

*Mondovi: Our Savior's, Gilmanton & Montana: Salem United Methodist Churches
4.26.2026, 4th Sunday of Easter, Rev. Hyuntae Kim, Ph.D.*

Tracing the Example of Christ

1 Peter 2:19–25

Let us pray: Lord, open our eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions. Your Word is our strength and our joy. In our Lord Jesus' name. Amen.

I will soon be visiting my mother-in-law with my wife and sons. My wife once shared a memory about her mother. When she was very young, her mother made dresses for her and her younger sister. She said she wore them proudly. Her mother had found a pattern somewhere and made them by following it exactly.

Just as following a pattern when making clothes produces good results, there is also a pattern we are to follow as Christians living in this world. In today's passage, Peter speaks about this.

Christ has left us a pattern to follow exactly, through his life and his words. As you know, 1 Peter was written to comfort and encourage believers who were suffering under persecution during the reign of Nero. Therefore, Peter speaks extensively about the believer's perspective and attitude toward suffering. The pattern that believers are to follow in the midst of suffering is the example of how Christ himself passed through suffering.

If we look at verse 18, the audience of today's passage is "servants." How much unjust suffering they must have endured. And when such people became Christians, the social misunderstandings of that time would have added further persecution, causing them to face even more unjust treatment.

Peter tells them, "For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God." In other words, when they receive unfair treatment from their masters, they are to endure it by keeping God in mind.

Jesus himself had no sin, yet he was handed over to trial and unjustly sentenced to death. He had the authority to call down twelve legions of angels but did not use it. At times, he answered questions, and at other times, he remained silent. The Lord could endure that suffering because he was thinking of the great work of the kingdom of God and of the Father who sent him.

And what about Peter? On the night Jesus was arrested, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. But Jesus said, "... all who draw the sword will die by the sword," and he healed the servant's ear (Matt. 26:52). The Roman Empire that killed Jesus eventually fell, but the kingdom of God continues to advance.

Peter had witnessed everything Jesus suffered. He did not understand it at the time, but after meeting the risen Lord, he came to grasp the meaning of Jesus' suffering. And when he received the Holy Spirit, Peter no longer feared suffering but passed through it as Jesus did.

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Not long after Peter was called first by Jesus while casting his nets into the sea, there was a day when Jesus went up a mountain and taught the crowds. At that time, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10–12).

After Jesus ascended and Peter received the Holy Spirit, he truly came to understand this teaching and began to live it out. Together with John, who was his constant companion, he preached the gospel and was imprisoned and even flogged. Acts 5:41 says, “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”

If we apply this to ourselves, we also experience times when we suffer unfairly. This does not mean we should do nothing. Peter and the apostles stood before a hostile council and said, “We must obey God rather than human beings” (Acts 5:29), and they testified about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In the same way, we should speak and take appropriate steps to set things right. But as people who belong to Christ, we must do so with gentleness. It is not, “If you hit me once, I will hit you twice.” We approach people leaning on Christ and walking with him. It is not easy, but this is why we have the power of the Word and prayer.

The word “commendable” is translated from the Greek word *charis*. It means grace, but it can also mean praise. It carries the sense that God delights in a person. When God delights in someone, he praises and rewards them. So when we endure unjust suffering because we are mindful of God, there is praise and reward. That is why the next verse, verse 20a, mentions “credit”: “But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?”

As the youngest among the brothers, I remember being loved a lot, and I don’t remember being punished much. But I remember my three older brothers being punished often. Since they were punished for doing something wrong, enduring it was not something to be praised. There was no reward in that.

When we face difficulties, there are several things we should consider as we work through them. First, we should ask, “Is there any sin in me?” There may be something the Lord wants to pull out of us or an area in which he wants to upgrade us, and he may graciously allow certain hardships for that purpose. As you read the Word and pray, ask what God is dealing with. If a particular sin becomes clear, then repent.

If you pray and still do not understand, the second thing to consider is this: sometimes hardship comes because God intends to reward you and lead you into a new season. Just as there are spoils after a battle, God may be preparing to give you spoils as you endure and pass through the situation well. So read the Word and pray, asking what those spoils might be.

For example, if God’s plan is to open a new path for you, he may first lead you into the wilderness. There is no path there. Only by entering the wilderness do you experience the God who creates a new way. This is

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where we meet the Word. The original title of the book of Numbers, which records Israel's forty years in the wilderness, is "In the Wilderness." There, they were trained by God and guided toward the land of Canaan.

Returning to 1 Peter, verse 20b says, "But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God." Again, the theme of reward appears.

Verse 21 continues, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." What is God's calling for us? Whether we suffer unjustly or suffer for doing good, our calling is to endure that suffering with God in mind and to work out our salvation through it.

Why has this calling been given to us? It is because we are united with Christ, and therefore connected not only to his glory but also to his suffering. As members of his body, we are called to fill up in our own bodies what is still lacking in Christ's afflictions until the kingdom of God is fully completed. Paul confesses this in Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." The "what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions" refers to the suffering we experience as we proclaim the gospel and build up the church.

Therefore, the suffering of Christ becomes our example. Christ suffered fully for us, and he left us an example so that we might follow in his steps.

The word "example" comes from the Greek word *hypogrammos*, which literally refers to the pattern a teacher draws for students to trace. *Hypo* means "under," and *grammos* means "letter" or "writing," from which the English word "grammar" comes. So *hypogrammos* means a "writing under" or "underwriting." When children first learn to write, teachers give them dotted letters to trace, and beside or beneath them, they leave blank lines for the children to copy the letters on their own. This is the kind of example the Lord left for us.

That is why the disciples, when they were arrested for preaching the gospel, allowed themselves to be taken, imprisoned, and even killed. They followed the pattern Jesus left. And this same reality is happening today in places like North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, and Kenya.

Verse 22 says, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

Verse 23 continues, "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly." This is an expanded quotation from Isaiah 53:7.

Verse 24 says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.'" The phrase "by his wounds you have been healed" is a quotation from Isaiah 53:5.

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When people suffer, some become more broken and distorted. This happens because Christ is not in them. Even in my own life, when the “Christ gauge” drops, I can feel the “anger gauge” rising. When I read the Word less, I can feel my sinful nature filling more space inside me. But when Christ is in us, even in suffering, we can respond as he responded. Our sinful nature dies, and we live for righteousness. This is the evidence that we have been healed by his wounds. This healing is holistic, and it includes the body as well.

Verse 25 says, “For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” This is a quotation from Isaiah 53:6. The phrase “going astray” in Greek carries the meaning of being deceived. In other words, you were once deceived by Satan. When we do not know the Word, or when we know it only partially, we become vulnerable to Satan’s deception. And if we continue down a distorted path, there comes a point when God turns us back through what 2 Samuel 7:14 calls “the rod of men and the blows of human beings.”

If we want to avoid those blows, we must keep our eyes fixed on the mouth of God, the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. That means clinging to the Word like a child who clings to a parent. A disobedient child avoids discipline by quickly listening to the parent’s voice and seeking forgiveness.

Now that we have returned to the Lord, how can we follow his example? Where do we find that pattern? It is found in the Scriptures God has given us. In the Bible, we receive the pattern that shows us, “This is how we are to live.” And unlike ordinary knitting and clothing patterns, this pattern also provides the power to actually live it out.

I will be getting on a plane next week, and it made me think about how pilots learn to fly. Trainee pilots spend many hours training in flight simulators. As they practice in the simulator, they become able to fly in real life. The Word of God works in the same way. The Word is our *hypogrammos*—the letters written underneath, the pattern we trace, the example of the Lord.

We are weak people who can make mistakes or fall into sin, but we have the Holy Spirit and the Word to help us turn back. And we have the Father, the Shepherd, the Overseer who seeks, waits for, and cares for us. In this hope, may your life be one that traces the *hypogrammos*, the example he has given us. Amen.

Let’s pray: Lord Jesus, you are the Word who became flesh, and we thank you for giving life to us who were dead and for leaving us the steps we are to follow. Even when we face undeserved suffering or suffering that comes from doing good, help us to endure well by remembering the God who will reward us. Keep us from being led astray again, and help us cling closely to the Word you have given as our example. Let us live by every word that comes from the mouth of our Shepherd and Overseer. In your name. Amen.