

Series: First Peter, Clarity in Chaos
The Freedom of Submission—Realities

Sermon by Teaching Pastor Paul Joslin

First Peter 2:18-25

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, October 29, 2024

A reading from First Peter 2, verses 18 through 25: “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, for it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God, 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, it is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. 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. He Himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls,” the word of the Lord.

Thank you, Sophie. Good morning, everyone. My name is Paul. I am one of the pastors here, and I have to say I love Fall Festival, and I keep trying to ask them if they will change the name of it to Paul Fest, but so far there has not been any action, but if you want to put in a word for me, it is not an egotistical move. I just love it a lot, okay? I promise it is not about me. No, it is going to be a great day. The other thing that is great about Fall Fest is usually the preacher tries to keep it a little tighter, because we all want to get out to hot dogs and pumpkins and artisan market. Yeah, we got a clap up here in the front row. Don’t sit in the front row if you are going to clap about a shorter sermon. All right, come on. No, it is going to be a good day. Let me pray for us as we jump into this passage of scripture.

Heavenly Father, God, we come before you today. Lord, we just even from reading this passage, I heard a couple woo’s in the audience. It is a hard passage for us to understand. “Slaves submit to your masters.” What does that mean? What is Peter trying to say, and what does that mean for us today? God, I pray that as we study this passage, as we look at this ancient text, God, that you would give us clarity, that you would give us insight and wisdom of how to understand what Peter is saying, and then how we might apply that to our own lives and our own culture today, and it is in Christ’s name that we pray, amen.

All right, so a few months ago I looked at my license, and I realized that it was about to expire. Has anybody ever had a license that was about to expire and caught you off guard? It is like every five years, so you do not really anticipate it, but I realized that I needed to renew my license, and so I went on the “My Colorado” app. Has anyone ever used that before? Yeah, that is a great thing, My Colorado app. I started filling it out so I could renew my license, and suddenly I find this little box that says if you want to renew your license through the app, you have to check this box, and essentially what it says after that is that you swear on all your honor and integrity and cross your heart and hope to die, that you have been to see an eye doctor, and that is true and that you were verifying that in checking this box, and so I sat there for about five minutes, and I just thought, “Okay, is it all right for me as a pastor to check this box when I have never seen an eye doctor before?” and I decided after about five minutes that no, that is probably not all right, and so I did not check it, and then I waited like another three or four months, and then my license actually expires. Like, I should go see the eye doctor, and that’s probably just a good idea.

Anyway, so I am in the eye doctor's office, and purely just so I can renew my license and check this box and have some sort of integrity in my life, and as I am in the doctor's office, they are like, "Hey, good news. You got great eyesight, 20-20." Everybody can congratulate me. I did a lot to earn that, and 20-20 eyesight, and I was like, "Oh, awesome. Now, great. Now I can check this box and not feel bad about myself," and then the eye doctor said something that I will never forget, and what she said was, "Hey, just be prepared that in two to three years, you are going to need to come back and see me." I was like, "Wait, you just told me my eyes were great. Everything was perfect." I was a little confused on the messaging, and so I just asked her, "Why would I need to come back to see you in two to three years?" and she says, "It is just part of entering middle age that when you get older," and I am going to tell you, I did not care for her tone. I did not think. It was like, "Why do we got to call it that?" but apparently when you get older, she just says, "Yeah, your eyes are great. Now about two to three years from now you are going to be getting a little older, and they will not be so good, and you are going to need reading glasses," and I did not care for that too much. Thankfully, I did not say that out loud, but then my second thought was, "Someday this is going to make a great sermon illustration," and so I was sitting there, and I just had this moment as I was talking to her about, I really actually was like, "Tell me more about this, because I do not think I am that old, and so let me know what is happening," and she just simply said that sometimes, as you get older, and it was the easiest answer. It was like I understand this, but she just said that when you get older, you just sometimes need help with clarity, and what that made me think of is we were in this series, "Clarity in Chaos," is that sometimes we need help with clarity in our life. Sometimes when we experience the chaos in this world, sometimes when we experience the different elements of suffering and challenge that we go through, sometimes the world just seems so loud and obnoxious in all of its different opinions and viewpoints and things that are coming at us, that we need help with clarity.

As we have been going through this book, First Peter, that is essentially what he is trying to do as he is writing this ancient letter to a group of Christians who are experiencing a very chaotic world. There is political turmoil. There are people who are experiencing suffering and hostility, people that have challenged the beliefs of Christians, that are pushing back against them, and Peter is writing to this community all throughout these different churches and trying to provide clarity for them in the midst of chaos and give them a little bit of an understanding of the situations they find themselves in and how they can trust God in the midst of those situations and how they should act and engage with the chaotic world in a clarified way.

We have anchored this teaching in this whole series in First Peter chapter two, verses 11 and 12, where he says this, "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles," and what we have talked about throughout this series is that for followers of Jesus, one of the main identifying things of followers of Jesus in culture and in the world around us, in the chaotic world, is we have to understand that we are foreigners and exiles. This world is not our home, that we will experience things in this life like suffering and hardship and hostility that are supposed to remind us that we were made for a world beyond this one. So, he says, "I urge you, as foreigners and exiles to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul, and live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us," and so what Peter does in this letter is in the midst of the chaos, he tries to provide clarity by saying, "You followers of Jesus, you are foreigners and exiles in this world. This world will not feel like your home. If you follow Jesus, there will be times in your life when you feel like you are an alien in a foreign land," and then he says, how you know this is true is because there are things that this world offers, pleasures and different things that the world says will satisfy

your soul, and you are supposed to abstain from those things and live a good life full of good deeds. If you do these two things, if you abstain from the different desires that you have, and if you live a good life among the pagans, then what will happen as a result of that is the people around you will come to see that there is something different about you, and they will learn to glorify God.” What Peter is essentially saying is that we are to bear witness to the world by how we live as exiles and foreigners in such a way that they will come to glorify God and lift Him up and praise Him.

Now that all sounds pretty great and pretty easy. It is the next couple of passages, and we looked at one of them last week and another today, where his answer to how we live that out gets a little tricky, because Peter says the way that we can learn to live a good life among the people who do not believe in Jesus is through the act of submission, which is not a word any of us like or get excited about. So, he says, and what we looked at last week is that there is a calling on Christians to submit to the different authorities in their lives, and so Larry preached a great sermon last week on how Christians are supposed to submit to governmental authority in their lives, even when those government authorities are unjust or unkind or do not act the way that they are supposed to, and then there is this circle that is happening in this letter. So, he starts with government, and then today, what we are going to look at is there is this next level of authority that we experience in our lives, and we can maybe call it the employer or the workplace or maybe someone you could think of, like for younger people, like maybe a coach or a teacher, someone who is in authority over you. They are not the like president or emperor of the world, but they have authority over you in your life, and then next week we are going to look at how this applies and this view of submission is lived out in the household and in the family. He says there are these three different layers of how Christians are supposed to engage with a chaotic world, and the primary way we engage in a world of chaos is through the act of submission, and that if we submit and live good lives among the pagans and the people who do not believe like us, then they will come to glorify God.

Now, that does not feel like something that very many of us can get excited about. If I just stand up here and say, “Hey, the biggest calling that Peter has for your life is that you learn to submit in every area of your life,” you are thinking, “Can we just go get some pumpkins and hot dogs right now?” That just does not sound very appealing. “Can we just skip past this?” I think it gets even a little bit trickier, because the answer that Peter is essentially trying to ask is, “What do we as followers of Jesus do when we experience hostility and injustice in the world?” and then he applies that to a very particular context that we are going to look at today, starting in verse 18, and Sophie just read it for us. It starts out, and it says this, “Slaves, in reverent fear of God, submit yourselves to your masters.”

Now let’s just pause there for a second, because that is a hard enough teaching. I mean, in our own context, we would all say, and I even talked to someone last night before and was like, “Hey, I have to preach a sermon on slavery, and I am not quite sure what I am going to do or say how it works.” He was like, “Yeah, you should say this; ‘Slavery is bad.’” We know that that is good, and that is true. The problem is this passage seems to not say that slavery is bad. It seems on the face of it to say that slavery is okay, which is not great, because this is the Bible, and the Bible is supposed to teach us how to live, and if we can all agree that slavery is a moral blight on humanity and an evil, when we read something like this, that slaves in reverent fear of God, submit yourselves to your masters, there is this cognitive dissonance that comes up with them. This does not make sense. This is the Bible. This is supposed to tell us about the character of God and how we are supposed to live in the world, and isn’t the Bible the one that has the story of Exodus where God freed a nation of slaves from oppressors and overthrew them with miracles and conquered that nation, and then set them up and made a covenant with them? Then Peter says, hey,

no, now you should just submit to those people, and that is a hard teaching. What is Peter saying? What is he doing?

But then it goes even one step further. Not only are slaves supposed to submit to their masters, but even those who are not good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. This is supposed to be the book that tells us about who God is and how we can live for Him and what it means to glorify and honor Him, and here it seems as if Peter is saying, “Slavery is not that bad. Just make sure you endure whatever you experience in this evil and injustice,” and how does this teaching fit with what we know about the character of God? To be honest with you, this is one of those passages that when we come to it, we just like to skirt past it or skip ahead, because we are not quite sure what to do with it, and there are a lot of people who have read this kind of passage and said, this is actually one of the passages in scripture that slaveholders used to uphold the institution of slavery in our country. This is one of the passages that slaveholders used to say, “You know what? Black people are actually less than and not full humans, and so we can treat them however we want, and they just need to submit to their masters, even if their masters are unjust and harsh.” We know that this is how one how this passage was used at times, and so what in the world do we do with this passage? What is Peter trying to say?

Those pumpkins are starting to sound really good right now, right? Like, let’s just get out to the hot dogs. What is important for us to understand is that Peter is writing in a context that is very different than our own. When we think of slavery, we think of the transatlantic slave trade and all the racial inequality that came with that, all of the different ways that people were treated and abused and mistreated, and Peter is writing in a very different context, and so in order for us to understand this passage, we have to do the hard work of separating out our context and understanding of what slavery has meant to us and our nation, and look at what Peter is talking about in his particular context, because slavery in ancient Rome looked very different than it did in the antebellum South.

In the Roman empire, slavery was a widespread institution, but it differed significantly from the racial chattel slavery of later centuries. In Rome, slavery was often based on economic factors, war captives, or indebtedness, but here is the key difference. Slavery was not a lifelong sentence. It was actually something that people often chose in order to get out of debt. Sometimes slaves, and not even sometimes, slaves could often earn and buy their freedom. In fact, some people chose to be slaves of, let’s say, a Roman citizen, because if they were a good servant to this Roman citizen, then after a few years of servitude, they would actually be given their freedom, and because they had been the servant of a Roman citizen, they themselves could become Roman citizens, and so in a lot of places it was actually this channel to better your life, to forward your prospects, to take care of your family.

It was not this kind of thing that you were just born into and had to live in for the rest of your life, and there were different ways that people were mistreated, but at the heart of it, we have to understand that slavery in ancient Rome in Peter’s context was really more akin to the middle class of our culture. It was people who were working to try to better themselves and maybe step up into the next level of society, and it was not just based on hard manual labor. Slaves were actually doctors and teachers and household managers, business managers, writers, accountants, agents, and overseers. They could even be captains of ships at sea. All of those people were classified as slaves in the ancient world, and though they had limited rights, and they belonged to someone, they had the ability to earn their freedom and better themselves and their prospects through this act. So, what Peter is saying in this passage, I think we have to be so clear on this, Peter is writing this in the particular context that he would not even recognize the slavery or injustice that we have experienced or witnessed in the history of our country.

Rather, what he is talking about is that Christians in these situations where there is injustice and where we sometimes experience in our workplaces people who mistreat us or in authority above us who do not treat us the way that we are supposed to be treated, is how do we embody the kingdom of God, even within unjust social systems? So we have to take that context and spread it out to apply it to our modern context. This is not, and this has to be said, so clearly, this is not a divine endorsement of slavery or injustice. What Peter is trying to do is to say, “In this world, you are going to experience injustice. There will be people in authority over you who mistreat you, who do not do things the way that God intended for them to be done. There will be people who argue with you and who use their authority to abuse you, and they will do acts of injustice, and the question for followers of Jesus is in those social systems, how does the believer respond and act and live? That is the answer that Peter is trying to ask for in this question.

So just to take it to our modern day, I want you for a moment to think about the worst boss you have ever had in your life, that person that when you wake up in the morning, you are like, getting ready to go to work, and you are just having an argument with them in the mirror, trying to think, “Oh yeah, I am going to say this to them today.” None of you have ever done that. It sounds like just me. All right, perfect. It is the coach or the teacher who, when you go to their class, and they say that thing to you that just like makes you crumble inside and makes you feel like you do not have worth or that there’s something wrong with you. It is the person who uses authority over you, employers, managers, teachers, coaches, who do not rule the world justly or fairly, but mistreat the people who are below them.

I was thinking about who in my life embodied that, and I thought of my high school basketball coach, and my high school basketball coach, he was a mean dude, and just to give you context, if the name Bob Knight means anything to you, he actually said multiple occasions that Bob Knight was his coaching model and that he tried to coach like Bob Knight coached, and he even, not kidding, he wore a sweater vest to try to even be dressed like him. He was trying to emulate Bob Knight and how he treated his players, so he was a mean dude, and for whatever reason he did not like me at all. He came at the end of my sophomore year, and I had been a fairly decent player, getting a lot of playing time on the varsity team, and after he came to our school, for whatever reason, he did not like me, and just I ended up on the end of the bench and not playing a lot my junior year for him, and it was really hard. I did not quite understand. It felt very unfair. It felt very unjust, and he would come down on me in a way that I felt like was harder than other players, and I think a lot of it had to do with his first summer there. I missed several optional practices because I was at church, and so I think he held that against me, but whatever the instance was, we did not get along, and I felt like his authority over me was being mishandled and misused, and it was unjust.

Then there was this one Christmas tournament where I had not played at all that season, and we are playing the team that will eventually become the 5A state champions in the state of Texas, and they are a good team, and it is coming into the fourth quarter. We are down by 15 points, and I have not played at all, and so the coach puts all the bench warmers like me and the scrubs in the game, and we get in the game, and for whatever reason, this is going to sound like I am trying to like brag to you about what happened in that game. Nobody cares. It was in high school, but I am just trying to give you context for the story, and I had a good game. Straight off the bench, I hit a three, and I went down on the other end. I took a charge, and then I got the assist on the next basket, got forced to turn over, hit another three, and then got fouled on a rebound and hit a couple of free throws, and so in the span of two minutes, I and all these scrubs had brought the team back from 15 points down to down two with about three minutes left in the game.

The other team calls a time out. The coach pulls all the scrubs and the bench warmers out of the game, puts the starters back in, and then we lose in overtime, barely. So that was just the context, and after the game, we head into the locker room, and I do not like losing. I am a very competitive person, but that was a game where I was thinking, “We lost, but I did pretty well,” and my grandma was in the stands for Christmas, and she got to see it, so I was feeling all right about myself, and this coach, he comes into our locker room, and he just starts tearing the team apart. I mean, he just lights into them, and it actually got to a point where it was violent and abusive. He broke his clipboard on the bench next to a player. He grabbed a player by the collar and shoved him against the wall. His spit was flying everywhere. He threatened one player for not playing well enough. I mean, he was just like on a tirade, and then suddenly he just calms down, and he turns, and he looks me dead in the eye, and I have my towel over my head and just trying to like not be subject to his anger, and he just looks at me, and suddenly his whole demeanor shifts, and instead of being angry and yelling, he just in the calmest voice I have ever heard, as he just looks me dead in the eye and says, “How does it feel to contribute to something for once in your life, you worthless bleep?” and then he walks out. I was sixteen years old. That is like a core memory that I have in my life. I was like, goodness. I mean, I thought I had just done this awesome play. It was probably one of the best games I had played in my life, and that was his response, and there are people in our lives that it can feel like, no matter how hard we work or no matter how good we do, it is the boss, it is the manager, it is the coach, it is the teacher for whom it is never good enough. They have been put in the position of authority over us, and no matter what we do, they are going to treat us unfairly and unjustly, and the question is, in that situation, how do we as followers of Jesus respond? Because we are going to experience injustice and suffering and oppression and people who act in ways that are not fair in this world, and that is Peter’s question and what he is writing about. In those situations, how do we respond? What does it mean for a follower of Jesus who is treated unfairly, unjustly, or even against someone who has harmed you? How do we respond?

Essentially what Peter is saying is, in this world you will experience the bent and broken systems of injustice, and the question is what do we do about it when the authority figures over us treat us unfairly, and his answer, which just like oh, it is submission. Like, not just to the people in authority who are good, but, but even to those who mistreat us, submit, and we have to go a little bit further, because we have to understand what it is that Peter is actually calling us to, because if we just leave it at this idea that no matter what anyone says to you, no matter what anyone does, or no matter how unjust or how unethical someone in authority over you is, you just need to submit, that feels terrible, and it honestly feels like maybe a situation where you could be stuck in some abusive situations. So, what is it that Peter is actually trying to get at?

Well, I think the first thing that he says, and this comes from verses 19 and 20 coming out of this, is he says make sure that when you suffer injustice, you are suffering for doing good, and he says this, “For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God, but how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and you endure it? But if you suffer for doing good, and you endure it, then it is commendable before God.” I think what Peter is saying here is that there are moments in life where you will be treated unjustly and unfairly, where a manager does not like you, does not pay you fairly, where someone in authority over you mistreats you, or maybe they are corrupt, they are broken, they are bent and cruel in some sort of way, and Peter’s caution is in those situations, make sure that the unjust treatment you are receiving is not something that you have caused or something that you have brought on yourself because you were doing wrong.

In other words, if we are mistreated, but we are doing something wrong, Peter is saying that is not necessarily injustice. That is called a consequence, and there are sometimes in life where we can have this view of the world where things did not go the way that we wanted them to, and we can blame everyone else, but then people outside of our life look at us and say, “I think you are actually causing that situation. Your manager may be a jerk, but you were insubordinate. You are not listening. You are choosing disobedience. You are choosing to skirt around their authority. You are gossiping behind their back.” Peter is saying your character, how you engage with your authority figure above you, whether they are a good person or a bad person, you have to make sure that you are the one who still has integrity and acts justly and fairly, that you are not doing something wrong.

Sometimes I think as Christians we can have this view of the world and it is almost like the toddler tantrum, when a toddlers get in a fight, and it is like, “Well, they started it,” and we can justify all sorts of behavior in our life as okay, because the people around us have done things that were unjust or unfair, and so we then choose to retaliate. We choose to act in kind. We choose to use the same path and tools and measures to try to get back at those people, but Peter is saying that is not how followers of Jesus are supposed to respond, so when you experience hardship or are treated unjustly, make sure that it is not because you were doing something wrong. Make sure it is not just simply a consequence of what you have been doing.

Then he goes on and, he says in verse 21 and 23, more than just making sure it is not that we are doing something to deserve it. He says in these situations where we experience hardship and suffering by authority figures over us, we need to make sure that we are following Christ’s example. He says, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you,” so you are called to submit to the authorities above you, even if they are harsh, cruel, or bent, because, “Christ suffered for you, and He left you an example that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth,” and then Peter goes on to say, “When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate. When Jesus suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.”

Now what we have to recognize is that Peter was one of the closest followers of Jesus, and that the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested and insulted and mocked and tortured, Peter was an eyewitness of those events, so when he says here that they hurled their insults at Jesus, Peter watched that happen, and he saw Jesus not retaliate. When he says that Jesus suffered excruciating torture and did not threaten his oppressors or his abusers, Peter watched that happen. Peter believed that Jesus was the Son of God. He believed that Jesus could have done anything to stop the injustice that He was going through, and in fact, Jesus tells Peter, “Hey, if I wanted to stop this, I could call down an army of angels to put an end to this right now.” Peter watched Jesus heal the person that Peter had just attacked with a sword, so when he says Christ has left us an example to follow, Peter is an eyewitness of those events. He saw Jesus live this out, and he says that as followers of Christ, this is what we are supposed to do as well, which goes against everything we want to do, doesn’t it? When someone insults us, we want to retaliate. When someone threatens us, we want to threaten back. When someone treats us unfairly or unjustly, we want to figure out how we can get around that situation and cause harm for them and repay evil for evil, and what Peter is saying is that is not the response of Christians.

Now I think we have to dig down so deeply here and understand what this looks like practically, so let’s take this example of the workplace. I want you to think of the worst boss you have ever had. Is Peter saying in this instance that you just have to endure suffering and injustice and mistreatment from the employer above you? Is Peter saying that you cannot quit, and you have to stay in that situation? Is Peter

saying that you cannot report illegal activity or unethical behavior, you just have to submit to whatever is going on? Is Peter saying that you have to be a glutton for punishment and suffer in silence and do nothing to address your situation? I think the answer to all of those questions is no. I do not think that that is what Peter is getting at. I do not think that he is saying you just have to suffer in silence and endure all of those things, and you cannot speak up, but in those situations, in a work environment where you are experiencing unjust treatment, I think what Peter is saying is that that circumstance, that situation, what we have to recognize as followers of Jesus is those circumstances are more about our sanctification than simply our salary. What we have to understand is that we have a different view of the world and that it is not about how we can get even or how we can better ourselves or tear someone else down. It is about us becoming more like Jesus, who submitted to unjust authorities. I think what Peter is getting at is submission is less about the person you are submitting to and more about your relationship with God and trusting his character. That's why Peter says that when we follow this example, Jesus entrusted Himself to the one who judges fairly.

The hope of Christianity is not that we just simply sit there and take all the abuse. The hope of Christianity is that we do not have to be masochists who just endure hardship and suffering because that is what we are supposed to do. The hope of Christianity is that we can endure anything this world throws at us because we serve the living God, who one day will judge everything and put everything to rights, and so we do not have to take matters into our own hands. We do not have to figure out how to fix the world, because we trust that Jesus Himself will return, and we are aliens. We are foreigners. We are exiles. There is nothing this world can do to us that can cause us to lose hope or give up. What Peter is saying is he is not justifying suffering for the sake of suffering. He is not saying that the Christians just to endure, because that is what we are supposed to do. What he is saying is followers of Jesus believe that it is actually in Christ's suffering and following his example that we become conquerors of this world.

He goes on to say in verse 24, "He himself," talking about Jesus, "bore our sins on his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness, and it is by his wounds that you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls." Peter is grounding this whole teaching in the idea that Jesus is the shepherd who will take care of you in all circumstances and that it is actually through following his example, the way He endured suffering and hardship and injustice, that actually was the power that leads to the healing of the world, and it is the very thing that can heal your soul and give you the power and strength to endure anything this world throws at you. This is so important. Peter's view is that when we suffer and endure hardship under unjust authorities, we recognize that the world is not our home, and that through us and how we respond to those situations, it is actually in those circumstances that the kingdom of God advances into the world.

This passage, the call to submission is not about affirming a system of slavery or any system of injustice, but about living a Christ-like life in whatever circumstances Christians find themselves in, and the whole reason that we would do this, the whole reason we would allow ourselves to go through that and with the hope that one day God will judge and set things right with the hope that even in the midst of our suffering, God is doing the work to not waste our witness to be at work in the world to bring about his kingdom, the reason we are willing to do that goes all the way back to the beginning of this passage, where Peter says it is by your good deeds how you live out this teaching that others will come to glorify God. The whole reason that we can endure is not just for the sake of ourselves, but it is for the sake of the world around us, this chaotic, noisy, crazy world, that when we have the clarity of what Christ has done for us

and what He has called us to do, when we endure suffering in those circumstances, then it points to a savior whose wounds can heal the entire world so that people would come to glorify Him.

Peter is not just writing in the abstract. He witnessed Jesus do that, but he also lived that out himself. We are given this story at the end of the gospel of John, at the end of Peter's life. John was one of the closest followers of Jesus, and he loved Jesus dearly, and he writes this eyewitness account about this conversation that Peter and Jesus had, because if you remember, when Jesus was betrayed, and when He went against everything that Peter thought he should do, He did not return insults for insults, He did not threaten, when Peter watched Him do all of that, he did not know what to do, because that was not what the Messiah was supposed to do, and so people start coming to him and saying, "Hey, I think you were one of those people who was following Jesus," and this would-be revolutionary who wanted to take over the world starts to crumble on the under the weight of a little girl wanting to tattletale on him, and he begins to deny that he ever knew Jesus, and he denies Him three times, and we are told that on the third time he denies Jesus, he actually met Jesus's eyes, and Jesus looked at him as he denied, and then he began to crumble and weep, because he realized what he had done, and so the gospel of John wants to wrap up this story, because we are left in this cliffhanger of what happened between Jesus and Peter. Jesus chose the way of non-violence and suffering and submission. Peter did not like that and did not know what to do, so how would they reconcile their relationship?

So, one night after Peter went back to fishing, Jesus pulls him onto the shore, and they begin having breakfast together on the beach, and then after breakfast together, Jesus takes him for a walk as the sun is rising over the beach, and they begin having this conversation where Jesus asks him three times, "Peter, do you love me?" He asked him three times, "Do you love me?" for the three times Peter betrayed Him, and we are told that on the third time Peter was hurt, because he knew what Jesus was doing, and so he said, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you," and he commits to following Jesus, whatever the cost, and then Jesus comes back with these words, "Peter, you were young, and you dressed yourself, and you went where you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go," and then we are given this footnote. "Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would" what? "Glorify God, and then He said to him, 'Follow me.'"

There may be some of you here today who, like Peter, are being led somewhere you do not want to go. There may be those of you in this room who have been called to seasons of suffering. You have been enduring hardship and unjust treatment and being treated unfairly, and the call of following Jesus is that we would endure those situations so that we can glorify God through our lives and so that those around us can come to glorify God as well, and what I need you to hear if you are in one of those seasons is that your suffering is not wasted. It is not accidental. It is not haphazard. Even though we do not believe God is causing the suffering, we are sure and confident that God uses all circumstances for his glory, when we submit not to the authorities around us, but submit to Jesus Christ Himself, and that it is in those situations that you are being used for the glory of God, and so that others may glorify Jesus one day as well.

Followers of Christ, we follow his example and entrust ourselves to the God who judges fairly, because it is by his wounds that we are healed, and it is by his wounds that the world around us, as chaotic as it may be, is healed too. We're not simply called to suffer for the sake of suffering. It is through suffering and following Christ's example that Peter says when you follow his example, you actually become conquerors of this chaotic world, because how do you stop a movement of people who are willing to submit to that? Would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, as we close our time together today in this passage, Lord, I just pray for anyone who may be in one of those seasons, God, someone who maybe feels the weight of injustice or being treated unfairly, an authority figure over them who does not treat them with kindness or the way that they are supposed to. I pray that the example of who Christ is would challenge us to follow in his footsteps, as Peter says, that whatever circumstances we may find ourselves in, in this world, we could endure suffering and hardship and difficulty not for the sake of ourselves, but for the sake of your kingdom, so that those around us who do not understand what it is we believe would come to a believing faith in Jesus, that they would declare and glorify his name. God, upon our shoulders you have placed this calling to live for you in this world. By the power of your Spirit, may you strengthen us for the journey. This is not easy. This goes against our natural desires, and yet, God, it was the example that you gave us, and so may we live that out for the sake of those around us, so that by your wounds, the world might be healed, and it is in Christ's name that we pray, amen.

42:10 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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