

## ON A HILL TOO FAR AWAY - Fifteen Protestant Truths About the Death of God the Son

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### Jesus Christ Died On The Cross To Call Us To Follow His Example Of Humility And Selflessness

**1 Peter 2:18-24** - "Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. [19] For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. [20] 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. [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."

It should be striking to us that Peter very specifically gives reference to the whole issue of *slavery* when he teaches these persecuted Christians about the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ is a very *good* thing and a very *Godly* thing, while slavery is a very *bad* thing and a very *ungodly* thing. Why would Peter put two things together that obviously don't match up at all?

There is a method to Peter's madness. He's going to tell us something we *all* remember about the Passion of Christ and he's going to tell us something very *few* of us remember about the Passion of Christ. The part we all remember is found in **verse 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.**"

Very good news, this. Jesus "**bore our sins in His body on the tree....**" The part very few of us think about is found in **verse 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.**"

So we see something important right away. There is a part of the Passion of Christ that is once and for all - a finished story - an accomplished fact. Jesus bore my sins in His own body on the cross. This is a *unique* and *unrepeatable* event. No one else will ever accomplish this in his or her death. Martyrs abound, but only one unique *Person* bore our sins in His death.

But there is also a part of the Passion of Christ that is to be *constantly repeated* in the lives of Christians all over the world. Jesus' death not only purchased my *pardon*, it provided my *pattern* - "**....leaving you an example so that you might follow in His steps**" (21).

These are very carefully chosen words - some of the most carefully chosen words in the whole New Testament. In His Passion, says Peter, Christ not only "**bore our sins**" but left "**an example.**" That word *example* is *hupogrammos*.

Just think of what English word we might get from the last part of that term - "*grammos*." Grammar. The Greek word means literally "**an underwriting,**" or "**to write under.**" It was a term used to describe the process of teaching small children to follow the line of the letters - to trace a perfect form of the alphabet - so they could learn to form the letters perfectly on their own.

And then, to make it even stronger, Peter adds a phrase used only in our text. It is repeated nowhere else in the whole New Testament. After saying Jesus died on the cross as our *example*, Peter quickly adds that we are to "**follow in His steps**" (21). When you put these two thoughts together they force our minds in a certain direction. There is one kind of example and there is another. One kind of example is a certain form of *teaching* or *principle* that we think about once in a while and try our best to live up to. That's not the kind of example Peter says Jesus died to leave.

There's another kind of example that isn't just a mental concept or a distant ideal. It's more like *placing your feet in Another's footprints*. Or it's like *tracing a plastic pattern as you form letters on paper*. In other words, the example Christ's Passion calls us to is a *deliberate, moment by moment* following with every single one of our actions. This example is to be copied *continuously*, not *occasionally*, and *consciously*, not *randomly*. This example is to be the *dominant* influence and effort of our lives.

"*Hupogrammos*" - to trace with pencil in a pattern. There are other ways to teach letters to children. You could just stand up at the blackboard and put the letters on the board in front of the class. But will they copy them properly? Just because *you* wrote them correctly doesn't mean *they* will. There is a certain *distance* in that kind of copying. So Peter chooses the method of *following a*

**pattern.** It's a picture of a *hands on, close up tracing* of an original. And we're meant to get the point of Peter's word choice. **Don't let this be theoretical! Put your feet right into His footprints.** Make this happen moment by moment. Don't just *learn* it. **Do** it! And do it *all the time.*

That is the basic framework of this passage. That's its heartbeat. Now we have to look at some specific points to bring it down to where we live:

## 1) TO FOLLOW JESUS AT ALL IS TO FOLLOW HIM IN THE PATH OF UNJUST TREATMENT

This is the specific reason Peter makes use of the example of slavery. Some slaves would be fortunate enough to have kind and reasonable masters. Those **aren't** the ones Peter uses for his instruction. He specifically mentions masters who are **"unreasonable"** - those who are cruel to their slaves when there is no **reason** to be so. The work of the slave was good. He was keeping all the master's rules. He was a profitable servant in every sense of the word. But his master is treating him in a way that takes none of this into account. The master is being **unreasonable.**

Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever had someone walk all over your kindness? Have you ever had someone - someone in the church - treat you like your rights mattered nothing? Have you ever felt you were being made the brunt of **unjust** treatment? This is Peter's topic for teaching. After all, it's one thing to be a **slave.** That in itself is **unjust** treatment. But then, on top of that, to be treated as a slave with unusual **cruelty** is something else again.

It's at this point that Peter brings up the whole subject of the Passion of Christ. What did **He** do when He faced unjust treatment? How did **He** respond. Peter says I must care deeply about this. I can't just claim Jesus' death as my **pardon.** I must also use it as my **pattern.** You can't have one without the other.

Jesus' **example** doesn't pardon me. No one will be saved by just trying to be as loving as Jesus was. But the inverse is also true. No one can truly claim Christ's **pardon** without taking on the calling of His **pattern.** So Peter takes the time to walk us through Jesus' response to unjust treatment:

**1 Peter 2:22-24** - "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."

**Verse 24** shows the final **destination** of the cross. Jesus did what He came to earth to do. **Verses 22-23** show the **path** to that end. This is where Jesus' example comes into play for all of us. The key is He didn't **return** the treatment He was given - **"He did not revile in return" (23).** He didn't give back what was being given to Him. He responded in the **opposite** spirit of what He was given. He lived out His own teaching of **loving our enemies.**

This is the path Christ calls us to walk. He doesn't just **advise** us to try this life-style on for size. He doesn't just **teach** us about it. He **experienced** it. No one on planet earth ever suffered unjust treatment from wicked people like Jesus. Peter goes over these details to remind us Jesus isn't calling us to something He knows nothing about. Jesus walked this path long before us and to a degree none of us will ever even begin to understand. In Peter's words, Jesus calls us to walk a pathway already stained with His own bloody footprints - **"Follow in His steps" (21).**

## 2) THE RESPONSE OF JESUS TO UNJUST TREATMENT IS AN EXAMPLE, BUT IT IS MORE THAN AN EXAMPLE - IT'S A CALL

**1 Peter 2:20-21** - "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."

**"For to this you have been called...."** We had better just all admit right now that none of us thinks of himself in this way. We think of unjust treatment as something that just **happens** to us. If we're really spiritual we'll make do as best we can when other people beat on us a bit. We close our eyes and sing **"What a friend we have in Jesus."** At least **He** loves us.

But Peter says this is not all there is to it. Unjust treatment isn't something that, unfortunately, just happens to us. Peter says it's our **calling.** And there is no doubt whatsoever that Peter means it's the call of **God** on our lives. It's as important a

part of the Passion of Christ as is the forgiveness of my sins. It's a key part of the reason Jesus went through all He went through on the way to His final death on the cross.

We will **always** be angered, or surprised, or discouraged, or embittered by the unjust treatment we receive from others until we see with fresh eyes that **unjust treatment is a part of the calling of God through the Passion of Christ.**

"O, Pastor Don, I just want to be like Jesus so much. I want to know the call of God on my life!"

Look no further. I can **tell** you the call of God on your life - **"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"** (21).

But **why?** For **what** purpose? What kind of God would make this His call on my life as a follower of Jesus Christ. What possible **reason** could there be for such a call? And right at this point we come with boldness right into the **main artery** of the heart of Father God. Never forget this - **We follow the pattern of Jesus so others can know the pardon of Jesus.**

Peter won't drop this idea of the **call of God in the pattern of the suffering of Christ.** It is a huge theme in his writings. He is still talking about it in the next chapter of this same letter:

**1 Peter 3:8-9,13-15** - "Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. [9] Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, **for to this you were called**, that you may obtain a blessing....[13] Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...."

Even if they don't see it, the people who need Jesus the most are the people who treat you the worst. **What else could make them treat you so unjustly but bondage to sin and darkness.** Who could possibly need Jesus more than your worst enemy? But there's a problem. The people most bound in sin are also the ones I least want to see receiving the grace and power and favor of Jesus. I want God's **grace** for **my** sins. And I want God's **justice** for **theirs.**

Enter the Passion of Christ. It has to be more than a movie. And it has to evoke more than my sympathy or pity. Peter says the Passion of Christ must be my **pattern** for my enemies' **pardon.** Peter says only the pattern of Christ in His Passion will provide a striking enough demonstration of the difference Christ has made in my own life - the **freedom** His pardon has brought from my own baser instincts of revenge and retaliation and bitterness.

Only such a drastic demonstration of the **pattern** of Christ will make people approach me and ask the reason for this visible display of the love and Spirit of Jesus Christ in my life - **1 Peter 3:15** - **"....but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...."**

I must see God's supreme calling - His compelling, non-optional calling - on my life to follow Christ's **pattern** just as passionately as I receive His **pardon.** Because I have the sneaky feeling that one can't really be had without the other.

This is called **walking in the light**, church. The pattern of Christ's Passion is never an **easy** thing to follow faithfully. Sin always pulls us in the direction of treating enemies **like** enemies. But, if you'll embrace the **whole** of Christ's Passion, not just a part, you'll find it's always warmer and sunnier in the light. Leave the winter of retaliation and bitterness, and smallness behind. People who need Christ's grace the most will be drawn in, because the **pattern**, when faithfully followed, always give rise to **proclamation.** We get the freedom. Sinners get the forgiveness. And God gets the glory.