

“THE SUFFERING SERVANT SAVIOR” PART 2

HOLINESS

1 Peter 2:21-25

DR. BRUCE BICKEL

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Bruce: All right, Don. Take us into the presence of the Lord, and make up for what I just said. (*Laughter.*) Let’s quietly go before the Lord. (*Music.*)

Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, it’s with a tremendous sense of expectation and awe that we gather at Your feet this day. Thank You for the privilege of the ministry of Your Holy Spirit, who will guide us into all truth. Would You once again, because of Your faithfulness, open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly, for Christ’s sake? Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: You know, ministry is giving away to someone else what God has given you. And if we don’t know what the Lord has given us, we really have nothing to give away. We would just give away ourselves, and that would have no eternal value.

One of my preaching heroes was Charles Spurgeon. When I was working on my doctorate at Oxford, in England years ago, I had the privilege of preaching at the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church at Elephant and Castle in downtown London, Spurgeon’s old church. Now I learned a lesson there. Somebody said that it took Spurgeon so long to get up to the podium to preach that one day somebody asked him, and said, “Pastor Spurgeon, why does it take you so long to get up to the podium to preach?”

Well, there were twelve or thirteen steps, I understand, and he said, “Whenever I get up on one step, I say, “I’m trusting the Holy Spirit. I’m trusting the Holy Spirit. I’m trusting the Holy Spirit.”

He did that twelve times. With every step, he just said, “I’m trusting the Holy Spirit,” because he knew this. Unless God goes before him, nothing that he would ever say in his own humanness would have any eternal value.

And brothers, you know, there is a lot that the Lord has been teaching us in recent months about submission, about authority, about suffering—a whole wide range of things Peter has been teaching us—how we need to respond and suffer correctly.

You’ve got a lot to give away to people. Whatever the Lord is giving you, when you give that away, that is ministry. Ministry is not some program that you start. Ministry is who you are, where you are.

Now I want to give us a few moments for you guys to minister to each other by saying what it is that the Lord has been teaching you in the last couple of months. We’ve been studying the book of 1 Peter—about holiness, about our salvation, about our pilgrimage in Christ, and about our suffering and submission. What has the Lord been teaching you? What are some of the insights you’re gaining that, if somebody were to say to you, “Give me the reason for the hope that you have within you,” and do that with gentleness and respect.

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You see, we’re not to be Bible bashers. If you’re going to Bible bash somebody, who do you Bible bash?

Participant: Yourself.

Bruce: Yourself. Hit yourself with it, nobody else.

And so, what would be the reason? If somebody said, “Friend, how is it that you’re able to handle that situation so delicately? How is it? It’s so unnatural that you’re seeming to respond to this. What’s the hope that you have?” And how can you do that with gentleness and respect? What’s the Lord teaching you, brothers, in the last couple of months? Let’s minister to each other. Give away to somebody else, to us, what the Lord has given you. Let’s take a few minutes before I get into our passage. Does somebody want to start out loud, so we can all hear? Yes, please?

Participant: Christ died for the ungodly, when we were ungodly, and justified us, so we already have favor with Him. So we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, which means that we’re set free. That’s what He has taught me this week.

Bruce: Wonderful. We’re set free in Christ. When you’re in Christ, you’re set free. True freedom is not external. Freedom is internal, isn’t it? Paul was a perfect example of that in prison. Thank you very much. We’re set free in Christ. Yes, please?

Participant: Bruce, I just watched a program on TV last night called *Front Line*. It was on the other night, and I taped it. And there was a doctor, who was talking about death and dying, and the inability of a lot of physicians to deal with that in terms of communicating with people who were dying. There were probably five or six cases, and most of them were cancer cases, and he was an Indian doctor. It was a very, very well done documentary. The thing that I noticed in that was that, of all the five people, none of them were Christians. And the fear that they had, and the anguish, and all the different emotions that were going on there, and the thing that was missing to me, and his father was also a physician who died of cancer, and he took his ashes and spread them out over the Ganges River. Again, it was very well done, but the thing that I took away from that is that I didn’t hear anyone say, “I’m not concerned about dying, because I know where I’m going. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: And being a person who has gone through cancer, and chemo treatment, and so on, I’m close to that event. But even back when I was first diagnosed with cancer, I said in my spirit that it really doesn’t matter whether I die or not, because I know where I’m going, and what a difference that makes in terms of people that are in terminal situations.

Bruce: Amen. What a great hope we can offer people. Our citizenship is in heaven. We’re just going home, really, aren’t we, when we go back to be with the Lord.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We’re just going home. Excellent; thank you. Yes, please?

Participant: Bruce, as far as what I’ve learned, sometimes, when I reach out, and I’m misunderstood, it’s not about me.

Bruce: Amen.

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Participant: So I’m very glad that I’m learning that, in good times and in bad times, the Lord has set friendship around me, and love that keeps me going.

Bruce: Amen. You’ve got to hang in there in the difficult times. You may give someone the reason for the hope that is in you, and they may not accept it. You’ve got to be consistent. Yes, please?

Participant: The Lord is showing me that submission has not been easy for me. I’ve always had a problem with that. But you’ve been telling me, in the last year or two, that I have to submit. Submission is not something that I do very well. He wants me to submit, and to submit no matter what the situation is, and so I’ve been trying to learn how to do that.

Bruce: Submission, coming under the protection of. That’s what it means. When you and I submit to authority, whatever it is,--and the Scripture teaches us to do that,-- basically, we’re saying that we’re coming under the authority of God Himself and His sovereignty, and we can submit to that. The real issue is, do we submit well? Do we submit correctly? That is what Peter has been teaching us. And he is going to give us some more of that today, also. Anyone else, please? Yes, please?

Participant: “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that, when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: Let your Christianity shine.

Bruce: Amen. Let them see your good deeds, and glorify God. Amen. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes, Bruce. Not so much in terms of submission, at least not yet, but a couple months ago, we were talking about the body of Christ. Ted alluded to this two weeks ago also, to the priesthood of all believers, that we’re a royal nation, a holy priesthood, a people set apart to proclaim the praises of God. I just thank God for the body of Christ, whether it be my local church, or the Brave Men. To be able to minister in some way to those who are not doing well physically or emotionally, to know the joy of the fellowship of the saints. I just feel sorry for unbelievers, or even people who claim to be Christians, who don’t have that. And so the Lord is teaching me to be grateful, eternally grateful, for the body of Christ.

Bruce: Amen to that. We were not designed to live on an island, were we? We are really not the captains of our own souls. No, we’ve been designed to live in community. One of the great issues of the Christian church in America is that we’ve lost the sense of community. It’s because we’ve lost the sense of what it means to be a member of the body of Christ. Absolutely. Anyone else, please? Yes, sir?

Participant: To your point, Bruce, about having must be giving, I wouldn’t have believed that maybe a year ago. But about February or March of last year, I was trained as a hospice volunteer, and had many occasions to meet with, visit and pray with folks at the intersection of eternity.

Bruce: Is that right?

Participant: And two in particular. One was an electrical engineer, a scientist, who was involved in designing the modules for the lunar landers, an incredible man, very

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sharp mentally, and science was his god. But God provided something for him to address what he was to face in that experience. When the Lord took his wife and family, then he made his peace finally with God, and went off.

The last one was a Battle of the Bulge engineer, 291st, involved in blowing up bridges, to stop the Nazis on their move to Antwerp. He died this past week, and his funeral will be Saturday. Again, exactly the same thing, when, this being available, and being able to love God, and work through, in this case, me, to be there at that moment.

Bruce: Amen. You know what Jesus says in John 17, in the Lord’s Prayer, in John 17. He said, (*Paraphrase*), “I will not lose any of the ones that You gave me.” What a marvelous statement! That’s why He could say in John 10, with such conviction, “No one will snatch them out of My hand.” If the Lord, in His grace, has sovereignly called you to saving faith, you will come to saving faith. It won’t be because of us. Sometimes we’re the hindrance, in slowing up that process. But that person will come to saving faith, because, do you realize this, men? If you’re in Christ here today, that you are a love gift from God the Father to God the Son? Jesus says, in John 17, (*paraphrase*), “I will not lose any of those that You gave me.”

Do you realize that you are given to Christ as a gift? It’s like the Father says, “Son, here is a gift I’m giving You. I’m giving You Corky. I’m giving You Ted. I’m giving You Don. I’m giving You whoever else there may be. I’m giving this person to You as a love gift. Now, Son, your job is to redeem them, to save them, to be their Savior, to be their Servant, to suffer for them. You give them a model of how to suffer in life.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: “You see, Son, that person is a love gift.”

Now, when we understand that this person is a love gift, we can have such tremendous confidence that those whom God has chosen before the foundation of the world will come to saving faith. And the reason that the Lord Jesus has not come back in all of His glory is because not all of the elect have come to saving faith yet. So don’t go looking for signs. Don’t read the tea leaves. Don’t look at the horoscopes and figure out what’s going on, all the tsunamis that are going on.

Is the Lord going to come? Of course He’s going to come! We just don’t know when, The issue is not when is He going to come, but how do we live until then? And the way that we live until then is to be holy. That’s what Peter is teaching us. And he’s going through a series of passages for us to teach us how to suffer correctly.

The thing I appreciate about Peter and the other apostles is that they really describe this principle in Scripture, and it is this, that God never requires of us something He doesn’t equip us to do beforehand. Peter is teaching us how to suffer correctly, and so he’s going to say, in effect, “Here is how the Lord is going to equip you to be able to suffer correctly, and do good in the midst of suffering unjustly, and being treated unjustly, for the glory of God.”

Let’s pick it up at verse 21 of chapter 2, of 1 Peter. We touched on this last week, and we’ll hopefully finish this up today, beginning at verse 21. Well, let me back it up to keep it in the right context. Let’s start at verse 18. Actually, let’s start at Genesis 1.

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(*Laughter.*) If we’re going to be correct, we need to start in Genesis 1 to keep it in context.

1 Peter chapter 2, beginning at verse 18. “Servants, be subject to your masters, with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if, when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called.” That’s part of our calling, and that is to suffer unjustly. And in the midst of that, we’re to do what? Do good. While you and I are suffering unjustly, we are to do good, because who does that call attention to?

Let’s read on, because here is the answer to that question. “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but now have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen. Now Peter has been teaching us in these chapters how to suffer correctly. He reminds us that suffering correctly is part of our calling, as we saw in that passage. It’s part of our calling. So, in difficult situations, we’re to consider His example, Christ’s example of suffering, rather than our own circumstances.

Now Peter says this. Here is how you need to think. If you find yourself in a situation of suffering unjustly, and you can’t figure out the reason why, here’s how you need to think. Remember our card. You’ve got to think right, act right, feel right. He gives us three things to think about, while you and I are in the midst of suffering unjustly. At least we think that it’s unjust suffering. The world is after us for no reason, we would say.

What is it that we’re to do? He gives us three things to do. Consider three aspects of Christ’s suffering. First of all, His *exemplary* suffering. He has given us an example. Secondly, His *substitutionary* suffering, and thirdly, His *expiatory* suffering, His atoning suffering. We need to think more about His suffering and not our circumstances, or our situation. When we do that, we’re going to respond differently, because we understand this.

Last week, we took a glance at the fact that we have an Example. The word *example* that he uses there, as an example of suffering, is a word that is only used once in the New Testament. It really means a reflection of the original. This is something that you and I do not do by imitation. We don’t imitate Christ’s suffering. We can’t do that. What we do is, we have an intentional response to it.

When you see that you’re suffering unjustly, you have an intentional response to want to follow the example of Christ. Now you can’t do it exactly like He did. That’s not the point. That’s not what the word means. It means that this is a perfect reflection of it. However the Lord is going to work in your life, it’s going to be a way which is unique to

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you, and you have the intention in your mind that I’m going to think more about His suffering for me as my Example.

How do I do that? Well, right here Peter tells us how to do that. He didn’t revile when He was harassed. He’s talking about the persecution that Christ talked about and experienced before He went to the cross. We’re not talking about the suffering on the cross. We’re talking about His suffering before He went to the cross. Those are the likelihoods that we will model, because we may suffer for the same things, because, notice this.

The world does not persecute religious people. It persecutes righteous people. And that’s in the Christian realm. Now a lot of people are persecuted because of religion. I’m not talking about religiosity. I’m talking about righteousness. And the reason that we might suffer unjustly is because of our righteousness, not because of our religiosity. It’s not because of our religion, but because of our righteousness.

Notice. “He entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.” The word *entrust* means this. Give the situation over to somebody else to manage. Give the situation over to someone else to manage. And we give that over to the Lord Himself. So notice. He entrusted Himself.

We submit to authority. We submit to our employer, and we take that act, and the example is this. Take that act of submission, and entrust that to God, who will judge justly, and you’re going to give that to Him to manage.

It basically means this. Do I really believe that God is bigger than my boss? You see, when you think like that, you’re going to have a different response to your situation at work.

I’m not saying that it’s going to be easy, men. But I’m going to say this, that maybe the way you handle this, and suffer correctly, somebody may come to you and say, “How do you do that? Could you give me the reason for the hope that’s within you?” and you and I can respond with gentleness and with respect, and give them the answer, because what we’re doing is that we’re taking our lives and we’re entrusting that to a God who judges justly. Give it to somebody else to manage. That’s how we submit, because it’s not the act of submission. It’s how we do it. In the midst of our submitting, what are we to do? Three times he tells us to do what?

Participant: do good.

Bruce: do good. In the midst of that, do good. So the real issue is my response, not the reason for my suffering unjustly.

So first we see the example that He gave us. Next we want to take a look at the second thing that Peter teaches us to think about, and that is His *substitutionary* suffering.

Look at verse 24 of chapter 2 of 1 Peter. “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.”

Peter reminds us that by the sinless suffering, He was suffering for us, to rid us of our sins, to give us a new life of righteousness. In other words, He was not suffering for His sins. He was suffering for whose sins?

Men: Ours.

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Bruce: Ours! That’s substitution! It’s the word *huper*, “on behalf of.”

Look at 2 Corinthians 5:21, one of the best verses in all of the Scripture about the substitutionary work of Christ. “And He made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.”

You see, the goal of Christ’s suffering for us is that you and I will now become His righteousness. In the midst of our suffering unjustly, you and I are doing good, and who are we calling attention to? We’re not calling attention to ourselves. We’re calling attention to our suffering Servant Savior. That is how Peter says that you need to think about your situation. Consider the suffering Servant Savior because, while we have an Example, sinful people don’t need an example. They need a what?

Participant: A Savior.

Bruce: They need a Savior. That’s why this is substitutionary suffering. We need to understand what it means that Christ is our Substitute.

Now you’ve heard me say this before, and people have said it again, so it’s not original with me, I don’t think. But probably one of the most important words in all of the bible is that little word *huper* in the Greek. It means “on behalf of.” “And God made Him who knew no sin to become sin *huper*, on behalf of us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.”

Peter says that the second thing, men, you need to think about when you’re suffering unjustly is not only the example of Christ, who entrusted Himself to the Father, and gave the situation over to God to manage it for Him. The second thing is this. Understand the substitutionary work of Christ on your behalf. Remember that.

Notice that the substitution described here is not by obligation. It’s something that He did volitionally. “He Himself bore,” the Scripture says. He carried Himself to the altar. He took Himself to the cross. It was something that He did volitionally. It was not by imagination. It was in His own body. It was physical. It was volitional, it was physical, and not only volitional suffering and physical suffering, but it as substitutionary suffering.

Notice. His sins were not the ones that He suffered for. It was our sins. The sins that are ours He Himself carried away on His body, Peter says.

His exemplary suffering was also substitutionary suffering, and as a result of that, it was *expiatory* suffering, meaning paid for. He paid for it.

Now here we need to understand some critical things. There was a substitution for our sins, and by this substitution we are saved. It was not merely a transfer of the punishment from one to another, but it was the transfer of sin in some deep sense. It was the transfer of sin, not just the transfer of punishment. It was the transfer of sin. “And God made Him who knew no sin to become” what? Sin in our behalf, *huper*, “so that we might become the righteousness of God.”

There was a transfer, brothers, of your sin and my sin. Volitionally, Christ took that to the cross. He took that to the cross. That’s why we say that, what God ordained, the Son accomplished, and the Holy Spirit applies. He accomplished that for us at the cross.

The substitutionary work of Christ did not make your salvation possible. That means you would have some option to choose it or reject it. He accomplished it for you. He completed your salvation. Your salvation was accomplished at the cross.

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When you look at it theologically, if you’re in Christ today, you became a Christian in three different realms. You became a believer when God the Father ordained it before the foundation of the world.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: God wrote my name in the Lamb’s book of life. I also became a Christian when Christ suffered for me at the cross substitutionally, and paid for my sins. Christ accomplished that. And thirdly, I became a Christian when the Holy Spirit applied the gospel to me, and I repented and believed.

You see, you and I have a Trinitarian salvation. God the Father ordained it. God the Son accomplished it, and the Holy Spirit applied it.

So is there a response on our part? Absolutely. Our response is to believe! Repent and believe. That’s our response. But you can’t do that apart from the first two things—God ordaining it, Jesus accomplishing it and the Holy Spirit applying it. Yes, Don?

Don: I read a book. I recommend it to all of you. It’s called *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. It’s the story of a young Muslim’s conversion. One of the things that he objected to, in addition to the Deity of Christ, the Trinity, and substitutionary atonement, in trying to defend Islam, was this. He said, “Islam is fair! You’re judged by your own sins. You’re not judged by”—and these are his words—“some random person paying for your sins.”

And a Christian, who was trying to evangelize to him, said, “Wait a minute! It isn’t just some random person. God took our sins upon Himself, in the person of Christ.”

And the Muslim said, “But why would He do that? How can one person pay for all of our sins?”

And he said, “Because that one Person has infinite value. That one Person is Jesus Christ, and, as God, He has infinite value.”

And, you know, the Christian went on to say how horrible sin is. In Islam, sin isn’t really that bad. It’s bad, but the wages of sin isn’t death, as it is in Christianity.

“But why would God do that?” the Muslim wanted to know.

He said, “Because He’s your Father, and because He loves you.” And that was one of the things that was instrumental in the conversion of this man

Bruce: The name of the book again?

Don: The name of the book is *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*.

Bruce: *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. Very interesting. Thanks, Don. Thank you. You know, there are many differences, of course, and I’m not going to go into those. There are all kinds of differences between Islam and Christianity. But let me give you one basic one, and it’s this. The Muslims die for the prophet.

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: In Christianity, the Prophet dies for us.

Participants: Amen!

Bruce: There’s your difference.

Participant: Praise God!

Bruce: Muslims die for the prophet. That’s why you have all these bombers killing themselves. They’re dying for the prophet. But in Christianity, do you understand the

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substitutionary suffering of Christ? It’s that our Prophet, Priest and King died for us! There’s your big difference! That’s life changing!

And Peter is saying this. When you’re suffering unjustly, remember Christ’s suffering. You’ve got an example of entrusting yourself to a holy God who will judge justly.

Secondly, remember His substitutionary sacrifice, because you have died to sin. Let me tell you what that means.

There is a promise of deliverance here. Look at 24b. Die to sins. Literally, it means this: “being unborn to sin.” We were born in sin, correct? But notice what happens. Because of His substitutionary work, and His expiatory suffering, by the substitutionary and expiatory suffering of Christ, we are unborn to sin.

You go from this. You go from being born in sin to being unborn in sin. In other words, God looks at you and me totally differently now. He doesn’t view us in our sin. He views us as being unborn to sin, because of the substitutionary, expiatory work of Christ. Do you see that?

In effect, Peter says, “Will you think about that?” That’s going to be life changing in how you respond to your unjust suffering. When you realize that now you’re in a position of being unborn to sin, you don’t have to live like you used to anymore, because that sin was paid for. It’s done. It’s been atoned for. God has been satisfied.

This concept of being unborn to sin has been radically altering in my own life. I don’t have to do the stuff I used to do.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Because I’m unborn to that. Why resurrect it? I don’t have to anymore, because of the grace of God. Think about that in the midst of your suffering, and see what the Lord does with it. It’s amazing what that will do.

I want to give you some examples of uses in our brief time, because I have to go get my PT and do my-- I’m sorry. Sig, please?

Sig: When you were asking the men at the beginning, that point you just brought out was life changing for me, when Bruce taught that same concept, but through Romans. It was at Mount Lebanon Presbyterian Church, and then again at the seminary in Point Breeze, the Reformed Presbyterian Seminary. And it has freed me up. I’ve always thought of myself as a sinner, and rightly so. And I’ve always talked to my friends about being a sinner, and probably sinning more now that I’m a Christian than before I was a Christian. But you freed me from that concept of the wrath of God coming on me all the time, because He’s no longer my Judge. He’s my Father.

Bruce: Amen.

Sig: And for that I’m forever grateful.

Bruce: Amen. You’ve been set free. True freedom. That’s what real freedom is. True freedom.

Let me give you some uses, or applications, of what we’ve been learning. Peter, in summary, is saying this. Look, friends, he’s saying. Look. It’s very likely that God’s will might be that you suffer unjustly for the kingdom of God and for the glory of God. In the midst of all of that, the guiding principle is continue to do good. Just do good.

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But remember three things about the suffering Servant Savior. Remember His example. He entrusted Himself to a holy God who judges correctly. Turn the situation over to God, and He’ll manage it for you. We do that by faith.

Secondly, remember His substitutionary work. He paid for our sins, as our Substitute.

Thirdly, the sins that He paid for are perfectly atoned for. They have been covered. You are now unborn to sin. That means that, in the midst of your suffering, you don’t have to what anymore? You don’t have to sin in your response. You’ve been set free, because you’ve been unborn to sin, and born now to righteousness. You’re now going to have right wiseness. You can choose differently than you did before.

So let’s talk about some of the uses of these principles that Peter has been teaching us. Let me give you a couple here, in these closing moments.

First of all, I would say this. Jesus proves that a person can be in the will of God, be greatly loved by God, and still suffer unjustly. You can be in the will of God, be loved by God, and still suffer unjustly. In my judgment, it’s very shallow theology that claims that you will not suffer if you’re in the will of God. In my mind, somebody who teaches that has never meditated on the cross.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: They’ve never meditated on the cross, because Peter says that you can think like that, and act like that. You’ve got to meditate on the substitutionary, atoning work of Christ on the cross, and that is what’s going to change your conduct.

So if somebody says that suffering is not part of the will of God, he really doesn’t understand the cross! They’ve never really meditated on the suffering Servant Savior that Peter is teaching us about in this passage.

That’s the point of the placement of these verses in the teaching on submission. Jesus has already accomplished all the submissiveness that you and I will ever need to have,-- all you’ll ever need as a citizen, as a worker, as a partner in your marriage, or as a believer priest in the body of Christ. He has already accomplished all the submissiveness that you’ll ever need! He has accomplished that for you. That’s part of the suffering Servant Savior mentality that Peter is saying that you need to think about.

So don’t think about your situation, or your consequences, or your circumstances. Think about the suffering Servant Savior, because He has accomplished all the submission you’ll ever need. And He has accomplished for us the response we need to have, in doing good in the midst of suffering unjustly. It’s a tremendous application when you understand the truths of what Peter has been teaching us.

When you are called to submit for the glory of God, and the favor of God, meditate on the cross, and not the circumstances. Go to the cross. Meditate on the cross. Think about these three words: *Suffering Servant Savior*.

I’ll tell you what, men. When your mind is filled with that, it will radically change your response to the situation in which you find yourself.

Just a classic, crude example of me last night. One of the down sides of my Parkinson’s, I’m learning, is that sometimes I will forget something, and my mind will not get off of it. It drives me goofy.

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Last night, about 2-30, after I went to the bathroom, (*laughter*), I could not think of a guy’s name. I could think of his first name, but I couldn’t think of his last name. and I just went goofy. It was just like I woke up, and I said, “Oh, no@ I can’t even go to the phone book, because he doesn’t live here anymore. Where can I go and find it?”

I just could not get it off my mind. I had to think of his name! I said, “Lord, help me with my memory. Don’t let this rule my life.” This must be one of the down sides, in my mind. It’s all medication related, guys.

Anyway, all I had to do is say, “Lord, You’ve got to fill my mind with other things.” Do you know what I thought about? The suffering Servant Savior.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s what I thought about. I got up and read this lesson again. And I just read these passages, and I read them, and I read them. And all of a sudden, I fell asleep. That’s exactly what I needed to do. But I had to fill my mind with something other than the anxiety of not being able to remember a man’s last name, because it was ruling my whole spirit and my soul at the moment.

Peter says that you don’t think about the consequences of the situation in which you find yourself. Think upon the suffering Servant Savior, and see what the Holy Spirit does.

Let me give you a second use. We should learn to submit ourselves, in every condition of life, with an unreserved obedience to the will of God. The bottom line is, why do we submit? What’s the bottom line? Because God said to. That’s the reason to do it. You and I must submit, even in those situations where we might suffer unjustly. We do it because the Lord said to do it!

Why are we involved in evangelism?

Participant: God said to do it.

Bruce: God says to do it. Evangelism is an act of obedience. It’s not some program you start during the summer, or around Easter time. Evangelism is a style of life. We give away what God has given to us, because God said to do that. He said to go into all the world and preach the gospel. You see, evangelism is not an option. It’s a style of life! And part of our evangelistic response to other people may be, “How in the world can you handle that unjust suffering?” then you’ve got a reason to give them hope.

But to do that, you’ve got to focus on the suffering Servant Savior. Yes, please?

Participant: I don’t know if you’ve pushed back on this or not, but I used to look at everything as, you know, because God said. But based upon your teaching, and based upon what you’ve put up here, that we died to sin, and we get to live in that righteousness, is it also dual? Christ paid for our sins, but we also receive His righteousness.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: I wasn’t understanding. It wasn’t that I need to witness because He tells me to, or I need to obey because He tells me to. I have a new attitude. I get to witness. And from that, that’s where I really started to find the freedom and the peace in this, because I never really understood. My guilt is easing, because I looked at Him as “I

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have to do this. Obey, obey, obey,” like I was a military man. But whenever I understood the gratitude side of it, it was that Christ had already done it.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: It’s His righteousness, not mine. It’s just gratitude.

Bruce: It is.

Participant: It’s freedom. It’s release from bondage. It has transformed my life, learning from you, in 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Bruce: Amen. Thank you. That’s a great point. It goes from having to to wanting to.

Participant: There you go.

Bruce: That’s the difference. You went from having to, as an act of duty; now you want to, as an act of duty. The duty doesn’t change. The motivation changes. The motivation changes because of the righteousness of Christ. I used to have to do this.

I mean, I’ve told you the story about a flight when I was going to Viet Nam for my third tour. I look back, and I think, “Lord, how could you use me in anything?”

I’m sitting there on this plane. This Navy commander sits down right beside me, and my first thought is this. “When do I do the Four Spiritual Laws?” (*Laughter.*) That’s what I’m supposed to do.

So I’m thinking, “Aren’t they going to serve food in a minute? Do I do it before the chicken, or after the chicken?” (*Laughter.*) “Maybe I should do it pre-dessert or post-dessert. He may be pre-mil or post-mil, but I’m going to be pre-dessert or post-dessert.” (*Laughter.*)

What do I do? When do I do it? All of a sudden, beads of sweat are coming down. I sweat in my armpits because, “I’ve got to do this!” That’s what I was told I was supposed to do!

And so finally, I went, one, two, three. “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”

And do you know what his response was? “Don’t hand me that crap.” See, I knew I should have done it after the chicken. (*Laughter.*)

Now, six months later, he and I were on the same plane, going to Sydney, Australia for r and r. I’d lost all kinds of weight. I had dysentery from all my flying, and working with the orphanage in Viet Nam, and I was weighing about 145 pounds, just sicker than a dog. And I sit down, and I’m thinking, “Lord, I’m just so tired! Just let me sleep for the next six hours, till we get to Sydney.”

Guess who sits down beside me? The same Navy commander. And I’m thinking, “Oh my goodness, no!” (*Laughter.*) “He’s going to remember me.”

Here was my response. “Lord, I’m just really tired. Let me sleep for Your glory.” (*Laughter.*) “Now I’m going to do that for Your glory, and just rest. And if You want me to do something, You’re going to have to make it obvious, so I can become an aggressive responder, because I know this. It’s not my job to initiate anything. It’s my job to be an aggressive responder to what You’re doing around me. So give me the wisdom and discernment, while I’m sleeping, to discern what’s going on around me, so that, should You be pleased to have me do something, I can be an aggressive responder.”

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So, somewhere from over across the Equator, the guy elbows me. He said, “Can I ask you a question?”

And I said, “Certainly.”

And he said, “I see you have your Bible on your lap. I’ve been reading.”

I said, “Yes, sir.”

He said, “What do you know about repentance and faith?” (*Laughter.*)

Don’t wake me up; I’m asleep. (*Laughter.*) What happened? Ministry occurred. Now, did I generate something? No. I shared the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith with him.

When it was all over, he said, “That’s really fascinating. Where did you learn all that?”

And I said, “Here. Why don’t you take it and just read the Bible? Start in the book of John.”

So I gave him my Bible. I’ve never seen him since. But who knows what the Lord will do with that?

Men: Amen.

Bruce: My point is this. It goes from having to to want to! It’s because you’re entrusting yourself to a holy God.

You see, that’s what Peter is saying. He’s saying that, in the midst of all of this stuff, think about the suffering Servant Savior. And be an aggressive responder to what you see the Lord doing around you, because He may create something to allow you to join what He’s doing. And you will be blessed, rather than saying, “I’m going to do something. Will You bless it?” You see, we go from having to to want to.

Let me give you another application. We should learn never to despair of the loving kindness of God amidst circumstances. Yes, Jesus suffered, but He was sustained. If God is not fit to remove the circumstance in your life, He’s going to give you the ability to persevere, because God never requires of us something He doesn’t equip us to do beforehand. If it pleases God not to remove it, He’ll give you the grace to be sustained in it, because Jesus is our Example.

Another application. We should learn not only the value we ought to set on our own salvation, but we need the value we need to set on the salvation of other people. I’ll tell you what, guys. When you meditate on the cross, two things are going to happen. You’re going to be filled with gratitude. Gratitude becomes your motivation. But you’re also going to be filled with compassion for the lost. You can’t focus on the cross, and not have the lost be a part of your imagination, and part of your thinking process. You’ll be filled with gratitude for the substitutionary atoning work of Christ. The other thing is going to be this. How can I give it away? You’re going to have a heart for the lost. We need to have a heart for the lost. You don’t become complacent when you think about the suffering Servant Savior. The last aspect of it is, how do I give that away, because it’s life changing for me. I value my salvation, and I want them to value their salvation, should God grant them saving faith. So evangelism, sharing your faith in Christ, is a result of focusing on the cross.

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So brothers, those are just some applications for us to consider. Remember this. In the midst of suffering, should God be pleased to have that as part of His will for you, two things. Think on the suffering Servant Savior, and do good. Entrust yourself to a holy God who judges correctly.

Let’s pray. Merciful Lord, it’s with a sense of awe that we realize once again that You constantly remind us of this—and we need a repetition to be reminded of it,—that You never call us to do something or be something that You don’t equip us to do beforehand. We thank You for giving us the right mindset, so that we can have the right action set, and do it with gratitude. And all God’s men said, “Amen!” Bless you guys. Thanks.