

Sermon: Your Reaction to Unfair Treatment

Text: [I Peter 2:19-25 ESV](#)

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Introduction: Most prospective church members are not approached on the basis of what it is going to cost them to be a disciple of Jesus and a member of the Body. Suffer? Are you kidding me? (Mention John Bray) Most want to know what the Church is going to do for them to make their lives easier. But the Apostle Peter had some different ideas.

[I Peter 2:19-25 ESV](#) ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹ 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. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

The Apostle Peter said that if we are Christians, we have been called ([v. 21](#)). We, as Christ's followers have been picked out, selected, chosen, sometimes to suffer unjustly because of our relationship with Jesus.

This is a much different Peter who in the last chapter of John's gospel was questioning Jesus about why he had to suffer while John would go on to 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

As I mentioned before, sometimes I have seen Christians experience terrible pain from disease and accidents. Yet, through the pain they were able to still praise God, they can become a tremendous witness for Christ's Church.

Illus. I served as a minister in Deming, New Mexico in the late 1980s. Back then a friend of mine from El Paso, Texas by the name of Mike Diskin was in a terrible accident, and this created tremendous physical pain in his life. He was 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 the lower half of his one leg.

A few years ago we went down to Deming, NM to celebrate First Christian Church's 100th anniversary. I saw Mike and his wife Brenda and found they were both continuing in their vocation to spread the Good News about Jesus Christ. Even today, Mike and his wife are still continuing to serve and praise God 30+ years after the accident. What a great 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 many times they represent those in our society who may be the most fragile and at-risk.

James 1:27 ESV ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

God is not calling all Christians to imitate or duplicate Christ's physical life of suffering - nor the Apostle's martyrdom. Otherwise we could all be like the misled, but well-intentioned religious fanatics in the Philippines who have themselves physically 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 emotion the devil tries to plant in our minds. Satan 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 obscure people who live in constant pain, who does not know what it means to be able to use his 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.” (Paul’s thorn in the flesh was to keep him humble and was given to him for God’s glory.)

II. Christians Are Called to Endure.

A. unjust suffering

The NIV text says it is *commendable*, (charis-grace) *if* a man bears up under the pain of *unjust* suffering (v. 19). Yet, some outcomes we bring on ourselves and quite frankly deserve. We live in a natural world that has laws (civil and natural) which when they are broken have certain consequences. If you take another person’s life through an act of murder, there is a consequence for that illegal act. If you poke a mother grizzly bear trying to protect her cubs, you might as well call the coroner ahead of time for that stupid decision.

When we suffer because of sin in our lives that could never be redemptive. And no one admires that! What makes Jesus’ life so attractive to those who are searching for God, is that Jesus lived a sinless life and yet was made to suffer, and was willing to suffer, in our places. 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. This provides a Savior who can secure our salvation.

The fact that Christians are to suffer injustice is not unique to them. Pagans/unbelievers in our culture also suffer unjust treatment and unfair behavior. The difference should be in how we react.

Christians are called to endure...

B. being constantly aware of God

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

We need to ask some questions regarding suffering:

1. How will my (re)action affect the Body of Christ?
2. Will it enhance her beauty for the Bridegroom (Jesus)?
3. Will the Church be more appealing to an already skeptical world?
4. How will what I do 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 was fulfilled by and in Christ - when he wrote his letter to the Church. God’s people were exiles and had been scattered and dispersed everywhere away from their homes. They understood the pain of suffering for God!

[Isaiah 53:1-12 ESV](#) ¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 **Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;** he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes 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 up and speak for 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 so much always at performance. It is whether we are trying to follow Him that matters most. It's more about our direction.

A. in the area of His sinless example

Jesus' example was:

1. no sin
2. no deceit, guile (lit. - "catch with bait") Jesus used love...
3. He did not retaliate
4. He let God judge Him and His persecutors

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

Christians are called to follow in Jesus' steps...

B. in the area of speech

James in his epistle also shares with us: **James 1:26 ESV** ²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

“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. Can you imagine how God must feel when He hears words that were designed to bring life used against His own creation to produce death and despair.

Illus. Who remembers Madalyn Murray O'Hare, the well-known atheist of times past? Do you remember all the rumors about her working with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and removing all Christian speech from different media.

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 (**Wallis, Duchess of Windsor (born Bessie Wallis Warfield; June 19, 1896 – April 24, 1986), known as Wallis Simpson, was an American socialite and wife of the Duke of Windsor, the former King-Emperor Edward VIII. Their intention to marry and her status as a divorcée caused a constitutional crisis that led to Edward's abdication.**) 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 Jesus' steps by:

C. actively loving and forgiving

If you can imagine the cross and understand what Jesus was doing as he was dying for us. When Jesus physically departed the earth, He left behind an example for the Church to follow, an example of non-retaliation, whether in actions or with words. He knew most assuredly that His righteous Father would bring correct judgment for those who choose hate rather than love, and criticism rather than understanding, and hostility rather than patience. We all need the mind and thoughtfulness of Christ, and to think like Jesus ([Philippians 2:1-11](#)).

Conclusion: Illus: On Monday, August 9, 1993, a 31-year-old woman, Sophia 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 over 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, Sophia White gave the gun to the nurse. She was disarmed by a hug, by understanding, and by compassion.

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

Jesus looks at His creation in a similar fashion. He sees people who are sick and broken by sin and in need of His care. And when we surrender to Him, it is His embrace that disarms us. - Tom Tripp (Coluisa, CA)