

**1 Peter 2.18-25**

Clint Le Page

Be willing to suffer unjustly as Jesus did that for you

Ever since I was a boy in primary school, justice and fairness have always been really important to me.

When someone was getting unfairly treated, I'd want to speak up or stop it.

If I was being treated unfairly, whether by a brother, a friend or a bully at school, I'd struggle with that.

If I got blamed for something I didn't do, I'd want to do all I could to be vindicated.-----

Even when I watch movies I get moved, even angered by abuse and injustice, and I long to see justice done; and good triumph over evil.-----

Someone bearing an unjust punishment, is something I find really hard, and I pray for justice.-----

So the teaching here today, and the example of Jesus, pushes me out of my comfort zone, and challenges me.----- And maybe you?-----

Last week, in 1 Peter 2.12 God's word said, live honourably among unbelievers, so when they slander you as evildoers they will see your good works and glorify God when he comes. Peter, inspired by the Spirit said, Submit to all human authorities and do good, and it's God's will to silence the foolish by doing good, v15.-----

He writes to free people, those set free spiritually, from sin and death through faith in Jesus.- That's the context.-----

And as Peter continues the theme of submission, he first focuses on, not the rich, powerful, influential, but the lowest and weakest in the social order.

The slaves.

**And our first of 3 points is, Slaves, be willing to suffer unjustly.(SLIDE)**

**V18**, Household slaves, submit to your masters with all reverence.-----

In the first century Roman Empire, as much as 1/3 of people were slaves, and more had been slaves in the past.

When we read of slaves, our minds likely go to the horrible African slave trade of the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This first century slavery in Peter's day, was different.

It wasn't based on race or colour. Slaves could be educated and have positions of leadership, like managers, accountants, physicians.

Or they could be cleaning out the animal mess.-----

They could own property, and some could purchase their freedom.

And in **1Cor 7.21** Paul says to slaves 'if you can be free, take the opportunity'; so seek freedom by lawful means.-----

But let's be clear, slaves were viewed as property.

Their lives were often miserable.

The Australian Newspaper reported last week a recent find – slave's quarters have been dug up in Pompeii.

It was covered when Mt Vesuvius erupted in 79AD so just after Peter wrote.

**These pictures** show a small room which was the home and store room for 3 slaves. They cared for a horse and chariot and the horse equipment was kept with them.-----

Slaves had little opportunity to make their own choices; no freedom.-

Their treatment depended entirely on their owner.

Who could beat or whip them cruelly.

And the law did not protect them.

Slaves had no police or authority they could turn to.

They were property, and could be treated as "things".-----

And it is to them, these lowly human beings, that Peter writes to first.

Peter starts with the lowest, and teaches and encourages them to follow Jesus.

His words communicate that they are significant in the congregation.

And in their powerlessness, the Gospel empowers them.

Peter says, they are the example we should follow - it's amazing!-----

But then comes the bombshell - 'submit to your masters... not only to the good and gentle ones but also to the cruel.'-----

While Christian slaves were free from sin's punishment and power, they were not yet free from their earthly masters.

And masters could be good or cruel.-----

**Horribly** a slave could be beaten without limit or accountability.

There was nothing a slave could do, no law to appeal to, no authority to turn to.

You'd feel so powerless.-----

And in this situation Peter says **v19**, if you're conscious of God – remembering what he's done for you in Christ, the life he calls you to, the hope of glory you have – then you can endure unjust suffering.

Put up with it.

For it brings favour.

That doesn't mean you earn God's favour, and deserve salvation by it.

Literally it's the word for 'grace'.

So endure the grief of unjust suffering because it's an expression of grace and it pleases God.

It's commendable – as the NIV puts it.-----

Peter elaborates in **v20**, if you get punished or beaten for doing wrong and you take that, bravely, calmly, patiently, you don't deserve praise for that.

But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, bravely, patiently, this is commendable before God. That pleases God.

And enduring unjust suffering will actually show power.

The power of your self-control, your love for an enemy, and more than that, the power of God's grace to strengthen you.-----

The slave will be a silent witness to God's grace in their actions.-----

Now I don't know why Peter doesn't speak directly to **masters**.

But to correctly interpret a passage we always interpret Scripture with Scripture.

And **Col 4** says Masters are to treat their slaves justly and fairly, not harshly, and **Eph 6** without threatening them.

God certainly cares about and will hold masters accountable for their actions.----

But Peter here wants to focus on the Gospel motivation, the Jesus reason, for enduring unjust suffering.

**That brings us to our second point, Jesus suffered unjustly.----(SLIDE)**

Having just said, it pleases God if you slaves choose to endure unjust treatment, Peter says in **v21**,

'For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.'

And we're told Jesus' unjust suffering is an example and it is saving.----

**First**, Christ suffered for you, leaving you an **example** to follow.

In directing us to Jesus' example Peter turns to **Isaiah 53**.

The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, did not sin, 'and no deceit was found in his mouth'.

What example did Jesus give when he was arrested?-----

He was spat on and beaten before the Sanhedrin, **Mark 14**(v64-65).

The Roman soldiers flogged him, and tore up his back.

They spat on him, mocked him, then nailed him to a cross, **Mark 15**.(**SLIDE**)-----

In Jesus' words and actions, even when he was innocent and undeserving, he did not sin.----

In 1 Pet 2.22&23, with his words he did not deceive or lie.

When abuse was heaped on him, he did not insult back.

When he suffered he did not threaten people.-----

No sinning, hurting, hating, threatening with his words.  
 Jesus gives slaves and gives us, the perfect example to follow.-----  
 In his words & actions he endured the most unjust suffering.  
 And he did because he entrusted his life to God, and was trusting in God's plans.  
 He sought the good of others, underserving people, and trusted God would do right, and raise him from the dead.----  
 And not getting revenge, not getting even, with hurtful words and hateful deeds, was the example Peter calls slaves to follow.-----

But Jesus gives more than a good example.  
 His suffering and dying give more than an example, for it saves.

**Secondly, Jesus' suffering saves.**

In the classic and wonderful statement of the cross and atonement, **v24** declares:

'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds<sup>pl</sup> you have been healed.'

Because Jesus never sinned, that enabled him to bear n' carry our sins.

On the cross he bore our sins, the punishment for our sins were laid on him.

**Deut 21.23** said, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, and that points to Jesus, for he was cursed for us, suffering our judgement, hell, for us.

He suffered hell for us, the just punishment for our sins.-----

Quoting Isa 53.5 Jesus' wounds, **v24**, heal us.

What transformative and comforting words to the slave who was unfairly beaten by their master for doing no wrong.-----

For the slave with wounds weeping blood, in Jesus comes the promise of healing.

By the stripes of his flogging, by the piercings and as the punishment for our sins is laid on him unto death, Jesus heals us.

Heals our broken relationship with God.

Forgives our sins, which separated us from God.-----

But this is only for those who have put their trust in him.

Is Jesus your Saviour and Lord?-----

If you've not turned to and trusted him with all your heart, so he is Lord of your life, then you miss out.

The only ones healed and saved, are those who have Christ as their Saviour and Shepherd.

But you can turn to him and trust him today.-----

Only he never sinned and can save us from our sins, and the just suffering we all deserve in hell.

And if we've relied on Jesus to save us, we may endure wounds from living in a fallen world, wounds from unjust suffering.

But God promises full and forever healing, when we're given new immortal bodies in heaven.

How good is that going to be!! 😊

What a huge thing and momentous hope that would give to a suffering slave.----

And a wonderful truth and momentous hope for you in your suffering.-----

Jesus is the one who saves, and forgiveness.

And through him also comes belonging.

**V25**, for we belong to the great Shepherd.

We're all like sheep who have gone astray.

We've not followed in the great shepherd's steps.

We've been selfish and sinful, and hurt back with our words, or hit back with our actions, like I was guilty of with my brothers or bully at school sometimes.

And he's the good shepherd who laid his life down for me his sheep, and he now guides me as my shepherd, and living his way is best.-----

And part of that following Jesus is expressed in **v24** - we've died to sins that we might live for righteousness.

We've died to sin's power and punishment.

We've been forgiven, and justified – declared right with God.

And now our justification flows into and results in sanctification.

They are connected.

Christ died not only to justify us but to sanctify us.

So we could and would live God's way, live for righteousness; follow in Jesus' steps.----

And part of us following Jesus as his sheep and disciple, is being willing to suffer unjustly too.

**Point 3 is, Are we willing to suffer unjustly?----- (SLIDE)-----**

Peter is firstly talking to slaves here, and we, by the grace of God are not slaves.

We are free people, who believe we have rights.-----

So we think we are entitled, and that makes it harder for us.

For like me, many of us hate unjust suffering.-----

Then again some are happy to inflict it.-----

Sadly, this passage is one of those used by **abusers** to justify their abuse.

Can I say clearly and categorically, that this passage does not justify cruelty, mistreatment or abuse.

And the Presbyterian Church of Victoria is firmly opposed to all forms of abuse.

And as our denomination's Statement on 'Domestic and Family Violence' says, any attempt to twist the biblical teaching to tacitly sanction domestic violence or abuse is a gross perversion of the Bible's teaching.

That statement can be found on the PCV Safe Church website ([safechurchpcv.org.au/resources/](http://safechurchpcv.org.au/resources/))

Peter was writing to encourage slaves who had no power to change their situation, no legal avenues to turn to.

And he encouraged them to remember Jesus, and follow Jesus' example of being willing to suffer unjustly.

That does not in any way justify or excuse the behaviour of those cruel masters, who will be judged for their own sins.

And for a person today, a boss, a parent, a spouse, a woman, a man, to use Scripture to justify their sin is offensive.

It is spiritual abuse.

Abuse can be sexual, physical, emotional, verbal; social, financial and/ or psychological.-----

And abusers who interpret scripture through a clouded, self-serving lens, distort biblical truth and squeeze out The Greatest Commandment , to love God and love others (Matt 22.36-40)

I recommend Steve Hoppe's article, A hidden epidemic God Hates, on The Gospel Coalition website (May 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/hidden-epidemic-god-hates/>)

I will say more on this in regard to marriages next week, but abuse is sinful, and seeking escape from it is not sinful.-----

In **Luke 4** when an enraged crowd from the synagogue wanted to hurl Jesus off a cliff, he didn't allow it, but just walked right through them and went away (4.28-9).

When Jews wanted to kill Paul in **Acts 9.24**, he fled and escaped. [cf. Prov 22.3]

When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem in **Acts 22** and the Romans were about to flog him without trial, Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship (22.25), to the law.

Later, when Paul stood before governor Felix, he appealed to Caesar (25.11).-----

The law may be used for one's protection.-----

If you're being abused don't retaliate.

You can entrust yourself to the God who judges justly, while also speaking up and seeking help.-----

Whether from a friend, a Christian leader, the Safe Church, or by calling 1800RESPECT.-----

In **1 Samuel 20**, Jonathan helped his friend David flee, and escape from a harmful, life-threatening situation, and Saul's murderous jealousy and hatred.

Like that, in love we should seek to help, advocate for, and protect those in danger too.-----

With those qualifiers I want to again bring us back to the main point, and to challenge us all with 1 Peter 2's teaching.

**Our Lord Jesus suffered unjustly to save us from our sins, and to set us an example to follow.**

[3v1 will say, wives, 'in the same way', v7, husbands, 'in the same way', and v8, 'all of you be like-minded and sympathetic and love one another, not paying back evil for evil, or insult for insult'.]

We are not to take revenge, not hurt back, hit back, or yell back, but love and patiently endure.

Will you be willing to suffer unjustly, and do it because Jesus did that for you?-----

As your choice?-----

Following the example of Jesus in your home, your workplace, your school, will mean not lying, threatening and insulting in your words.

Not retaliating; not getting even.-----

It might mean that when someone at **school or home** calls you names, you don't call them names back, and don't get them back some other way either.

You endure it and patiently put up with it.

Yes, if bullying at school continues or worsens, seek advice and speak up, but revenge and retaliating is not ok.

Maybe your **spouse** has had a really hard day, they're overwhelmed by stress and they raise their voice, or get impatient and angry, and you bear the brunt of it.

You can choose to endure that, and like Jesus, not threaten, hurt or insult in return.

Because of the Christian foundation both Britain and **Australia** have had, we are blessed to have many laws which protect people's human dignity and rights.

We should be thankful that we have legal protections, and are not slaves without protection.

In our **workplaces**, while sometimes frustrating, we can be thankful for the role Work Safe, Unions and HR departments have, which seek people's well-being.

And while we may turn to them, let's apply the principle of enduring forbearance first, and not use the law to retaliate or get even.

Maybe at work, you are blamed for something you didn't do, are accused unfairly, or suffer unjustly, how would you respond?-----

You can choose to stay quiet, not defend yourself, and about your own rights first, but think about Christ.-----

You choose to bravely, calmly, patiently endure the hardship, to follow and please Jesus, who endured worse hardship for you.-----

In what context does God want you to not return insult for insult, not threaten, not hurt, but be willing to suffer?-----

Scripture encourages slaves and all of us to do good and be willing to suffer unjustly.

I admit, to be told it's good n' commendable to endure unfair suffering –seems unbelievable.

To be asked to accept injustice without retaliating seems unbelievable.-----

But what was unbelievable, what the sinless Servant Jesus, suffering injustice.

Him suffering the unjust punishment of bearing our sins in his body on the tree.

That's unbelievable!

And his salvation empowers us to do what seems unbelievable.-----

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus empowered the lowest slaves.

And doesn't it inspire us to live his way too?-----

I close with a true story from the book 'Jesus Freaks', (**SLIDE**) by DC Talk and the Voice of the martyrs'.

It's about two 18yo girls from the USSR in the 1960's, **Maria and Varia**.-----

The girls had once been school mates in a Communist boarding school.

Varia, a member of the Communist Youth organization, had constantly teased and tormented Maria, a Christian, who prayed often for Varia.

One day Varia said, "I cannot understand [it]. Here so many insult and hurt you, yet you love everyone"

Maria replied, "God has taught us to love everyone, not only friends, but also enemies".

"Can you love me too?" Varia asked.

Mary hugged her and they both began to weep. Not long afterward Varia received Jesus as her personal Saviour and witnessed openly to everyone about it.

At the Communist assembly Varia courageously spoke to the group about Jesus.

Afterwards they took Varia away.

When Maria visited Varia in prison she asked, "Varia, don't you regret what you did?"

"No" she answered, "And if they would free me I would do it again and would tell them about the great love of Jesus. Don't think that I suffer. I am very glad that the Lord loves me so much and gives me the joy to endure for his name."

Her friend was thin, pale and beaten, but her eyes shone with the peace of God and an unearthly joy.-----

Varia was moved to an unknown location and months passed, until Maria received a letter from Varia, in a Siberian Labour camp. Varia wrote:

My hearts praises and thanks God that through you He showed me the way to salvation.

Now being on this way my life has a purpose and I know where to go and for whom I suffer.

I feel the desire to tell and to witness to everybody about the joy of salvation that I have in my heart.

Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Nobody and Nothing. Neither prison nor suffering. The sufferings that God sends only strengthen us more and more in the faith in him. My heart is so full that the grace of God overflows.

At work they curse and punish me, giving me extra work because I cannot be silent. I must tell everyone what the Lord has done for me...

All our brethren greet you and are glad that your faith in God is so powerful and that you praise Him in your sufferings unceasingly.

Yours, Varia."-----

Like them, be willing to suffer unjustly because Jesus did that for you.

Let's pray.