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THE SUFFERING SAVIOR

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Peter had discussed the role of servants who are Christians. For the sake of their conscience they should willingly suffer for doing what is right. Thinking of innocent people suffering, the apostle turns to the greatest example of suffering ever seen by human eyes or heard by human ears (1 Peter 2:21-25).

WHAT JESUS DID FOR US.

Christ also suffered for you. He suffered on the cross. That we know. Why? For us! This is the deepest meaning of the cross. He suffered even for slaves. It was Peter who opposed the Lord's declaration that He was to die. He didn't understand the Lord's purpose. Now he does. "For us" explains it. What once had been an impossibility, a disappointment, or something totally incomprehensible to Peter's mind is now clear and valuable. Until we understand His death for us, the gospel makes no sense and has no value to us. Peter puts more stress on Christ's suffering than do the other writers. Perhaps His death has become a historical fact to the point of our forgetting its pain and sorrow.

Leaving you an example. We are to make our lives the same as His; to coincide with His in all respects. He is the Master Copy. This is connected with His suffering as the back of a coin is attached to the face. Don't separate this from His suffering. He is our pattern. The reason for human evil is not lack of example. The Pattern is available. The trouble is we do not copy it. He says simply, "Deny self and follow me."

His own self bore our sins in his body on the tree. Jesus was more than an example. Stephen might be used as an example, but only Jesus died for our sins (Isa. 53:12). He bore our sins. They were not His. His death was not justified by His action. He alone died for us. He suffered the punishment due to us. Men think of sin as a very light matter, but Christians know it is a heavy burden, too heavy for them to bear. It was a burden for

Christ, too! Christ made a sacrifice of Himself for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. The idea behind sacrifice is substitution for another. His body became the sacrifice for us.

By whose stripes ye were healed. This is from Isaiah 53:5. Spiritual restoration is "healing" (Mt. 13:15; Acts 12:12, 13). That spiritual healing is intended is further shown by the next verse which begins, "For ye were going astray..."

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN HIS EXAMPLE.

Who did no sin. Christ was unwilling to lie or to sin. He refused to answer curse with curse or suffering with threats. Thus Christ suffered innocently, but with a higher motive than we (Isa. 53:9). Although His enemies searched diligently, they found no deception in Him. This declaration of Christ's sinlessness comes from a man who was with Christ almost day by day for three years. Peter saw Christ's behavior in times of terrible stress as well as times of great popularity. Either present strong temptations, but Peter says Jesus "did not sin."

Neither was guile found in his mouth. His faithfulness extended to His mouth, an area where we so often fail. Slaves, even when suffering, should speak without deceit.

Reviled not again. To revile is to heap abuse. Christ is the example for servants and for all. When He was insulted and treated unjustly, He did not revile in return. Provocation to sin is never justification for sin. It could not bring one indecent word from Christ. The rudeness, cruelty, and injustice of our enemies will not justify sin on our part. The reasons to sin may seem great, but we have always stronger reasons to avoid it. Christ uttered not one word of impatience. This is reminiscent of Isa. 53:7.

When he suffered, threatened not. Retaliation, if only in words, is so much a part of us that it is only by deep faith and determined action we can

resist the temptation. We are especially prone to indignation when we feel that what we are suffering is evil treatment that is undeserved. Remember the Lord uttered no threat. Jesus not only taught non-retaliation, but practiced it as well (Mt. 5:38-48). Do we have the spirit of Christ?

Committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Leaving judgment to God, He did not need to be concerned about what the Jewish leaders thought about Him (Lk. 23:46). "Himself" is added by the translators. Leaving it out, we could also get the idea He left them to be judged by God, not by Him at the time. He didn't lash out at them, but left them to God. He is our example. We should not seek revenge, but feel calmly that God will ultimately see that right is done (Psalm 37:5, 6).

WHAT WE ARE TO DO BECAUSE OF CHRIST.

Ye should follow his steps. To follow His steps suggests following a path of a leader by stepping in the same places he stepped in order to be safe and sure. He triumphed. So can we. But Christ's death is more than just an example as Peter shows in the verse that follows.

We, having died unto sin. If it took the death of the Son of God to provide our forgiveness, it requires of us more than an outward change, more than a slight improvement in our lives. It requires a death to sin.

Might live unto righteousness. The aim of the gospel is not just forgiveness of our sins, but a rejection of sin as a lifestyle. Christ died to release us from the past in order that we might live a new life (Rom. 6:3, 4).

Returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. "Returned" suggests a definite act done by each person. It was done when each was converted. The picture of a shepherd may be lost on an urban society, yet we know enough to find the shepherd relationship attractive. As the title "Shepherd" was applied to Jehovah in the Old Testament, Peter is affirming that Jesus is Deity with the same nature and concern as God. The risen Christ gives kind and thoughtful leadership to those who listen to His voice. Thus "Shepherd" suggests guidance, guardianship, and provision (Jn. 10:11-14).

"Bishop" means overseer. It repeats the concept of caring for people as a shepherd does sheep. Our suffering is not to be thought of as a proof Christ is not watching for us. No other overseer could be depended upon with so much certainty as the One who died for us. He watches for our souls, our inner man! As Overseer, Christ is aware of us individually and of us as a church. To each of the seven churches of Asia Jesus said, "I know thy works." Peter's stress is on us as individuals.

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