

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 2:21 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Called To Endure Unjust Suffering

READ: 1 Peter 2:21, with vv.12,15,18-20 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - Even though we true believers are essentially foreigners to the non-believers around us, our living in comprehensive goodness, producing good deeds, submitting to every authority, and showing proper respect to everyone can have an attraction and substantial impact upon them becoming open to hearing about God. (vv.2:11,12,13-14,17)
 - - True believers are commanded by God to respectfully submit to their work supervisors, even if being treated harshly. (v.2:18)
 - - God highly values 'suffering from unjust treatment' when it is endured in the manner that He prescribes. (v.2:19)
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v.21 - READ

[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, identify, and integrate the various main elements and dynamics that comprise the 'calling' that is stated in the first phrase "To this you were called".]

SECTION POINT: Within God's instruction for all true believers to 'do good', He "calls" us to then endure the unjust painful suffering that may result from that 'doing good'.

"To this you were called,"

- - In the context of verse 21, the term "called" can be defined as "in the sense of to call to an assignment or station, in other words, to appoint, choose". (Zodhiates p.812 - Strong's #2564)
- - By means of a 'calling', God gives an assignment - a function to pursue, accomplish, and maintain.
- - Upon considering some of the 'callings' listed in the Scriptures, 'callings' can be distinguished as being of two categories: some are generalized and applied to all of us true believers; others are personalized and applied to particular individual believers.
- - By implication, in a 'calling', we are appointed and given authorization from God to engage in that activity, and responsibility to properly and accurately represent God, His kingdom, His Scriptures, and His doctrines from the Scriptures.
- - By implication, we furthermore are obligated to become fully-trained from teaching of the Scriptures that apply to the area of the 'calling', and obligated to become fully-equipped - acquire the necessary willingness, eagerness, readiness, availability, flexibility, mobility, determination, commitment, and resources to engage in that calling.

- - Here in verse 21 from the context of preceding verses 18-20, this is a generalized 'calling' that applies to all true believers - we are all called to "endure unjust suffering for doing good". (vv.19-20)

- - Also from the context, being propelled into unjust suffering situations is not a matter of choice for us true believers - this 'calling' applies to us whether we like it or not, whether we comply with it or not, whether we strenuously strive to avoid unjust suffering situations or not.

- - By God's design within this 'calling', unjust suffering situations will come upon us in life, and when they do, this 'calling' activates - it becomes actively applicable to us personally in each of those unjust suffering situations.

- - By implication then, God will hold us accountable to respond to unjust suffering situations in a manner that He prescribes.

- - By implication, we are also bound by this 'calling' for the remainder of our life.

- - Therefore, in an unjust suffering situation, if we fail miserably to respond in a manner that God approves of, we are not released from this 'calling', but instead we are then obligated to make corrections so that we succeed excellently during the next unjust suffering situation that comes upon us.

- - God desires and instructs that we engage in "doing good", "as we have opportunities". (vv.20,12; Galatians 6:9-10)

- - Even though our "doing good" will sometimes incite other people to react abusively towards us and even inflict unjust suffering upon us, nevertheless in a sense we are "called" to "do good" despite the inevitability that sooner or latter we will incur unjust "painful" suffering from our "doing good", which we are also "called" to endure. (1 Peter 2:12,20,19)

- - Therefore, this "calling" involves multiple tests for us to go through, starting on each occasion when we initially face an opportunity to "do good" and therein are tested to see if we will act upon that opportunity to "do good".

- - This exposure to multiple tests is all part of God's plan and God's will for us to encounter within this "calling" to endure unjust painful suffering situations that come upon us, which furthermore will occur at various more times throughout our life.

[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, identify, and integrate the various main elements and dynamics that comprise the reason for our 'calling', that is stated in the second phrase "because Christ suffered for you" .]

SECTION POINT: Our calling and motivation for enduring painful unjust suffering is because Christ endured unfathomable suffering on the cross for our priceless eternal benefit.

"because Christ suffered for you,"

- - A reason is stated here as to why God has "called" us to endure unjust painful suffering for doing good - "because Christ suffered for you".

- - Christ suffered "on behalf of" us - for our benefit. (Strong's #5228)

- - By means of professional medical analyses and conclusions that are extrapolated from the accounts in the New Testament, we know that Christ suffered extreme and horrific excruciating physical pain during His torture and then execution on the cross.

- - And we know that form of torture and execution in fact was intentionally designed by the occupying Romans to inflict that maximum amount of pain just short of rendering the victim unconscious or outright killing the victim, for the longest time possible.

- - The total costs in painful suffering to Christ are impossible for us to adequately comprehend or measure because that suffering furthermore encompassed the eternal punishment that is due for every single sin of every single true believer that they committed during their entire life on the earth.
- - By definition, that eternality of punishment makes the suffering that was endured by Christ as infinite - in other words, Christ suffered infinite pain for every single sin of every single true believer - pain that is supernaturally different and immeasurably exceeding the concurrent temporal horrific physical pain that He additionally endured on that day He was crucified.
- - So, Christ, the Creator of the universe, suffered immeasurable great and even infinite pain and then death of His perfect body, in order to provide the priceless benefit to us true believers of eternal forgiveness of every sin that we commit. (Colossians 1:16,13-14)
- - His voluntary enduring of pain and suffering for our benefit came at such a great cost to Him but at no cost to us recipient true believers.
- - And, Christ, the God-man or Incarnate Deity, was absolutely sinless and innocent of any wrongdoing - ever. (2 Corinthians 5:21; cf. 1 Peter 1:18-19, the term "precious blood" in v.1:19 points to the unification of deity and humanity in the person of Christ)

[Lesson Question: Discuss, analyze, identify, and describe the implications and application of the third and fourth phrases "leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps".]

SECTION POINT: How Christ responded to the enduring of unjust suffering at His crucifixion is our example of how we should respond to our enduring of unjust suffering.

"leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

- - Christ successfully endured that horrifically painful unjust suffering during the crucifixion, as evidenced by His resurrection from the dead on the third day. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
- - He did not try to avoid or escape that unjust painful suffering even though He had all authority and power to do so, which He could have instantly accomplished if He so chose to do so. (Matthew 26:53-54)
- - A composite of eye-witness accounts and other relating information supplied in the New Testament provides us with a detailed description of how Christ successfully endured that suffering for doing good. (1 Peter 2:20)
- - Christ's successful enduring of painful unjust suffering is worthy to be emulated, because He endured with perfection that entire suffering event of His crucifixion. (Hebrews 2:9-10)
- - This "example", of Christ perfectly enduring unjust painful suffering of crucifixion, has been "left" or "bequeathed and passed on" "for us" true believers. (Strong's #5277, #2254)
- - We true believers are to use this "example" as a guide of how we are to properly endure unjust painful suffering.
- - And we are to "follow in his steps" as we enter into and proceed through situations of enduring unjust painful suffering, taking the same kinds of actions like Christ did, and refraining from taking actions that Christ did not engage in when He endured that unjust painful suffering of crucifixion.

- - On a practical and personalized note, perhaps a good way to view and implement "follow in his steps" is that when you are enduring unjust painful suffering, you steadfastly "fix [your] eyes on Jesus", maintain ongoing consideration of the dynamics of how Christ responded when He "suffered for you", and let His "example" strengthen you and encourage you to properly endure the onslaught of seemingly never-ending inflicting of painful unjust suffering by the abuser. (Hebrews 12:2-3)
- - Another good way to view and implement "follow in his steps" is to resolutely rest in the reliance that God will somehow "restore you" to full functioning sometime in the future. (1 Peter 5:10)
- If you are "doing good", innocent of wrongdoing, and have pure motives when you become inflicted with unjust suffering (vv.2:19-20), then you can rest in the assurance that:
 - - - - God sees you in your enduring of this painful unjust suffering; (v.20)
 - - - - through Christ, God has firsthand experiential knowledge of enduring unjust suffering like you are; (v.21)
 - - - - God empathizes with you and in a sense feels your pain with you, in your enduring of this painful unjust suffering; (example: John 11:32-36,38)
 - - - - and God highly values and regards as "commendable" your properly enduring this painful unjust suffering. (1 Peter 2:19-20)

- - On a relating note, it is distinctly contrary to the will of God for an innocent and upright true believer to react to having been inflicted with unjust painful suffering by essentially thereafter ceasing doing good deeds, or essentially thereafter ceasing / dropping out of / withdrawing from doing ministry work that God has called him/her to do. (vv.15,5,9,12,16)
- - If your proper ministry functioning has been destroyed and utterly obliterated by an abuser, then patiently wait upon God to restore you to ministry functioning, whether that functioning is in the same manner or same kind of position that you were previously functioning in, or in a somewhat different but related field or manner or position of ministry functioning.
- - Your calling from God is still valid, and has not been cancelled because you were wrongly accused and then consequently inflicted with unjust suffering, perhaps even substantial suffering that was totally devastating to you.
- - As a real-life example, suppose your head pastor or highest ranking leader flies into a prolonged rage at you and has brought incorrect or false accusations against you of "sinning" in your ministry functioning activities and has essentially declared you as no longer fit or qualified to do particular aspects of ministry functioning until you "Repent!!".
- - For you, the next step is to carefully, accurately, and thoroughly consider all of his/her charges against you and unbiasedly determine if you are in any way guilty of 'sinning' within the context of your ministry functioning.
- - If you are completely innocent and blameless before God in this matter, then you are now heading down the path of incurring unjust suffering at the hands of your head pastor or ministry leader.
- - Next, if the head pastor or leader essentially forces you out of that church or ministry perhaps even in an atmosphere of heaped-on shame and disgrace, then you leave quietly, without creating a stink (commotion), without committing any sabotage, and without trying to incite other people to leave the church or ministry with you.

- - After your quiet and gracious departure from that church or ministry, allow yourself plenty of time to process before God what has happened to you in this matter.
- - If you unbiasedly determine that God agrees with you that you are entirely innocent in this matter, then solidly adopt the view that this whole matter is an incidence of you being inflicted with unjust suffering and (from verse 21) therein God has "called" you to endure it like Christ endured at the hands of the highest ranking religious leaders during the events leading to His crucifixion.
- - Now with a correct view of the truth and a correct spiritual perspective of reality about what has happened to you in this matter, watch for and patiently wait for God to raise you up and plug you into some kind of ministry functioning again, because you know that God has not cancelled your original "calling" to do ministry functioning, and you have not disqualified yourself, either.
- - If you consequently and subsequently suffer a major drop in your financial income, then make adjustments or adaptations that are distinctly temporary, so that you can easily, quickly, and forthrightly transition into doing the level of ministry functioning that God provides you opportunity and places you into next.
- - And stay keenly aware that God herein has not approved you to drift away and leave ministry functioning that He has called and still calls you to continue doing.
- - It is very disturbing and sad to see so many good people, who were appropriately doing excellent ministry work, drop out and leave doing ministry because they were treated unjustly and abusively by a pastor, or a high ranking ministry leader, or a ministry governing board.
- - In consideration of this trend, a proper conclusion, therefore, is that we true believers are "called" not only to endure unjust painful suffering, but we are also "called" to appropriately recover from that enduring of unjust painful suffering and "called" to be restored to again "doing good" and everything else that God has for us to do.

BIG IDEA: We true believers are called to endure unjust suffering, and to respond to that enduring of unjust suffering in the same manner as how Christ responded to His enduring of unjust suffering at His crucifixion.

APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who are a true believer, after hearing this teaching of 1 Peter 2:21 today, are you willing to be obedient to this "calling" from God to "suffer for doing good and endure it"? (vv.19,20)
- - If so, are you going to strive to emulate how Christ responded to the enduring of unjust painful suffering that was inflicted upon Him at His crucifixion?
- - Are you motivated to endure unjust suffering because you have inherited priceless eternal life by means of Christ enduring unfathomable suffering on the cross for you - for your benefit?
- - Are you willing to engage in "doing good", as you have opportunities, and regardless of whether or not your "doing good" incites someone to inflict unjust suffering upon you?

- - For those of you who are not a true believer, perhaps you find the principles and teaching content from verse 21 as absurd, or shocking, or very disturbing to you.
- - Willingly and passively allowing someone to be abusive towards oneself may seem quite alarming and warped to you.
- - If so, perhaps it would be helpful for you to remember that God institutes obligations like this "calling" in order to both achieve His good purposes and to supply us true believers with many opportunities to earn "great rewards" that will last for eternity in heaven. (Matthew 5:11-12)
- - At this point in your state of technically being a non-believer, however, a far more important issue that should dominate your alarmed concern is the principles comprising the phrase "Christ suffered for you".
- - The principles for you non-believers regarding this phrase "Christ suffered for you" are sort of a 'Yes' and 'No' dichotomy.
- - 'Yes', "Christ suffered for you" is true for you non-believers in the sense that the eternal benefits from His suffering and death on the cross are available to you and are sufficient to extend to you complete and permanent forgiveness of all of your sins - past, present, and future sins.
- - However, 'No', "Christ suffered for you" does not apply to you as a non-believer - unless you actually become a true believer by genuinely and correctly placing your faith in Jesus Christ, that He died on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day, to take upon Himself the punishment that you personally deserve for all of the sins that you commit in your life. (Romans 3:21-26)
- - So right now in your current state of technically being a non-believer, you "stand condemned" before God, and in that standing you are not a recipient of the eternal benefits that are represented in this phrase "Christ suffered for you". (John 3:18)
- - Perhaps, it would be wise for you as a non-believer to focus on and seriously meditate on that reality and status before God in which you are currently standing.

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - When you initially became a true believer, what was your thinking in regard to what your life on this earth would henceforth be because of the new ongoing protection that you would be receiving from God everyday?
- - Was your thinking mainly that your life would henceforth be nice, pleasant, accommodated, and trouble-free?
- - Has that kind of thinking been prevalent for you all through the subsequent years until perhaps recently, when you started studying the Book of 1 Peter?
- - Did you or do you tend to get angry with God when He fails to accommodate you and protect you adequately from such things as troubles, abusive treatment from other people, situations in life not going the way that you want, and etcetera?
- - After having now studied this far in the Book of 1 Peter, now what is your thinking about if your life will henceforth be nice, pleasant, accommodated, and trouble-free by means of daily accommodation and protection from God?]

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