

“Walking the Walk”

Christ and the Christian Life

Various Scriptures

Pastor Jeff Stivason

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Jeff: Okay. Why don't we prepare our hearts by praying? And Don, why don't you help us to get into that frame of mind? *(Music)*

Our heavenly Father, we are so thankful, so thankful to come before You, so thankful to be Yours, and to have the privilege of prayer. Father, as we come, we praise Your name and praise who You are. And as we were reminded of some of Your attributes this morning in the reading and in Sig's comments, we are humbled by the fact that You are God and You called us to be Your sons. Father, as we delight in that and as we think upon Your word which tells us how we might follow Your Son, our elder Brother, we pray that You'll enable us. We know You have and we pray that You'll continue.

Lord, we certainly give You thanks that Bruce is planning to come back on a particular day and is encouraged by these men to do so. And Lord, we just thank You that He is that kind of man that is an example for us, a man who follows Christ that we might in following him follow our Savior. And Father, we're thankful for Him. And Lord, we pray for Ruthie. Our hearts go out to this young woman, and we pray that you will bring healing to her body. But we also pray that through this connection with Sig that You'll bring not only physical healing to those involved, but we pray for the real spiritual healing that is needed in their lives. And we pray that this would come in a powerful way. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well men, it's good to be with you. I feel like I'm walking in slow motion and talking in slow motion this morning. So I'm teaching a class at the seminary this week and I was asked to pinch hit. And so that means that I had about two weeks to prepare the lectures, forty in all. I was good until about sometime around noon on Wednesday, and maybe into Thursday I had a few prepared, and I had none prepared for today. So last night was a long night. *(Laughter)* So I feel like I'm walking in slow motion.

But do you know what? I want to tell you something. All week long, as I was thinking about wishing that the week would end, I was looking forward to being here. This is a reprieve. So it's good to be with you guys and I'm glad for the time.

We've been talking about the Christological pattern of the Christian life. I changed the title to "Christ and the Christian Life." I thought that was a little easier to manage, and so I want to talk about that this morning. Here's the outline. You have it before you. I want us just to think about some introductory comments. I want us to think about the difficulties of the Christian life. And then I want us to think about what the main point of what we're going to be focusing on today is. And those are the three passages.

And those three passages really become crucial when we think about the humiliation and exaltation that we've been thinking about. And then I just want to think of a conclusion to this whole thing. So let's get started and let's think about some introductory points.

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And the first thing that I want to really remind you of is this whole idea of *humiliation* and *exaltation*. And that really is from beginning to end.

If you remember how I introduced this to you the last time, I told you that when we think about the humiliation of Christ and the exaltation of Christ, Peter helps us to use that as a framework for the whole letter. And if you look in your Bibles, if you want to open up to 1 Peter, I'll just point that out one more time so that we can have that in our minds.

It's in 1:11. In 1:11 he mentions the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow, or the subsequent glories.

And then if you flip over to chapter 5, you notice again that there is a reference to the sufferings of Christ. And Peter says that he is going to be, as with us, a partaker of the glory that is to be revealed, or the glories that will follow.

And then, if you look at verse 6, there's that add-on. There's that additional tag-on phrase where he reinforces what he's been saying to us in these three passages that come between those book end phrases—*“the sufferings of Christ”* and *“the glories to follow.”* And he says, *“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and at the proper time God will exalt you.”*

So if you think about this, you think about the framework of the letter being humiliation and exaltation. But what you really find is this. You really find that the Christian life is a life of humiliation, and there are blessings and exaltations sprinkled throughout in anticipation of the final exaltation that God will bring to our lives at the appropriate time.

So the Christian life is a life of humiliation. And I would say that the best way to understand the Christian life as a life of humiliation is to understand that it is a change of state. That's the first way that you want to think about the humiliated life that we enjoy. I say that intentionally in Christ. And that humiliation is a change of state.

Now what do I mean by that? Well, for Christ the humiliated state was because He left His exalted state above and He took upon Himself the form of a servant.

You know the phrase. And if you don't, it's one that you ought to know. *“Not leaving behind what He was, He took upon Himself what He was not.”* And so remaining what He was—God—He added to who He was in the form of a servant. So there was no subtraction when God the Son left heaven and took upon Himself the form of a servant.

B. B. Warfield says, *“There was addition involved.”* In other words, not forgetting, not leaving behind, but remaining who He was, He took upon Himself the form of a servant. Now taking upon Himself the form of a servant meant that He changed His status. No longer was He the exalted Son, at least to the visible eye. Now He looked like a poor carpenter. And so there was a status change.

And so when He starts teaching, they say, *“Isn't this the carpenter?”*, as if to say, *“Why should He be speaking these wonderful things and full of authority?”* There's a status change. He was treated according to His new status.

Now that becomes important because when you look at 1 Peter you realize that 1 Peter says some wonderful things about us. I reminded you the last time that he calls us *“a people pleasing to God”* through the Lord Jesus. We're called *“a royal priesthood, a holy*

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nation, a spiritual house”, all of these things heaped up. And you look at those things and you wonder. Why isn’t the world treating us according to who we are?

And it’s because we follow Christ. It’s because we are humiliated. There has been a status change for us in the same way there has been for Him. In other words, though we are sons of the living God, sons of the King, we are not treated the way we ought to be treated. We will be when we’re exalted at the proper time. But for now that is not the case. Exaltation will follow, but at the proper time. And we’ll enjoy glimmers of it for the time being. But it will be something to follow when God brings it.

So those are the introductory points to remind you of what we’ve talked about the last time. And I think those are really important things, and I think they’re important things because I think I mentioned this to you the last time. You go into the Christian bookstore and you find that the bestseller book is *Your Best Life Now*. Well your best life is not now. And if you believe that your best life is now, then you’re believing a lie. Christ said that it is now for you to humble yourself. It is now for you to be humiliated. That’s the experience, the status change, that we all experience. And we anticipate that status change again, moving us from humiliation to exaltation when God deems it to be appropriate. But until then we are to experience the humiliated life. Before we get to the difficulties, do you have any questions about last time or the review this time before we move on? Yes?

Participant: Does this have anything to do with being in the world but not of the world?

Jeff: It does have something to do with that. And it’s because we’re in the world now and yet belong to God and enjoy this status in His eyes. Yet we’re in the world. We’re in the midst of people who are not going to recognize that about us. That is why we’re treated the way we are. Does that make sense? Yes, Don?

Don: Last week, Jeff, you talked about chapter 4, I believe it is, where Peter says that if you suffer as an evildoer, don’t expect to be rewarded.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: I often thought of that in the context of a criminal or something like that, or someone who is doing wrong. But, for example, you applied it if you have cancer or bad health or lost a loved one. You said it is possible to act in a wrong manner. Could you elaborate on that?

Jeff: Yes, I can. Let’s say, for instance, that you lose a loved one, okay? You can respond to that loss in a Christian manner. You can grieve, but you shouldn’t grieve as having no hope. The person who may grieve as if he had no hope could be a Christian. And what I mean by that is this. Let’s say that a man loses his spouse, or that a wife loses her spouse, and he she grows bitter at the loss of her husband. And then she begins to isolate herself and she begins to become a hard woman to be around. You see, that kind of response to that kind of suffering is a response unbecoming of a Christian, and can be sinful. Bitterness is sin. Does that make sense?

Don: Yes. Thank you.

Jeff: So we can be in those situations where we respond in wrong ways. I mean, I want you to think about it. You see the neighbor, you know, and he’s got his bag of leaves

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with which he’s just raked up his entire yard, and he’s throwing them over the fence into your yard. And you’re standing there watching. What’s your response? Hey, you can actually handle that in a godly way. Did you know that? *(Laughter)* Or you can handle that in an ungodly way

Participant: Tell us the godly way to handle it. *(Laughter)*

Second Participant: You can lay hands on him. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I don’t want to talk about that. *(Laughter)* The temptation to handle it in an ungodly way is too great.

You know, this naturally brings us to the difficulties that are a part of the Christian life. So I want you to think about this. Think about Peter. Peter is writing this letter to this church. And he says that there are various trials that you’re going to experience.

Now in one sense that’s an understatement. I may or may not have mentioned that these people were in exile. And they were probably part of the exile that happened as a result of the emperor having experienced tumultuous times between Jews and Christians at that time. The Jews were persecuting the Christians. And in 49A.D. the emperor Claudius said, “I’ve had enough. All of you are going.” And the historical document is that because of Crescus they were expelled or exiled from Rome.

They were sent to these five outermost parts of the empire. And you know, your way is not paid when you go into exile. They don’t say, “Here’s your ticket to exile.” They say, “You’re leaving and it’s on you.” And by the way, you don’t get to take anything more than you can carry.

So in one sense to say that you’ve experienced “*various trials*” is sort of an understatement. But also they would experience some of the things that are in the text, some of the difficulties they would experience with their relations, whether they would be slave to master or husband to wife. They were going to experience some difficulties.

Think about it. If you went to a place, exiled from the city you were in, to the outermost part, Rome is trying to build a colony there. And it’s pressing people out of their own land as they colonize that area. So there are going to be various trials.

But I want to tell you something because it’s important for you to understand that Peter knew about trials. And the interesting thing is what happens to Peter and how that trial is related to him.

I want you to go with me to Luke 22 for a minute. And in Luke 22 verses 31-34, what you find is this very familiar passage. Jesus says, “*Simon, Simon, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*”

“Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.’

“Jesus said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know Me.’”

Now I want you to think about that. Think about what Jesus says to him. He says, “*Satan has demanded to have you.*” “He wants to sift you as wheat.”

Do you remember what it is like to sift wheat? It depends on what you were doing. But oftentimes, sifting wheat, you would have this mound of wheat from the threshing floor, usually up from where the wind would be blowing. And you would throw it up in

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the air. The heavy part of the wheat would come back down. But part of the chaff that found its way onto the wheat would blow away because it was lighter than the wheat. So you'd just keep doing that, sifting that wheat.

Now you know, I always find this interesting, because when Jesus explains to Peter that *“Satan has demanded to have you,”* it's interesting how Jesus explains that to Peter. *“He wants to sift you as wheat.”* I kind of wonder if Satan's in the background going, *“No, no, no! That's not quite what I wanted to do to him. I actually wanted to destroy him.”* (Laughter) *“I don't want to purify him. I want to destroy him.”*

And so the Lord is putting this interpretation onto Satan's demand. Why? Because the Lord knows that He is going to keep His own. And in keeping His own He says to him, *“And when you turn, strengthen your brothers.”*

So Peter knows something about what it means to experience various trials. But here's the thing. When you think about this, you think to yourself, *“Wait a minute!”* The thing that he experienced was a little girl saying, *“Yes, but weren't you one of the ones who were with him?”*

And he says, *“No, I wasn't with Him, no!”*

And you say to yourself, *“Wait a minute!”* The trial that he experienced was just a little girl asking him if he was with Jesus. How can he compare that to these people being in exile, losing their homes and their possessions?

I'll tell you why. It's because whether it takes a little girl or a Roman emperor to make one deny the Lord Jesus Christ, the denial is all the same, no matter the cause.

So whatever the trials, various though they may be, if they have that as their end, what a dangerous end they have!

I want to share something else with you—*Pilgrim's Progress*. Have you read that yet? (Laughter) If you haven't read that yet, you've got to read that before September 15, or you're not coming back. Right, Sig? (Laughter) That's the quiz.

Sig: I bought the book.

Jeff: Sig, you're not coming back if you don't get that read. (Laughter) All right. So Christian is the main character. This is a book you've got to read. If you don't like allegory, hold your nose and read it. (Laughter) I mean, this is just a great story. You can read only Part 1 if you want to. If you're a Presbyterian or if you're an Anglican, or if you're anything but a Baptist,--interestingly, John Bunyan was a Baptist!--if you're anything but a Baptist, you've got to read Part 2 where the wife and all the kids come along. That's the covenantal part of it, right? (Laughter) It's one of the ironies of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a great one at that.

But Christian is on the way. He's in this pilgrimage. And he goes through these difficult times. He comes to these really delightful places along the way. And one of the delightful places to which he comes is the house called Beautiful.

There's only one problem. The problem is that before he gets there he encounters two men that are running the other way. And he says, *“What's wrong?”*

And they say, *“Run! You can't believe what's ahead of us!”* Timorous and Mistrust are their names.

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And he continues to go forward, but with a bit of hesitation. And he sees why. Ahead of him, between him and the house called Beautiful are two lions standing on either side of the path. And he stands there frozen. And the porter at the house says, “They’re chained!” (*Laughter*) “They can’t get to you as long as you stay on the path. Are you that afraid?”

And so he walks. He walks, but he stays on the path. He stays on the path. He stays on the path.

Now men, listen to me. Are we so afraid? You know, we’re Brave Men. But sometimes we encounter the trials, the various trials of life, whether they be a little girl or a Roman emperor, and we act like cowards. And what we forget is that the Lord Jesus Christ has said, “*When you have turned.*” And we forget that the lions are chained.

Do we not serve a sovereign God who is providential over all?

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Amen!

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Then every event in our lives may have a chained lion until glory. But he’s on a leash. He is a chained lion. And that is the way we need to think about the events of life and the people we encounter in life. That’s the way we need to think about life, that all of life is under the sovereign hand of God.

You know, I want to tell you something else. The difficulties are real. I’m not denying that. There’s no way to deny that. In fact, that’s what the humiliated life is all about. We have a status change. But sometimes, like Jesus, we experience the painful and shameful death of the cross. There is an embarrassing shameful experience to the humiliation that we now experience. It’s not just the status change. The difficulties are real.

But again, they don’t have supreme power. They’re chained. This is expressed to us in different ways. Paul expresses it this way. He says this. He says that Jesus is above everything that is named. And the idea back in that time, and even before, was that to have dominion over something was to name it. If you named something, that was to have dominion over it.

Why do you think that God said to Adam to name the animals? He names the animals. Why? Because He then gives them the dominion mandate. You exercise dominion over this world. And there is nothing in this world that Jesus has not named in that sense. He has dominion over it all.

Well that’s just a reminder of the difficulties. Before I go on to the three passages, do you have any questions? Do you want to talk about anything or ask questions? Yes.

Participant: Initially when you first mentioned humiliation I was thinking what that means, even just being made low in rank or feeling. Then I was thinking how we experience that humiliation, and I was going to ask you for some examples. But then the other thing that you had mentioned was fear. Does that fear that may occur prevent us from experiencing that humiliation? Should we enjoy that humiliation as well?

Jeff: Yes. Let me start backward and work up. We should have joy in the humiliation that we experience, not because we’re sadistic but because we know that this is the path that the Lord carved out for us. So we should have joy in it.

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And that means, like Matthew says, that when you’re persecuted and reviled, count it all joy, right. Count that as joy. That’s what Peter says as well. So there is a sense in which we are to be rejoicing in the fact that though we have this status, we are treated according to another. But we ought to rejoice even when that treatment is shameful and painful, again not because we’re sadistic, but because we understand that this is following in the footsteps of Christ.

I think your first question was how do we manage to get ourselves out of this sometimes, and so not to experience the joy, right?

Participant: My initial question was even in regard to being a believer, some examples of humiliation and what that would look like. And then I went to Matthew 5, even as Jesus said that. That would be one example that comes to my mind, just in regard to examples. And Christ is our ultimate example. So how do we experience that in the humiliation? How are we experiencing that and what does that mean? You know, examples. How are we humiliated for Christ?

Jeff: Yes. You know what? I’ll tell you what. I’m going to save that part for when we get to the three passages because I think that will emerge there. Sig, did you want to—

Sig: In the example you gave about Peter,—

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: To me that’s very real because we know the end of the story.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: The story is being told even in the midst of this. And I can relate to the embarrassment. Or even his exile might have come had he been outed as one of Christ’s followers on trial. He could be next.

Jeff: Yep.

Sig: So that to me is very real, even though it’s a young girl, a kid.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Sig: But the things we go through are very real. Yet we know the end of the story. Paul knew it, but Peter didn’t know that. So we should be able to step above that and go beyond that. But I just think that story is very real and very scary because of the consequences of it.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Sig: But my whole point in this is this. Do we live knowing the end of the story? Do we know the exaltation that Christ is building?

Jeff: We may not know the end of the story. For instance, Peter knew the end of his story in John 21. The Lord tells him, “You’re going to have a horrible death,” right? He doesn’t know when. But he knows he’s going to be led somewhere, and it’s not going to be a happy ending. So he knows the end of his own story in one sense.

But let’s come back to this earlier part. He doesn’t know the end of the story for his life. He doesn’t know if he’s going to be taken into prison and executed along with Christ. He doesn’t know that. But he knows the One who controls the story because he has watched Him walk on the water. In fact, the One who walks on the water summons him out on the water. He saw Him still the waves. He saw Him exercise sovereign

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control. And though we may not know the end of the story, we know the One who controls the story in the same way. And so I think that’s kind of what I’m shooting for.

Sig: That’s a good point. That’s very good. Thank you.

Participant: I just think about 1 Peter chapter 5. *“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.”*

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: A lot of times we think of humility in a negative sense.

Jeff: That’s right.

Participant: But if you read the rest of that passage, Peter says, *“Be anxious for nothing. Be sober-minded. Resist the devil.”* So humility also carries with it a very positive effort of obeying God.

Jeff: That’s right. It’s thinking of yourself rightly under His sovereignty. Yes?

Participant: Alistair Begg had a great sermon on anxiety.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: This is my interpretation. He said that anxiety is directly related to our lack of humility.

Jeff: Oh!

Participant: He said that when we get on a plane we’re just so terrified that this plane isn’t going to make it, that it’s going to go down. And what we’re saying is that this pilot doesn’t know what he’s doing.

Jeff: Yes. I’m not in control. I ought to be in control.

Participant: You can’t fly the plane from seventeen feet. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Okay, there are lines of humiliation. Obviously, it’s a blessing to be persecuted for Christ. But what if your humiliation is your own fault? Does that still count?

Jeff: Well, it’s like he says, right? Don’t suffer for doing evil. And if you suffer—

Participant: Not evil, but—

Jeff: Lack of wisdom.

Participant: Lack of wisdom, yes.

Jeff: Well, I’ve suffered for having a lack of wisdom. *(Laughter)* It’s not a very enjoyable thing.

Participant: I see it very day.

Jeff: But hopefully our lack of wisdom in decisions won’t affect our lives. But even if they do, and we’re in Christ, we’ll be kept even then, right?

Participant: Just one other quick question. Is suffering because we screwed up legitimate suffering? I mean, I know it’s not as blessed as being persecuted for Christ. But does that not count as humility?

Jeff: Well let me put it this way. If you mess up and you’re suffering for it, you’ve got a decision right there and then as to how you’re going to respond to it. And if you respond to your mess-up that got you into this situation in a godly way, then yes, you’re on the right track, right? Yes.

Participant: Thank you.

Jeff: You bet. Yes, Ted?

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Ted: I have something to say in response to Sig. Intellectually we know the end of the story. But we have to existentially experience that. Everybody who is regenerated and is a believer knows the end of the story, and we can brag about it and talk about it. But do we actually hit it face on if we haven't experienced it? So it's all based in theory up to that point.

Jeff: Yes. Okay, so there are three passages that I want you to look at. We're going to take kind of a quick tour through those three passages. These are the three passages that speak to us about suffering and yet being blessed in it. So let me take you through these.

1 Peter 2:18-21.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Peter 2:18-21. *“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, if, being mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if you do good and suffer for it and endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 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.”*

Jeff: Now 2:18-21 is a little bit of a bigger category, because he starts out talking to servants. And then he moves in verse 21 to talking about Christ as our example.

Now the broader application of that could be that servants undergo difficulty and cruelty at the hands of their masters. Christ made Himself to be a servant. He underwent cruelty. I get it. But the interesting thing is that in the midst of this passage there's something of an inclusion. There's something of a roping off of a section within this section that I think we need to pay attention to. And you can see it because it's roped off in such a clear way.

He says this in verse 19. *“For this is a gracious thing.”* And then you go to the end of verse 20. *“This is a gracious thing.”*

So you find this idea that he's roping off, as it were, something in the midst of this particular section that he's wanting us to pay attention to.

Now there is something else that I want you to understand. I want you to look at verse 19. And he says this. He says that one endures suffering while suffering unjustly, all right?

Now this has a larger structure to it. But that one, one endures. Now the question is this. Is he talking about the slave that he has mentioned earlier in verse 18, or is he talking about someone else? In other words, has he expanded his category? I think he has expanded this category, because the Greek word there can be translated *one*, or it can be translated as *anyone*—anyone who endures, that idea. And I think that the inclusion and the structured way in which he deals with that, those verses in between,—actually it's *“grace”, “suffers unjustly”, “suffers for doing good”,*—that's how 19 and 20 sort of work themselves out—a, b, b, a—grace, grace, and then two references to suffering unjustly in the middle, however you want to slice it.

But the idea is that if anyone suffers unjustly, he's talking to us about this being a gracious thing that we need to keep in mind. So it's not just slaves at this point. He has expanded the category. And therefore, in verse 21, the reference to Christ's example

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doesn't just apply to slaves. But it applies to anyone who is a Christian and who suffers unjustly.

Now there is advice in this particular passage that he wants us to take on board. He wants us to understand that he says, *“For this is a gracious thing when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.”*

Mindful of God. Now what does that mean? Does that mean when a person is aware of God's existence? No, because here's the point. We as Christians are aware of God's existence, but even the unbeliever is aware of God's existence. The atheist must God on board in order to deny God, right? So the point is that this is knowledge that compels.

But here's the point that I would say to you. This is not an external coercion. For the Christian it never is. In 1:23 what we find is that the word has been implanted in us.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Peter 1:22-23. *“Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”*

Jeff: And therefore there is an internal compulsion to be mindful of God in this difficult situation, and so to act accordingly. And that means this. That means that we have a Spirit-shaped mind when it comes to thinking about the hardships of life.

All of these things are things that are true. I'm asking you to look at a text of Scripture and realize what has happened to you if you're a believer. You see, that's what I'm asking you to think about. This is true of you. You don't say, “Is this true of me?” No, this is true of you if you're a believer.

Passage #2. 1 Peter 3:13-17.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Peter 3:13-17. *“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do this with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.”*

Jeff: I don't want to read all of that. But I want you to just follow along with my comments here. Just kind of keep your eye on the text.

What you need to realize is that this passage, 13-17, is about spiritual self-defense, because I want to tell you something. If you are in Christ and you are enjoying the humiliated life, then you're going to take the hit.

You know, I think I mentioned to you at one point that I used to take martial arts. It was an Indonesian style. And one of the things that I learned was how to fight with a knife if somebody had a knife and I didn't have one. And one of the things that my instructor said was this. He looked at us very soberly and then he said, “If you encounter someone with a knife, you're going to get cut.” (*Laughter*)

I want to say to you very seriously and soberly that you're going to take a hit. You're going to take a hit. He says, *“if you should suffer.”* You ought to read, *“since you're going to suffer.”* And that means that you're going to need a defense. You're going to need a defense in this situation.

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And what is that defense. That defense is *“sanctify the Lord in your heart.”* What’s the enemy going to try to do? Steal your salvation? No, he can’t do that. What’s he going to try to do? He’s going to try to steal the assurance of your salvation.

That’s what the world does all the time. That’s why we fear to send our kids to a secular university, isn’t it, because we’re afraid of what they’re going to hear, because we’ve heard too many stories about professors disabusing the children under their care of their old beliefs and instilling them with new ones.

You see, the enemy can’t steal our salvation. But he can steal our assurance. He can steal our confidence in our God. And he tries to do that all the time. That’s why Peter says that you need to sanctify, set apart the Lord as Lord in your hearts. In other words, you need to create a spot in your heart that is impenetrable.

And guess what? You don’t have to create it because God has enabled you to do it. But you need to cultivate it, you see. Go ahead.

Participant: So is Peter writing this because of what Christ said to him in Luke’s gospel that you read earlier?

Jeff: Boy, you know, you can’t help inferring that, right?

Participant: Yeah.

Jeff: Yeah. “When this little girl asked me that question, I did not sanctify the Lord in my heart,” right? It needs to be an automatic response in that regard.

But I want to tell you something that one more thing in this passage tells us. This passage tells us a lot. But here’s the other thing this passage tells us. I’m going to tell you right now that your immediate instinct is going to be to hit back. But this text tells us to do something that would be totally foreign to us. It tells us to answer the opponent with gentleness and reverence. It requires a Christlike spirit.

Well there’s a third passage that I want you to notice. And this third passage is in 1 Peter 4:12 and 13. Let me read this one to you. *“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s suffering, that you may rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.”*

Now let me just say a couple of things about that. We need to remember not to be surprised when these kinds of things happen to us. But we need to remember that the proper response is to rejoice.

Now let me just say this to you. How do we do that? We do that by remembering that we are united to Christ.

Do you remember when Paul saw the living Christ when he was on the road persecuting Christians. Do you remember that? And do you remember what Christ said to him? He said to him, *“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?”*

Now the question that we have to ask is, wait a minute! Why didn’t Jesus say, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting My people?”

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: “Why are you persecuting My church?” Instead He says, *“Why are you persecuting Me?”* It’s because union with Christ is real. And Christ is saying, “You’re persecuting Me when you persecute My people, because I’m united to them.”

“Walking the Walk”

And here we see just the opposite. We share Christ’s sufferings. Before Peter said that Christ is our example. Now he is saying that we share in His sufferings. And you can think about that in terms of *koinonia*.

I don’t remember if I mentioned this to you before or not. But *koinonia* has been reduced to fire hall fellowship, and that’s wrong. *Koinonia* is an investment between at least two people. Peter and Paul want to start a fishing business. And so Peter puts up 50%, Paul puts up 50% and they invest in the business. And that’s why Paul can say to the Philippians that we have this fellowship in the gospel. They’re invested in the gospel together. They’re skinning the game for us.

And that’s what Jesus was saying to Paul. “These are My people,” right? And now we’re saying that this is our Christ, and we share in His sufferings. When we suffer for Him here and now, we share in His suffering.

And then I think that the conclusion is this. This just comes out of what we’ve been doing. I think we have to ask ourselves this question. Where is your head? Where is your heart? Maybe we should ask who is in your heart or what is in your heart? And to whom are you united? What’s the focal point of your life? What’s the thing that matters most that you care about most, that sort of thing? Those are the three conclusions that I want to leave you with. Do you have any questions about that? Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. To follow back on what Sig said, 1 Peter 5:8, where he talks about the devil prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: If you go back to what Sig said, he experienced that firsthand. Whenever Christ said, “Satan wants to sift you as wheat,” he experienced that firsthand. He never forgot that. And he is able to meet them from firsthand experience about what Satan wants to do to us as well.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Okay, why don’t we just pray quickly before we end? Our heavenly Father, again we thank You for the day and the time that we’re able to be together. We pray now, Lord, that You will bless us as we go forward into the day. We know, Lord, that we may encounter difficulties ranging in their difficulty. And yet, Lord, we know that You are sovereign over all of them and that you love us and keep us. So enable us to be brave. Enable us to then sanctify the Lord in our hearts and so be brave, but be gentle and reverent as well. Lord, we ask that You will do these things for us not only because we need them, but because You love us and care for us. And we ask it in Christ’s name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Have a good day. (*Applause*)