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“CHRIST’S MIRROR IMAGE” – ‘Imitation Stage’
“IMITATE JESUS IN HIS DEMONSTRATION OF PATIENT ENDURANCE”
(1 Peter 2:19-23)

Intro ... Today we come to the seventh and final ‘*Imitation Action*’ in our journey toward Christ-Likeness. Next week we will review all seven.

IMITATION ACTION SEVEN ...

“IMITATE Jesus In His DEMONSTRATION of PATIENT ENDURANCE”

- Enduring patiently when **SUFFERING** unjustly –

Now I don’t have to tell you that this runs contrary to just about every instinct we possess.

This action of patient endurance demonstrates that an entirely different kind of life is taking shape within us. It demonstrates that the Spirit of God, ‘*Pneuma*’ Himself, is walking us in an entirely new direction.

The presence of this quality of ‘*patient endurance*’ demonstrates that He is in the process of conforming us to an image other than the one we normally see in our mirror.

People (and especially Americans) do not take unjust, undeserved suffering well ... The fact is we Americans don’t take any suffering well!

In fact, some of the most common words spoken in this land between the Atlantic and the Pacific are the words: “*It’s not fair*” and “*I don’t deserve this*”.

What we are saying today is that those angry, accusatory, self-focused words never came out of Jesus’ mouth and they should not come out of the mouths of his ‘*Spirit-Led Followers*’.

Now before any of us says ... “*This message is not fair – I don’t deserve to feel the way it’s going to make me feel*” ... let’s look at **Today’s Key Scriptures**. In fact, I’m going to hurry right along because I don’t want to give myself the chance to say those words!

Each of the verses we will look at today come from an amazing statement that the Spirit of God had Peter put into print in his First General Epistle to the Churches of the First Century.

Here they are ...

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ... 1 Peter 2:19-23

* It is **COMMENDABLE** if a man bears up under the **PAIN** of **UNJUST SUFFERING** ... (vs. 19)

Fascinating ... the word that Peter uses here that is translated 'commendable' is actually the Greek word '**Karis**' which is most commonly and almost exclusively translated 'Grace' – meaning '*strength and provision that is distinctively God-Given*'.

So Peter is saying that it is a most 'Grace-Filled' – 'Grace-Displaying' – thing when a follower of Christ bears up (holds up) under the pain of unjust suffering.

Just think with me for a moment ... How much suffering in this world is 'unjust'? How do we define it?

Unjust suffering (simply put) is '*any suffering to which we can honestly say ...*
"I've done nothing wrong – I've done nothing to deserve this."

Lots of suffering falls into this category ... We are just '*minding our own business*' and the actions of others cause us to '*suffer*'.

Can be suffering brought about by their '*mean spirits*' – Can be suffering brought about by their '*foolish actions*' – Can be suffering brought about simply by the '*brokenness of this fallen sinful world*'.

Peter says that it's a '*grace-filled thing*' to bear up well under such circumstances and the truth is, only by the Grace of God given by the Spirit of God can we do that.

Peter concludes that nineteenth verse with these words ...

"Because He is conscious of God."

It's our consciousness of God (and I would add 'of God's Holy Spirit Who walks beside us') that enables us not only to desire to '*bear up under the pain of unjust suffering*' but to actually pull it off.

This becomes a powerful testimony ...

That's what the repentant thief on the cross beside Jesus observed (Luke 23:41) ...

"We are getting what we deserve" – our pain is justified –
"He has done nothing wrong" - His pain is completely undeserved.

He was so impressed by Jesus' '*commendable*' behavior that he asked Jesus to save him.

"Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom."

Sometimes these are the only words that we can say when the '*pain of life's sufferings threaten to overwhelm us*' - pain brought by people or circumstance.

"The Lord's Kingdom is coming and I will be part of it."

So sometimes suffering comes when we are just '*minding our own business*' – just seeking to '*live a godly life*'. We have done nothing wrong and we surely don't deserve it but it comes nevertheless.

God says that it is a '*Grace-Demonstrating Thing*' to bear up well under it – to endure it patiently as we await the fulfillment of God's Plan in our lives.

And this we can do as we remain – '*Conscious of God*' and the '*Spirit of God*' who walks beside us and '*graces us*'.

Peter now goes on and mentions a second kind of unjust suffering (vs. 20) ...

** If you **SUFFER** for doing **GOOD** and you **ENDURE** it,
this is **COMMENDABLE** before God (vs. 20)*

This is a second kind of '*Grace-Filled/Grace-Demonstrating*' Suffering ...
This is a particularly hurtful and frustrating kind. It's when you can say ...

"I've done something good – I've don't deserve this."

You acted with the '*best of intentions*' – you truly had a '*pure heart*' – you stepped in and took a positive action and people were benefitted and yet you have been '*punished for it*'.

You were told it '*wasn't your place*' – or that you did it just to '*show off*' – or that you did it to '*advance yourself*' – to gain '*advantage or reputation*'.

Only by being '*Conscious of God and Of God's Holy Spirit who walks with us*' can we bear up under this kind of painful treatment. We must ready ourselves for it. We must not expect that all our '*good deeds*' will be commended though we would like them to be.

We must understand that there will be times when we will suffer pain simply because we have '*done the right and god-honoring thing*'. We are by no means the first to experience such mistreatment.

This is Jesus as a 12 year old boy, remaining in the temple to discuss spiritual things with the teachers of the law and having his own mother accuse him of being thoughtless and insensitive to his family (Luke 2:48).

This is Jesus (in his adult ministry) '*Casting out a demon*' and being accused of being in league with the Devil (Luke 11:15).

This is Jesus correctly interpreting the Scriptures regarding Himself and being accused of committing '*Blasphemy*' and deemed '*worthy of death*' (Mark 14:64).

Jesus suffered – '*patiently endured*' all of these for a reason and here it is ...

* **CHRIST** suffered for you, leaving you an **EXAMPLE** ... (vs. 21)

Here's our 'Mirror Image' statement ...

Here's what we are to see as we look into our own spiritual mirror.

We are to see looking back at us one who 'endures unjust suffering patiently'... whether the suffering is brought to us intentionally or simply as a result of us living in a broken, sin-filled world. And we are to see such a one because that is the very image of the Savior we follow. That is the very example that Jesus has set ... The more 'Conscious of Him' we are, the more likely to 'suffer patiently' we will be.

There's one more thing the Spirit had Peter share in this Scripture but before we look at that, let me point out to us ...

SEVERAL UNHAPPY BUT NECESSARY TO KNOW TRUTHS ...

We need to know these things lest we be 'blindsided' by them.

1. Not all people will respond **POSITIVELY** to the **WITNESS** and **LIFESTYLE** of an **IMITATOR** of Jesus.

The 'Cheers of the Crowd' today are not focused upon those who stand for and practice Biblical Values – more likely it's the 'Jeers' of the Crowd that Bible-Based Believers hear.

2. Some will directly **OPPOSE** and even seek to **DESTROY**.

In lands other than our own, followers of Jesus Christ are attacked and killed or mutilated routinely. In our own land, followers of Jesus Christ are driven out of business, thrown out of institutions of higher learning, fired from jobs or overlooked for advancement because of their faith.

3. **ACCUSATIONS** might arise – **RUMORS** might be spread - **SLANDEROUS** comments might be made – Great **PAIN** might be felt.

Jesus said that the devil was the 'Father of Lies' (John 8:44) so is it any wonder that those under His Control take such 'liberty with the truth'?

Here now is the 'example' Jesus set for us – Here's how His Image looks ...

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS ... 1 Peter 2:23

He did not **RETALIATE** – He made no **THREATS** ...
He **ENTRUSTED** Himself to Him who **JUDGES JUSTLY**.

Now that observation – that firsthand report from Peter - leads right into our ...

Final Thought ...

Those who **TRUST** God don't spend a lot of time **DEFENDING** themselves –
They '**IMITATE**' Jesus. They **ENDURE** suffering **PATIENTLY**.