

1 Peter 2:19-25 NIV

“Turning suffering into victory”

“For it is commendable if *people* bear up under the pain of unjust suffering because *they* are conscious of God. (20) 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.

“(21) **To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.** (22) **‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’** (23) **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.**

“(24) 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. (25) For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Trusting God and in Jesus’ resurrection is our only sure hope.

Do you think some ministers feel depressed this week because they can’t hold Easter services?

In the past few weeks, have you gained confidence and hope or are you now struggling?



Are you of late finding more or less joy?

Though most people seem upbeat, I suspect that some currently run on the blues side.

When the Apostle Peter wrote today’s text, he faced greater concerns than social distancing and financial worries.

Peter’s belief in Jesus put his life in full jeopardy.

He knew, as he wrote this, that enemies of Christ would shortly kill him as they did Jesus.

We don’t know as many details of Peter’s later life as we do of Paul’s.

Yet we know authorities tried to waste Peter.

How did this endangerment affect Peter?

The Book of Acts gives us a unique picture.

The incident took place about 44 AD:

In an assault on Jesus’ followers, King Herod persecuted and arrested some church members.

He beheaded James, the brother of John.

This violence won Herod the approval of many enemies of Christ.

Herod’s cohorts arrested and imprisoned Peter, handing him over to be guarded by 16 soldiers.

“Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover (this time of year).”

“5 The church was earnestly praying to God for him. 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.

“7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. ‘Quick, get up!’ he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. 8 Then the angel said to him, ‘Put on your clothes and sandals.’ And Peter did so. ‘Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,’

the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision.

“10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.”¹

Imagine being considered so dangerous by law enforcement, they chain you to two officers and 14 others help confine you--inside the jail.

Peter knew that at his trial the next day, the court would find him guilty, and they would immediately execute him by beheading him.



But Peter slept soundly--without Sominex, Jack Daniels, or any weed.

A bright light didn’t even awaken him; an angel whacked his side.

Peter hadn’t always been so cool and courageous.

¹ See Acts 12:1-

He earlier bragged a lot and he wasn't exactly “Joe Cool” under pressure.

Recall his boast that, he'd never disown Jesus, but then he denied him three times at Jesus' kangaroo trial?

What changed Peter's demeanor?

Paul made an even greater transformation.

About four years before this time, he acted as a chief prosecuting attorney.

Paul brought Christians to trial and always recommended severe punishment for them.

After Paul changed, he spent the rest of his life helping people know Jesus and establishing churches in places where no one even heard of Jesus.

Paul made a lively finish.

In his old age with his eyes on the goal, Paul finished strongly.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”²

How can we make that happen?

How do we live confidently all our life?

The key: we set our hopes in the right place.



Here's what happens to many of us:

E.g. –Say you're a guy, hungry for an ice cream cone.

You can already taste its cool smoothness.

You go to an ice cream shop and order a tall twist cone.

You savor it a second and start to take a bite.

At that moment, a well-dressed dude enters the shop.

This chap has a chick on each arm—I'm not speaking of tattoos.

Really attractive young ladies accompany him.

The guy orders 3 banana splits.

² 2 Corinthians 4:16 NIV

Each of them (the banana splits) has 3 huge scoops—dripping with strawberries, chocolate syrup, marshmallow, and with a cherry on top .



**You look at your single twist cone.
Suddenly it's not as appetizing.**

Not only that, while you have been eyeing the dude and his escorts, your ice cream melts across your knuckles and down the sleeve of your new shirt.

The Old Testament gives a classic example of this in I Samuel involving the first king of Israel.

Saul possessed qualities the world envies.

Saul was tall, smart, brave, hard-working, and conscientious with good leadership qualities.

But Saul didn't finish well.

No opposition party got him voted out of office.

No press criticized Saul.

When Narvaez, the Spanish patriot, lay dying, his father-confessor asked him whether he had forgiven

all his enemies. Narvaez looked astonished and said, **“Father, I have no enemies, I have shot them all.”**

As any king of his day did, Saul could have shot his enemies.

Saul enjoyed every advantage a person could hope for and the power to carry it out.

So why didn't Saul cross the finish line?

He made unwise choices in his every-day decisions.

Saul's increasing self-focus led to his downfall.

We usually fail to accomplish what we are capable of doing because we wrongly place our trust.

This well-gifted guy trusted in himself, not God.

In today's text, Peter advised the opposite:

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ⁽²²⁾ "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." ⁽²³⁾ 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.”

Note how this text began: “For it is commendable if people bear up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.”

- We begin by recalling that God created us and remains in control.
- This present life is a test: **do we trust God?**
- Jesus came to this planet, not only to die for us but to act as our life-coach.

Based on the above, our text continues:

“(21) To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

(22) He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” (23) 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.”

Do we experience injustices now?

Of course, inequities are part of our testing for advancement.



What examples did Jesus give us?

We treat others as we would want to be treated, but we don't retaliate against folks who mistreat us.

We don't judge others; we await God's judgment.

As we progress in learning, the difficulty of our tests increases.

Through all testing, the Lord expects us to:

- **Honor Him**
- **Serve others**
- **Encourage others.**
- **Show mercy toward everyone.**

We remember Jesus' resurrection and His promise to raise those who follow him.

What caused Peter and Paul to change from being ego-driven to caring, patient, loving guys?

From what the New Testament tells us, an advanced missionary course didn't fire them up.

Evidently neither one was a big intimidating, super-salesman, either.

Paul’s Latin name probably indicated a nickname like “Shorty” and the new name Jesus gave Simon (Peter) likely meant “Pebble” in Greek.

What made Peter and Paul fearless advocates?

Recall our text a few weeks ago from 1 Peter 1?

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

Both Peter and Paul saw and experienced Jesus alive after he died on the cross.

Jesus presented considerable evidence to both.

Risking their lives, they and the other apostles kept witnessing that Jesus returned from death. Wherever they went and under great duress, early believers kept telling others of Jesus’ resurrection.

During communion at their first-day-of-the-week gatherings, they spoke of Jesus’ return from death.

They faced testing confident that Jesus arose on the 3rd day and will also raise those who trust him.

As do many contemporary folks, some in the Corinthian church questioned the resurrection. “How are the dead raised?”

As some do now, many doubted whether God could bring life back once death occurs.

Our parents had daughters born in 1924, 1926, and 1929.

Sons arrived in 1934, 1936, and 1939.

My dad gave us sons nicknames, in most cases not as flattering as Shorty and Pebble.

My elder brother, he called Peewee and he called me Poop-deck-pappy.

May I remind you that on older ships, the poop-deck was above the main deck?

Dad called my younger brother “Toot-n-squirt.”

Those doubting whether God can raise people from graves in the earth should recall that we all began from much less than a toot and squirt.



John the Baptist once told some arrogant religious guys who came to the wilderness: “I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”³

If God can create life out of Judean rocks, he can certainly bring life back from Midwestern soil, or any conditions.

He created the Cosmos from nothing.



Judean Wilderness

With a word he'll bring us believers back to life.

This Easter as we practice enforced ease:

- Pray that all God's creatures will contemplate the greatness of our Creator.
- Pray that we shall thank him for Jesus.
- Pray that we shall diligently imitate Jesus.
- Pray that we shall look forward to new, permanent life in Him.

- Pray that we shall endure our testing and at the same time encourage others to believe.
- If we place our faith and hope in God so that we serve, encourage and show mercy to the end of our days, the Lord promises to help us across the finish line.

“In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”

God bless you as you hope and trust in Him!

Happy Resurrection Day!

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³ Matthew 3:9 NIV