

## Easter Hope: Enduring Injustice ~ 1 Peter 2:19-25

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ May 11, 2014

<sup>19</sup> For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. <sup>20</sup> But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. <sup>21</sup> To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” <sup>23</sup> When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup> “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” <sup>25</sup> For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

Easter Hope. This hope that a Christian has is far different than any other hope this world has to offer. In the weeks following Easter, we have been taking a look at this Easter Hope and what it looks like in a Christian's life. We have already taken a look at the certainty of this hope – what we hope for will come to pass. We have already taken a look at God wanting to fill us up to overflowing with this hope. And now in the next two weeks we will see two pictures that Peter gives describing this hope. The one we look at today is hope in a shepherd.

Today, we celebrate Mother's Day, a day when we remember our mothers, everyone has one. Hopefully most of you had good mothers growing up, mothers who cared for you when you were very young, mothers who supported you when you were growing up. It is fitting then on this Mother's Day as we remember all that our mother's did for us, that we can also be reminded of the love and care that our Good Shepherd gave to us. This is EASTER HOPE:

1. Enduring love from our shepherd
2. Enduring hope in our shepherd

(1)

We enter the second chapter of 1 Peter where Peter is talking about living our Christian hope. He directs Christians to submit to their respective authorities – citizens to their government, slaves to their masters, and wives to their husbands – not just when there are good governments, good masters, and good husbands, but even when they are not so good. Peter is calling upon all Christians to live in the situation God had called them to, he wanted Christians to realize that Christianity did not have a political or social agenda. The agenda is always focused on a person's relationship to God.

With a pagan government such as the Romans, it would be tempting for Peter to have said “Go ahead, disobey them because they're not Christians.” But Peter says, “No, submit to them.” He

summarizes this in verse 17, **“Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.”** And then he turns his attention specifically to slaves – **“submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.”** There is only one way that Peter is able to say all of these things, and that reason is Christ.

**“For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?”** Think about these words of Peter for just a moment. He’s talking about enduring suffering, something we talked about a few weeks ago, but not just any suffering, unjust suffering. And he makes a good point, if you are suffering as punishment for something you have done, then there is nothing good about enduring it, you’re getting what you deserve. If you as a Christian starts slacking off on your job because the boss is a godless heathen, there’s no pride in being reprimanded for your shotty work. It’s only when you endure unjust suffering is it commendable before God.

He asks us endure unjust suffering. The real question is why? How contrary this is to the way we have been brought up, even as we have been brought up as Christians. It isn’t natural to turn the other cheek, it isn’t natural to keep our mouth silent when something is wrong, it isn’t natural to endure suffering, so we fight it. We fight for our own rights, we fight for our fair share, we fight for payback.

And that’s where the real problem lies, doesn’t it? As much as we think we have a case for justice, as much as we think we deserve our fair share – whether we’re Christians or not, we get exactly what we deserve. No matter how innocent we think we are, we are always guilty. No matter how just our cause is before other people, we are completely unjust before God. The end of this section of 1 Peter gives it away, **“you were like sheep going astray.”** We were the one sheep that was lost from the flock of 100. Anything we endure in this life cannot be commendable because we have it coming. Anything bad that happens in this life only serves as a reminder of our guilt, as a reminder of living in a fallen world, and anything good that happens in our life is a sign of God’s grace.

And nowhere was God’s grace more evident than in the enduring love from our shepherd, God’s own Son Jesus Christ, who suffered silently. It’s the enduring love from our shepherd, that it is all about. Peter brings in a prophecy from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, **“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”** He then continues, **“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.”** We can remember this is exactly how Jesus lived. When he was tried unjustly by the Sanhedrin, when he was put on trial before Pontius Pilate, he could have opened his mouth and said he was innocent, and he truly was. And yet he didn’t, he kept his mouth closed. The enduring love from our shepherd meant he suffered silently.

And yet this isn’t just how Jesus acted at the very end of his life, but it was throughout his whole life. His whole life, **“he committed no sin...no deceit was found in his mouth.”** Jesus didn’t just act this way because he wanted to set an example for us to follow, he didn’t keep his mouth closed because he was a nice and humble guy. No, no, no! He kept his mouth closed because he had to. He was our shepherd. He was a shepherd who put his life on the line for the sheep, in order to save the sheep. He truly **“bore up under the pain of unjust suffering” “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross...he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”** The only one who judges justly is God – the

one who can read hearts. And Jesus entrusted himself to the one who judges justly – to God the Father – upon the cross. And God judged him justly. He judged him justly, seeing the sins of the world laid upon Jesus, and poured out his wrath upon him. His life is the chief injustice in life – as well as the greatest good.

Our good shepherd endured suffering for our sake. And as Christians, we are called to follow Christ's example, we are called to follow in Christ's footsteps. Christ chose us, we didn't choose this for ourselves, he is the one pouring hope into our lives. And we are able to do this because of our enduring hope, our enduring hope in our shepherd, who still cares for us today.

(2)

The picture which Peter gives us is that of a father and son walking on the beach. The son sees his father's footprints in the sand, and he jumps from one imprint to another as well as his stubby little legs can carry him. The son does this because he wants to imitate his father, he looks up to him. It is the same idea which is brought forth with a Christian and Christ. We see the footprints in the sand and want to step in line with them.

Of course following Christ's example doesn't mean we imitate what he accomplished, but it does mean we are following him on our way to heaven. We follow him, we walk in his footsteps, when we endure the pain of unjust suffering. It actually is really interesting that Peter uses two different words for "endurance" depending on whether you deserve the suffering or not. The word he uses for enduring unjust suffering means to willingly place yourself under. Even though you have every right not to place yourself under that suffering, you do, because that is what Christ called you for.

So we willingly place ourselves under unjust suffering, just as we willingly place ourselves under our government and respect their authority, we willingly place ourselves under the ones God has called to be our spiritual head – a pastor or teacher, wives willingly place themselves under their husbands, as the church places itself under Christ. We do all of this because Christ placed himself under God's law. And by doing this, we do not show weakness (as so many imagine), but we show trust, confidence, and ENDURING HOPE IN A SHEPHERD who still cares for us today.

When we place ourselves under others, when we endure unjust punishment, we are entrusting ourselves to him who judges justly. We don't have to open our mouth for justice, because we already have one who will speak justice on our behalf. That is how this shepherd is still caring for us today. We now know that we don't have to fight for every inch so that our life might be just, so that our country might be just, so that our world might be just, that isn't the point, we know that it will be just in the end. That is why Stephen was not afraid to die at the hands of his enemies, he trusted in the one who still cared for him.

This last week, a story surfaced about a show that the Home and Garden network cancelled even before they showed an episode. The show was cancelled because of the outrage from fans about the hosts holding an anti-gay stance. These two brothers responded in this way, "*We were saddened to hear HGTV's decision. With all of the grotesque things that can be seen and heard on television today you would think there would be room for two twin brothers who are faithful to our families, committed to biblical principles, and dedicated professionals. If our faith costs us a television show then so be it.*"

Things like this are to be expected. This speaks to a Christian's endurance. Endurance that is strengthened in the Word of God, endurance that we willingly go through these trials in life, just because we're Christians. We have ENDURING HOPE IN A SHEPHERD who came, found us, and brought us back into the fold, and who will use us to bring others back into the fold as well. He will use those tough times to draw us closer to him, putting to death our sins that we might live for righteousness. Our Easter hope is sure, our Easter hope is full, our Easter hope is in an enduring shepherd. Amen.