

When Life is Not Fair

I. Look to Christ

II. Follow in his Steps

III. Entrust Yourself to God's Care

*<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>[a]</sup>*

*<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,”<sup>[b]</sup> but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

“That's not right! It's just not fair.” Tell me, have you ever experienced that emotion? The feeling that you get when you've just experienced some form of injustice. Maybe you're busting your tail at work week after week and that other girl is just chatting it up with the boss, and she gets the promotion instead of you. And you're thinking, “That's not fair! I'm doing all the work around here.” Or maybe you need some work done on your home, so you research various contractors, you make a down payment – and the guy skips town with your money, leaving you holding an empty bag. “That's not right!” Or maybe you go the extra mile to give your children everything they need, and in the end, they aren't grateful for what you've done. Instead, they blame you for messing up their lives. “Really?” Or in a moment of honesty, you admit your faults to someone you've sinned against and instead of forgiving you they hold those sins against you. In fact, they go and blab them to everyone they know. Or maybe there was someone you thought cared about you, someone you trusted, but he took advantage of you. He hurt you. But because of who he is, or because of the position he holds, you feel like you can't say anything about it. And so, he gets away with it. And you're thinking, “That's not right. That's just not fair!”

Chances are, we've all experienced situations similar to these, where we were treated unfairly. We were wronged. We got the short end of the stick. We were victims of injustice. And when that happens, we often feel angry, bitter, frustrated. We want to get revenge on that other person. Or at the very least, make sure everyone knows how badly we were treated. Sometimes that anger is ultimately directed toward God. “God, how could you let this happen? I mean, if you really are a just God, then where is the justice in my life? How can you allow me to be treated so unfairly? It feels like I'm being punished for doing the right thing.”

My friends, in our study of God's word today, we're going to deal with that very real emotion. Here the Apostle Peter is writing to Christians who are experiencing the pain of unjust suffering. And the advice that he offers to them still applies to you and me today. When it comes

to the question, what do we do:

### When Life Is Not Fair?

St. Peter offers three answers:

- I. Look to Christ
- II. Follow in his Steps
- III. Entrust Yourself to God's Care

First, look to Christ—for two reasons. First, to see how he handled injustice in his life. Think of the injustices he endured. Jesus was perfect. He never did anything wrong. And yet, people accused him of blasphemy for saying he was the Son of God—when he was! They accused him of being in cahoots with the Devil for performing miracles. He was convicted of crimes he didn't commit, beaten with blows for telling the truth. Ridiculed and despised and ultimately nailed to a cross even though, as the prophet Isaiah foretold, *He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. (Isaiah 53:9).*

And yet, in spite of all the injustice that Jesus endured, how did he respond? St. Peter tells us, *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats (1 Peter 2:23).* Now, just for a minute, I want you to contrast that with how you or I might react if we were in Jesus' situation. What would be your response to someone punching you in the face for no good reason. How would you react if you were charged and convicted of a crime you didn't commit? Or punished for someone else's sins? Would you respond as Jesus did? Would you endure it without complaint? How did the prophet put it? *As a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7).*

I don't know about you, but I can tell you that's not how I react when I know that I've been wronged. Chances are, somebody's going to hear about it. I'm going to let it be known that “this was not right. This is not fair. I've been mistreated.” And even if I manage to keep my mouth shut, that doesn't mean that I don't hang on to it in my heart. I hold a grudge. I cannot let it go. I long for some form of revenge. And in the end by my attitude toward that person who wronged me, I prove that I am no better than the person who wronged me. I'm guilty of being bitter, vengeful, unforgiving, judgmental.

But you see, that's the second reason we need to look to Christ. Not only to see how he handled other people's sins against him. But more importantly to see how he handled my sins against him. What does St Peter say? *“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.” (1 Peter 2:24)*

My friends, as we think about the various ways that we've been treated unfairly, the times when people have sinned against us, when we think about the times when we responded in a less than Christ-like manner, it's important to remember what St. Peter says here. *By his wounds you have been healed.* Whether we are hurting because of what someone did to us or were hurting because of how we responded, the fact is, our healing is found in Christ. Christ offered up his life on a cross to take up our infirmities and carry our sorrows. With his blood, Christ has given us a new identity. Our identity is not “victim of injustice.” Our identity is not “avenger of all wrongs”. Rather, our identity is “redeemed, restored, and forgiven, child of God.”

My friends, that's why, when it seems like life is not fair, the first place to look is to Jesus, to see what he's done for us, to see that he has made you right with God, to see that by his wounds you are healed. But once you see that, once you see that in Christ you are a forgiven child of God, then God calls you and me to put that new identity into action in our lives. Or to

put it another way, when it seems like life is not fair, God calls us to not only: I. Look to Christ, but also to: II. Follow in his steps.

Here in our text, St Peter puts it this way. *If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. And now here's the important part: To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

Now let's not misunderstand what Peter is saying here. He's not saying that we all need to follow Jesus' example and suffer and die on the cross, just like Jesus did. No, Jesus suffered and died on the cross, so that we don't have to. Jesus died in our place. Peter is also not saying that there are no injustices in the world, or that we shouldn't work to protect the rights of those who are being mistreated, the victims of discrimination. No, when Peter says that we should follow in the footsteps of Jesus, he means that when we suffer injustice, we need to maintain the same attitude that Jesus maintained. That means, there's no room for retaliation. No "he hit me, so I'm going to hit him back harder." Rather, it means turning the other cheek, it means repaying evil with good. Maybe that means saying as Jesus did from the cross, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*" (Luke 23:34).

This is the example that Jesus has set for us. It's the pattern, or the footsteps, that we are to follow. In fact, in the original language, that word would be translated literally, the "writing under." What does that mean? Well, do you remember when you were in kindergarten and were learning to write the letters of the alphabet? Your teacher gave you a piece of paper with dotted lines in the shape of the letter A. And you had to take your pencil and trace over the lines to form a properly shaped letter. Well, in the Greek, those dotted lines were called "the underwriting." It was the pattern that a student followed to form the letters correctly. Well, so it is with you and me, as Christians. God has given us a pattern to follow. And the pattern is Jesus. When Jesus suffered injustice, he did not retaliate.

So, when life seems unfair: I. Look to Christ, II. Follow his Steps, and maybe most important of all, III. Entrust yourself to God's care. You realize, this is what Jesus did. Notice what St Peter says about Jesus. *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threat. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.* What does that mean? It means that Jesus knew that he had a father in heaven who is not oblivious to what Jesus was going through, a God who knows right from wrong. A God who would not let injustice go unpunished. God would make sure that things came out right in the end. That is why, when Jesus was suffering terrible injustice at the hands of men, he did not feel the need to retaliate. He didn't need to feel bitter or resentful. He could leave the whole matter in the hands of God. He could let God be the judge. He could, as St. Peter put it, *entrust himself to him who judges justly.*

My friends, isn't the same thing true for you and me as well? So often when we suffer some injustice, when something bad happens to us, when we are mistreated in some way, we want to play the judge. We want to hand down the verdict. We say, "What that person did was wrong! He should be punished. And here's the punishment: I'm going to make them pay for what they did. I'll withhold my forgiveness. At the very least, I'll remain bitter about what happened." But you realize, when we do that, when we refuse to let go of those injustices, those sins that people commit against us, we end up carrying those burdens on our shoulders. That's a heavy load to bear!

That's why God says in Deuteronomy 32, "*It's mine to avenge. I will repay,*" says the Lord. (Deuteronomy 32:35). Or as Paul writes to the Romans, *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath.* (Romans 12:19). In other words, you and I don't have to

be the judge. We can leave the judging in God's hands. He knows what's going on. He is a far better judge of people's hearts and actions than we are. actions and motives than we are. That's why we can entrust ourselves, we can entrust our circumstances, we can entrust justice into God's hands. Even if it seems like nobody appreciates the good we do, even if the world opposes us for doing what is God pleasing, the fact is, God knows. God cares. God will make sure it all comes out right in the end.

And how do you know that? Because you have a good shepherd. A shepherd who loved you enough to lay down his life for you. A shepherd who, with his final breath, entrusted his spirit into the hands of his Father in heaven. A shepherd who prayed, *"Not my will, but yours be done."* God trusted his Father, and so can you. By God's grace, you are under the care and protection of that Good Shepherd. How did Saint Peter put it? *For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and overseer of your souls.* Let's face it, God never promised that life on this side of the grave would always be fair. Quite the opposite. As followers of Jesus, there are going to be times when we suffer injustices just as he did. But what did God say about those who suffer such injustice? He says, *It is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.*

Dear Christians, that's you. People who are conscious of God. When it seems like life is not fair you don't have to pretend it doesn't hurt. But you also don't need to wallow in self-pity. You don't need to blame God for the injustice, but you also don't need to take matters into your own hands. Instead, you can do what Jesus did. You can hand the whole matter over to God. The God who died to give you forgiveness for sins. The God who suffered to give you an example to follow. And the God who you can trust will make everything come out good and right in the end, for your good and his glory, in the name of Jesus, your Good Shepherd. Amen.