

**Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery
Ordeal Among You**
An Expository Journey Through **1Peter**
1Peter 2:21-25
28- The Triumph of Grace through the Death
of Human Vengeance

July 29, 2018

1 Peter 2:21-25

21 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,

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

23 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;

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.

25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

To the Glory of God

It is nothing short of astonishing when we begin to realize how *different* God's Priorities are from ours. What matters most to God, many times, is not even on our radar. And what matters most to *us* is usually *not* a Priority with God. For example, here in the first part of verse 21, the Apostle Peter tells slaves, who are saved, that they are "called" to suffer. The Apostle was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to say:

For you have been called for this purpose ...

... and, in context, the “**you**” here are the “**servants**”, of verse 18, that we now know are human beings who have been bought like cattle, and who were forced to labor against their will, and are being harshly treated by their masters.

Now most of the time, when we use the word “called”, we speak about wondrous things, like unworthy sinners being “called” to Salvation, or unqualified men being “called” to the Ministry. But here, Peter uses this word to the slaves of his day. And he boldly and unashamedly tells them that God Almighty has “called” them to suffer.

Now that would be bad enough. Just that would be very hard for any of us, who live in the 21st Century, and who have been steeped in “American Freedom” and “Civil Rights” and (an unwarranted) sense of “Human Fairness” to take. I would guess that, if Peter taught this in our day, he would be visited by the local “Ministerial Association of greater Galatia” and cautioned to “tone down his rhetoric” about how God is *infinitely* more interested that believing slaves “suffer *well*”, to the Glory of God, than He is in abolishing the evil Institution of Slavery.

And those who sat under Peter’s Ministry would no doubt rebel against him, saying things like, “*My God would never say such horrible things. And God is a God of Love, and God would never tell a believer to ‘suffer well’*”. And yet we find this amazing Passage in the Bible that we say that we believe is inspired and inerrant and infallible.

And just so your sensibilities are offended properly and fully, Peter is *not* telling slaves to simply *endure* the Institution of Slavery itself. He is *specifically* telling slaves, who already endure untold hardships, on a good day, to endure suffering patiently, *especially* when they haven’t done anything wrong! And keep in mind that the “suffering” that was common back then was *not* usually “verbal”. It was everything from not being fed, to standing all night in the cold, to medical attention being withheld, to being beaten, and all the way to actually being put to death.

Now we need to remember that the life of a slave was already harsh anyway. They were usually separated from their parents at a young age and taken by force to a strange country that spoke a strange language. They were told when to get up and when to go to bed. They were told what to eat and when to eat it. They were told what to wear and what to do. They were told who to marry and what would be done

with their children. They were usually not asked any questions, and their opinions didn't matter.

And the reason this information is important to understand is because, in context, the “**suffering**” that Peter was talking about here is that which would be “above and beyond” the every-day “normal mistreatment” that was “part and parcel” to being a slave in the first place. So, Peter is talking about *horrific* suffering, *brutal* suffering, and *unthinkable* suffering, that would be hard for us to imagine.

Now please understand that Peter is not teaching these people, or us, how to be “stoic” or how to be “courageous”, or even how to be “brave”. The New Testament is not a “how-to” Book that psyches people up so they can “be all they can be”. But, if it isn't bravery or courageousness or stoicism that Peter is promoting, then what in the world would be the motivating factor that he could use to compel these believing slaves to suffer patiently, *especially* when they haven't done anything wrong? What rationale could Peter possibly use that could comfort a mistreated slave? What information could Peter give to suffering aliens and strangers that would encourage them to endure that suffering patiently? Read again what he said:

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

23 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;

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.

25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Now for several weeks, we have been examining just what it looks like for us to live in this broken, fallen, world as “Aliens and Strangers”. And Peter has given us powerful examples that we are to follow as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter said we are to live in a “counter-intuitive way”:

1 Peter 2:9b

... so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

... in other words, Jesus has Qualities and Attributes that are so Excellent, so Amazing, so Good, so Wonderful, so Important, and so Valuable, that we are to *reflect* or *proclaim* or *display* or illustrate those Excellencies in the way we live our lives. But, Why? To what end?

1 Peter 2:12b

... so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

... which is very similar to what Jesus Himself taught:

Matthew 5:16

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

So, the lost and pagan world *cannot* see God or His Glory. Their minds have been "hardened", and their eyes have been "veiled" so that they are blind to what is truly lovely and important.

2 Corinthians 3:14&15

14 But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

15 But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;

... but we have been gifted with the ability to see. God has mercifully unveiled our eyes so that we may behold God as He is. And because we see, we are changed into that same Image.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18

16 but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there is* liberty.

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the

Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

... now this "seeing" happens the first time in Salvation when God sovereignly gives us eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to believe. But this seeing also occurs *continuously*, in our progressive Sanctification. So, the correct theology is:

The beholding of God and His Glory- brings about the transformation

Seeing the radical difference between ourselves, as wicked sinners, and the Righteousness and the perfect Holiness of God, brings about the kind of sorrow that produces "repentance without regret" that leads a sinner to Salvation.

2 Corinthians 7:10

For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*,

All sorrow that humans experience is *not* the kind of sorrow that leads to Salvation. People grieve over their sins, all the time. But, without the granting of the *particular* kind of Sorrow, that is "according to the Will of God", that grieving is usually a grieving over the *results* or the *consequences* or the *price* of our sins. We may grieve that we were caught, or we may grieve over the fine we have to pay, or the trouble that our sin brought to our families, or the jail time, or the disease, or even the death. And when *that* kind of sorrow is present, the only "salvation" we seek is the "salvation" that will get us out of the trouble our sins have caused.

And this is why so many who "walk the aisle" or who "pray the prayer" don't last. It isn't because they are persecuted, because all who live righteously will be persecuted. It isn't because they simply aren't very close to Jesus, because Salvation itself will make you *more* hungry for Jesus, not *less*. No, they have never really "seen" God and His Glory. And so, the veil is still over their hearts. And whatever else it was that they wanted Jesus to "save" them from, they didn't want Him to save them from their sins. And so, they don't last because they were never truly saved to begin with. We must understand, dear friends,

that there is no such thing in the Bible as anyone being saved, and then *not* serving Jesus until the day they die. It isn't that *some* saved people persevere, while *others*, who are equally saved, just get weary and fall away. No, the Faith that Salvation is "through", is a Faith that will persevere.

But the Sorrow that is "according to the Will of God" is a deep and profound *grieving* over the revelation that our sins have dishonored God. That we are at odds with the Owner and Creator of the Universe. That our sins have *insulted* and *belittled* God and His Glory.

And *that* kind of Sorrow is a gracious Gift from God, that God mercifully grants only to His elect. And *that* Sorrow, *that* Grieving brings about a "turning away" from, a Repentance, that is entirely without any regret, which *always* leads a sinner to true and genuine Salvation. And this is *exactly* what Jesus was talking about when He said:

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Those who have been graced by God, to behold God and His Glory, also see the great Contrast between themselves and an infinitely Righteous God. And that great Contrast produces this godly kind of Sorrow, this supernatural Grieving over our sins and this Divine Mourning over the Reality that we are wicked and evil sinners, and God is pristine in His Beauty and Value.

So, it isn't only that we come to understand that we are sinners. It is also seeing how glorious and magnificent God is, and how much our sins have made God to look *inferior* to the pleasures that we engaged in. *That* is what produces this kind of Sorrow and Repentance.

And, falling prostrate before Him, in the agony of our souls (that was brought about through the sovereign Work of God the Spirit), we cry out to God for the only thing that matters, Mercy! We have been gifted with the ability to utterly despise our own inherent self-righteousness, and since we cannot talk about how much we have done to *earn* Salvation, we beg God for a Mercy that is beyond any comprehension.

And since the only ones who mourn over their sins are those who are chosen by God for Salvation, God hears our cry, and He applies the

shed Blood of Jesus to forgive us to the uttermost, and He credits us with the very Righteousness of Jesus Himself, and we are now justified before God!

But what Peter is talking about here is the *continuation* of what God began in our Justification. Peter is *not* talking here about how lost people are saved in the first place. No, Peter is talking about how saved people should live their daily lives, *after* we have been justified. So, these are *not* "acts of Righteousness" that will produce Salvation. These are not "human efforts" that will get God's Attention, so He will save us. These are not "Good deeds" that we can perform so that we can earn God's Favor.

No, as already redeemed souls, we are constantly seeking and striving to behold God and His Glory. We are constantly crying out to God for Help and Strength and Comfort and Power to rise above the petty grievances and the works of the flesh, and the worldliness and the carnal ways of Man that desires to keep us earthly and fleshly and base, so that we may behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ! Because the Promise of Scripture is that as we see, as we behold that magnificent Glory, we are:

... being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

But what does that look like? What does it look like for human beings, who live in a fallen world that is dominated by satan, and that does not have a glorified body (even though our souls have been saved), what does it look like to be changed into the Image and Likeness of Jesus in His Glory that God has allowed us to behold? Peter sums it all up by saying:

1 Peter 1:14-16

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.**"**

So, being "holy" is being "set part for God's use", or *not* being "conformed to the former lusts". *That* is what being "transformed into

the Image that we see" looks like. And then the Apostle gets into specifics. He says that people, who behold God and His Glory and are changed, have certain *unmistakable* characteristics, they bear very *peculiar* fruit, that proves that they have, in fact, seen the Lord, and they are radically different from the lost unsaved world. Peter says these people:

1 Peter 1:6b

... greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

1 Peter 1:7b

... that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 1:8b

... though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

1 Peter 1:9b

... obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:13b

... prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter says that these people, as they continuously see God in His infinite Value, they do not *guess*, they do not *hope*, they do not *wonder*, they do not simply *believe*, but they *know*:

1 Peter 1:18b&19

... that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.

... why do they do this? Peter said they were:

1 Peter 1:21b

... believers in God, who raised Him [Jesus] from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

... and what is their response to having Faith and Hope in God?

1 Peter 1:22

... you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

... and why did these aliens and strangers do all this? Because they were brave? Because they were courageous? Because they were given so many material blessings? No. Peter says that the reason these people, who suffered more than most, did all this because they were saved and they no longer trusted in flowers and grass:

1 Peter 1:23-25

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And this is the word which was preached to you.

And then Peter says that since all that is true, and since they have been gloriously saved, and all their sins have been forever forgiven, now they are to respond to all this Grace:

1 Peter 2:1-3

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

But what about us "coming before God" so that we may behold Him in His Glory? Has Peter forgotten all of that? Is coming to the Lord now unnecessary because we have already been saved?

1 Peter 2:4&5

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So, no, “coming to the Lord” to see Him as He really is is still critical to our ongoing Sanctification. And the result of our “seeing” will be what we have been going over the last nine weeks. Because we see, we will be able to:

1 Peter 2:11b

... abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

... and that “abstaining”, that *refusal* to be a part of this broken world will manifest itself in various ways:

- ✓ We will “keep our behavior excellent” (verse 12).
- ✓ We will produce “good deeds” that are observable (verse 12).
- ✓ We will “submit ourselves to every Human Institution” (verse 13).

... and now we see that part of us “**abstaining from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul**” involves us:

Suffering patiently, even when that suffering is unjust.

... therefore, as bond-slaves of the Lord Christ, we are to be radically changed by the Glory of God that we see in the Face of Jesus Christ. And that transformation will empower us to voluntarily give away our “rights” and live in a way that is both *inconvenient* and that actually *invites* persecution.

But, just in case you’re already choking on all this, Peter isn’t finished yet. Because, in the next Chapter, Peter will tell us how Husbands and Wives should behave, which will also serve to “prove” or “show” or “display” or “proclaim” to the pagans all of Jesus’ amazing Excellencies and demonstrate to the world:

The common feature of the Faith that *escapes* suffering and the Faith that *endures* suffering is this: both of them involve believing that God Himself is *better* than what life can give to you *now*, and *better* than what death can take from you *later*.

... and my Question is, "How do human beings get like this? How do people, who are simply flesh, change so radically that this is their public testimony?" Who among us would suffer like this? Who do you know that lives this way? Is there some way we can just hypnotize ourselves into being like this? What is the secret that allows people to be like this? I think the Answer lies in what Peter says in the Passage we are studying:

1 Peter 2:21-25

21 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,

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

23 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;

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.

25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

... and I think by looking carefully into these five verses, we will see what we need to see so that we may be what we have been called to be.

1. This is a Calling to Which we Surrender, not a Job to Accomplish

For you have been called for this purpose...

A Divine Call is not something we "do", it isn't a Job that we are to "accomplish", but a "Divine Summons" to which we *surrender*. It is a "Celestial Beckoning" to which we *yield*. It is a "Heavenly Communication" to which we *acquiesce*. God does the *calling* and we do the *responding*. We do not call ourselves. We do not take it upon ourselves to *impose* this on ourselves. We *hear* or we *recognize*, or, in some way, we *comprehend* that God has called us, and we *yield* or *respond* or *surrender* to that Call. And even in our yielding, both the *power* to yield and the *desire* are gifts from God.

Salvation is a "Calling". People do not "choose" to be saved. That is nonsense. We do not "choose" to be saved any more than we "choose" to be born. We do not *initiate* our Salvation. And, we *do not*, because we *can't*. God calls us, and those who are chosen respond. Jesus said:

John 5:25

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

So, there is a "General Call" to all Mankind to "repent and believe the Gospel" that we are to proclaim to every creature. But then there is an "Effectual Call", to God's elect. And when the elect hear, they live!

Then there is a "Calling" to *some* of those who are saved to enter into the Ministry. And *this* Calling is obvious and evident and clear to all, because those whom God calls will be given the necessary gifts and talents that equip them to minister effectively.

But Peter says here that there is yet *another* type of Divine Calling. And this is a Calling to suffer. And while the Call to Minister is not for all, the Call to suffer is. How do we know that? Because Peter links suffering to the Example set by Jesus:

1 Peter 2:21-23

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;

... so, if you are a Christian this morning, God has *called* you to endure unjust suffering without bitterness or revenge, or the desire to hurt back.

Now why is this part of living as "aliens and strangers"? If you will honestly look at yourself and then closely listen to others, you will see and hear something amazing. Human beings have a tendency to justify their anger and their critical spirit by the wrongs that have been done to them. In other words, there are lots of people who, when you point out to them that they seem to be unduly angry or bitter or critical or slanderous of others, immediately tell you about how badly they have

been treated in the past, or how they've been let down, or how they've been hurt.

There appears to be some automatic and deeply rooted sense that if I've been mistreated or let down or hurt, then the other person deserves to be shown up and brought to Justice, and paid back, and therefore, I have the "right" to make sure that happens. And I can use criticism or slander or put-downs or threats or grudges to make sure they get what they deserve. This is called "Human Vengeance", and it is the *opposite* of the Grace of God. And, as one *triumphs*, the other one *dies*. Because they *cannot* co-exist in the same person at the same time. So, either Grace triumphs and Human Vengeance dies, or Human Vengeance triumphs and Grace dies.

And real bad teaching, and an almost *universal* refusal to acknowledge that engaging in Human Vengeance is sinful by the people of the modern church, is the reason we can go for several years and never hear anyone say, *"Yes, I have been unjustly hurt, let down, betrayed and mistreated, and yes, those people deserve to be shown up and brought to justice and rebuked, but no, I will not be bitter, I will not retaliate, I will not criticize or slander; I will return good for evil and I will bless rather than curse."*

My dear friends, this is not some off-the-wall, strange idea here. This is fundamental, basic Christianity. And those who came before us practiced it. It was their public testimony. And it changed the world. The modern Health, Wealth, and Prosperity Message, that emphasizes the here and now, may draw the covetous and those who desire to be made much of, but it will never produce people who can suffer without fighting back. And so, it will never transform the world. But this will. And I beg God that He would be merciful to us, to me, that we, that I, might recover this glorious biblical Truth that God has called all Christians to endure unjust suffering without bitterness or revenge, or the desire to hurt back.

And I also need to say, that this is not something that we can say, *"I believe that!"*, and that takes care of it. This is *not* some Rule to be kept, or some Job to be accomplished. We can't gin this up. We can't fake this. We can't psyche ourselves up to this. This is not something we can initiate. And we're also not simply going to "do" this. This is a Miracle that has to be *experienced*, and a Grace that has to be *received*.

God has *called* us to this, and only God can change us so that we *respond* to that Calling.

So, our place in all this, where we begin in all this, is to cry out to God that He would be so Good to us that He would so radically change us until this becomes normal.

Now, about 600 years before Jesus was born, God the Holy Spirit “moved along” the Prophet Isaiah to predict what the Messiah would be like, and in **Isaiah 53:9**, the Prophet wrote:

His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

... and the “**violence**” in view here was *violence* that was carried out against the Glory of God, which is sin. So, Isaiah is saying that the Man, who is the Center of this Prophecy, would be a *sinless* Man.

Now, of course, we know that Isaiah was referring to Jesus. But the reason we know that is not because of our own independent study. We know this because *part* of the “special anointing and gifting” of an Apostle was the ability to correctly understand the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures. And so, as Peter takes this Old Testament Prophecy, and he correctly applies it to Jesus, *that* is why we know that Isaiah was talking about Jesus. But until Peter said this, we didn’t. And so, the only reason that every preacher worth his salt can “see” Jesus in **Isaiah 53** is because Peter gave us that ability.

So, just like Jesus suffered, Peter says we are to use that sinless Model, that perfect Example, as a Guide as to how we are to suffer. So, again, this is *not* a Characteristic of Jesus that we are to merely agree with or confess or believe in. No, *this* is a Characteristic that we are to follow and become personally acquainted with.

And how do we do that? The dynamic is the same as to how we were saved in the first place. Firstly, we must be granted with the ability to behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. And then, secondly, we must be granted the power to be changed into what we see.

2. We Need to be Forgiven and Healed

But we are not *normally* or *naturally* like this. We do not *easily* give up our "right" to defend ourselves, and we do not calmly allow Injustice to seemingly triumph over us. More than almost anything else, suffering injustice, patiently, goes against every fiber of our natures. One of the things I have discovered about myself that I really am ashamed of is how *easy* it is for me to rise to defend myself. You can steal my possessions and I won't react the way I do when my integrity is attacked. And that is not simply because I am human. Peter says, I am like this, because I am already two other things:

1. Sinful
2. Sick

... but I didn't just become sinful and sick last Tuesday. I have been spiritually sick and sinful my entire life. Actually, I was born this way. Well, more accurately, I was conceived in my mother's womb both sick and sinful. And the Truth is that, even though I am saved, I am desperately in need of *growing* in the Grace that Salvation was initially "by" (**Ephesians 2:8**).

So, the reality is that I simply *cannot* "be" and "do" what God requires of me as a Man without it. You see, as a Man, I fill certain Roles on earth like, a "Father", and a "Husband", and a "Son", and a "Brother". And, as someone called to the Ministry, I also fill other Roles like, a "Pastor", and an "Elder"; a "Crusader for Truth and Righteousness" as well as all those Biblical Issues for simply being a Christian. And I acknowledge that if I don't grow in this Grace, I will fail at all of that.

So, it would be very hard for me to *overstate* how strongly I feel about this right now, at this point in my life, and in the life of our Church, and in the life of the "Evangelical Movement" that is going on throughout the world. Marriages, Parenting, Friendships, Employment, Stability, Ministry in the Church (of every kind!), Perseverance in fighting for Righteousness all of this struggling for the "long haul" of effectiveness depends *more* on this Grace than most people realize. I know beyond the shadow of doubt that my Family and my Ministry at Covenant, and my Role beyond this Church all radically depend on whether I and those near me genuinely *experience* the ongoing Miracle

of this Grace in our lives of doing what Peter says here, and not “returning hurt for hurt”.

So, I hope you see the seriousness of all this as we look over Peter’s shoulder as he writes these words. The Apostle is boldly and unashamedly calling for nothing less than a death to our propensity for Human Vengeance through the Triumph of this amazing Grace.

So, look again at verse 19, that says:

1 Peter 2:19

For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

Here, Peter says that we “find Favor”, or in other words, we are “approved by God”, we “bless God”, we “honor God”, we “display the Value of God” if we “**bear up under sorrows when suffering unjustly**”, when we consciously make that decision to suffer based on “**the sake of conscience toward God**”.

Please let this stand out in your mind. Peter is not talking about getting punished when you have done something wrong. Peter is talking here about suffering when you do what is RIGHT. So, when you do RIGHT, you will be criticized. When you do RIGHT, things won't necessarily get better. When you do RIGHT, someone will say a hurtful thing. When you do RIGHT, people may not even notice and there will be no appreciation. Or, when you do RIGHT, you lose your possessions and are thrown into jail. Or beaten. Or killed.

Yet our inclination is to feel as though such abuse, *especially* when we have done RIGHT, is absolutely intolerable! *“This is wrong! I've been violated! No decent person would respond to me that way! The least they could do is notice...”*

And then there arises this overwhelming emotional force inside of us that we have a right and a DUTY to set this thing straight, and make sure that the words come back on their own head, and point out their flaws, so we may be vindicated! And why do we feel that way? Because we've done RIGHT!

How many of us actually live in the liberating knowledge that it is our calling, our DIVINE CALLING, God has actually *called* us to be misunderstood, and criticized, and ignored, and hurt *for doing what is RIGHT*, and to *resist* the temptation to return hurt for hurt?

Now, before anyone thinks that Peter was simply addressing this only to the slaves of his day, please read **1 Peter 3:8&9**:

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;
9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

So, this Calling is for every person in this room, who trusts Jesus. And **1 Peter 2:21** shows why:

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,

This verse says that two things were happening when Jesus suffered. One is found in the phrase "**Christ also suffered for you.**" When Jesus suffered, more than any of us have ever or will ever suffer, He was standing in our place. He was bearing our sins so that our Condemnation became His, and He took that Condemnation away from us. So, the sufferings of our lives, as we are in Christ, are **NOT** Condemnation for sin. They are discipline for Holiness (**1 Peter 1:6&7; Hebrews 12:3-11**). The sufferings of genuine believers are *never* Divine Condemnation. Because that is *precisely* what Jesus bore "for us" (**1 Peter 2:24; Galatians 3:13**). And that is the reason why *our* sufferings come just as often from "doing what is RIGHT" as it does from "doing what is wrong". It is not Divine Condemnation, it is Divine CALLING!

But the second thing that was happening when Jesus suffered was that He was providing an Example, a Model, of just *how* we were to live. So, Jesus died for you so that you might suffer like Him. And this perfect Example or Model is spelled out in verses 22&23:

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

23 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;

Now, we must remember, especially when we are tempted to stand up for ourselves in our "righteous indignation" at the unfair treatment we are receiving, that Jesus did not deserve to suffer at all. He deserved it less than anybody in the history of the world deserved it. And yet, when He was reviled:

... He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

... and Peter says that this particular disposition is our "Calling". To *not* hurt back. To *not* get the last word. And then to *not* plan to hurt back later. And, all the while, *not* to seethe with bitterness because we're not allowed to hurt back. And while all that is going on, to make sure we realize that this is not "Pacifism". We absolutely believe that God will adjudicate all outstanding accounts. So, nobody ever gets away with anything, ultimately.

And so, this is not about being brave or strong or courageous. This is simply rock, solid Trust, that God sees and God knows and God will ultimately correct all injustices. And we have become satisfied with that. So, I hope you can see that this is *not* a "Rule" that we are to keep. This is not a doctrine that we are simply to believe in. This is a Miracle that we are to personally experience. This is a Grace that we are to receive and possess.

And this is the only way that many Marriages will survive and flourish. Because spouses can hurt each other worse than almost anybody else. And how many are consumed day and night with indignation and "justified" self-pity and numbing frustration that they are doing RIGHT, and yet, all they get is pain.

So where does this Miracle come from? How does a Grace like this get to us? First, let me give the overarching Answer from the text itself, and then see how it works out in experience. The overarching Answer is found in verse 19:

For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

This Miracle happens in us, and this Grace comes to us when we are "conscious of God". It comes by reckoning with God. It comes by

including God in the equation of your relationship. Thinking about God. Looking to God as a "Third Party" Who is really present. It comes from taking God as seriously as we take the offense against us. So, the Source of this Miracle, is GOD!

But let's be more specific. What are we supposed to think when we find ourselves in a situation of "unjust suffering"? What are we to believe about God at that very moment? The Truth is that most modern believers don't think for a second that God would ever allow this to happen to them in the first place. The average believer in the average church today has such a convoluted understanding of the Purpose of Suffering that he would never dream in 10,000 years that it could ever even be God's Will for them to suffer unjustly.

So, when unjust suffering comes to them (which it does), then most of these people completely fall apart, and they turn on God, and they run and hide, and they blame God, and they get angry with God, and they feel as though God has abandoned them, which means that the Bible isn't true, and these people get into a very bad, bitter place, very quickly. And there are literally thousands of these people, all over this country, people who genuinely feel as though God has left them high and dry, because unjust suffering came their way and they were not prepared for it.

But God was Good 2,000 years ago to give all genuine believers the Answer as He "moved along" the Apostle Peter to write down verse 23:

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;

When Jesus was reviled, He handed over to God the whole situation, including Himself and those abusing Him, and the hurt done, and all the factors that made it a horrendous outrage of Injustice that the most innocent Man Who ever lived should suffer so much. Jesus trusted all of it into God's Hands as the One Who would settle the matter justly, ultimately. He said, "*I will not carry the burden of Revenge, I will not carry the burden of sorting out motives, I will not carry the burden of self-pity, I will not carry the burden of bitterness, I will hand all that over to God Who will settle it all in a perfectly just*

way and I will pray, 'Father, forgive them they don't know what they do'" And Peter tells us that, since it is true that God sees every wrong done to you, and since it is true that God knows every hurt, and that He assesses motives and circumstances with perfect accuracy, because it is true that God impeccably Righteous and takes no bribes, and that He will settle all accounts with perfect Justice, we can trust Him when we suffer unjustly. And this is what it means to be "conscious of God" in the midst of unjust pain.

So, if you believe this, if God is this real to you, then you will hand it over to God. And even though nobody in the world may understand where your Peace and Joy and Freedom to Love is coming from, you know. The Answer is God. And sooner or later they will know.

Now please allow me to close with two illustrations of how this works in two kinds of situations.

1. When the Good You Do Goes Unnoticed

The first is the hurt you experience when the Good that you do- is not noticed or not appreciated, *especially* by those who mean the most to you. Some common examples:

- ✓ Parents who never say (or never said), "*Good job,*" no matter how hard you tried.
- ✓ Children who never thanked Mom for hundreds of rides and meals and launderings.
- ✓ Husbands and Wives who long ago stopped looking each other in the eyes and saying: "*I love you. Thanks for all you do.*"

How do you survive and thrive when all your love disappears in a black hole of silence? The Answer is God. Jesus said over and over again in **Matthew 6:**

... your Father who sees *what is done in secret* will reward you.

... and Faith latches on to the Promise, and by Grace, says:

"Father, of all the audiences in the Universe that I want to notice the efforts of my love, You are the most important. I believe You have seen it all. And you have written it all down in Your Book. And You will reward me far

more than any human ever could. I thank You. I love You. I need You. I trust You. Please make Yourself more real to me than my closest friend. Give me the Grace now to be finished with self-pity and all anger, and to go forward in love to everyone. Please kill my need for Human Vengeance."

2. When the Good You Do Is Rejected

The other illustration is the hurt you experience when the Good you do is rejected, twisted, criticized, or even attacked. Someone lies about you and you lose your job with no justification at all. You confide in someone and bare your soul, and it comes back in your face as a criticism and rejection. Or you sit down for the first time prayerfully and non-violently in front of an abortion mill, and you are arrested and sentenced to nine months in jail for peacefully trying to save the lives of unborn children.

How do you survive and thrive and go on loving when your deep judicial sense cries out: *"NO! It isn't right! This can't be tolerated! It is not fair!"*

The answer again is God. Paul said in **Romans 12:19-21**:

19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "**VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,**" says the Lord.

20 "**BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.**"

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

... in other words, do what Jesus did. Hand it over to God. God sees it. And God judges justly. Nothing escapes His Notice. Nothing falls from His Memory. He will settle all accounts more fairly than we ever could. Lay it down. Let it go. This is your Calling.

So, it really all boils down to this:

Remember God. Be conscious of God. Trust God.

... God will remember and reward you for every Good forgotten by everyone else. He will avenge you for every injustice overlooked by men. And that Knowledge sets you free. Free to love, Free to Forgive. God

sends us out of here today as free men. Leave behind in this room the yoke of self-pity and the yoke bitterness. God is there in every relationship. Remember Him. Be conscious of Him. Hand it over to Him. Trust Him.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.