

**FOLLOWING HIS STEPS  
I PETER 2:18-25**

**NEED:                   A COMMITMENT TO CHRIST**

**PROPOSITION:       JESUS IS THE EXAMPLE THAT WE ARE TO FOLLOW.**

**OBJECTIVE:           TO LEAD OUR YOUTH TO MAKE A PERSONAL  
                          COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS.**

**INTRODUCTION:**

It has never been easy to live a Christian life. It was especially difficult and dangerous to live a Christian life in that first century world. Many of the early Christians came from a background of poverty and enslavement. Because of this they had no political influence or power. They found themselves to be vulnerable to opposition at many different levels.

One of the things that contributes to the difficulty of the Christian life is the fact that the majority of the world does not share your commitment to Christ. They do not share it now nor have they ever shared it. Different nations and periods of history have been Christian in only a nominal sense. There have been periods in some nations in which the Christian influences was predominate for a given period of time. But that did not mean that a majority of the people in that period of time shared a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Whatever predominance Christian influence had in our society it is now gone. The powers that are controlling the world around us are in opposition to Jesus Christ.

One of the things that marks a true Christian, however, is the desire to do what is right.

Whatever the world about them may do, they desire to do the right thing in each circumstance. However, it is not always easy to know what the right thing is. This difficulty makes this word from Simon Peter especially helpful. He reminds us that Jesus Christ Himself is our example and that we are to do what He did as we face the different situations in life. We are to follow His steps! The word for example in this passage has an interesting background. It was used of something that happened in the classroom when people were being taught. One of the ways that teachers have taught children to write the letters of the alphabet is to give them a sheet of paper that has the letters of the alphabet written across the top. It is the responsibility then of the student to copy those letters as best they can. They learn to write the alphabet by imitating the letters that are written across the page. Jesus is the ABC's of life written clearly so that we can copy those letters into life day by day as we follow in His steps. Just as little children grow in their ability to copy those letters correctly from year to year, so we should be growing in our ability to live life as Jesus lived life. The longer we are Christians the more like Jesus we ought to be in the way we live our lives.

When you look at this context in which Peter gives this word y you see three situations in which we are particularly responsible for following Jesus. Actually, we are to follow Him in all of life but this passage helps us focus upon three very critical areas.

## **I. WHEN TEMPTED TO DO WRONG.**

One of the things we learn about Jesus in this passage is that Jesus was without sin. He was not without sin because He was without temptation. Another writer in the New Testament assures us

that Jesus experienced every temptation that you or I will ever know. Listen to this word that Peter quotes, "He committed no sin and no deceit was found in His mouth."

The New Testament helps us by giving us a detailed report on one encounter Jesus had with temptation. It was a severe struggle with the tempter himself. You will recall that when Jesus was confronted with the temptation to turn the stones into bread, to leap from the pinnacle of the temple and gain the approval of the world, and to bow before Satan as a means of gaining a position of power in the world, that Jesus choose to do what was right, even the will of God. He withstood each of the temptations because He never varied in His commitment to God at every point.

You will never be able to live a life in this world free from temptation. There is no sin in being tempted but there is the opportunity to sin in every temptation. We must learn to see temptation as a serious matter. We often succumb to temptation because we have not prepared ourselves to face such a temptation. We succumb step by step and suffer the consequences.

There was a "Kathy" cartoon that appeared on the comic page some time ago that illustrates how we succumb to temptation. Kathy was struggling with her diet. There are 10 frames in the cartoon for that day. In frame 1 Kathy says, "I will take a drive but won't go near the grocery store." Frame 2: "I will drive by the grocery store, but I will not go in." Frame 3: "I will go into the grocery store, but will not walk down the isle where the Halloween candy is on sale." Frame 4: "I will look at the candy, but not pick it up." Frame 5: "I will pick it up but not buy

it." Frame 6: "I will buy it but not open it." Frame 7: "Open it but not smell it." Frame 8: "Smell it, but not taste it." Frame 9: "Taste it, but not eat it." Frame 10: "Eat, eat, eat, eat!" If we are not careful that is the way it happens to us.

Jesus is our example. Deal decisively and immediately with every temptation to do wrong. Always choose to do the will of God. The thing that will be most obedient to God in every circumstance of life. Actually, if you ever take even the first step down the road that Kathy walked. It is almost impossible to turn back.

## **II. WHEN SUFFERING FOR DOING RIGHT**

This is really the application of this passage. Christian slaves of that first century world found themselves being mistreated simply because they had become Christians. They were owned by men who were not Christians and many who were just naturally cruel and evil.

Peter distinguishes between two kinds of suffering that may come to us in life. There is some suffering that comes to us as a consequence for having done wrong. When this type of suffering comes, there is no special benefit in it. But there is also suffering that comes to us as a consequence of having done right. This suffering is unjust and can become a source of special blessing in our lives.

Some of you young people have known some unjust sufferings in your life. They may not be the consequence of having done right, but they are not the consequence of having done wrong.

Some of you have been subjected to unjust sufferings through a divorce that happened in your family. You were not the cause of the divorce, but you suffered because of it. Some of you have even known physical abuse or sexual abuse. This suffering came to you not because of something you did wrong but yet it came with great pain. Jesus is our example in responding to suffering that comes for having done right.

The sufferings of Jesus were severe. They came to Him totally without cause. Peter reminds us, "Christ suffered for you." and then he adds, "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." There is an important lesson for us to learn in this.

1. We must not seek to retaliate against those who done us wrong.

Jesus could have, but He did not seek to retaliate. When they insulted Him He did not respond with insults. When they hurt Him He did not try to hurt them. He Himself said that he could have called for t least 10,000 angels to have taken up His cause against those who did it wrong. But He didn't. Any time y you seek to retaliate against someone who has done you wrong, you lose what ever spiritual benefit there might have been in that suffering.

2. You trust God to defend your cause and to see that right is done.

This is what Jesus did: "He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly."

Jesus placed Himself in the hand of the righteous judge of the universe, His heavenly Father. You will remember at the cross He prayed, "Father, forgive them they know not what they do." But His last prayer from the cross was, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." This last prayer turned everything over to the Father. If those who were doing Him wrong were to ever face the consequences of what they had done against Him, then His Heavenly Father would have to do it. He Himself, those who did Him wrong, the wrong that they did was all placed in the hands of the heavenly Father. Now when a person takes a step like this, then they get the maximum benefit from the suffering they have endured.

Some of you need to take such a step of faith. You need to follow the example of Jesus. Instead of being bitter and resentful against those who have done you wrong, you need to turn yourself and the wrong that was done over to the righteous judge of this universe. He is fully capable of defending your cause and seeing that the right thing is done. None of us are wise enough and good enough or strong enough to see that they righteous thing is done. Only God is capable of this. So, Jesus is our example in responding to suffering that is unjust.

### **III. WHEN FACING AN OPPORTUNITY TO BLESS OTHERS.**

There is another aspect of the cross of Jesus that provides us an example to follow. Peter continues the presentation by saying, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness: by His wounds you have been healed."

When Jesus faced the cross it was obviously an opportunity for Him to save you and me. He

knew this because of things the Father has shown Him about His up-coming cross. Jesus knew this the night that he went to the Garden of Gethsemane. But He also knew that if He was to do us good, provide our salvation, then it was to require an extreme price from Him. In order to save us, He must be willing to give Himself over to death completely. During the struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus willingly choose to do the will of His heavenly Father even though He knew it would cost Him His life. None of us ever faced the same opportunity to do good that Jesus faced. None of us ever faced that extreme price that Jesus had to pay. But all of us will face a similar opportunity. All of us have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others for good. But if we are to make a difference in our world, then we must follow the example of Jesus. We must be willing to put others above ourselves. We must be willing to submit ourselves to the will of the Father and to obey Him at all cost.

This really touches a critical point for many of us. Many of us can trace our spiritual problems to this very spot. We are having difficulties in our Christian lives because our commitment to our Lord is conditional. We have never quite decided that we will put the will of God and the blessing of others above our own pleasure and our own will. We have quite been able to pick up our cross and to follow Jesus.

Is it not encouraging that Jesus does not ask us to do something for Him and for others that He has not already done for us. Jesus does not ask you to bear a cross and to give your life for Him until He bore His cross and gave His life for you. Jesus does not ask you to bear a burden in Christian service until He has borne the burden of your sins upon the cross. So whatever we do

in following His example is our grateful response to what He has done already on our behalf on the cross.

Young people, you are at that critical point in life which you are making strategic decisions. One of the decisions you are making is whom will you follow? Many of you have been baptized and have declared in that Baptism that you intend to follow Jesus. But let me remind you that this means more than being faithful in Sunday School. This means more than just being able to say to others, "I am a Christian." This means that you are ready to follow Jesus step by step each day. You will seek to be in the world what He was in the world. You will seek to address life and respond to life as He addressed life and responded to life.

This means that when you are tempted, you will respond to the temptation like He responded to temptation. It means that when you are wrong and mistreated, you will respond to the wrong and the hurt, as He responded to wrong and injustice. It means when you face an opportunity to do something for God that will bless others, you will surrender to that even as Jesus surrendered to His cross. It means that you will readily and joyfully day by day follow the shepherd of your souls where ever He leads.

Peter closes this wonderful paragraph with the word "For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls." This means that there was a time when we did what we wanted to do. We did things our own way, but we have decided to become Christians. We have decided to make Jesus the shepherd and overseer of our lives. This

means that we live life day by day by following Him step by step. This is the only way to live life joyfully and fruitfully.