

**IN MY PLACE CONDEMNED HE STOOD - The Biblical Pattern of the Atonement - Part ten - Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
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**FORGIVENESS OF SINS, YES - THE JUSTICE OF GOD SATISFIED - YES - BUT HOW ARE OUR LIVES TRANSFORMED THROUGH THE CROSS?**

**1 Peter 2:21-25 - “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. [22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. [23] 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. [24] 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. [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”**

***Shailer Mathews***, who was dean of the divinity school at the University of Chicago years ago, had these words of complaint against, what he considered, the doctrinal irrelevancies of the Christian church: ***“The world needs new control of nature and society and is told that the Bible is verbally inerrant. It needs a means of composing class strife, and is told to believe in the substitutionary atonement....It needs faith in the divine presence in human affairs and is told it must accept the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.”***

These words are not a **denial** of the event of the cross of Christ Jesus. There is nothing in them to question the **truth** of what you and I believe happened when Jesus died. The attack is not upon the **truth** of our claims, but the **relevance** of them. That quote is a gigantic shrug of the shoulders. It's saying "Your beliefs may well be true, but why would anyone care?"

Of course, there's a whole side of the relevance question that's ignored completely in the quote. I hope you noticed this - ***"The world needs new control of nature and society and is told that the Bible is verbally inerrant. It needs a means of composing class strife, and is told to believe in the substitutionary atonement...It needs faith in the divine presence in human affairs and is told it must accept the virgin birth of Jesus Christ."***

And, as important as all of those concerns are, they are taken in the mind of the speaker to reflect the **whole** of reality. This present, earthly realm of concerns is the only world reflected. There is no mention of **sin** as guilt before a just, wrathful God - no mention of **death** and the debilitating chains of fear and bondage that accompany physical mortality - no mention of the reality of the **fall** and the universal, consistent flow of wickedness that issues from every person everywhere.

It's like a coin that gets tossed 6 billion times and comes up heads every time. There's something so **fixed** about our condition. We just can't educate or police ourselves out of our moral depravity. Are none of **these** issues relevant? Are none of these of present concern? Does the cross of Christ speak to none of them?

But let's leave all of this aside for now. Let's just address the concerns of the present. What difference does the cross make? Does it change anything **right now?**

Here our text has a voice. And the rather shocking verdict of our text is that not only does the cross of Christ have a shaping power in the transformation of our lives presently in this world - that wouldn't be news to very many thinking Christians - but our text presses far beyond that obvious conclusion. Peter actually says **only** the justifying work of Christ Jesus on the cross has power to effect permanent, radical change in the human heart.

So immediately we are pressed by Peter's logic far beyond the realm of pious, cathedral shaped religious doctrine. We will either be transformed by the grace of God or by the plying of human will. And Peter leaves no doubt as to which path will have success. As real as the wood of the cross that was driven down into the hard soil of this earth, the **transforming effects** of the cross are tied to behavior on this planet for all who truly believe. We'll see this as we work through this great text:

1) INCREDIBLY, PETER TIES TOGETHER HIS CITING OF CHRIST AS OUR EXAMPLE WITH AN EMPHASIS ON SOMETHING CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED THAT CAN NEVER BE REPEATED

**IPAD TEXT - 1 Peter 2:21 & 24 - "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....2:24....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."**

To say we need to pause over these verses is an understatement. Peter does what we would almost *never* do in calling someone to follow a good example. If you're calling a student to follow the example of a great person, you pick something in the person that you honestly believe the student can imitate. After all, you're not trying to *discourage* the student. You're trying to *motivate* him or her to a higher standard. In essence you're saying, "You can do this. After all, look at so and so. *He* did it. So *you* can too!"

So before we go too far with our text we need to ask the right questions. That's always a good way to do serious Bible study. And the question we need to ask is ***what is Peter trying to do for us in this text?*** If he's calling us to be like Jesus, yet insists on reminding us of how absolutely ***unique*** He was (“***committed no sin***” - 22) and how ***unrepeatable His suffering was*** (“***bore our sins in his body***” - 24), then Peter's clearly not using Jesus as ***merely*** an example. He's doing something ***like*** that, but a great deal ***more***. And it's incredibly important that we see this difference and take note of it.

Now, before we drift too far down the road, remember our opening critic's objection: ***Shailer Mathews*** voiced the thoughts of many when he said, ***“The world needs new control of nature and society and is told that the Bible is verbally inerrant. It needs a means of composing class strife, and is told to believe in the substitutionary atonement....It needs faith in the divine presence in human affairs and is told it must accept the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.”***

That's the objection we're examining in the light of our 1 Peter text. And Peter says we need something newer and more radical than just another bit of advice. We need more than some new thoughts. We need more than just another example. And as we've been examining Peter's argument we've seen that, indeed, he doesn't just tell us to be a bit more like Jesus.

Yes, there's an example listed. But Peter enlists the example only **after** he has pointed out the unique redeeming work of Christ bearing our sins in His body on the tree. So the **example** only has meaning **following** the **substitution**. The **example** follows the **doctrine** of the cross. We are called to do what we now **can** do because we've been blessed and changed by what only **Christ** can do.

Paul makes the same argument more concisely in **Philippians 2:12-13** - "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." - IPAD TEXT

The idea of an **example** isn't specifically listed here, but we know what Paul means when he says we are to "**work out our own salvation.**" We have certain tools. We work **out** of what we have at our disposal in terms of **commands, promises, examples, ideas, worship, etc.**

But we'd be doomed to failure if our working out of these things were our hope of salvation. Quite the opposite, we are able to work these things **out** only through and because of what the redeeming grace of God through Christ is prompting and motivating and enabling **within**. That's exactly how Peter calls us to follow Christ's example.

So here's our answer to **Shailer's** objection. The gospel of the cross - at least properly understood - is never presented as a **dodge** to personal transformation, but as the only genuine **root and hope** for it. But let's unpack this idea just a bit more.

2) **BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S SAVING WORK, TO PROFESS TRUST IN HIM IS TO FOLLOW HIM**

**IPAD TEXT - 1 Peter 2:21, 24-25 - "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....24-25....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. [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."**

Clearly, an example has been left for us(24). How shall we keep it? How shall our old lives be torn from their creaky hinges and a new way of living be set in place?

Or, perhaps the right question to ask is what is it that **keeps** us from following the best examples we have? We've had many, most of us. Teachers, perhaps parents, great books and authors, examples from history, friends of noble character. Surely no honest person can claim a lack of information.

But our sin - that seems to be the problem. There is always that gap between what we **know** and what we may occasionally **wish** for and that ugly monster inside that constantly pushes the buttons of self, pride, and greed. Our inward desires tear down the best examples we can find.

But what if that could be **healed**? What if someone came along side and said we were now free to soar higher than we could with our crippled sinful selves. Is **that** what our text is saying?

Look at it again, and don't fear that it's too good to be true - **2 Peter 2:24b-25 - "...By his wounds you have been healed.[Here Peter quotes Isaiah 53] [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."** - **IPAD TEXT**

Yes, we can follow the Shepherd. Yes, we can lean into His wonderful example. But ponder carefully the grand difference between what Peter is saying and mere **moralism**. You can beg people to change the world all you want. You are calling upon the lame to fly.

But Peter says we can follow because we've been **healed** - **"....by his wounds you have been healed!"** We don't follow the Shepherd in **order** to qualify. We don't heed the example **in order** to bring our healing. That would never work. We follow because we **have** been healed by the only power that could ever make our following possible!

So the call to discipleship isn't just a call to "shape up." It's a call to the example of Christ based on the substitutionary atonement of Christ. It's a call to do what **we can** do based on what **only Christ** could do. And, as we'll see in the last point, the change is bigger than we'd dare believe.

3) **BEFORE YOU SAY YOU'VE PLACED YOUR TRUST IN THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST, HEAR PETER OUT**

**IPAD TEXT - 1 Peter 2:20-23 - "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. [21] 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. [22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. [23] 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."**

Faith is absolutely invisible. It originates inside my own mind. I can say I have faith in Jesus and I can say I don't have faith in Jesus. You simply have to take my word for it. If I were sneaky, I could **pretend** to have faith in Jesus Christ when I had none at all. I could go to church, bow my head, raise my hands in worship, learn Bible verses, give my offerings, and do all of this with no inward devotion to Christ in my heart whatsoever.

So Peter, while addressing the subject of being **healed (24)** by Christ's death on the cross and **returning** to Him as the overseer of our souls (**25**), he doesn't just leave those ideas lying lifelessly on the floor. He draws attention to the nature of faith in Christ as Savior and Lord by comparing it with another manifestation of that same faith and trust.

Everybody experiences mistreatment. Definitely not to the degree that Jesus experienced in His suffering, but to lesser degrees and on countless occasions, we know what it is to have our wills opposed and our rights pummeled.

And whenever that happens, anytime, anywhere, what's being assaulted and tested is your **faith**. That's what was being tested in Jesus as He was abused unjustly.

Peter says so - **1 Peter 2:23 - "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."** - IPAD TEXT

This is Jesus - yes, **Jesus** - exercising faith in God. This is what faith looks like.

Peter relates this example of faith to us. In congregations of all sizes and stripes, in offices across the country, in schools, in marriages - **especially** in marriages - we are forced to navigate situations where we have an ideal picture of how we **should** be treated and someone else has a totally different set of expectations of how **we** should modify our treatment of **them**.

Right there, Peter would tell us, right there in the painful world of our fractured dreams and rights, that's the place where our trust in Christ ceases to be talk. It ceases to be invisible. It leaves the private world of your own thoughts and enters the humble, cross-carrying world of reality. And to the degree you plan out and execute your own defense you practice the **opposite** of saving faith in Christ Jesus. You expose the invisible world of your true inward ruler.

We simply must get Peter's most urgent idea in this text. He's not talking about **two different faiths** when he links up following Christ Jesus as our example when our rights are tramples and coming to Him as our Redeemer from our sinful selves. When Peter writes about the faith that has received **healing** by Christ's stripes and the faith that **denies self** as it follows the Saving Shepherd, he's talking about the **same faith**.

How can I say I trust Him with my **sins** but not with my **rights**? He is the one and only Savior of all. And my sins and my life are both included in my trust in Him. The faith that receives Christ as **Redeemer** and the faith that receives Him as **example** are the same faith.

No wonder, when Peter talks about faith in Christ and His cross - when he seeks to reveal the unbelievable, hope-filled power of the atonement - he says it brings healing to the most cherished, sensitive, deeply rooted realms of our own wills and emotions. This is healing for the stuff that causes wars and riots and that fills prisons.

And that, ***Shailer Mathews***, is the most relevant news in the whole world.