

Our Glorious Submission

- 1 Peter 2:18-25
- In this passage Peter is continuing to answer the question for these elect exiles who are going through suffering, “How are God’s people to relate to the kingdoms and the institutions of this world?” As we saw last week in the text of Scott’s sermon, this whole section can only be viewed through the lens we are given in verses 12 and 13. “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.” And, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.” We honor others and we are subject to others because we honor God and we are subject to God. Notice that Peter tells us in verse 17 to fear God, but he does not tell us to fear people. We who belong to God have nothing to fear. He has replaced that spirit with one of power, and love, and self-control. But having no need to fear people does not remove the calling on our lives to sometimes suffer when we do good, just as Christ did. Let’s see what that looks like under three main points: The blessing of unjust suffering, the model for unjust suffering, and the power of unjust suffering.
- **The blessing of unjust suffering (verses 18-20)**
- In no way is this passage an endorsement of slavery. But it was a human institution then, as slavery was widespread. The word he uses here means household servant, and many slaves in the Roman Empire then would have what we see as professional occupations now: accountants, teachers, even physicians. But they were under the rule, sometimes despotic rule, of another. Peter is not advocating for the perpetuation of slavery, not by any means. Neither does Paul in his letters. But both apostles are speaking to believers where they are, encouraging them that they have a higher calling whatever their station in life happens to be. And Paul even says to the Christian slaves to render service to their masters with a good will and then says to Christian masters, “do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.” (Eph. 6:9)
- Peter says we are to be subject to our masters with all respect. It is a derivative of the same word that Paul uses in Ephesians 5:33 when he says, “And let each one of you (husbands) love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” Why would a wife or a servant respect a husband or a master who is not deserving of respect? And let’s be honest, men. Which of us is truly, in every way, *deserving* of respect? I think the answer is the respect we are to have above all others is for God. As men and women under authority, and sometimes authority that is not godly, we look to our heavenly Father. We trust him. We serve him where he has placed us, and when a servant is unjustly treated for doing what is good and right, he or she can have confidence in the Lord. When we are “mindful of God,” as Peter says, and endure suffering, it is powerful. We do it for the Lord’s sake, and Peter says, “this is a gracious thing.” He says it again in verse 20. “But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.” This kind of trust in submission elicits divine favor. There is no credit, Peter says, when we suffer because of our own sin. But when we suffer unjustly, God opens the heavens and pours out blessings. Think of the many testimonies in the first century or since that time where someone suffered for the sake of Christ and people came into his kingdom as a result. The Philippian jailer saw Paul and Silas singing praises after being beaten and bloodied by the Roman guards. He came to believe in Jesus, the One whom they were respecting, trusting, and loving as they suffered. The martyrs of Sebaste were Roman soldiers in AD 320 who served under Licinius the emperor. When all the soldiers in the unit were commanded to make sacrifices to the emperor, these 39 men told their commander that they were Christians and would not offer sacrifice to any man. They were first beaten with whips that had iron hooks on the ends, ripping open their flesh. They would not relent. So they were told to go and stand without clothing on a frozen pond in the middle of winter and they would slowly freeze to death, while a warm bath was prepared beside the pond for any who would renounce Christ. The 39 men ran joyfully to the pond, rejoicing that one painful night would lead to a happy eternity. Watching these men suffer without

complaint, one of the sentinels took off his clothes as well and joined the men on the pond, confessing his faith in Jesus. The story of **40** martyrs of Sebaste, who suffered for the sake of Christ, has been shared for nearly 2000 years and given hope and brought the Gospel truth to many. That leads to...

- **The model for unjust suffering (verses 21-23)**

- In all of this, we look to Jesus. We follow him. We walk in his footsteps. Look again at verse 21. It's in your Bibles and it is on a banner on the stage, designed by Janet. "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." What a powerhouse of truth! Some believe this verse was an early hymn or creed. The saints would sing or recite it often to remind themselves of this pillar upon which we stand.
- First, we are *called* to this. To what? To endure suffering while suffering unjustly. As I said two weeks ago, we have to know who we are and what we have been given in Christ, and this is so important. All Christians are called to suffer before they are glorified with him. That is the very opposite of the so-called Prosperity Gospel, which is no gospel at all, and you can read what Paul said about anyone who preaches another gospel in Galatians 1. (But not now). But look at this. We are not suffering because of fate. If we think that, we probably just put our heads down and go into stoicism mode. We grit our teeth and endure. No, we have been *called* to suffer for the sake of Christ, so our heads are up and our mouths are open and we rejoice in Him! Why?
- Second, because Christ also suffered for us. That's why. The example of Christ is one that saves. His suffering is a model for us because it produced our salvation. Notice that he suffered verbal abuse; he was reviled but did not revile in return. He suffered injury that we cannot even begin to understand, and he uttered not one word of threat. His suffering was powered by his complete and utter trust in his Father. This example of Christ's suffering is not just a north star we look to for guidance. No, Christ's suffering is the very center of all our motivation to love him and surrender our lives to him completely, just as he surrendered up his life for us. How do we do this?
- Third, we follow in his steps. I wonder if when Peter wrote that, his mind and heart went back to that charcoal fire in the courtyard on the night of Jesus' trial. Remember, it was Peter who told Jesus that even if everybody else fell away, he would not! He would die with Jesus before he would deny him. But he did just what Jesus told him he would do. He denied the Lord three times, once with a curse. He did *not* follow in Jesus' steps on that dark night when roosters crowed and strong men ran away. But after Jesus restored him, Peter followed the Lord for the rest of his life, all the way to his own crucifixion at the hands of Nero. Are you tired and discouraged and feeling like a failure and wanting to give up? Then you are just the person Jesus is looking for. He found Peter in that condition and we know how that turned out. He does the same for you and me. That leads us to...

- **The power of unjust suffering (verses 24-25)**

- We can do nothing with the first two points unless this third truth is laid at the foundation of all our hopes. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live in righteousness." That is the atoning sacrifice that saved your life and mine and made us completely and utterly free, whether in this body you are a slave or a king. Jesus did that. No one took his place. He took *our* place! It is the amazing exchange that Paul wrote about, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21)
- Peter writes, "By his wounds you have been healed." He looks back to Isaiah 53:5, "and with his wounds we are healed." This is not a verse to take out of context and claim healing whenever you want. Edmund Clowney explains, "Christ's wounds heal suffering at its root: the curse of sin." That's the healing we need most, for without Christ we were, Peter says, "straying like sheep." He could be referring to Isaiah 53 again, "All we like sheep have gone astray," or Ezekiel 34, "So they were scattered because there was no shepherd." Either way, Jesus is the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep, and then seeks after the sheep that are lost or who have wandered away from the fold.

- So, how can we live? With honorable conduct, and with godly submission to others. Because? In Christ, we have nothing to hide, nothing to prove, nothing to fear, and nothing to lose.
- Prayer
- Greet One Another