1 Peter 2:18-25

Key Verse 2:20b

*But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*

Introduction: We have learned from the previous passage that submitting ourselves to every human authority is doing what is right for God’s glory. Today’s passage is for slaves who converted to Christianity. Many believing slaves could have faced the persecution of their masters, because of their faith to take a stand against idol worship. They must have been treated harshly by their unbelieving slave masters. But Peter encouraged them to come to Jesus and follow His example. May the Lord bless us to learn from Jesus’ example of submission and suffering for doing good, and to live, and to live in a way that is commendable before God.

1. Read verses 18-20. Why should believing slaves submit themselves to their masters? (18) In what respect was this a difficult command for them to obey? (18-19) How are suffering for doing wrong and suffering for doing good contrasted? (19-20)

***18*** *Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.* ***19*** *For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.* ***20*** *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.*

1. Believing slaves should submit themselves to their masters out of reverent fear of God. To have reverent fear means to show awesome respect, the kind of awesome respect that honors God as God. A believing slave should recognize that the authority of their master was given by God and serves the will and purpose of God. They should submit to their slave masters in reverent fear, as though submitting to God himself.
2. This was a difficult command for them to obey because it often involved bearing the pain of unjust suffering. Peter commanded that believing slaves submit not only to masters that are good and considerate, but also to those that are harsh. In the ancient world slavery was commonplace. There was even the concept of a good and considerate slave master, something that seems unheard of by today’s standards. In the time of Peter’s letter, it may have been considered relatively easy to submit to a good and considerate slave master. However, to submit to a harsh slave master was not considered easy. It meant to bear a considerable amount of pain and injustice. A harsh slave master might provide very poor work conditions, while demanding a very heavy workload; such as long hours without breaks or mealtimes. They might also drive workers using a whip and severely punish those that do not complete required tasks. They could even persecute a slave for their faith; such as refusing to worship household idols. It would be very difficult for any slave to submit to such a harsh master. From a modern perspective, just the existence of slavery is systemic injustice and institutionalized evil. Just imagine having to bear up under the pain of unjust suffering in order to submit to the demands of a harsh slave master. However, Peter commanded slaves to do so out of reverent fear of God. There are many regions of the world were slavery still exists and where these verses regarding slaves and masters still could apply as originally intended. However, in places were slavery is outlawed and most people have never experienced or witnessed it, this command can still be applied to the relationship between employees and employers. How should believers deal with a harsh boss or unjust employer, or even an employer that persecutes them for their faith? The typical person or an unbeliever might immediately begin looking for a different job. However, believers need to first consider God’s will, and could choose instead to bear up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. This might represent one small way for them to participate in the sufferings of Christ. Besides, who knows if God perhaps has in mind to save a fellow employee or even a wicked boss through their Christian example of submission. .
3. Suffering for doing wrong and suffering for doing good are contrasted in that suffering for doing wrong is of no credit, while suffering for doing good is commendable before God. Here, Peter presents only two options. People either suffer for doing wrong or they suffer for doing good; either they suffer for their sins or suffer for Jesus. There is no third option to avoid sufferings altogether. To suffer for one’s sins is meaningless suffering that produces no lasting value. Those who suffer for their sins lead an empty life, only to die and face judgment. But, when a believer suffers for doing good, because we are conscious of God, that person is commended and blessed by God. When they suffer for doing good, because they are conscious of God, they can know that God is with them and they are blessed by God.
4. Read verses 21-23. Why were the believers called to suffer for doing good? (21) What example did Jesus set? (22-23a) How was Jesus able to suffer unjustly for doing good? (23b)

***21*** *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.* ***22*** *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”* ***23*** *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.*

1. The believers were called to suffer for doing good because Christ suffered for them, leaving them an example to follow. Jesus suffered for us to forgive our sins and redeem us, but that’s not the end of the story. In suffering for us, he also set us an example. We are called to follow in his footsteps by suffering for the good of others. When a believer suffers for doing good, because they are conscious of God, they should consider Christ’s sufferings. Not only is Jesus with them in their suffering, but they are actually participating in Christ’s ongoing sufferings for the salvation of others. Through their suffering, they are able to learn from Jesus’ example and come to know Jesus better. For this reason, the apostle Paul said, *“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death”* (Phi 3:10). Also, Peter said, *“But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed”* (1 Peter 4:13).
2. The example Jesus set in suffering for doing good, is that he did not sin nor deceive, nor retaliate nor make threats. When Jesus was dying on the cross, the religious leaders, the crowds and even the two criminals crucified with him all hurled insults at him. Mark said that “*Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days,* ***30*** *come down from the cross and save yourself!”* ***31*** *In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!* ***32*** *Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.* (Mark 15:29-32) Jesus did not open his mouth to respond to people’s insults, neither to retaliate nor to make threats, and not even to defend himself. Throughout his trial and crucifixion, Jesus did not open his mouth to sin or deceive in anything that he said, but only opened his mouth to speak the truth of God. Jesus willingly submitted to and participated in such suffering, because he was conscious of God the Father and God’s will to save others through him.
3. Jesus was able to suffer unjustly for doing good, because he entrusted himself to God the Father who judges justly. Jesus did not react out of vengeance, but rather entrusted judgment to God. God is the only perfect judge, and will bring His righteous judgment on the earth with swiftness and finality. This will happen when Jesus comes again. On the other hand, human judges and judgements are fallible judges as best.
4. Read verses 24-25. Why did Jesus bear believer’s sins in his body on the cross? (24) How have they been healed by God? In what way were they like sheep going astray? (25) How were they able to return to God? (26) What does it mean that Jesus is the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls?

***24*** *“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”* ***25*** *For “you were like sheep going astray,”[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+2%3A18-25&version=NIV&interface=print#fen-NIV-30425b)*] but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

1. Jesus bore believer’s sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. Of course, Jesus died to forgive sinners, which should not be understated. However, God did not forgive so that people could sin again or go on sinning. The cost of forgiveness was too great for that. God forgave our sins through Jesus Christ so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. The end purpose of Jesus dying for sinners was to give them a new life free from sin. Here, the word righteousness has to do with doing what right. No one can do what is right apart from God who alone is righteous. From this perspective, righteousness comes from a right relationship with God. It is God’s righteousness transferred to believers through faith in Jesus Christ.
2. The believers had been healed by Jesus’ wounds.
3. They had suffered a lot because of their past sins. They might have still had a lot of wounds and scars. So Peter encouraged them *“by his wounds you have been healed.”* As long as the believers suffered for their own wounds, they could not also be expected to suffer for doing good; to suffer for the wounds of others. First, they needed to know that they had already been healed through the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Then they could suffer for doing good for the sake of God and for others.
4. Also when we look at how Jesus endured suffering for the work of salvation, it leads us to do the same in applying what he had done to save us. Jesus commanded us to love others. At the same time Jesus provided us the resource of how to properly love others through the way that Jesus set a good example to take wounds to heal us. For instance, in this world, and even including the believing community consisting of forgiven sinners, we can face many misunderstandings leading to individual suffering and inevitable inner wounds as we obey His command to love each other. Then we try to get even with those that hurt us and the church will only fall apart. Therefore, we must endure others patiently and love one another as Jesus did us. Just as Jesus willingly endured suffering and all wounds for His salvation work, we must also be ready to receive insults and criticism while loving our believing fellows and serving students. Sometimes due to so much pain and wounds, we are prone to isolate ourselves from other coworkers and just focus on our family and our jobs in order not to get hurt more and more from them. Also we prefer not to invite students actively because we want to avoid this kind of suffering like rejection, insults and criticism. But we must welcome what Jesus suffered for us in the same way and we will become His good and obedient people with a meaning and good purpose behind. If we avoid such suffering, then in reality we cannot expect the great work of God among us. We pray that we may follow Jesus’ attitude to love each other to build up loving community among us and continue to spread the gospel by participating in His sufferings.
5. They were like sheep going astray in that they were lost in their sins. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah said, “*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all”* (Isa 53:6). We are like sheep in that we are prone to go astray from God and God’s commands. Our sin is that we turn to our own way, rather than following God’s way. The believers were like sheep going astray. Peter wanted them to remember their prior lost condition without Jesus.
6. They were able to return to God through the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls, Jesus Christ. Jesus, their Good Shepherd came looking for them when they were lost. As the Overseer of their souls, he already knew them, and knew how to lead them back to God.
7. Jesus is the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls in that he continues to lead and guide, watch over and care for their lives. King David said, “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. **2** He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, **3** he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.

Conclusion: Jesus is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls and guides us day and night to the righteous lives for God’s glory. Jesus suffered for us while we were still terrible sinners. In such a way, He set a good example for us to follow. We want to participate in His sufferings so that we may become shepherds and overseers in Jesus’ image for many lost souls. Suffering for doing good is the will of God in leading many to return to our Lord who is the Chief Shepherd to be saved! **One word: Suffer for doing good!**