

## “Free to Submit” (1 Peter 2:18-25)

Do you feel appreciated in your work? Do you sense that you are valued and respected? Does your boss place unrealistic demands upon you? Is your boss moody and easily agitated? Does he/she criticize you on a regular basis? Do you feel rejected or even persecuted by your co-workers? If so, this sermon is for you. Children and teens, do you have parents that never say, “good job,” no matter how hard you try? If so, this sermon is for you. Parents, do you have children who never say, “thank you,” for hundreds of rides, meals, and launderings? If so, this sermon is for you. Husbands and wives, are you married to a spouse who long ago stopped saying, “I love you. Thanks for all you do.” If so, this sermon is for you.

At one time or another, most people feel underpaid and unappreciated. We are tempted to think or say, “What did I do to deserve this treatment? The people at my work have no idea how fortunate they are that I’m here.” We tend to think that we don’t deserve to be treated poorly. Somehow we think we’re above it. The message of the Bible is contrary to this mentality. This is especially clear in the book of 1 Peter. The book of 1 Peter is about suffering and Peter is going to argue that we must **submit amidst unjust suffering**. In chapter 2, Peter urges his readers to cultivate a love for God’s Word (2:1-3) and to live like God’s people (2:4-12). In 2:11-12, he expressly states that excellent living earns the right to be heard. Then in 2:13-3:6, Peter expounds the virtue of submission, applying this theme to citizens (2:13-17), servants (2:18-25), and wives (3:1-6).<sup>1</sup> Peter specifically mentions citizenship, work, and marriage because these are three primary areas where most suffering occurs.

In 2:18, Peter writes, “**Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.**” Peter tells “servants”<sup>2</sup> to be “submissive”<sup>3</sup> to their masters (cf. 2:13). Yet, unlike “submission holds” in wrestling or martial arts, biblical submission is voluntary. As disciples we are called to make deliberate decisions on a daily basis to submit. Peter goes on to write that we are to be submissive “**with all respect**” (lit. “with all fear”). This phrase refers to our responsibility to fear God (see 1:17; 2:17; Col 3:22).<sup>4</sup> Peter is saying, “Servants, submit to your earthly master because you fear God.”<sup>5</sup>

The tough thing is Peter says it doesn’t matter if our master is “**good and gentle**” or “**unreasonable.**” The term rendered “**unreasonable**” (*skolios*) means “crooked.”<sup>6</sup> The English word “scoliosis” is derived from this Greek word. (Scoliosis is the disease of a distorted spine.) Peter is saying that even though our employers can be morally dishonest and evil the Lord still expects us to recognize the place of authority that He has put them in (see Rom 13:1). Since we live in a “perverse/corrupt generation” (Acts 2:40) we can expect employers to be crooked in terms of pay, work conditions, expectations, etc. Yet, even in the case of unjust suffering, we are still to “keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles” (2:12). Our responsibility at the end of the day is for our actions and not those of others. They will give an account of their behavior to God (4:5) and judgment belongs to Him (2:23).

So how can we demonstrate biblical submissiveness? (1) Have a teachable, rather than a defensive, spirit when being corrected or instructed. A Dennis the Menace cartoon shows Dennis being disciplined and sitting on his rocking chair in the corner: “I’m sitting down on the outside, but I’m still standing up on the inside.” This is not the heart of a disciple. We have a responsibility to be humble and gracious. We are to stand out from the rest of our fellow employees because we’ve changed bosses—we’re working for Christ.

(2) Don’t complain about your boss or put him down behind his back when others are doing it all the time. FOX television is debuting a new reality TV show called, *My Big Fat Obnoxious Boss*.<sup>7</sup> This is typical of the type of remarks that we can hear in work environments. “My boss is obnoxious.” “She is such a jerk.” “He is so selfish.” Instead, speak words that build up.

(3) Obey the instructions of your boss.<sup>8</sup> You don't have to agree with the validity of his/her instructions in order to faithfully carry them out. If you have ever been in the armed forces you understand this. As a soldier you must obey all the orders whether you agree with them or not. This rule also applies at work. Even if you don't agree with the course of action or work responsibility, do it nonetheless. Then work diligently and faithfully all the time, not just when the boss is watching.

(4) Pray that God would prosper your boss (spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and financially). A great example of this is found in the movie, *Scrooge*. Bob Cratchet prays, "God bless us everyone...even Mr. Scrooge."

(5) Show him respect in your tone of voice, body language, etc. Our society dictates a lack of respect for authority figures. You can be counter-cultural by loving your boss with the love of Christ.

Peter is clear that we are to submit but the natural question is: Why should we bother submitting to those who disrespect and abuse us? Peter answers the question with three powerful incentives. **(1) The first incentive is found in 2:19: God's favor.** Peter writes, **"For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows<sup>9</sup> when suffering<sup>10</sup> unjustly."** The word **"for"** indicates that Peter is giving an explanation/motivation for submitting to our masters. The reason given is that submission **"finds favor."** The word **"favor"** (*charis*) is the Greek word for "grace."<sup>11</sup> I think what Peter means here is that God delights in behavior that reflects utter reliance on His grace. When a Christian, out of **"conscience<sup>12</sup> toward God"** or "mindful of God" (ESV), looks to God for strength, courage, hope, and peace in a time of suffering, God sees it as a tribute to His grace. God is shown in it. And when God is shown God is pleased.<sup>13</sup>

Peter further explains his thought in 2:20a: **"For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated,<sup>14</sup> you endure it with patience?"** Peter is saying, "If you steal pens from the office and get in trouble, what credit is there?" "If you take a long lunch break and get busted, what credit is there?" "If you exchange words with your boss and he writes you up, what credit is there?" "If you get fired for viewing Internet pornography, what credit is there?" The answer to all of these scenarios is there is no credit...none! You deserve to be **"harshly treated"** for all these things. If you endure your punishment with patience, big deal! Who cares? You're just receiving your just due.

One of the most important questions a Christian worker can ask is: Why am I suffering? Is my work not up to snuff? Am I routinely late for work? Do I meddle? Do I talk too much? Am I strong-willed and argumentative? Do I share my faith when I should be working? In many cases there are good reasons why Christians suffer. Before you claim to be suffering unjustly be sure that you are not guilty of bringing on the suffering.

Peter now brings a word of contrast, **"But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God"**<sup>15</sup> (2:20b). Please let this sink in! When you do right you will suffer. 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 will not even notice and there will be no appreciation.<sup>16</sup> Yet, Peter says, "If you **'patiently endure'**<sup>17</sup> unjust suffering you will find favor with God."

When I first began lifting weights in seventh grade, I was so physically weak that I lifted by myself, in the privacy of my bedroom. One day I was working out with my 110-pound weight set. I was doing a set of squats. Since I had no bench, I had to take the barbell and clean and press it to my shoulders. Once I did that I would do my set. On my final set of squats I was feeling weary but I knew I could finish my reps. Well, wouldn't you know it, my legs gave out. I then fell face forward onto my bed with a 110-pound barbell on my neck. What's a young man to do when something like this happens? The answer is obvious:

“HELP!!” I yelled and screamed but no one came to my rescue. I later learned that I was home alone. I had to patiently endure a lengthy struggle to get this weight off my neck. After a few minutes that seemed like hours I was able to tilt one side of the weight on its side and escape with my life.

This humorous crisis demonstrates the importance of bearing up, patient endurance. One who suffers righteously must persevere in his suffering. Many can endure for a short period of time but Peter calls you and me to endure our suffering with patience. When we do so we find “**favor**” or “**grace**” with God. Is there anything that means more to you than God’s approval? (2:18-19). I hope not. God wants you to seek after His “well done” (Matt 25:21, 23).

[We are called to **submit amidst unjust suffering** because of God’s grace.]

**(2) In 2:21a, Peter provides the second incentive for suffering unjustly: the Christian’s calling.**<sup>18</sup>

Peter writes, “**For you have been called for this purpose.**” Here we see that undeserved suffering is not a possibility for our lives but it is a promise. Part of the Christian’s calling (1:1; 2:9) includes suffering (cf. 2 Tim 3:12).<sup>19</sup> Of course this leads to a natural question: Why do we have to suffer? A skeptic once asked C.S. Lewis this very question, “Why are the righteous called to suffer?” Lewis replied, “Why not? They’re the only ones who can take it.” The reality is there are times when God wills the unjust suffering of His people. Elsewhere Peter writes, “For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong” (3:17). “Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (4:19). God often wills our suffering because He knows the best way for us to bring Him glory. Sometimes it is by miraculously escaping suffering and sometimes (more often) by graciously bearing suffering that we do not deserve, from men, because we trust in God.

There is an Arab proverb which says, “All sunshine makes a desert.” Just as the rain is necessary for plants to grow, unjust suffering is just as necessary for us to grow in godliness. A similar truth is found in tea [display a tea bag]. Do you like tea? Well, here’s a tea bag. Go ahead and eat it. Of course you wouldn’t do that. Why? Because you know that the tea bag must first go through hot water. A Christian is like a tea bag—not much good until it has gone through hot water.<sup>20</sup> Are you willing to step up to your calling? Will you patiently endure in your work responsibilities because you’re a follower of Christ?

[We are called to **submit amidst unjust suffering** because of God’s grace and our Christian calling.]

**(3) The third incentive that Peter mentions is: Christ’s example (2:21b-25).**<sup>21</sup> Undeserved suffering was a critical component in God’s plan for Christ’s life (cf. Heb 2:10; 5:8).<sup>22</sup> This is especially brought out in 2:21b: “**Since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.**”<sup>23</sup> Peter writes that Christ suffered for “**you.**” He voluntarily stepped into a position where there would inevitably be much suffering. He took the form of a servant, subjecting Himself to the will of His Father, enduring everything that was necessary for Him to save the human race.

Peter heightens his argument by bringing up Christ as our example. The word “**example**” (*hupogrammos*) appears only here in the New Testament. However, in classical Greek the word meant “underwriting.” It referred to a drawing that someone placed under another sheet of paper so he or she could trace on the upper sheet. Children often learn the alphabet by copying a sheet provided by their teacher. To get it exactly right they use tracing paper and produce an example from the original work. In the same way, Jesus has given us a pattern to follow. Peter says that this “example” is for us “**to follow in His steps.**” The word “**follow**” provides an additional way of looking at this verse. People and animals often leave their mark when traveling through mud or snow. We can track them by following their footprints. In the same way, Jesus has gone before us and we can plant our shoes where He has already been (Heb 4:14-16).

In 2:22-23,<sup>24</sup> Peter draws upon five experiences from Jesus' life. (1) Jesus was sinless (“**who committed no sin**”). One of the amazing truths of this passage is: Christ was absolutely sinless<sup>25</sup> and yet He suffered willingly on our behalf.<sup>26</sup> This is quite a statement. Peter had lived with Jesus for more than three years and had observed Him closely, yet he could say that Jesus never sinned (see also 1:19). He had seen Him tired and tempted, misunderstood, and misrepresented. Yet, Jesus never did or said anything that was in the least way inappropriate. Both His inner life and external conduct were absolutely without sin.<sup>27</sup> While we can't be sinless in this life, we can seek to emulate the life of Christ so that there is an unmistakable innocence about us.

(2) Jesus was honest (“**nor was any deceit found in His mouth**”). Jesus was upright in all that He said. When someone is causing us suffering we may be tempted to lie or deceive in order to escape that suffering (e.g., Abraham [Gen 12:11-13] and Peter [Matt 26:69-74]). Yet the life of Christ challenges us to live above our natural inclinations.

(3) Jesus was gracious (“**while being reviled, He did not revile in return**”). The word “**revile**” means “to heap abuse on someone.” Peter is referring specifically to Jesus' sufferings when He was on trial and during His crucifixion.<sup>28</sup> Jesus did not fight fire with fire. He could easily have retaliated and overthrown His persecutors. Instead He trusted God to deal with His persecutors justly, as we should. In our everyday experience insults are often met with a dose of the same medicine (3:9) and if this does not work, vengeance at a later time is plotted. This should not be.

(4) Jesus was humble (“**while suffering, He uttered no threats**”). The religious leaders of Judaism hurled their insults at Him by placing a blindfold over His eyes, spitting at Him, and striking Him with their fists while taunting Him to “prophesy!” (Mark 14:65; 15:31-32). The Roman soldiers crowned Him with thorns and mocked Him as king (Mark 15:17-20). Even those passing by the cross in the time of His agony reviled Him (Mark 15:29-30). How did He respond? With dignified silence. He did not retaliate (Mark 14:61; 15:5; Luke 23:9). His cause was just; His suffering was unjust. Even His tormentors were included within the circle of His forgiveness: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).<sup>29</sup> Jesus did not threaten anyone. He could have said, “One day I'll be the judge and you will be on trial; you will be sent to hell!” Often our threats are empty; we cannot follow through with them. However, Jesus could have followed through, yet He chose not to.

(5) Jesus was dependent (“**kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously**”). Instead of focusing on His enemies Jesus looked to His Father. The word “**Himself**” is in italics which means it is not in the original Greek. What Peter seems to be saying is: Jesus handed over to God the whole situation, including Himself and those abusing Him, and the hurt done and all the factors that made His trial and crucifixion a horrendous outrage of injustice. He trusted everything into God's hands as the One who would settle the matter justly someday (cf. 1:17). 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 everything over to God who will settle it all in a perfectly just way.”

Notice that Peter does not recommend venting our anger when wronged or burying it inside of us. We are to give ourselves repeatedly into God's hands. After all, He can handle it when we express our real feelings. We shouldn't call a friend to vent. Rather, we should “keep entrusting ourselves to Him.” This is your calling this morning. It's not merely a rule to be followed. It's a miracle to be experienced, a grace to be received. It's a promise to be believed. Do you believe that God sees every wrong done to you, that He knows every hurt, that He assesses motives and circumstances with perfect accuracy, that He is impeccably righteous and takes no bribes, and that He will settle all accounts with perfect justice? If you believe this—if God is this real to you—then you will hand it over to God, and 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.

In 2:24, Peter transitions to talk specifically about Christ's sufferings for us. He writes, "**...and He Himself bore<sup>30</sup> our sins<sup>31</sup> in His body on the cross,<sup>32</sup> so that we might die<sup>33</sup> to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds<sup>34</sup> you were healed.**"<sup>35</sup> Jesus' sufferings reached their climax on the cross. Peter taught that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins and laid down His life as payment for those sins. The verse says that "**He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross.**" Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. This means that God can't forgive you solely on the basis of His love. Someone had to die to appease His wrath toward sin. Jesus died so that you might live. The purpose of Christ's death was "**so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.**" The overarching purpose of Christ's death was not merely to get men and women to heaven but to empower those same men and women to live victorious Christian lives here on earth. By means of Christ's death on the cross whoever comes to Him ends his old life and begins a new one, devoted to righteousness or "right living" (cf. Rom 6:1-14, 18-19; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Gal 2:20; 6:14).

In 2:24, we see a basic principle for undeserved suffering: Christ was hurt in order that we might be healed. Suffering in our lives always has purpose behind it and often its purpose is that God wants others around us to see a supernatural response to undeserved affliction. Augustine once said, "When God allows us to suffer it is either to improve our imperfections or to prove our perfections." As we respond in a godly manner to undeserved suffering, that response becomes a blinking light which sets us apart in this darkened world. And we too can be hurt in order that others might be healed.<sup>36</sup>

In 2:25, Peter writes, "**For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.**" God chose, of all animals in creation, to call human beings "**sheep.**"<sup>37</sup> He could have compared us to strong oxen or noble horses or even cute kittens; but He preferred to call us sheep. Sheep have a built-in waywardness, a remarkable capacity for going wrong. When left to their own devices sheep will foul things up.<sup>38</sup> But the good news is we have a relationship with Christ, we have trusted Him for salvation, and we have returned to Him as our "**Shepherd and Guardian.**" This final verse is a powerful incentive to honor God in the marketplace. As we remind ourselves of our utter sinfulness and how we previously, "**continually strayed,**" it is much easier to "endure" (2:20) unjust suffering from sinful, unbelieving men.

The titles "**the Shepherd<sup>39</sup> and Guardian of your soul[s]**" means "overseer," implying that not only does Christ save us, but He sovereignly preserves and protects us as He sees fit. Whatever your trials and burdens you have "**the Shepherd and Guardian of your soul[s].**" The double designation assures us of Christ's own care for His own. He not only leads, feeds, and sustains His own but also guides, directs, and protects them.<sup>40</sup> As a shepherd He feeds His people; as a guardian He keeps His people. Will you entrust yourself to this Shepherd and Guardian? Will you begin to submit amidst unjust suffering because of God's grace, your calling, and His example?

Invitation: Let's face it; this world can be difficult at best. You need to be loved and appreciated. I do too. Ultimately, there is only one that can meet our needs for fulfillment and approval. He wants to have a relationship with you today.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: 1 Peter* (Great Britain, Sovereign World, 1999), 54.

<sup>2</sup> Gk. *oiketai* refers to “house slaves.” See also Luke 16:13; Acts 10:7; and Rom 14:4.

<sup>3</sup> Gk. *hupotasso*, cf. 1 Pet 2:13, 3:1, 5, 22; and 5:5. While *hupotassomenoi* (“be submissive”) is a participle and not an imperative, it does have imperatival force because it links back with *hupotagete* (“submit yourselves”) in 2:13. Both the imperative (2:13) and participle (2:18) are derived from the exhortation of 2:11-12.

<sup>4</sup> Davids correctly argues, “(1) The phrase with all respect” comes before the reference to the masters in the Greek word order, and (2) fear or reverence (Gk. *phobos*) in 1 Peter is always directed toward God, never toward people, whom Christians are not to fear (1:17; 2:17; 3:2, 6, 14, 16).” See Peter H. Davids, *The Book of 1 Peter: NICNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 106. See also I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter* (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 87.

<sup>5</sup> This would parallel 1 Pet 2:13: “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.” Of course, believers do not have to submit when authorities ask us to sin (Acts 5:29).

<sup>6</sup> Gk. *skolios* “pertains to being morally bent or twisted, crooked, unscrupulous, dishonest.” See BDAG, Electronic Ed (cf. Acts 2:40; and Phil 2:15). It is also translated “unjust” (ESV) or “harsh” (NIV).

<sup>7</sup> This show is scheduled to air Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004. For more information see <http://www.fox.com/bigfat/>.

<sup>8</sup> What Peter cannot be saying is that we are to passively “lie down” under every bad experience at work. In cases of grievance, companies usually have procedures to follow. There may be legal protection for unfair dismissal or sexual harassment. These exist for Christians too!

<sup>9</sup> Gk. *lupas*. Grudem notes, “[Sorrrows] is used of mental pain or grief, sorrow, but never in the New Testament is the noun [sixteen occurrences] or the verb [twenty-six occurrences] used of physical pain itself.” See Wayne Grudem, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 126.

<sup>10</sup> The actual verb meaning “suffer” (*pascho*) appears for the first time in 1 Peter 2:19 and recurs in 2:20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:1 [twice], 15, 19; 5:10. Twelve of the 41 NT occurrences of the verb come in this brief letter, together with four of 16 occurrences of the noun form (1:11; 4:13; 5:1, 9). These figures indicate clearly that suffering is a major theme in 1 Peter. See also Marshall, *1 Peter*, 89.

<sup>11</sup> The ESV renders this phrase, “For this is a gracious thing.”

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 1 Peter 3:16 and 21.

<sup>13</sup> See also John Piper, *How to suffer for doing what is right* (1 Peter 2:18-23), June 5, 1994: <http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper94/06-05-94.htm%20&SermonID=23698>.

<sup>14</sup> The phrase “harshly treated” (*kolaphizomerloi*, lit. “strike with the fist”) is used in Mark 14:65 of Christ’s treatment at His trial.

<sup>15</sup> Behind Jesus’ words we can hear the teaching of Jesus in Luke 6:32-35, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them...”

<sup>16</sup> John Piper, He trusted to Him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:18-25), August 25, 1991: <http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper91/08-25-91.htm&SermonID=23702>.

<sup>17</sup> Gk. *hupomeno*: “to maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition, stand one’s ground, hold out, and endure.” See also Matt 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Rom 12:12; 8:24; 1 Cor 13:7; 2 Tim 2:10, 12; Heb 10:32; 12:2-3, 7; Jas 1:12; 5:11, BDAG Electronic Ed.

<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere Peter states that believers are called out of darkness into God’s marvelous light, called to inherit a blessing, and called to God’s eternal glory in Christ (1 Pet 2:9; 3:9; 5:10).

<sup>19</sup> See Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Peter* (<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1peter.pdf> , 2003), 33.

<sup>20</sup> See Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), Electronic Ed.

<sup>21</sup> Hiebert writes, “These verses [2:21-25] contain the fullest elaboration of the example of Jesus Christ for believers in the New Testament.” D. Edmond Hiebert, “Following Christ’s Example: An Exposition of 1 Peter 2:21-25,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 139:553 (January-March 1982), 32.

<sup>22</sup> Dwight Edwards, *The Life that Lasts: A verse-by-verse study through 1 Peter* ([www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)), 15-16.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Sheldon’s book, *In His Steps* is based on this verse. I have heard it said that the most read book apart from the Bible is John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Second, is Sheldon’s book, *In His Steps*.

<sup>24</sup> Five times in 1 Peter 2:22-25, Peter quotes from or makes allusions to Isa 53.

<sup>25</sup> See also Matt 27:4; John 8:29, 46; 14:30; 18:38; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1 John 3:5.

<sup>26</sup> In the story of Job, after the account of his very great suffering, we are told, “Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God” (Job 1:22).

<sup>27</sup> See also Robert Mounce, *A Living Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 36.

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<sup>28</sup> During the course of His ministry, Jesus' enemies said He was possessed with a devil. They called Him a Samaritan, a glutton, a wine-bibber, a blasphemer, a demoniac, one in league with Beelzebul, a perverter of the nation, and a deceiver of the people. Yet, He did not revile in return.

<sup>29</sup> Mounce, *A Living Hope*, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Gk. *anegken* means, "to offer as a sacrifice, offer up" (see esp. Heb 7:27; 13:5; Jas 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5), BDAG Electronic Ed. In the Greek OT, it is used for bringing a sacrifice and laying it upon the altar (Gen 8:20; Lev 14:20; 17:5; 2 Chron 35:16).

<sup>31</sup> The words "our sins" (*hamartias humon*) are near the beginning of the verse for emphasis.

<sup>32</sup> Gk. *xulon* (lit. "tree"). Why does Peter call the cross a "tree"? Through the ages people have made public spectacles out of the executions of criminals. Often their bodies were displayed on wooden gallows, poles, or even trees. The OT speaks of this shame, which hints at Christ's death on the cross: Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse (Deut 21:22-23; Josh 8:29; 10:28; 2 Sam 4:12; 17:23; 18:10). The executed criminal bears his own condemnation or curse; Jesus takes our condemnation (cf. Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal 3:13).

<sup>33</sup> Gk. *apoginomai* is only used here in the NT.

<sup>34</sup> "Wounds" (*molopi*) refers to the bruising and swelling left by a blow that a fist or whip delivered. Undoubtedly, some of Peter's original readers had received wounds in a similar fashion or were in danger of receiving them.

<sup>35</sup> Tragically, there are those who understand the phrase, "for by His wounds you were healed," to refer to the physical healing of every Christian. But contextually, this cannot be the case because these final two verses are addressing spiritual deliverance (salvation), not physical deliverance (healing). The context of Isaiah 53 as well as the past tense completed action verb "were healed" is an already, once for all, accomplished fact. The word translated "were healed" (*iathete*) implies spiritual healing from the fatal effects of sin rather than healing from present physical afflictions. Peter used healing as a metaphor for spiritual conversion, as Isaiah did (cf. Mark 2:17; Luke 4:23).

<sup>36</sup> Edwards, *The Life that Lasts*, 16.

<sup>37</sup> The picture of the shepherd and sheep would mean much to Peter, since he had heard Jesus teach about the Good Shepherd (John 10) and since Christ had commanded him to tend His sheep (John 21). In this passage and others, the lost sinner is a straying sheep (Isa 53:6; Luke 15:3-7); but Christ, the Shepherd, seeks him out and saves him (Luke 19:10).

<sup>38</sup> See D. Stuart Briscoe, *When the Going Gets Tough* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1982), 128.

<sup>39</sup> Peter calls Jesus "the Chief Shepherd" in 1 Peter 5:4. Kennedy lists 14 different functions of a pastoral/shepherd: (1) Feed, rescue, give sympathetic care, and protect (Isaiah 40). (2) Gather together and watch the sheep, so they do not become scattered, confused, and lost (Jeremiah 31:10). (3) Feed, strengthen, heal, search for, rescue, protect (Ezekiel 34). (4) Lead and protect, so they do not wander and suffer (Zechariah 10:2). (5) Authoritatively lead and protect (Isaiah 44:28). (6) Lead, feed, refresh, encourage, calm, protect, and comfort (Psalm 23). (7) Have compassion for those who had no shepherd, teach them (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34). (8) Prevent them from scattering, because without a shepherd sheep scatter (Mark 14:27). (9) Feed and tend, i.e., teach and care for (John 21:15-17). (10) Guard from false teachers, oversee, and shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28). (11) Equip for normal life and service (Ephesians 4:12). (12) Lead, teach, and be examples of the faithful life (Hebrews 13:7). (13) Lead and use authority wisely; closely guard and build up the spiritual life of each member of the flock—and do so joyfully (Hebrews 13:17). (14) Oversee and shepherd willingly and eagerly, not for corrupt gain, and not as heavy-handed and proud dictators, but as examples of how Christ shepherds believers. Christ will give each diligent and faithful shepherd an unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:1-4). See Tod Kennedy, "The Shepherding Aspect of the Pastoring and Teaching Ministry," *Chafer Theological Journal* 9 (Fall 2003), 44.

<sup>40</sup> See D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 190.

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## Application Study Questions

1. What type of boss was Laban (Gen 31:36-42)? How did he mistreat Jacob? How did Jacob respond? How would you have responded? Have you ever had an unethical boss (2:18)? How did you handle this situation? How would you handle it differently today?
2. What does the New Testament say about suffering (2:20)? Read John 15:18-20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 3:12. What is the result of endurance during trials and suffering? Read 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:13-19; James 1:2-4; Luke 24:26; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 2:10; 12:2-4.
3. What purpose have we been called for (2:21)? When have you been unjustly treated? What evidence do your non-Christian work associates have that you are a believer in Christ?
4. List the many facets of Jesus' sinless reaction to suffering unjustly (2:21-25). What would the equivalent be in your life if you responded to unfair treatment by following His example?
5. The key to Christ's obedience was that He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (2:23). Describe what this means in your own words. Why are the godly treated unfairly? In what trial do you need to entrust yourself to Him who judges righteously?
6. Peter states that Jesus is the "Shepherd and Guardian of our souls" (2:25). What are the implications of this statement? What other biblical truths can you think of that support that statement?

## Weekly Scripture Reading

1. 1 Timothy 6:1-2
2. Titus 2:9-15
3. Titus 3:1-8
4. 1 Timothy 2:1-4
5. Ephesians 6:5-9
6. Colossians 3:22-4:1  
Philemon 1:1-25