

# **Sermon: Your Reaction to Unfair Treatment**

**Text: I Peter 2:19-25**

Gary L. Wackler

August 10, 2008

**Introduction:** Most prospective church members are not approached on the basis of what it is going to cost them to be a part of the Body. Suffer? Are you kidding me? I want to know what the Church is going to do for me to make my life easier. But the Apostle Peter had some different ideas.

**I Peter 2:19-25 (NIV)** <sup>19</sup>For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. <sup>20</sup>But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. <sup>21</sup>To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” <sup>23</sup>When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The Apostle said that if we are Christians, **WE HAVE BEEN CALLED** (verse 21). We as Christ’s followers have been picked out, selected, chosen, sometimes to suffer unjustly.

This is a much different Peter who in the last chapter of the gospel of John was questioning Jesus about why he had to suffer while John would live a long life. Peter at that point had said: “What about him?” (**John 21:21**)

## **I. Christians Are Called To Experience Pain.**

### **A. Physical**

Sometimes I have seen Christians experience terrible pain from disease and accidents. If through the pain they are able to still praise God, they become a tremendous witness for Christ’s Church.

**Illus.** A friend of mine from El Paso, Texas by the name of Mike Diskin has had a great deal of pain in his life. We are going to see him in three weeks! He was once hit by a drunk driver as he was responding to an emergency call as a volunteer fireman. He came out of a two-month coma following the accident to discover he was missing a leg. He has continued his vocation as a minister of the gospel, and I have every reason to believe that when I see him again that he will be giving praise to God. What a witness!

We are called to take care of physical needs. One of the reasons the Christian community exists is to especially be kind to orphans and widows. This is because they represent those who may be the most fragile and at-risk.

**James 1:27 (NIV)** <sup>27</sup>Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

God is not calling Christians to imitate Christ's physical life of suffering - nor the Apostles' martyrdom. Otherwise we would all be like the misled, but well-intentioned religious fanatics in the Philippines who have themselves crucified every Good Friday. Most of us want to live past our early thirties, and most of us would prefer not to be beheaded or run through with a sword for the Faith.

Here though, the word in the text (v. 19) deals mostly with pain that is:

### **B. Emotional/Psychological**

Typically, most of the pain we feel as Christians is emotional and psychological. At times we feel unloved, alienated, abused, unforgiven, incompetent ("I can't do anything - right"), forsaken. You remember what Jesus said on the cross: "My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?" Do you ever feel all alone and like nobody cares? Jesus did! That is the kind of thought and feeling the devil plants in all our minds. He does an especially good job when he mixes that with our pride.

The following quotation is from a Christian man who has been an invalid all his life, one of those lonely and obscure people who live in constant pain, who do not know what it means to be able to use their physical body in any way without pain and suffering:

**“Loneliness is not a thing of itself, not an evil sent to rob us of the joys of life. Loneliness, loss, pain, sorrow, these are disciplines, God’s gifts to drive us to his very heart, to increase our capacity for him, to sharpen our sensitivities and understanding, to temper our spiritual lives so that they may become channels of his mercy to others and so bear fruit for his kingdom. But these disciplines must be seized upon and used.... They must not be seen as excuses for living in the shadow of half-lives, but as messengers, however painful, to bring our souls into vital contact with the living God, that our lives may be filled to overflowing with himself in ways that may, perhaps, be impossible to those who know less of life’s darkness.”**

## **II. Christians Are Called to Endure.**

### **A. Unjust Suffering**

**It is commendable (charis-grace) if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering (verse 19). Yet, some things we bring on ourselves and deserve. We live in a natural world that has laws which when they are broken have certain consequences.**

**When we suffer because of sin in our lives that could never be redemptive. And no one admires that! What makes Jesus’ life attractive to those who are searching for God, is that He was without sin and suffered for our sins. The people who loved Him then, now, and in the future, are the same people who made it necessary for Him to be crucified - you and I.**

**Suffering as a result of personal sin has never turned anyone around and changed them for the good. But suffering as a result of others’ sin not only requires grace, but it also provides an avenue for directing people who, like sheep, have gone astray.**

**The fact that Christians are to suffer injustice is not unique to them. Unchurched Mary and Harry also suffer unjust and unfair behavior. The difference should be in how we react.**

### **B. Being Constantly Aware of God**

**Everything we do or say should be done with a conscious awareness of God. One commentator says this could be translated “for God’s sake.”(Selwyn)**

We need to ask some questions:

1. How will this action affect the Body of Christ?
2. Will it enhance her beauty for the Bridegroom?
3. Will it make Her more appealing to an already skeptical world?
4. How will this affect *my* relationship with God and His Church?

### C. Not to retaliate

There certainly in Christ's life was a difference between what is called passive and active obedience. Peter was very aware of Isaiah 53 and the Suffering-Servant theme that had been fulfilled in Christ when he wrote this letter to the Church. (I Peter 1:1)

**Isaiah 53:1-12 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup> Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? <sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. <sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. <sup>9</sup> He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. <sup>10</sup> Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. <sup>11</sup> After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

### **III. Christians Are Called to Follow in Jesus' Steps (vv. 21-23)**

**Jesus sets the example/model/standard, and we as Christians are to follow in his steps. Jesus certainly did not deserve the poor treatment. But sometimes He struck a nerve. When you stand for and speak the TRUTH, you will be opposed by those who stand for UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.**

**The idea of following Christ's example is captured by the word that was used in the text as a model of handwriting to be copied by the school child. It later referred to conduct that should be imitated. Imitation does not mean a perfect copy, so no one should be too hard on themselves when they fail to measure up to the "perfect" standard. God looks at the heart not our performance. It is whether we are *trying* to follow Him that matters most. It's more about direction.**

#### **A. In the area of His sinless example**

**Jesus' example was:**

- 1. No sin**
- 2. No deceit (lit. - "catch with bait")**
- 3. He did not retaliate**
- 4. He let God judge Him and His persecutors**

**He could have used his position to coerce or force compliance with His plan, but that would have violated our free will.**

#### **B. In the area of speech**

**James in his epistle also shares with us that "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." (James 1:26)**

**"Blessed are they who have nothing to say and cannot be persuaded to say it"  
- James Russell Lowell**

**(In the area of gossiping) - Someone has said: Christians don't gossip. They just share prayer requests! The difference between news and gossip lies in whether you raise your voice or lower it. Gossip, and spreading incorrect information, can be very expensive.**

**Illus.** Madalyn Murray O'Hare rumor about the FCC.

Have you ever told someone something in confidence that you wanted them to tell (leak)?

**Illus.** Some time ago, Dr. Albert H. Cantril, a professor at Princeton University, conducted a series of experiments to demonstrate how quickly rumors spread. He called six students to his office and in strict confidence informed them that the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were planning to attend a certain university dance. Within a week, this completely fictitious story had reached nearly every student on campus. Town officials phoned the university, demanding to know why they had not been informed. Press agencies were frantically telephoning for details. Dr. Cantril observed, "That was a pleasant rumor — a slanderous one travels even faster."

Christians Are Called to Follow in Jesus' Steps by:

C. Actively loving and forgiving

If you just look at the cross and at what Jesus was doing as he was dying for us.

**Conclusion:** When Jesus physically departed, He left behind an example for the Church to follow, an example of non-retaliation, whether in actions or words. He knew most assuredly that His righteous Father would judge correctly those who choose hate rather than love, and criticism rather than understanding, and hostility rather than patience. We all need the mind of Christ ([Philippians 2: 1-11](#)).

**Illus.** On Monday, August 9, 1993, a 31-year-old woman, Sopheia Mardress White, burst into the hospital nursery at USC Medical Center in Los Angeles, wielding a .38-caliber handgun. She had come gunning for Elizabeth Staten, a nurse whom she accused of stealing her husband. White fired six shots, hitting Staten in the wrist and stomach.

Staten fled, and White chased her into the emergency room, firing once more. There, with blood on her clothes and a hot pistol in her hand, the attacker was met by another nurse, Joan Black, who did the unthinkable. Black walked calmly to the gun-toting woman—and hugged her.

**Black spoke comforting words.**

**The assailant said she didn't have anything to live for, that Staten had stolen her family.**

**"You're in pain," Black said. "I'm sorry, but everybody has pain in their life....I understand, and we can work it out."**

**As they talked, the hospital invader kept her finger on the trigger. Once she began to lift the gun as though she would shoot herself. Nurse Black just pushed her arm down and continued to hold her. At last Sopehia White gave the gun to the nurse. She was disarmed by a hug, by understanding, by compassion.**

**Black later told an AP reporter, "I saw a sick person and had to take care of her."**

**Jesus Christ looks upon us in a similar fashion, as persons sick and broken inside, in need of his care. And it is his embrace that disarms us.**

**-Tom Tripp Colusa, California**