

# FOLLOW CHRIST'S GREAT SUFFERING

## 1 PETER 02:21–25

### *Introduction*

The one thing that God wants is a genuine life. He wants believers to live for Christ, to live exactly what they profess. He wants us to follow Christ ever so closely, and He wants us to bear whatever suffering has to be borne in following Him. This is the great discussion of this great passage: follow Christ in His suffering. In these words we have one of the clearest and most descriptive pictures of what the sufferings of Christ were.

- I. The great call of believers: to suffer for Christ even as He suffered for us (v. 21).
- II. The great suffering of Christ (vv. 21-24).
- III. The great need that believers have (v. 25).

### 1 PETER 02:21–25 DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

There are at least four references to Isaiah 53 in this passage: v. 22 (Isa. 53:9); v. 23 (Isa. 53:7); v. 24 (Isa. 53:5, 12); v. 25 (Isa. 53:6).

It should be remembered that Peter was an eyewitness to Jesus' life and sufferings upon the cross. He says three things about the death of Christ.

1. Christ "suffered for you" (v. 21). That is, His death took the place of sinners.
2. Christ "committed no sin" (v. 22). That is, He was sinless; He had lived a perfect and righteous life. Therefore the sins He bore in death were not His sins but the sins of men.
3. Christ "bore our sins in his body" (v. 24). That is, the suffering Jesus bore was the penalty due sin.

In the Old Testament, the words "bore our sins" means to be answerable for sin; to endure its penalty; to die for sinners (Exo. 28:43; Lev. 24:15-16; Isa. 53:12). Thus, the death Jesus bore was substitution; He bore the sins due others. It is this act that shows the supreme love of God for man. □

### **I. 1 Peter 02:21 Believers' Call: Suffer for Christ**

There is the great call of believers — to suffer for Christ even as Christ suffered for us. Believers are called to suffer for Christ. What does this mean?

=> Any person who follows Christ — who lives a pure and righteous life — is going to be rejected by the world. The world wants little to do with purity and righteousness. People want to live like they want and to do their own thing. Therefore, they ridicule, mock, ignore, abuse, bypass, ignore and persecute anyone who lives a strict life of purity and righteousness.

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=> Any person who lives a self-denying life — who sacrifices all he is and has to meet the needs of a lost and dying world — is going to be rejected by the world. People are not willing to live unselfish and sacrificial lives to meet the needs of the poor, starving, diseased and lost masses of the world. People want more and more comfort and recognition, possessions and pleasure, money and property. Therefore, they want little to do with a person who sacrifices and proclaims a message of sacrifice.

But note: this is the very life to which Christ calls us. In fact, it is the only call Christ gives to men: the call to holy and sacrificial living — the call to love God and people, to love God so much that we live godly lives and to love people so much that we help them even to the point of sacrifice.

The point is this: Christ suffered for us. He gave everything He was and had to meet our need. Therefore, we are to follow His example. We are to live holy lives and sacrifice all we are and have to meet the needs of the world; and we are to suffer whatever ridicule, abuse and persecution comes our way. Scripture is strong about this:

=> Note the word *example*. Christ has left us an “example” (hupogrammon). The word means the pattern of some picture or letter that a teacher gives to the pupil. The pattern is to be copied or reproduced. The idea is that an exact copy is to be made; every detail of the pattern is to be reproduced. The exhortation is that we are to be an exact copy of Christ; we are to follow the pattern of Christ in every detail.

=> The word “follow” (epakolouthesete) is the picture of a guide leading us along a most difficult and rocky path, so difficult that we must actually put our feet in his footprints (B.C. Coffin. *First Peter*. “The Pulpit Commentary,” Vol. 22, p. 75.). We are to follow Christ step by step, moment by moment, and day by day.

Remember the point: Christ has given us a great call — to follow Him and to suffer for Him and His cause even as He suffered for us. What is His cause? To love God supremely by living a holy life and to love the lost and dying of the world by meeting their desperate needs.

## **II. 1 Peter 02:21–24 The Death of Jesus Christ**

There was the great suffering of Jesus Christ. Remember how close Peter was to Jesus. He was the big fisherman, the leader of the twelve apostles, one of the three closest persons to Christ when Christ was upon earth (James and John were the other two). If anyone knew Christ during the Lord's ministry, Peter knew Him. What we are about to read and study is exactly what Peter thought about Christ and His death. Therefore, what is being said needs to be closely observed and heeded. Peter says five things about the death of Christ.

1. Christ suffered “for you” (v. 21). The word “for” (huper) is a simple word with profound meaning when used with the death of Christ. It proclaims the most

wonderful truth known to man. Note this striking truth: it does *not mean* that Christ died only as an example for us, showing us how we should be willing to die for the truth or for some great cause. What it means is that Christ died *in our place, in our stead, in our room, as our substitute*. This meaning is unquestionably clear. (See Eph. 5:2; See *Death of Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. 2:21-25.)

- a. The idea of sacrifice to the Jewish and pagan mind of that day was the idea of a life given in another's place. It was *a substitutionary sacrifice*.
- b. The idea of sacrifice is often in the very context of the words, "Christ gave himself up for us." (Eph. 5:2).

**John 6:51** "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

**John 10:11** "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

**John 10:15** "Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep."

**John 11:51** He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation.

**John 15:13** "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

**John 17:19** "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."  
(Cp. Rom. 8:32; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14.)

2. Christ did not deserve to suffer (v. 22). He had lived a sinless and perfect life (v. 22; cp. Isa. 53:9). Peter clearly says that Jesus Christ "committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." Jesus Christ never sinned and never deceived a person. Remember: Peter has already declared this amazing fact:

**1 Pet 1:18-19** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

This means the most wonderful thing: Jesus Christ is the Perfect and Ideal Man. Since He never sinned, there is no unrighteousness in Him. He stands before God as the Perfect and Ideal Man, the very embodiment of righteousness. Therefore, His righteousness can cover and stand for man. Any person who truly believes in Jesus Christ is accepted in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The person is covered by the perfect and ideal righteousness of Jesus Christ.

**Isa 53:9** He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

**John 8:46** *“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?”*

**2 Cor 5:21** *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Heb 4:15** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

**Heb 7:26** *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

**1 Pet 1:19** *But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

**1 Pet 2:22** *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

3. Christ willingly and voluntarily suffered (v. 23). This is seen in three facts.
  - a. He was insulted, but He did not retaliate and hurl insults back at the attackers. The picture is that He was cursed, blasphemed, ridiculed, mocked and insulted; but He bore it all willingly and voluntarily. He did not have to bear it. He was the Son of God, and He could have stopped everyone in their tracks. But He had come to save them, not to condemn them.
  - b. He suffered, was abused, beaten, pushed around and crowned with a crown of thorns; but He suffered it willingly. He did not even threaten the unbelievers and persecutors.
  - c. He entrusted Himself to God knowing that God would vindicate Him. He knew that God judges righteously and fairly; therefore, He committed His life into the hands of God. The word “entrusted” (paredidou) means to hand over; to deliver into the hands of. Jesus Christ handed over His life to God; He delivered His life into the hands and keeping of God. Again, He did not have to suffer death, for He had the power to stop it all. But He had come to save men; therefore he willingly suffered, committing His death and cause into the hands of God. He knew that God would raise Him up and prove His claim to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

**John 10:11** *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

**John 10:15** *“Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

**John 10:17-18** *“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”*

**Eph 5:2** *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

**1 John 3:16** *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

4. Christ suffered to the ultimate degree: He bore our sins in His body (v. 24). Nothing could be any clearer to the honest and open heart:

**1 Pet. 2:24** *[Jesus Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.*

Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself — the guilt, judgment and punishment — and bore them for us. This is what is meant when we say that *Jesus Christ died for us*. He took all the sins of all men of all time upon Himself. He bore all the sin — all the guilt, judgment and punishment of sin and He died for it all. He bore the penalty for our sins.

How could Christ do this? How could one person bear the sins of all people? By having lived a sinless life, Jesus Christ was the Perfect and Ideal Man; therefore, whatever He did was acceptable to God. When Jesus Christ died, His death was the death of the Ideal and Perfect Man. Therefore, His death stands for and covers the death of all men.

**Isa 53:5** *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

**Gal 3:13** *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

**Heb 2:9** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

**1 Pet 3:18** *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

5. Christ suffered for sins that we might die to sins and live for righteousness (v. 24). What does this mean? How can a person die to sins? By believing in Jesus Christ and His death for our sins. There is no other way to die to sins. Every honest and thinking person knows this. We all sin and are ever so short of perfection and righteousness. Our only hope of ever being counted righteous and acceptable by God has to be through the righteousness of some ideal and perfect person. It has to be, for there is no righteous man. None of us have ever seen or ever will see a man who is perfect and sinless and righteous. But this is the glorious gospel: the righteousness and death of Jesus Christ covers us. When we truly believe that Jesus Christ died for us, God takes our belief and counts it so.

=> He counts us as having died when Christ died.

=> He counts the death of Christ for our death.

Jesus Christ died for us; He bore the penalty, the judgment, and the punishment for our sin. Therefore, when we really believe and trust Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we become free of sin. God actually accepts us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God no longer charges or counts sin against us. We are freed of sin and we stand before God as righteous and perfect — all because of Christ. We are healed of all our sins by the wounds which He suffered and bore. (See *Justified*, Rom. 5:1.)

**Rom 3:23-24** *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

**Rom 5:1** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Rom 5:9** *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

**Rom 6:7** *Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

**Rom 8:33** *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

**Gal 3:6** *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

**Col 3:3** *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

**Gal 5:24** *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

**1 Pet 2:24** *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

### **III. 1 Peter 02:25 Return to Jesus Christ, the Shepherd and Overseer**

There is the great need that believers have: to return to the Lord. Believers need to always remember what they were, and note: what is said about their past is true of all men.

1. Believers had been as sheep going astray. They had wandered away from God. They had been attracted by the greener grass of the world and had forsaken God for the world and its food and pleasures. They had wanted to live and wander about as they desired and to do their own thing. Therefore, they turned away from God and His pasture.
2. Believers had, however, returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls. They had repented and turned back to God.

- a. They had returned to the Shepherd of their soul. The shepherd is a picture of Christ, a picture of the love, peace, joy, care, provision, protection and security which He gives to those who turn to Him and follow Him day by day. (See *Shepherd*, 1 Pet. 2:25.)
- b. They had returned to the Overseer of their souls. The word "overseer" (*episkopon*) means caretaker, guardian, protector, guide and director (William Barclay. *The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 258). It is the picture of Christ watching over our souls and looking after them with the greatest of care. Jesus Christ is our Overseer, Caretaker, Guardian, Protector, Guide and Director. When we come to Him, He takes complete charge of our lives.

**Mat 3:2** *And saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*

**Acts 2:38** *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

**Acts 3:19** *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

**Acts 8:22** *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

**2 Chr 7:14** *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

**Prov 28:13** *He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

**Isa 55:7** *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

**Jer 3:13** *"Only acknowledge your guilt — you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favours to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me," declares the LORD.*

**Ezek 18:21** *"But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die." ■*

### 1 PETER 02: 25 SHEPHERD

*For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:25*

The Shepherd leads and shepherds the sheep. He loves them as His own; therefore He must lead them to the green pastures and still waters. He must see that they are nourished and protected and given the very best care possible.

1. He feeds the sheep even if He has to gather them in His arms and carry them to the feeding pasture.

*Isa 40:11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*

2. He guides the sheep to the pasture and away from the rough places and precipices.

*Psa 23:1-4 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

3. He seeks and saves the sheep who get lost.

*Mat 18:12 "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?"*

*Ezek 34:16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.*

4. He protects the sheep. He even sacrifices His life for the sheep.

*John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*

*Heb 13:20 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep.*

5. He restores the sheep who go astray and return.

*1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

6. He rewards the sheep for obedience and faithfulness.

*1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

7. He shall keep the sheep separate from the goats.

*Mat 25:32-33 "All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left." □*