

SUFFERING SERVANTHOOD

1 Peter 2:9-25

But 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.

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Submission to Government

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Submission to Masters

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 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.

The title of this message is "Suffering Servanthood". It was intentional for me to not call it something like "Jesus, the Suffering Servant", or to call it what would be the counter point to Peter's message 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 who is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. Martin Luther, referred to as the Father of the Reformation, penned the five solas which are foundational truths of the Christian faith. They are: 1. Sola scriptura: "Scripture alone", 2. Sola fide: "faith alone", 3. Sola gratia: "grace alone" 4. Solo Christo: "Christ alone", 5. Soli Deo gloria: "to the glory of God alone". In his 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." ¹ To not only wholeheartedly agree with Luther, I will add then to that, it is not only that Peter emphasizes the 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. That, brothers and sisters is good news. 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 your soul!

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**) 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

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

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) 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 "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 Apostle Paul also wrote pretty much the same thing in 1 **Corinthians 11:25**, it is not known whether the Holy Spirit showed him that or whether he learned that from the disciples but he used the same word that Luke used in what Jesus had said, and that is the Greek word *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. According to Wikipedia, "Though it has at times been thought that a *will* historically applied only to real property [land] while *testament* applied only to personal property (thus giving rise to the popular title of the document as "last will and testament"), the historical records show that the terms have been used interchangeably. Thus, the word *will* validly applies to both personal and real property."² So a testament is a will to which as the writer of Hebrews states, "For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." (Hebrews 9:16) For the Old Testament or in the Old Covenant the death was a substitute for the testator, so to speak, in the sacrificing of an animal, but it was only the temporary covering for sins, since it was really an image of the perfect sacrifice of what was to come in the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ. 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.

² "Will and testament," accessed 8/26/2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_and_testament.

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**)

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. Then 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**)

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, even though some will claim to not even believe that, despite the mountain

of evidence to support that. 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, brothers and sisters, 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.

That is where we go to our passage of Scripture from **1 Peter 2:11-25**. Peter says, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims." That certainly had a double meaning . Sojourner is another word for alien or stranger. Not an alien from outer space, although one can feel like one, compared to the ways of the people of this world. Peter is saying, "those who are just passing through." Peter was speaking to those who had been compelled to move from their homelands due to what was going on in the Roman conquest as well as the persecution that the Christians were facing. Yet the other side of that double meaning is what the Apostle Paul said to the folks at Philippi, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." (**Philippians 3:20**) 2000 years later, here we are still waiting for the return of Christ.

Why do I say that? After all, the unbelievers say as much. "You people have been waiting for 2000 years, you really think He's coming back?" I would say emphatically to that, YES, and sooner than we can imagine. Yet nevertheless, here we are. Just as the people that Peter was addressing had to still deal with the here and now, so must we. We aren't intended to just be sitting around and looking up at the sky waiting for Jesus to come busting through the heavens on a cloud. Although I kind of hope I am around to witness that and to rise up to be with Him. Peter said though, while ya'll are waiting around as strangers and pilgrims, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works

which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." Another way of saying that speaks more directly to the New Covenant we are to live by. Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." **(Philippians 2:12-13)** We aren't following some subjectively assumed laws to where we hope we please God just enough so that He will allow us into His eternal kingdom. We are in a covenant relationship with Him, that is, all those who have received Christ, to where He is working in us His will and His purpose! Wow! That is the personal relationship that is spoke of. God, through His New Covenant, which is in Christ Jesus, is very much similar to what God spoke of to the Israelites in the Old Covenant. God told them, "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." **(Deuteronomy 30:6)** Then in vs. 10 He said, "**if you obey the voice of the Lord your God**, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." In summary God told the Israelites, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."" **(Deuteronomy 30:19-20)**

Likewise we have Jesus saying to preach repentance and remission of sins, to love God and keep His Words, and that as we have the Holy Spirit, that is, the Spirit of Christ working in us, that we should obey Him and follow Him as He leads us. Peter said, "when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." That is very similar to what Jesus said, "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**" **(Matthew 5:16)** Those good works, Peter goes on to say, include being submitted "to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good." Evil rulers are usually allowed to be there as "punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good." The world around us watches as evil increases but they are also watching the men and women of God who are shining the light of Christ and that they may see your good works and glorify God. There is always someone watching you and it should always be our hope that someone will say, "I want what they have-the love, the joy, the peace!" Then, those around you will not be able to ignore the fruit of the Spirit that testifies to

God's Spirit working in you, that is, the "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

"Against such there is no law." "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (**Romans 8:1-2**) That is what it means to be free in Christ Jesus! He leads us as the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (**John 8:36**) But as Peter points out, we are called to submit to authorities as they are of God. As Peter talks of being submissive to masters, since we don't have slavery in this country anymore, praise the Lord, we do have a form of slavery in the system we have to where we have to pay taxes and we have bosses and other authorities such as policemen and judges. As much as we can, we are called to obey those who have authority over us. Jesus did not rebel against Roman authority, although non-Christians will typically describe Jesus as a Jewish philosopher who rebelled against Roman authority. Clearly, they don't know the Scriptures. When Jesus was confronted about paying taxes, He had Peter go get a fish that had a coin in its mouth.

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." 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**)