

The Gospel According To Peter

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[0:00] For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

! He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed, for you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Amen. We know that any form of Christianity that does not have the atoning work of Jesus Christ at the very center of its faith and of its practice is no Christianity at all.

[1:07] But let's personalize that in a more direct way. We would have to also acknowledge, if that's true, that any professing Christian who does not hold the atoning work of Jesus Christ and all its implications as the sole foundation for salvation is no Christian at all.

The good news that Jesus Christ has satisfied the wrath of God against sinners, reconciling them to God through the forgiveness of their sins, that is the essence of the one true gospel.

And Christians are gospel people. We are gospel people. We believe that that gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

So the gospel of Jesus centers our fellowship. It fills our songs as we have sung this morning. It marks our preaching. We are a gospel people.

And this gospel permeation that we know and that we experience and should be faithful to is evident throughout Peter's letter. And we've seen it again and again and again and again.

[2:29] From the very beginning of chapter 1, verse 1, we have seen this gospel continually coming to the surface. Jesus and his atoning work are at the very heart of all that Peter has to say to these Christians in Asia Minor.

In fact, it's on account of their faith in Christ that he is able to call their experience an exile and describe it as an exile.

Through the gospel, God called them, as we read earlier in chapter 2, out of darkness and into his marvelous light, making them a chosen people, representing God in this fallen world.

But exile isn't easy, is it? And many of them are struggling. Many of them are suffering on account of their faith. So what did Peter do to address their suffering?

He wrote again here of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ who suffered for us. Why? What good is that?

[3:39] What help is it to the Christian slaves to whom Peter is addressing directly at this point in the letter? What help is the suffering of Christ to their suffering?

Because we're gospel people and because the work of Jesus Christ anchors our faith, it comforts our souls, it offers us true and lasting hope, and it instructs us on how to endure to the end.

That's why Peter returns to it once again here. He said, it would have been just more helpful if he would have just maybe commiserated with them for a little while, showed maybe a little more empathy than what he seems to show here.

No, the best thing for them, the best thing for us in the midst of suffering, is not to dwell on our sorrows, it is to look at our Savior.

It is only in our Savior that we find hope and comfort and endurance. But we need to keep the immediate context in mind, don't we? Remember in this section of the letter, Peter is instructing us on how to submit to authorities, human authorities that are over us, but to do so in the fear of God. [5:03] In other words, human authority is not absolute. And whenever earthly authorities contradict God's commands, our duty as his people is to joyfully submit to God, even over and above, as we've seen in one passage, civil government, and then in the most direct passage that we're at now, to those, in Peter's case, who were slaves, serving unjust masters.

That means that Christians are going to inevitably face suffering for their obedience to the Lord. And using the circumstances of Christian slaves suffering under unjust masters, Peter instructs all believers, this isn't just an application for them, he's using them as a springboard to address all Christians.

He instructs all believers on how to faithfully endure suffering for the glory of God. And what does he do? He points us to the perfect model of faithful endurance when suffering for good.

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And here again, even in his address to these slaves, what is it that comes to the surface? What is it that takes center stage?

It's the gospel. So then the larger point of the text, we have to keep that in mind, we don't want to escape it too quickly, but the larger point of the text is that believers are to follow Christ in his suffering.

[6:36] And last week, we considered Jesus' example of suffering as a model for how to suffer well and how to suffer faithfully. But Peter also acknowledges in the text that we're now settling into, he acknowledges that our suffering is not fully comparable to Christ's suffering.

It's not exactly the same. We follow him in it, certainly. We endure as he endured with the spirit that he endured, but we ought not to think that his and ours is exactly the same.

Christ's suffering was unique. His suffering was atoning. His suffering provides the basis for salvation. So it's good for us to linger just a bit longer on these verses.

Meditate on the unique nature of Christ's sufferings as an atonement for our sins and how the benefits of that atonement are applied.

In other words, if this is what Christ's suffering accomplished, how can I ensure that it was accomplished for me? If on the cross, Jesus provides salvation, how can I receive the salvation that he has provided?

[8:01] And I think what we find here in these verses is what we might call the gospel according to Peter. The gospel according to Peter. Three main points of emphasis that I want to point out to you that Peter gives us here.

First is this. I want you to see Christ's perfections. Christ's perfections. We get this in verses 22 and 23. Now last week we examined Christ's example.

We're picking back up on that here. We're returning to it so that we might see that there is a deeper truth at play in what Peter is saying here than merely to say that Christ's suffering was only to give us an example.

Certainly it is that. It is not merely that. There's more that Peter is affirming here. Jesus isn't just a model for how to suffer.

He is the model. And undergirding his application to suffering for good, particularly for the slaves, is the truth of Christ's perfections.

[9:07] That's undergirding everything that Peter is saying in 22 and 23. Jesus' faithfulness in suffering owes to his divine, sinless nature.

And it is his divine person that Jesus is God himself in flesh that makes everything we believe about the atonement, that makes everything that Peter says about the atonement possible.

And that's what Peter's emphasizing here. And there's two key areas of Christ's perfections that Peter brings into view. His fulfillment of both these areas of perfections are what qualify him to actually be our Savior.

If either one of these fail, he is not a Savior for anyone. But if they both stand, he is indeed the Savior for all who will believe.

The first category is this, perfect obedience. Perfect obedience. Look back at verse 22. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

[10:19] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. Now in all four of these verses here, Peter is leaning heavily on Isaiah 53.

And if you know Isaiah 53 well, you know that it foretells that the servant of the Lord, that coming Messiah, will be a suffering servant.

And that in regard to his suffering, he will provide salvation. That through that suffering, he will provide salvation for God's chosen people. The New Testament repeatedly affirms, even Jesus himself, multiple times acknowledging that he is the fulfillment of that suffering servant in Isaiah 53. And here, Peter directly quotes Isaiah 53 in verse 9, which reads, and they made his grave with the wicked. So his suffering is not just hardship, it's death.

They made his grave with the wicked, with the rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Direct quote from Peter here of Isaiah 53, 9.

[11:28] Now why does he do that? Now his point in quoting this verse is to emphasize that not only was Jesus sinless in his suffering, that he did not sin as he suffered.

Of course that's true, that's an application that we make, but that's not all that Peter is saying. He's quoting Isaiah 53 in order that he might say that Jesus was sinless altogether.

Sinless. Whereas Adam and all of Adam's descendants fail to love and obey God, Jesus perfectly obeyed in every way.

And think about how the scriptures begin to piece this together for us. John 1 says that Jesus exists in eternity as God, but in history he took on humanity in order that he might bring us salvation.

We call this the incarnation. God has taken on flesh. He doesn't become less God. He maintains his deity fully, but he adds to that humanity, true humanity, as the scriptures teach us.

[12:46] Given that this incarnation comes through the supernatural conception and birth of a virgin, Jesus did not inherit Adam's corruption as you and I have inherited Adam's corruption.

Yet, he's truly human. As we read earlier in Philippians 2, he was in the form of God. That is his very essence and his nature is divine.

And then he emptied himself, not of his divinity, but of his divine rights and prerogatives in order that he might take on flesh.

Whereas as the divine, he is worthy of all worship, he humbles himself and becomes the man of sorrows. Whereas in his divinity, he is worthy of worship and exaltation, he condescends in his humanity in order that he might die, becoming obedient to death.

Consider also the multifaceted temptations Jesus endured. You can read about these in Matthew 4. Just after Jesus' baptism, we read that the Spirit of God leads him into the wilderness for the purpose of being tempted.

[14:11] For 40 days, he fasts in the wilderness. For 40 days, he endures temptation from Satan. That temptation, I believe, continuing throughout his life until the day of his death and resurrection.

And what is that all about? It was necessary that he be tempted in every way, yet to prove victorious over that temptation to have never sinned.

And that's exactly what Jesus did. He succeeded where you and I have failed. Thus the writer of Hebrews says, Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens.

That was, he was divine, and he passed through the heavens in order to become a man. Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

And it is only because of that that the writer of Hebrews then says, Now let us with confidence draw near to his throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need.

[15:37] That's Peter's emphasis here. It's not just that Jesus didn't sin as he suffered on the cross. It's that he was sinless altogether. Yes, he's lifting up Jesus as our example, but he also means for us to see that Jesus' example owes to his sinless perfection.

We are to follow him in suffering, but we need to acknowledge that his obedience is unique and distinct from ours because he is indeed the sinless Son of God.

So we find here in verse 22 Christ's perfect obedience, but it's not just perfect obedience that Peter emphasizes for us here. We get to verse 23 and we find perfect faith.

Perfect faith. Verse 23. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, and here's his faith.

He did not follow him, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. Now, to obey God's moral law is important.

[16:51] It's not the only thing. There is a positive side to Jesus' perfections that is just as important as his restraint. The negative emphasis is that he restrains himself from temptation and from sin.

The positive emphasis is that he not only demonstrated perfect obedience, but perfect faith. Both essential if he is to qualify to be our Savior.

Now, again, here in 23, Peter is alluding to Isaiah 53 and verse 7, writing about Jesus' silence in his suffering.

As he suffered at the hands of the unjust, he neither reviled in return, neither did he threaten to retaliate. Instead, we're told that Jesus continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

What is that? What is that about? Jesus demonstrates perfect faith as he endures the cross, trusting that the Father will vindicate his righteousness and will judge his enemies.

[18:03] And how does that vindication come? It comes through resurrection. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, his true righteousness is vindicated.

He is risen because he's sinless. And when will God judge his enemies? At the final judgment. All wrongs will be made right.

All righteousness will be vindicated. All wickedness will then be judged. And Jesus, the perfect son of God, fully, in every way, and at every moment, demonstrates perfect faith.

not only in his suffering, but his suffering demonstrates a faith that permeated all of his life. In every way, Jesus perfectly loved and trusted the Father.

Now, why are these perfections important? Why would Peter bother to emphasize these? Why would he bring in Isaiah 53 in order to provide the support for what he's trying to get across?

[19:16] And it's this. If Jesus is not the sinless son of God, then we are all hopelessly lost in our sin.

If Jesus is not the sinless son of God, if he did not have perfect obedience, if he did not have perfect faith, then his death was no atonement at all.

And that leaves the wrath of God to be poured out on us. The only way for his wrath to be satisfied then is for us to spend an eternity in hell.

The stakes are high. But because of Christ's divine perfection, as our new confession of faith reads, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.

That's who he is. He's not just a man. He is truly the God-man who did what Adam was meant to do, love and obey God.

[20:34] And these perfections qualify Jesus and Jesus alone to bring us salvation. But how exactly does he bring that salvation? That's where Peter moves to next.

So we not only see Christ's perfections, we now look to Christ's atonement. Christ's atonement, verse 24. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed. Now let's define atonement. We use that word a lot. Let's make sure we understand what it means.

It's a simple definition really. Atonement, it just simply means a payment for sin. A payment for sin. Peter here focuses on the payment that Christ made for the sins of those who follow him.

Through the centuries, for 2,000 years, many theories or models explaining the nature or at least attempting to explain the nature of Christ's atonement have been suggested.

[21:44] Some of them are helpful. Some of them are not helpful at all.

What Peter writes about here is not a theory of the atonement. It's not a model of the atonement.

It is the true essence of Christ's atonement. It's the heart of it. Every other model, every other explanation you might add to this cannot possibly stand unless what Peter is emphasizing here is at the heart of it.

It's not a theory. It's what it is. And what does Peter do? Well, again, he leans on Isaiah 53. He writes that, quoting Isaiah 53, Jesus bore our sins in his body on the tree.

By his wounds you have been healed. Let me give you just a couple of important theological words and we're going to move on from that. But these will be good for you to know.

I would encourage you to write them down if you don't know them already. Jesus' death on the cross was, number one, substitutionary. It was a substitution.

[22:58] He took our place. He didn't suffer merely as an example. He suffered in the place of those who were worthy of that judgment.

Isn't that what Peter says? He bore our sins in his body on the tree. It was a substitution. Second, it's a propitiation.

propitiation. It's a biblical term. We read it in Romans and a couple of other places. It just simply means that on the cross, Jesus fully satisfied the wrath of God.

Full satisfaction. God's wrath against sinners. Jesus stands in between the father and those sinners, interposes his precious blood as we sing in another song.

And what does that accomplish? It fully assuages the wrath of God. It turns it away. It satisfies it. It is a true propitiation. Third, it was an imputation.

[24:03] An imputation or an expiation. It removes our guilt. But how does it do that? The removal of the guilt is the term we would say is expiation.

But how does it actually do that? It does that through imputation. In other words, our sin is credited to Jesus on the cross. And his righteousness is in return credited to us.

We just sang before the throne of God above. What is the whole point of that? It's a courtroom, isn't it? The whole point of the song is that we stand before God, the righteous judge, and we stand righteously before him.

But it is not a true righteousness. It is an alien righteousness that is credited to our account. On the cross, Jesus took on our sin.

He has made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. A great exchange takes place there. Imputation. That's the essence.

[25:13] That's the nature of Christ's atonement. That's what's happening. All three of these truths of Christ's atonement, they're implicitly at least expressed here in what Peter is saying.

But I want you to notice three benefits of this atonement. Three benefits of this substitution and propitiation and imputation. Number one, Christ's atonement is a substitution that reconciles sinners to God.

It reconciles sinners to God. Now you know what reconciliation is. You are enemies and now enemies are reconciled. They're made to be friends. If you made your wife mad this week, you didn't do what you were supposed to do, perhaps for a season, you were enemies and at some point you humbly and contritely come in and say, sweetheart, I'm sorry.

I was wrong. Will you forgive me? And a reconciliation is made, right? What are we? We're enemies of God by nature because of our sin.

What does Christ's substitution on the cross do? It reconciles enemies. It makes them friends. It brings together sinful men and a holy God and reconciles them in peace with one another.

[26:39] Now it's implicit here. It's explicit in the next chapter over and I want you to see it in chapter 3 and verse 18. Notice what Peter says there. Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that's the substitution.

Why? That he might bring us to God being put to death in the flesh. What is the great benefit of the atonement?

That on the cross Christ brings sinners to God and he reconciles us to God in peace. Second, it's a substitution that frees sinners from the bondage of sin.

It is a substitution that frees sinners from the bondage of sin. Back in chapter 2 and verse 24, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.

Why? Peter says it, so that we might die to sin. Sin might be put to death in us so that we might then live in righteousness.

[27:54] What is this? The effect of Christ's sin bearing atonement is that it breaks the power of sin in the lives of his people.

Well, fully through his sacrifice, Jesus put your sin to death so that if you are in him, you are now truly free to live in righteousness.

Prior to coming to Christ, we only think ourselves free, but we are not free. We are in bondage to our sin, to our nature. But when Christ's atonement is applied, he sets us free, having put to death our sin on the cross, so that now we can truly be righteous and live righteously, and we must pursue that righteousness.

In fact, persistent repentance from sin and pursuit of righteousness are the fruits of Christ's atonement having been applied to you at salvation in the new birth.

Christ works his righteousness into those who have been truly born again of God through faith in him. I just want you to let that settle on your mind for just a second.

[29:36] He accomplished that, finished, on the cross. You are free. We sang it last week, it was the last song we sang last Sunday, not I, but through Christ in me.

I can sing. I am free, not because of me, but because Christ has set me free. How did he set you free?

By putting your sins to death on the cross. He wasn't putting his sins to death on the cross. He had no sin. Whose sins was he putting to death? Your sin, my sin.

Now, you are free to live, truly. Third, it's a substitution that brings healing to the soul.

It's a substitution that brings healing to the soul. Again, this is a direct quote from Isaiah 53 and verse 5. Jesus' wounds, his substitutionary death on the cross bring us healing.

[30:46] Now, I want you to think about the illustrative material Peter is using here. Who is he addressing directly at this point in the letter? Slaves. Slaves serving unjust masters who are being beaten for doing good.

As they gather on the Lord's day for worship with fresh wounds suffering for good, Peter says, by his wounds you've been healed, not the wounds in your body, but as a healing of the soul, far greater healing.

Given Peter's focus on the atonement in this text, we gather and understand that this healing is the forgiveness of sin and the fruit of righteousness that he's just spoke of, putting to death our sin so that we might live to righteousness.

That's the healing. Healing for the soul. Forgiveness. Righteousness. man of sorrows.

What a name. For the son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim. What's the next line?

[32:06] Hallelujah. What a savior. Bearing shame and scoffing rude. In my place, condemned he stood.

Sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah. What a savior. Guilty, vile, helpless we.

Spotless lamb of God was he. Full atonement can it be? Hallelujah. Hallelujah. What a savior.

And lifted up was he to die. It is finished was his cry. Now in heaven he's exalted high.

Hallelujah. What a savior. Christ's perfections qualify him to be our suitable and sufficient savior. savior. His substitutionary death on the cross is the means by which he paid for sin and satisfied God's wrath against sinners.

[33:26] But there's one more place that Peter takes us. How is it that the benefits of this atonement are then applied to sinners?

How can I receive this salvation provided in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Third, we see Christ invitation. Christ invitation.

We're going to bring the first verse of this section and the last verse of this section together. Verse 21 and verse 25. For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

25. for you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Now we put these two verses together it's forming somewhat of an inclusio if you understand that language and into this little section of the gospel that Peter is expressing here.

[34:34] We see how one receives the salvation provided in Christ's atonement in these two verses. First there's a call to follow in his steps. I said this last week calling in the New Testament is never about a vocation.

It's never about a gifting. The New Testament never uses that word that way. We use it that way. It's not wrong to use it that way but it's not how the Bible uses the term. Calling in the New Testament is always the effectual call of God to salvation.

And here Peter uses it again. this call that comes by the work of the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel message. So the gospel goes out.

That's the call. The Spirit of God energizes that call so that it takes effect in the heart of the sinner. And what is the nature of the call?

It's an invitation. invitation. It's Jesus' invitation to say I have paid the debt. Now turn and come to me.

[35:45] Come to me. Trust in me. Turn from the sin. Turn from the path you're on. Come to me and receive what I have done on your behalf.

faith. It's trusting in Christ's death and resurrection. It's an invitation to follow him not only as Savior but as a Lord. It's an invitation. And then in verse 25 we see the elements of genuine conversion. Don't we? One hears the call of God in the gospel and responds with repentance and faith. And again wouldn't you guess it Peter quotes Isaiah 53.

This time it's verse 6. In our sinful condition we are like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd. I just want you to grasp the illustration here from Isaiah and Peter.

We're like sheep who have wandered away. We're out of the fold. We've left the shepherd. We've followed this world. We've followed its sin. We've followed its philosophies. We've followed everything that it offers.

[36:50] We've wandered away. And through the gospel of the cross the great shepherd Jesus Christ calls out for us. His wandering sheep.

I've taken care of it. Come back. He cries out from the cross. It's finished. He cries. And those who hear his call what do they do in verse 25?

They return. What is this returning? It's repentance. repentance. Literally means to turn. And faith. They hear the call. They abandon sin. Everything that it offers. In order that they might follow their shepherd. The overseer of their souls.

They turn away from sin. They trust in Christ alone. They obey him as Lord. Because the shepherd has laid down his life for his sheep. And he now calls for them to submit.

[37:53] And to follow him. Follow him where? To heaven. On the path of suffering. So how is it that Christ atonement is applied?

How can you be saved? Well having heard this gospel. It's time that you turn. And follow. Not to put Jesus on the shelf alongside of your own ideas and alongside of all the other things that you want to try to hang on to in this life.

No. It is a full turn. Full faith. Him and him alone. Shepherd and overseer in this case.

We think about this illustration we often first imagine the notions of tenderness. That is not the way that Peter is using the illustration of a shepherd here. Think about the context.

It's not about tenderness. It's about authority. What does it mean? To come to Christ in repentance and faith. It means to acknowledge him as Lord. And to follow his authority as the shepherd and overseer of your soul.

[39:00] Which means that you can't just do away with this. You can't take the things that you like and take out the things that you don't like. No you submit to him in all things.

You submit to his word in all things. That's what it means to return. That's what it means to come. And here's the good news of it all. He's paid the debt of your sin. Doesn't matter what you've done or how many times you've done it.

His sacrifice is sufficient. And now he invites you to freely receive this salvation by coming to him in faith.

So return. You want to be saved. Come to Christ. Turn to him. There's nothing left for you to do.

There's nothing for you to pay. He paid it all. There's nothing for you to do. What needs to be done is done. Fully satisfied.

[40:00] So believe him. Trust him. And follow him. Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes and is justified. And with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.

For there's no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on him will be saved.

Christians are gospel people. And Christ's atonement on the cross and his subsequent resurrection from the dead are the essence of the gospel message.

That's what it is. It is to center not only our conversion, but every facet of our lives.

[41:11] God's which is why Peter keeps bringing it up. He's now in the practical part of the letter where he's instructing us on how to live. And what's at the center of that instruction?

The gospel is at the center. It gives us hope in our exile. It guides us on how to faithfully live as Christ's people in the world.

And that's Peter's whole point. In our suffering, we take our cues from Jesus who suffered for us. But as we look to him, we must remember that his suffering was unique and atoning.

It is the basis of salvation for all who will believe and follow him. Therefore, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that as we suffer for the gospel and for good, we are following in the steps of our Savior as we await his return, at which time we will receive the fullness of our inheritance that Peter has already said is imperishable and undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by God's grace are being guarded through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed.