

¹⁹ *For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.* ²⁰ *For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.* ²¹ *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:* ²² *“Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”;* ²³ *who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to [His Father] who judges righteously;* ²⁴ *who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.* ²⁵ *For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

Text: 1 Peter 2:19-25 A 4/24/22 Ezek. 34:11-16 Jn. 10:11-16 Ps. 23 Psalmody (p. 29, WS)
Hymns: 198, 200 (1-2, 5-7), 732, 785

SUFFERING FOR JESUS WHO SUFFERED FOR US

Dear fellow believers in Christ, who suffered to save us,

“It’s not fair!” We all feel that way sometimes. Our text makes it very clear that as Christ’s people He calls us to sometimes suffer unfairly. Along with all the joys and blessings our Lord gives us as His dear children, He also gives us crosses to bear. Sometimes we must suffer even in unfair circumstances. How can we do it? The key, as we will see, lies in Jesus’ unfair suffering for us.

In our text from his first epistle Peter asks, *“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?”* We understand and can even accept the fact that when we do wrong we have to suffer the consequences. We don’t deserve praise for ‘taking our medicine’ under such circumstances. We’re only getting what we deserve.

“But,” Peter says, *“when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.”* Sometimes we’ve done nothing wrong and still we have to suffer. That’s life. Each of us can relate experiences in which we suffered and it “just wasn’t fair!” Our suffering may be caused by others misjudging us or misunderstanding us. It may be caused by ridicule or persecution or mean gossip directed against us. It may be caused by someone hating us for confessing Christ and standing up for His Word. Our suffering may be caused by a member of our family, or someone else close to us.

Peter says, *“to this”* (namely, to unfair suffering) *“you were called.”* Jesus has told us, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”* (Mt 16:24). Along with the joys of discipleship come the costs – the burdens Jesus sends us to bear. Scripture tells us, *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”* (Ac. 14:22).

Some people only like to talk about the victories we have as Christians. It’s true that we do have victory over all things in Christ. But it’s also true that as Christians we sometimes must suffer.

Those people don't like to talk about that. They even go so far as to say that there must be something wrong with our faith if we're suffering.

On the contrary, if we find ourselves suffering very little or not at all, then something may well be wrong with our faith. Not that we always have to suffer. But we do suffer when others treat us unfairly and we struggle not to be mean to them and get revenge. We suffer when we struggle to accept God's will that we suffer unfairly. "I know what You say in Your Word, Lord, and I see where You're leading me, but this is hard." If we find ourselves never or hardly ever suffering at all, it may be because we keep our mouth shut to avoid persecution, or because we've been wanting people to like us more than we've been wanting to obey God, or because we've been choosing to follow our own will instead of the Lord's will.

Sometimes the suffering the Lord allows us to be put through is a bitter pill to have to swallow. Thoughts come to our mind: "Why me?!" "What did I ever do to deserve this?" "It's not fair!!" "How come other people don't have to go through what I have to?"

First of all, it's simply not true that we're the only ones suffering as we are. Scripture says, "*The same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world*" (1 Pet. 5:9 ESV). Peter's words in our text are addressed to all Christians. He speaks of unfair suffering that all Christians are called by Christ to bear.

Secondly, let's not be so quick to whine and complain to the Lord about how unfair our suffering is. If we want to talk about unfair suffering, what about the unfair suffering Jesus went through for us? We're reminded that Jesus "*committed no sin*" (the original emphasizing that Jesus was completely innocent), "*nor was deceit found in His mouth.*" Jesus never did anything wrong. He is the perfect, sinless Son of God. Peter says, Jesus "*Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.*" Our sins caused Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. Peter says, "*Christ ... suffered for us.*" "*For us*" in the original means that Jesus suffered "*in our place,*" so that we don't have to suffer forever for our sins in hell. "*For us*" in the original also means "*for our sake.*" Because Jesus suffered "*for our sake*" we are forgiven and saved. Peter says, "*By [His] stripes you were healed. You were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*"

Peter reminds us, "*When [Christ] was reviled, [He] did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten.*" When Jesus was ridiculed and blasphemed against, He never tried to get revenge. He didn't wallow in self-pity. When lies were told about Him and He was tortured and crucified, the only thing Jesus said about those who caused His bitterly-unfair suffering was, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Lk. 23:34).

Peter says that Jesus "*committed Himself to [His Father]*" (from the original, Jesus "*gave Himself over*" to His Father's will and direction), "*who judges righteously.*" Jesus didn't fight against His Father's will. Jesus didn't harbor any bitter feelings toward His Father. He entrusted everything into the hands of His Father who knew He was innocent, and who brings about justice in His way and in His time.

Peter says, “*You were called*” to suffer, “*because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example*” (from the original literally “*leaving us a writing copy*,” including all the letters of the alphabet, given to beginners as an aid in learning to draw them.”) “*that you should follow*” (from the original, “*that you should devote yourself to following*”) “*His steps*.” When you’re suffering and you’re tempted to think that it’s too hard and too unfair, look to your Savior and what He suffered for you. Jesus is the key to bearing up while suffering, and ending up victorious. Jesus willingly suffered for us, even unfairly, because He loves us. Jesus is our example to follow. And Jesus’ love for us moves us and enables us to bear up under unfair suffering for His sake.

Peter tells us after our text, “*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you*” (1 Pet. 4:12). Following Jesus means that we will experience times of unfair suffering. Don’t be surprised when it happens to you.

Peter says, “*For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures*” (from the original, “*keeps on bearing up under*”) “*grief, suffering wrongfully*.” Our Lord knows when we’re suffering. The Bible says that Jesus “*was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (He. 4:15). Jesus understands from personal experience what we’re going through when we suffer. He is well pleased with us when entrust everything we’re going through to Him, and relying on Him, patiently, humbly await the end of a trial He sends us. Scripture tells us, “*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may [lift you up] you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*” (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Peter says after our text, “*Even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed*” (3:14, my emphasis). The Bible says, “*We ... glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (Ro. 5:3-5). Peter says after our text, “*May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever*” (1 Pet. 5:10-11).

Again after our text Peter assures us, “*But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exaltation*” (1 Pet. 4:13). “Thank You, Jesus, that when You call us to suffer unfairly for Your sake, You teach us to better understand and appreciate what You suffered for us. Thank You for letting us share in Your joys and in Your suffering in this life, knowing that we will share in the perfect, eternal joys of heaven with You!”

Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne’er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy. Amen. (WS #785:3-4)