we come to our text, we are reminded of why it is that we love Christ in the first place; why it is that we are willing to fulfill the calling of a life that will cause us to sail into the storms and not around them. **1 Peter 2:24** is Peter's declaration of awe as in his mind's eye he recognizes Jesus' act of sacrifice as nothing short of miraculous. Jesus loved us with the kind of affection of a parent who loves a broken child. Jesus loves us because Christians are gifts from God to His Son, as **John 5** so aptly reminds us. In order to make us whole, Jesus set the masts of His life towards the storm of the cross, and for the joy set before Him, the joy of resurrection and newness for His children, and the joy of glorifying God, and the joy of being restored and honored for His faithfulness, He trimmed the sails of His life to cast His vessel through the storm of the cross, that we who follow Him may land on the shores of redemption.

Consider with me how all this is seen in these verses. We saw over the last several messages, Christ's example to follow: suffering; Christ's purity to follow: truth; Christ's trust to follow: He entrusted Himself to God; and today Christ's life to follow: righteousness, and the shepherd to follow: Christ.

.I. Christ's Life to Follow: Righteousness. Notice how we get to this concept of righteousness. First, Christ Himself bore our sin in His body. There could be no other that could do this. Do you hear the words of John the Baptist, behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world? Do you hear the clamor of generations – where is the one that will finally rule over the world with justice and equity? Do you see the pain of false religion – all seeking some means of earning justification and cleansing from sins? From the eastern teachings of reincarnation which indefinitely binds us to this life in different forms because nirvana is so difficult to achieve, to the ritual cleansing of voodoo water festivals, to the self-scripted actions of religious service in catholic and protestant circles, to the fledgling but chameleon-like moral enlightenment of secularism and its and bewildering culture of shame, we are innately aware of our need for cleansing from sin. We are ever aware that there is something in us that just can't quite get there. No one else but Jesus could bear our sin. Jesus bore our sin in His body to be the savior of the world because He is the Lamb of God in whom there is no iniquity, and in whom deceit was never found, **verse 22**.

The text continues, He bore our sin on the tree. This may not seem significant, but **Deuteronomy 21:23** tells us that all who are hung on a tree to die are cursed by God. Paul connects this concept for us in Galatians in underscoring that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, and in underscoring that we have absolutely been set free by Christ. **Galatians 3:13–14**, ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.” So, Peter also includes that Christ did this that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. Jesus Christ the righteous one died to make us righteous. But the path to making us righteous is to kill sin. Paul says the same thing like this, **Galatians 2:20** “²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

What does this mean for us? It means that we are healed. These paths of pain upon Christ became our paths of healing. You may not think you need healing, but our minds and bodies and spirits are broken. There is not one person on this earth, though they live incredible lives, who will not face the fate of every man, which is death. Think of the most admirable ones in our histories and legends. Where are they now? They are people of history and legend because they are gone. We need healing so that our bodies and minds are no longer affected by these pains at hit us all. Jesus Christ who is perfect died on our behalf and rose again so that the seeds of eternal life might course through the veins of those who rest in Christ, and in our day of departure from this world these seeds of eternal life become the road of life towards the arms of Christ. But this is not simply a spiritual healing. Jesus Christ's salvation, the plan of God from before the beginning of the world, was to establish a people unto Himself in a place of complete peace, a place free from the fears of death and hardship, a new heaven and new earth, and new bodies that are incorruptible.

2 Corinthians 5:4–9 ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

The Bible teaches that we need healing because we are broken. And the Bible teaches that the means of grace from Christ's salvation towards us is this, that we get to trade in what is broken, for something that is new. Imagine that in any other context. Imagine trying to trade in a car that is broken as an even trade for one that is brand new. You would certainly be the topic of conversation around the dealership lunch room. But that is exactly what Christ's provides for us in His sacrifice.

So it begs the question, are you walking worthy of the gospel to which you have been called? Our crosses may be varied in a sense, but they are ultimately met by the same test of commitment to Jesus Christ. Do I love Christ more than the hardship of not being satisfied with those things that I know displease Him? This is relationship. Am I willing and committed to bear up under the load of a calling that God has put on my life? This is Christianity. This is part of our proclamation of His excellence, that we have found a treasure of great value that we will sell everything to have. Is Christ worth more than the porn, than the sex, than the lying, than the cheating, than the murderous thoughts and intentions, than the pursuit of wealth and health and position? Did Christ worth more than the life I thought I wanted so that I might experience the life that Christ has called me to, even if it is hard? As Christ puts it, is Christ worth more than even my life? But remember the promises. Remember the reward. If we lose our life for Christ's sake and the gospel, we will find it. Remember that this taking up of our cross is only following the paths of righteousness to which we have been called, and those paths are the paths of eternal life.

Now all of this is possible because we have a shepherd to follow. **.II. We have a shepherd to follow, verse 25.** We were straying, says Peter, but we have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. I love this as a pastor. I can say without doubt that Peter was overjoyed with this as well, because it not only ultimately puts the pressure on Jesus, it also means that my failures will not keep you from the gates of heaven. Just notice that in **1 Peter 5:1-2** that Peter identifies himself as an elder. What to elders do? Elders shepherd the flock of God by exercising oversight. Here is the relationship that the original language gives us. The word for "overseer" is the word **episkopon**, from which we get episcopal and from which we translate the word bishop. The word for "exercising oversight" is **episkopuentes**. In Greek this is a **participle** of **episkopon**, which is like a verb/noun combination. This is important. Jesus Christ is the One the Shepherd from which all who serve His people take their guidance. Jesus Christ is the ONE true Overseer, the the ONE and ONLY bishop of our souls. He is our High Priest. He is our advocate. He is our acceptable sacrifice before God for the removal of sins. It is He who has first gone through the valley of the shadow of death with the intention to defeat it, not surrender to it. He mocked its undefeated record of silencing all who meet it. Jesus tore through doors of death and now as the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls leads us through the shadow of death on the paths that He has worn. **Romans 8:37-3** ³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** ³⁸ **For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,** ³⁹ **nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Oh, dear friends, is He not worthy of your worship? Is He not worthy of hearing you praise His excellencies since He has called us out of darkness into marvelous light? Amen.