

# 1<sup>st</sup> PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 2:20-25

Lesson #12

## Introduction

The verses that we'll be examining in this study are from first Peter chapter 2, verses 20 through 25. This is the third part of a multipart series which began in chapter 2, verse 11, and will continue through the end of chapter 4. We're calling this series "A Christians Responsibilities." In part one we did verses 11 and 12, which we titled "Conduct Among the Gentiles." In part two we covered verses 13 through 20, which we titled "Honoring Designated Authorities." And now in this lesson, which is number three in the series, we will be covering verses 20 through 25 which we will title:

## Suffering For Righteousness (Christ As Our Example)

*20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.*

*21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

1 Peter 2:20-25 (NASB)

I know that we covered verse 20 in our series last week, but verse 21 is simply a continuation of the thought, and without verse 20, verse 21 and following has no contextual reference, therefore I have included it in this group of verses as well. Verse 20 sets the tone by saying that there is favor with God when His children endure sufferings for doing what is good and what is right. That very same sentence says that there is no favor to be found for patiently enduring sufferings that are the result of sin, but only sufferings for righteousness sake find favor with God.

Then we get verse 21 which opens up with this sentence "*For you have been called for this purpose.*" I have to say quite honestly that I kind of wish that it didn't say this. What it means is that Jesus was absolutely serious when He told His disciples that unless they took up their own cross and followed Him they couldn't be His disciples. And this verse says that this is exactly what we are expected to do. This verse says it isn't just theoretical, it's real and subjective. This verse says that if we intend to practice righteousness in Christlikeness then we should expect the same kind of response that He got. Because the verse finishes with the words "*since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps*"

I must confess that my initial response to these words is just like Peter's were when he first heard them, when he took the Lord aside and said "God forbid Lord that this should ever happen to you." Isn't it interesting to note that the verses that we're studying right now were written by the same Peter who uttered those words earlier in His life. At that time in his life he just didn't "get it," his mind was still set on the things of man, not of God. But now Peter is older, now he's seen and experienced many things in his Christian life, and now he "gets it" only too well. Now he understands the words of the Savior, and wishes very much to pass those words on to us who follow after him.

The Christian life was not designed to be a life of ease, or a life of triumph. Contrary to contemporary teachings, It's not about self-fulfillment, or self-satisfaction, or self-improvement, it is designed to be a life that was exemplified by our glorious example, Christ Jesus. His entire life, and even His death serves as our example of what we might expect if we wish to take up our cross and follow Him in the path of righteous obedience to God. How's that for an evangelism sermon? Have you heard that message preached recently? I hope you have, but it isn't likely.

Nevertheless that is undeniably the message presented by the holy Scriptures to all those who wish to follow after Jesus and be His disciple. It is the message that was taught by Jesus, and was repeated by all of His apostles who followed Him. And yet perhaps, to many who are listening to this message, this may sound as strange as a foreign language. This is not the popular teachings of our contemporary churches, it's just the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.

I'm speaking this way because the title of our entire series is "A Christians Responsibilities." I myself have set in churches and been taught for years that Jesus paid it all. That all we need to do now is rest on His finished work. Since salvation is acquired by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, therefore there is absolutely nothing that we as Christians can, or need to do, to secure salvation. Concerning this statement, as it pertains to the initial means of salvation, I whole heartedly agree. We do not secure our salvation by our works, nor do we maintain our salvation by our works, but what so many fail to acknowledge is that it is our works that authenticate the validity of our salvation. Where there are no corresponding works, there is no authentic salvation. Where there is no obvious leading by the Holy Spirit producing obedience to Jesus Christ, no adoption into His family has ever taken place, according to the Apostle Paul who wrote:

*9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. **But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*** Romans 8:9 (NASB)

*13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 **For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*** Romans 8:13-14 (NASB)

It is my fear that there are great multitudes who are comfortably and confidently resting on the finished work of Jesus Christ, where there is no true relationship with Jesus Christ. For a preacher, or a pastor, or a teacher to tell his students not to worry if there's no change in their heart attitudes and affections concerning the word of God and His Commandments, because Jesus has absorbed all their sin debt, and all they need to do now is rest on His finished work, is absolutely contrary to every teaching of the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus said that it would be better for a teacher of the Scriptures to tie a huge rock around his neck and throw himself into the ocean than to teach one of His genuine children that it's okay to tolerate sin. That it's okay to disobey the Scriptures. That it's okay to continue to practice some of the old ways of life. (Mat 18:6; Mk 9:42; Lk 17:2) It took but one single, seemingly insignificant sin, committed by Adam to condemn himself and the entirety of humankind to death and eternal condemnation. And the penalty for sin has not changed one iota from that day forth in history. (Hence the need for a Savior)

The Scriptures tell us that if we are genuinely children of God, then we have been regenerated, and the Holy Spirit is laboring within us to bring us into subjection and obedience to Jesus Christ. (Ch. 1,v.2) It tells us that our old flesh nature is at war with our new regenerated spirit, and we have the absolute responsibility to take a part in that warfare, to actively engage the enemy, which is disobedience to the Commandments of God. (Gal 5:17) My dear saints, hearing teachings like this one are going to continue to become less frequent. Sadly, our country is in a moral freefall, and open hostility towards Christianity is growing exponentially. Supreme Court justices ruling that prayer is unconstitutional when the Constitution itself declares that Congress shall make no laws that prohibit the free exercise of religion. It's not that these people are ignorant of what they're doing, it's that their hatred for Christ is so great that they're willing to openly and flagrantly do it anyway. And what should we expect, if they are willing to completely ignore the divine word of God in the holy Scriptures, are we surprised because they ignore the words of our national Constitution?

There is also going to be a proliferation of false prophets and preachers who are going to tell you what you want to hear instead of what God says. And my friends they are already here by the truckload. They're preaching peace, peace when in fact there will be no peace, especially for the godly. Up to this point in our country there has been very little price to pay for publicly advocating righteousness, and the observance of the commandments of God. But my friends that's changing rapidly. If you're listening to this message, then there is a very great likelihood that you will have to make some serious decisions in your own lifetime concerning what is most important to you. The Commandments of God concerning the behaviors of mankind are fixed forever in the heavens, but to continue practicing them, and especially openly declaring them, and taking a stand for them, will become more and more costly. Times are coming that will test the true merit of the souls of men, but the Scriptures declare to us that it is those who endure to the end who will be saved. (Mat 10:22)

I'm becoming aware more and more of those whom I consider to be true and faithful pastors and teachers who are beginning to see the same trends, and are taking measures to prepare their congregations. As we see this escalation we must not be alarmed or surprised, but must realize that Peter has told us in these verses that we have been called for this very purpose. Right to the end of the age God will have a testimony on this earth through those whom He has chosen and sanctified. Those who are His royal priesthood and His holy nation, and their saving faith is protected by the power of God for that final salvation which is reserved for them in heaven. And we have Christ as our example, and an innumerable cloud of witnesses says the writer of Hebrews, that testifies to the perseverance of God's elect.

Now we move on to verse 22, concerning Christ who is our example, we have the following comments *"who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth."* So here we have a description of our example. One who committed no sin and spoke no deceit. I actually once heard someone say that even Jesus sinned. This was a long time ago when I was a young Christian, and I don't completely remember the circumstances, I just remember how shocked I was at that statement. I don't think I myself fully realized the implications of this statement at the time, because I was a brand-new Christian. But I hope we all realize now that the absolute perfect sinlessness of Christ is a mandatory element in establishing His eligibility as a suitable sacrifice to God. Any assault on His divine, sinless and perfect character is an assault on the gospel itself. A single sin in the life of Christ would render His atonement totally null and void.

We've all heard the clever insinuations that Christ had some kind of illicit relationship with Mary Magdalene, and some even suggest that they had a child together out of wedlock. If you're a Christian, or even if you're not, don't you listen to this hogwash for one second. It is a blasphemous lying assault on the divine holiness of our Savior Jesus Christ, and drives a stake through the heart of His substitutionary atonement on the cross. His virgin birth, His sinless life, His divine nature, and His bodily resurrection are all essential and nonnegotiable tenets of the Christian faith, and there is no room for debate or negotiation on these elements within the Christian faith.

Do not be surprised when the time finally comes when it will cost you something tangible to preach what we have preached right here, and to stand up for the name of Jesus Christ, because we have been called for this very purpose. But rather thank God for how long a time that we have enjoyed the freedom to openly worship as we see fit, and to openly and publicly speak the things that we believe in our hearts to be true and virtuous and righteous. Few and short have been the times in history when societies and countries have enjoyed such precious freedoms for their peoples as we have enjoyed in this country.

But sadly, the Scriptures tell us plainly that in the latter times, and who knows but what these are those very times, that it will be very perilous to be a true Christian. Because rampant hedonism, narcissism, and greed, will define the character of humanity, and even the churches will no longer tolerate sound doctrinal teaching according to Scriptures, but rather will replace their pastors with one's who will tell them exciting things that they want to hear. (2Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-5)

Brothers and sisters, go turn on your television, tune in to any number of so-called Christian stations, and tell me what they're preaching. But don't be deceived, they'll all be holding up their Bibles, but how many stations will you have to flip through before you find a preacher who's telling you that you must deny your desires for personal gratification and self-satisfaction, and that you must cease from your sins and live holy and righteous lives that are in compliance to the commandments of God? I predict that it won't be very long until the television networks simply will not broadcast any such preaching, or the laws of the land will prohibit such teachings. Okay the scriptures have told us what we might expect to see, and what our responsibilities are, which is to continue to live godly in the present age (Tit 2:11-13) so what should be our response as we see these things unfold? How are we supposed to react? Peter goes on to tell us exactly that by continuing his analysis of our example Jesus Christ. He says:

**Verses 23-24:**

*23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

These are pretty surprising verses, at least to many of us. It says that while being reviled, He did not revile in return, and while suffering, He uttered no threats towards those who mistreated Him. Now I suppose there are some people who might naturally think this way, but I have to confess that I'm not one of them. My natural human response would be for the Lord Jesus to have told them in no uncertain terms just exactly what was going to happen to them one day, and the sheer terror they would face when they stood before Him in his glory. But that's not what He did, because that wasn't why He came here in His incarnation. Do you remember His words that were recorded by the apostle John where Jesus said that the Father did not send Him into the world to judge the world, but rather that the world might be saved through Him. (Jn 3:17)

This reflects back to some statements that we made earlier concerning someone's worldview. According to a man centered worldview, Jesus would've wanted immediate vindication, but Jesus understood that He had a mission from the Father, and according to that mission, right then and right there, His calling was to be a Savior and not a judge. Make no mistake about it, in Revelation 19 and following He does come back as an avenging judge, but that's later in the plan, and even Christ himself understood that He must adhere to the designated timetable of the Father. All things recorded in the Scriptures must have their fulfillment said Jesus, which demands adherence to the Father's timetable, both for Christ and for His saints. Therefore, what has our example told us must be our response? Our response must be as His response, and we must understand that according to the Father's divine timetable, suffering precedes glorification, the cross precedes the crown. This held true for Jesus our Savior, and it applies equally to all of us as well.

This kind of response will not be a man centered response. It will not reflect a man centered worldview that seeks immediate justice and vindication, but rather as the verse goes on to say *"but kept entrusting himself to Him who judges righteously"* The Lord Jesus willingly deferred the use of His power and authority, and endured the shameful treatment at the hands of men, because He entrusted Himself to his Father, who ultimately and finally enforces righteous judgment, according to His own time, and for His own purpose. No one with a man centered worldview will find it possible to respond accordingly, but only those who understand the divine authority of God, and are willing to submit themselves unreservedly to His sovereign authority, will be able to follow Christ's example, because they too will be willing to entrust themselves to Him who judges righteously. It is not our place, in this time and this age, to take up armed resistance, just as Christ did not take up armed resistance, but it is our time in the divine plan of God, to demonstrate our faith in His final and eventual righteousness, by our perseverance, not by armed resistance. For now, we must trustingly defer to His divine timetable.

Before we move on to the next verse I want to just expand on this thought for a moment. The thought that Jesus said He came not to judge the world but that the world might be saved through Him. There are numerous hotly contested issues that are at the forefront of today's headlines. Abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, these are all hot issues and opinions are strong on both sides. Make no mistake, the holy Scriptures speak directly and plainly regarding every one of these issues as far as God's perspective is concerned. But the real question is, what do we do about it? Those who believe in God, believe these things to be wrong, and those who do not believe in God consider these things to be just fine, so how do we coexist without going to war with one another? Or, are we supposed to go to war, and take up arms against those whose beliefs are contrary to ours? The answer to this is very easy to find. Abortion isn't new, there was abortion when Jesus was here, and homosexuality isn't new, it was rampant when Jesus was here, so how many abortionists did Jesus kill, and how many homosexuals did He physically assault? You see how foolish this question is? He said He didn't come for that, He said He came for the salvation of sinners, all kinds of sinners, including these.

If you're a Christian, I mean truly a Christian, not just a cultural Christian, then your mandate according to Christ is to speak the truth in love. Yes, speak the truth, and warn the people of the eventual consequences of sin, but we are not appointed to be judges in the punitive sense. Certainly we are called to make righteous judgments, but we are not authorized to carry out punitive judgment, do you understand the difference? No genuine Christian is ever going to blow up an abortion clinic, no genuine Christian is ever going to physically harm an abortion doctor, no genuine Christian is ever going to physically harm a homosexual; firstly, that is not our hearts desire, and it's far beyond the purview of our authority and we very well know it. Let me just make a simple example. If you see someone in their car whose about to drive over a cliff, you quickly run out to warn them of the danger, but you don't pull them out of their car and beat the tar out of them. If they choose to ignore your warning then they suffer the consequences, but your desire was only for their salvation.

The news media just loves to grab these stories where people perpetrate such crimes and then try link them to genuine Christianity. This is no accident, there's an obvious agenda here, because you never, ever see Christianity portrayed in the news media in any other way whatsoever, and perhaps a lot of ignorant people buy into it. But let me tell you something, Christians got that name by their identification with their Savior, Jesus Christ. Christlikeness of behaviors is the authenticating trademark of genuine Christians. It's the means by which you may tell all of those diverse and plentiful cheap knockoffs from the real and authentic thing. (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13; Tit 2:11-12)

Therefore, so that you won't be fooled in the future, we may declare by the authority of the holy scriptures, that none of these behaviors are being perpetrated by genuine Christians, even if they claim to be themselves. They are simply cheap knockoffs trying to pass themselves off as something they are not. And, in the perpetration of this hoax, the good name of Jesus Christ is greatly maligned by their abominable behaviors, for which they will eventually answer to Him. And the Lord will publically disavow any knowledge of them (relationship) when He returns. (Mat 7:23; Tit 1:16) Having made this clarification, now lets move on to the next verse:

**Verse 24:**

*24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

This is the very heart of the gospel. That Jesus voluntarily came into the world that He himself might vicariously suffer the penalty of death in His own body, on behalf of those whom the Father had given to Him. Because according to the righteous laws of God, the wages of sin is death, and without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness. (Rom 6:23; Heb 9:22) He didn't come as an executioner, or even as a social reformer or civil libertarian, but He came as a Savior, to all who would receive Him, from every tribe, and language, and nation, and people group throughout the entire world, without exclusions. And this is why He silently submitted to His Father's will, not because He was powerless to prevent what happened to Him.

Then the verse goes on to say that He did this so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. This sounds very nice but how does one take hold of such words? We haven't actually died, and we sure aren't really righteous. So what do we make of this verse? Well, It has its principle and it has its application. In principle the death of Christ on our behalf imputes His death to our account to settle our debt of sin with the Father. And His perfect righteousness is imputed to our account to satisfy the Father's mandate of perfection. (Mat 5:48)

But there is also a more subjective aspect to these words. We have died to sin in respect to our having been freed from its bondage over us through its previous absolute dominance of our desires and affections. The essence of the New Covenant is that it includes within it, a new heart (which means new heart attitudes and affections for God's laws that are inscribed into our minds) by which we may now begin to serve as slaves of righteousness instead of slaves to sin. (Rom 6:17-18) Our bondage to sin has been broken because our desire for sin has been broken, and replaced with a desire for holiness and righteousness. We are internally, spiritually, mentally, a new creation, the old has passed away.

It's true that our unredeemed flesh nature still tempts us to return to those old ways, but at the same time our new heart cries out against it, because that's not what we desire, and it's not who we are anymore. (Rom 7) Can we be, in one instant, made perfect and holy? In principle, by imputation of the virtues of Christ, yes, but obviously on the subjective side, only to a progressively growing degree, until the whole process is completed. (1Co 15:50-54; Phi 1:6, 3:21) So while this transformation into Christlikeness is taking place, we are daily dying to sin and living to righteousness, on the roadway to final perfection. (Rom 8:29, 12:2; Eph 4:13) Regarding the progressive nature of this transformation process we might look to Peter's second epistle where he says:

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason*

*also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*

2 Peter 1:2-11 (NASB)

So much for simply resting on the finished work of Christ. These verses, and countless more, tell us that Christ's work in us is never finished while we're still alive. If you're still breathing, then He's still working. Unless that work is clearly visible right now, and noticeably increasing, then we should carefully examine ourselves to validate the authenticity of our election and calling says Peter. My dear friend, if you answered an alter call, and said a little prayer, and then nothing much else has happened regarding your desires and affections, if your behavior is pretty much the same as before, then I beg you to cry out to God for His mercy, that He will grant you that new heart, through genuine saving faith, because He turns away none who ask with genuine repentance.

Do not let pride, nor the love of sin, separate you from your God, and His mercy and great promises. And please don't rest your entire hope on an event that happened months, or years, or decades ago. Unless your life today authenticates His Spirit actively working in you right now, and even increasing as long as you live, then you must accept that something isn't right, and take the appropriate measures, while time still permits. Christ works through the heart, not by the sword. He won't cut off your head if you fail to convert, but He will cast you into the lake of fire if you reject Him, and choose to die in your sins.

And with that, lets move on to the final portion of verse 24 which states *"for by His wounds you were healed."* This is a statement of contrasts. It uses the anthesis of wounds versus healing as metaphors for Christ's being injured as the very means by which we are benefitted. Now right from the first I want to make it very clear that this verse is not speaking about physical healings from sickness, or diseases, or injuries, as it's so often used, especially in public prayers. If that's the way you're using it then I suggest you reconsider your practice. Not because it's evil, but because it so tragically belittles the intent of what was happening to Christ as He suffered on that cross. He didn't die to heal our flesh and blood bodies, our flesh bodies are still going to die unregenerated and sinful. He died to heal us of our terminal wounds of sin, for which the only acceptable outcome in the eyes of God is death.

Now please don't misunderstand what we're saying. It's perfectly okay to pray for the healing of our tangible bodies, in fact we're instructed to do so, as in James 5:14. All we're saying is to please keep the scripture verses in their proper context, and use them as they were written and intended, because indiscriminate use of verses, completely out of their proper context strips them of their intellectual integrity, and comes very close to sheer mysticism.

By the damage to Him, the wounding and death of His body, our eternal souls were made healthy and righteous in the sight of God. And we'll eventually even get a matching glorified body as well in the future. His wounds have healed our eternal souls, by His suffering we were justified and made whole before our God. To Him be all Praise and Honor and Glory for now and evermore. And now to the last verse in this lesson.

### **Verse 25:**

*25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls*

In simple terms, Peter says that there is a before and an after. Which can only reflect back to his previous statement that we were healed by His wounds. Before our healing we were continually straying like sheep in every direction, but now that we have been healed, we have a shepherd to lead us in the right direction and a new guardian to protect our souls from harm by forces that are more powerful than we could handle on our own. Christ as our shepherd leader, and the Holy Spirit as our soul's guardian are now our overseers through life's many journeys. To Him be glory, and praise, and honor, for now and evermore. Amen