

**A COVENANT OF SUFFERING SERVANTHOOD
(1 Peter 2:21-25)**

Presented to
Professor Wilson Kilgore
Holmes Bible College

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NEW 303 General Epistles

by Todd OBert
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1 Peter 2:21-25 (New King James Version)

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." ¹

¹ Scofield Study Bible, The (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

The title of this message is "A Covenant of Suffering Servanthood" and it was intentional for me to not call it something like "Jesus, the Suffering Servant", or to call it what is a supporting point to that which is, "Following the Suffering Servant". The overall theme of what Peter is giving to the Christians who had been dispersed throughout what is modern day Turkey, is in the new covenant we have in Christ Jesus, to no longer follow after the ways of the world, but to follow Jesus, the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, by His example. Martin Luther, referred to as the Father of the Reformation, who penned the five solas which are foundational truths of the Christian faith had a strong and positive opinion about the book of 1 Peter. He considered 1 Peter, along with the books of Romans and the gospel of John, as being "the true kernel and marrow" of all of Scripture. "For you will find depicted in masterly fashion how faith in Christ overcomes sin, death, and hell, and gives life, righteousness, and salvation." ² To not only wholeheartedly agree with Luther, I will add then to that, it is not only that Peter emphasizes Christology, which is the theological study of the person, nature, and work of Jesus Christ, but that in Christ, He brings us into a New Covenant with God, to where Jesus Christ becomes, once again, the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls and then in Christ we will partake in, as the Apostle Paul said, "the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." (Philippians 3:10)

Peter understood what Jesus was saying when He told His disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.

² Letters to the Church, pg. 283 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011)

In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) While the message of Suffering Servanthood is before us, we have Christ, who overcame all things: sin, suffering, shame, and death, and He now is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls! This message in 1 Peter is rather ironic in that, of all the disciples, Peter was most opposed to, or at least the most vocal against, what we can read in Mark 8:31-33, of Jesus speaking about the sufferings that He would have to go through. "And He [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."" (Mark 8:31-33) Also of note is that this interchange of dialogue brought forth the strongest and harshest rebuke of Jesus against any of His disciples. What Peter failed to realize, as did really all of the Jewish people of that time, was that the Conquering King that they were looking for, was first to come as the Suffering Servant. Jesus had His disciples get him a colt to ride on, into Jerusalem, on what we celebrate now and call Palm Sunday, where the people spread their clothes on the road and proclaimed, while waving palm branches, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38) "They applied to him the words of Psalm 118:25-26, a song customarily sung by Passover pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem.

These words ascribe to him a messianic title as the agent of the Lord, the coming king of Israel." ³ Yet Jesus did not claim His throne at that time. Less than a week later, on what is now called Holy or Maunday Thursday, Jesus celebrated the passover with His disciples. Maunday is said to be from a Latin word that means command. That command is considered to be, by many Bible scholars, after Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, He told them, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34) ⁴ Peter certainly addressed that in his letter by saying, "love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22) but what made Christ's command unique is in Him saying, "as I have loved you, that you also love one another." "This was a new expression of love; and it showed strength of attachment which we ought to have for Christians, and how ready we should be to endure hardships, to encounter dangers, and to practice self-denial, to benefit those for whom the Son of God laid down His life." ⁵

Yet there was another commandment that Jesus gave during their eating of what we now call the Last Supper, that Jesus had with His disciples, and it points to the heart of Peter's overall message in 1 Peter. It is a revelation of the establishing of what would be called the New Testament or the New Covenant. In the Old Testament, Moses

3 Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged Edition, New Testament, pg. 338 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994)

4 "What is Maunday Thursday?", Gotquestions.org.
<https://www.gotquestions.org/Maundy-Thursday.html> (accessed Sep. 14, 2022)

5 Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, pg. 332 (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1966)

"took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."" (Exodus 24:7-8) That was the Old Covenant. As Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples He gave the disciples bread to eat and said, "do this in remembrance of Me", and they ate of it. "Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:20) The Greek word for covenant is diathēkē, which is translated as covenant, or some translations use the word testament. But really what it is, is both!

In the same way as we interchange Old Testament with calling it the Old Covenant, the same can be said about the New Testament being the New Covenant. The New Testament was the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood for the remission of our sins. But just as in the time of Moses with the Israelites there was an agreement, a covenant that was established between God and His people. That word covenant in the Hebrew is berith and that word first appears with the covenant God gave to Noah with the rainbow signifying that God would not entirely flood the earth again. The next time that berith or covenant was used is when God told Abraham "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." (Genesis 15:1) "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be

blessed" (Genesis 22:18) And Abraham, "believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6) ⁶

Later then, with Moses and the Israelites, the ark of the covenant was also called the ark of the testimony. And what was in that ark of the covenant or ark of the testimony? The Ten Commandments. God, in establishing a covenant between Himself and the Israelites, had them agree that they would obey God and follow His commandments. Now, we know that after Jesus had risen from the dead on the third day, He appeared to His disciples and said, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. [The three books of the Old Testament Jesus quoted from the most were: Deuteronomy (the law), Psalms, and Isaiah (the prophets)] And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."" (Luke 24:44-49) Jesus was the fulfilling of the law and He was God's promise of a New Covenant spoken to Abraham that He is our exceedingly great reward.

⁶ New Unger's Bible Dictionary, The, pg. 259 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988)

The closing speech by Jesus in Matthew is similar but adds an element that is worth mentioning. This is what we call the Great Commission that helps to establish a better understanding of the New Covenant in Christ Jesus. "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."" (Matthew 28:18-20) Luke quoted Jesus saying, "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name" while Matthew quotes Him saying, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."

The covenant starts with what Jesus said in what we know of as John 3:16-17, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." That may seem to be simplistic to some of us, who may have believed on Christ even as a child. "Believe? No problem, I can do that!" Yet, there are those who do not, or refuse TO believe. Why? Because believing on Christ means more than just believing He existed. Believing on Christ is entering into a covenant with Almighty God in accepting His free gift of salvation through His marvelous grace, that is in His Son Jesus Christ, who died on a cross for our sins. Here is where the covenant kicks in. The Apostle John said, "But as many as

received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12) Jesus explained that it is necessary for us to be born again, that is, born of the Spirit. That is the receiving of Christ. We believe on Christ, acknowledge to God that we will repent of our sins, (repent meaning to have a change of mind-to follow God's ways versus our previously sinful ways), and then receive Christ into our hearts. Jesus explained though that we truly must have a repentant heart, and have a willingness to live for God. "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (John 14:23-24) That is the New Covenant. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and then He rose from the grave on the third day, conquering death, and then giving each of us that same hope of eternal life in Christ as we put our hope and trust in Him and obey His Word.

The last moment that the disciples had held onto that Jesus would raise Himself up as the Conquering Christ was just before His betrayal and then death on the cross. He had the disciples get a couple of swords and then they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter was thinking, "yah, this is it, I'm ready Jesus!" As Jesus and the disciples are confronted by the mob led by Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, Peter wields his sword and lops off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus told Peter to put away the sword and He healed

the guy's ear. Jesus did not come as the Conquering Christ, that comes later, sooner than later perhaps-but when He comes, there will be no mistaking it. "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30) Meanwhile we continue to humble ourselves and follow our Suffering Savior. The Apostle Paul put it this way, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:5-8)

"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." That is the example that is set before us. It is a lofty goal indeed to follow in the example of Jesus. But with God all things ARE possible. There has been 2000 years of saints before us who have followed in His example, and there were many, many examples of those in the Old Testament who walked in that same faith, as it says in Hebrews 11. Then Hebrews 12:1-2 concludes for us with this, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before

us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

To those who have received the gracious gift of salvation in Christ Jesus, yes, "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10) That means we are now in a covenant relationship with God Almighty. Jesus has left us, in His will and testament, that we will be joint-heirs with Jesus (Romans 8:17) and to those who endure we will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). To close, we can look to Peter's word of blessing, "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 5:10-11)

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