

“A Portrait of a Surrendered Life”

1 Peter 2:21-25

One of the greatest men who ever lived was Hudson Taylor who was the founder of the China Inland Mission. He was born in 1832 to James and Amelia Taylor, a Methodist couple who had a heart for the people of the Far East. In fact, they had even prayed for their baby, “Grant that he may work for You in China.” His mother didn’t reveal this to him until after he responded to God’s call on his life.

As a teenager, Hudson Taylor experienced a spiritual birth while reading about the salvation of a coal miner who was dying of tuberculosis. He read about how some Christians had visited the man and shared the gospel with him through a series of Bible verses. The coal miner was particularly struck by 1 Peter 2:24, which says that Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the cross. When the dying man was told about how Jesus said, ‘It is finished,’ on the cross, it was then that he understood its true significance. Hudson Taylor would later go on to say that his attention became arrested by a single phrase in the tract, *“The finished work of Christ.”* He wondered why the author would use that expression. What exactly was it that was finished? The answer was full atonement and divine satisfaction for sin. He understood that the debt had been paid by Christ as the sinner’s substitute.

Up until that point, Hudson Taylor had been trying to make himself a Christian through his own efforts. He would later say of his conversion experience:

“And with this dawned the joyful conviction, as light was flashed into my soul by the Holy Spirit, that there was nothing in the world to be done but to fall down on my knees, and accepting this Savior and His salvation, to praise Him forevermore.”

Hudson Taylor understood what it meant to surrender to Jesus Christ. Not long after his conversion, he would surrender his life as a missionary to China. He would spend the next years in frantic preparation, learning the rudiments of medicine, studying Mandarin, and immersing himself ever deeper into the Bible and prayer. His life is a lesson in trusting God for one's every need. He said:

Hudson Taylor — *“China is not to be won for Christ by quiet, ease-loving men and women... The stamp of men and women we need is such as will put Jesus, China, [and] souls first and foremost in everything and at every time—even life itself must be secondary.”*

Hudson Taylor is an example of a life that was surrendered to God. And yet there is no greater picture anywhere of what it means to be surrendered to the will of God than the example of Jesus Himself. The portrait that we have of His life and ministry in the gospel accounts reflects this truth. Every thing that He did, every word that He spoke, every action that He took, was in perfect submission to God the Father. Jesus alone could rightfully say:

John 8:29— **“I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”**

It was His perfect surrender to the Father's plan that led Jesus all the way to the cross. He was surrendered to suffering, and this is Peter's argument here at the close of chapter two, in which he presents us with a portrait of what a truly surrendered life looks like.

1. He is our perfect STANDARD (2:21-23)

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in

return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”

Suffering is never easy, especially when you are suffering for your faith as a Christian. Yet Peter wants his readers to know that their suffering is all part of the plan of God for their lives. It isn't random or meaningless.

A word about calling

Peter says, “For to this you have been called.” We don’t often think of suffering mistreatment as something we've been called to. Instead, we like to think that Jesus has called us to a life of relative comfort and ease. Suffering is for those who are stronger than we are, for those who live in places around the world where Christianity is outlawed.

J.I. Packer — *“God uses chronic pain and weakness, along with other afflictions, as his chisel for sculpting our lives. Felt weakness deepens dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away. To live with your ‘thorn’ uncomplainingly—that is, sweet, patient, and free in heart to love and help others, even though every day you feel weak—is true sanctification. It is true healing for the spirit. It is a supreme victory of grace.”*

God doesn’t waste our pain, but uses it to serve His ultimate purpose and calling upon our lives.

For Peter’s readers, that calling involved suffering for Christ’s sake. They needed to know that to be a follower of Jesus is to be at odds with the world. The very moment they were born again, they became marked.

2 Timothy 3:12—“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that His followers would be the targets of unfair persecution. This present world system will launch a smear campaign against us. When it happens, it shouldn't take us by surprise. Rather, we should realize that it is something we've been called to.

There is no greater example of unfair treatment than what Jesus faced in His suffering at the hands of sinners. He was the only perfect Man who ever walked the face of this earth, and yet He faced continuous mistreatment. Isaiah said that the Messiah would be a ‘Man of Sorrows’ who was well acquainted with suffering. Christ *also* suffered!

A word about character

In His earthly ministry, Jesus was viewed with constant suspicion by the religious authorities. He was slandered and misunderstood. The crowds followed Him as long as they got their stomachs satisfied, but they soon abandoned Him. The same ones who welcomed Him into Jerusalem with shouts of ‘Hosanna’ were the same ones who shouted ‘Crucify Him’ less than a week later. Even His disciples ran out Him at the hour of His most intense agony.

How did Jesus respond to it all? Look at verses 22-23:

“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten,

Peter affirms the sinless nature of Jesus. When He was mistreated, He didn't make threats. He didn't curse those who cursed Him. He didn't return insult for

insult. He didn't revile those who reviled Him. No deceit was found in His mouth. The only One in history who had every right to lodge a complaint remained silent.

My sinful heart shows itself most easily and most often through my mouth! I find it all too easy to say something when I feel like I've been given the short end of the stick. It is easy to lash out, to become critical and bitter, and to demand my rights.

Someone has well said that our character comes out more through our reactions than our actions. Have you ever thought about that? Your reactions to your circumstances reveal a lot about you. Pressure reveals contents!

How will you react when you find yourself in the furnace? Notice how Jesus reacted to His suffering:

A word about confidence

"...but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

Jesus didn't demand His rights, He didn't threaten, nor did He thump His chest. He didn't do any of that. Instead, He was confidently surrendered to the will of His Father. He kept 'entrusting' Himself to Him who judges justly.

"Entrusting" — *means to commit or hand over; in the imperfect tense which speaks of repeated action*

The idea that Peter is expressing here is that Jesus kept handing Himself over to the Father in submission to the Father's perfect will, all the way up to His dying breath.

Luke 23:46— "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

Interestingly enough, Peter uses this same word in relation to the way we respond to suffering:

1 Peter 4:19—“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

And so think about how powerful Peter's words are here when he says that we've been called to unfair suffering as part of the Christian life. The reason? Verse 21 says:

“Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”

Jesus is the perfect standard of what we are to do when we suffer, when we hurt. He is our supreme example.

“Example” — word is ‘*hupogrammon*’ and literally means to write under; refers to a pattern placed under a sheet of tracing paper so the original image could be duplicated

Do you remember what you did when you were teaching your children to read and write? You’d begin by making them trace the letters of the alphabet so that they could become familiar with their shape. (illus. of Allie’s picture)

The idea that Peter is getting at here is that Jesus is the ‘*hupogrammon*,’ the pattern on which we trace our lives. We are to follow in His steps.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that we are to live our lives whereby we are constantly ‘looking unto Jesus,’ the author and finisher of our faith. When we encounter suffering and pain, we need to remember Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest we become weary and discouraged in our souls.

I don't know why we think we ought to have it easy, as if it we had the right to an easy, comfortable life. In reality, the Christian life is a life of warfare. It is a walk of faith in which we are following in our Lord's footsteps.

That we follow in His steps means that He has already gone on before us, and He has promised His presence with us. What, then, can we not face?

Sometimes, we complain because our circumstances are not fair. We sulk, we groan when the way gets tough.

What's it going to be? When the way gets tough, will we complain, or will we live surrendered to God?

Whenever we are taken advantage of, whenever we're wounded by others and tempted to retaliate, we look away from ourselves and look to Him. We follow in His steps.

2. He is our necessary SUBSTITUTE (2:24)

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

The surrender of Jesus' life is vividly seen in the way that He willingly gave Himself up as our substitute. He didn't of the cross against His own will, but was surrendered to the will of the Father. His sufferings were not inconsequential; there was a sovereign purpose behind them. He suffered for us. He bore our sins in His own body as our substitute.

“Bore” — *to carry the full weight of something heavy*

He carried the massive weight of our sins in His own body on the cross, something so heavy that all of creation groans and suffers from sin's consequences. And Jesus carried the full weight of that!

He bore in His body the weight of our sins. Jesus was fully surrendered to pay the ultimate price to save me. He did not give part of Himself. No, He gave all of Himself.

What was the purpose? It was two-fold. Listen:

"...that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."

Jesus carried the weight of my sin in His own body on the cross so that I might die to sin and self. The cross of Jesus repudiates all form of the self-life. How could I as someone who is following in His steps live as if life were all about me? But isn't that what we are often tempted to do? We come to church and sing such rich anthems of worship like, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," or, "At The Cross" or, "I Surrender All." And yet if we remain unmoved in the way that we view ourselves, if we fail to renounce the self-life, its nothing but empty words. He gave all of Himself for us, and following Him as His disciple means that I now surrender all that I have and all that I am to Him. "Me first" cannot be in the vocabulary of His disciple.

(illus. of those who wanted to follow in Luke 9)

Negatively, the cross means that I die to self. Positively, it means that I now live for righteousness. I am now free to pursue righteous living because Jesus has made me righteous. The Holy Spirit living within me enables and empowers me to live righteously. No longer do I live for my own will—I'm surrendered to His will.

- I've surrendered my spirit— *worship from the heart*
- I've surrendered my mind— *instruction in the Word*
- I've surrendered my body— *devotion to the mission*

Peter says by His wounds, you have been healed. He took the nails for me!
How can I not live for Him?

To get this in context, if Peter's readers were going to submit to those in authority over their lives, they needed to realize that it would all be patterned after Christ. I don't have to repay wound for wound. Jesus heals me no matter what others do to me. He was wounded for me, and there will come a time in my life as His disciple when I'm wounded for Him. To live righteously as a Christian is to be attacked by the world. But if I'm surrendered to His will, it won't matter what others say or do.

Mark 13:13—“You will be hated by all for my sake.”

He suffered and was in full submission. He suffered for us, and His followers in the world, the time will come when we suffer for Him in obedience to His mission.

3. He is our faithful SHEPHERD (2:25)

“For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Peter's words in these verses echo what the prophet Isaiah wrote in the 53rd chapter of his book. Isaiah said that the Messiah would be a surrendered Servant who suffered on the behalf of His people, a Shepherd who rescues sheep.

(1) *Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*

- (2) *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him,*
- (3) *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*
- (4) *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*
- (5) *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*
- (6) *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*
- (7) *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*
- (8) *He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken.*
- (9) *And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.*
- (10) *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.*
- (11) *He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.*

(12) Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The point of Peter's words is unmistakably clear. The fact of our submission, whether it be to the government or to unjust employers, is predicated upon the submission of Christ to do the Father's will. In fact, submission is going to continue to be the theme through the next chapter.

I think that if we would all be honest, we would admit that we have a submission problem. We don't want to subject ourselves to anyone, much less to those who mistreat and take advantage of us. Self-lordship is the option we are often tempted to choose. Surrender doesn't come natural.

Peter's says that we were straying like stubborn sheep, but it took a Shepherd to bring us back to the fold.

“Shepherd” — *word is 'poimen' and means pastor*

“Overseer” — *word is 'episkopos' and means bishop*

And so Peter's words in this passage aren't welcomed and celebrated in a culture like ours. In fact, they are counter-cultural. They are radical. They go against the flow.

Self is the enemy of surrender. To live surrendered to God means that you deny self. And Peter knew this better than anyone. God had to bring him to the place where he came to the end of himself.

Remember how proud Peter had been, so sure of himself? He had even tried to keep Jesus from suffering the cross, at which point Jesus rebuked him and said,

“Get behind me, Satan.” When Jesus had called Peter, it was a call to follow, which meant that Jesus was supposed to be out front, not Peter. Jesus is the One who calls the shots.

Even when Jesus told the disciples that they would all abandon Him, Peter said, “Never, Lord! Even if all forsake You, I never will!” Yet Jesus told the proud disciple that he would deny knowing Him three times before the rooster crowed the next morning. Sure enough, that is exactly what happened. Rather than denying self, Peter denied his Savior—three times.

Luke 22:61-62—“And the Lord turned, and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”

Peter knew the bitter tears of failure. He knew the pain and heartache that was brought on by his overconfidence in himself. And yet those same tears marked a turning point in his life. It was the moment Peter came to understand what it meant to turn from himself and surrender to Christ. Before he would be able to take up the pen and encourage the church, Peter had to come to the end of himself.

A lot Christian people live out their days settling for second best. Their lives are bankrupt because they've not yet come to the end of themselves. There are times that they long for more of God, and so they bounce from church to church trying to find something that seems so illusive. Yet they miss the fact that discipleship means I give God more of me. Unlike Peter, they've not yet wept the bitter tears that come from having the self-life stripped away. They've not yet come to the end of themselves.

Here is some closing application:

- *Discipleship demands a life that is surrendered to God.*

You and I must learn to endure our painful situations in life by being mindful of God's purpose behind it all. When I'm truly surrendered to God, my circumstances aren't my primary concern.

You need to understand that whenever you are faced with unjust circumstances, just like Peter's readers, whether it be mistreatment by someone who was supposed to be a friend, or whether you're targeted for your faith by an unbelieving supervisor, God has a purpose behind it. Whether at work, at home, or at church, my attitude must always be one of surrendered submission, and my focus is on Christ and His glory.

- *Surrender does not come cheap.*

Surrender comes with a price, and that price is the denial of self. We are often quick to defend ourselves, quick to lash out, quick to criticize. Instead of clamoring for our rights and taking matters into our own hands, why not take the same route that Jesus took? Keep entrusting yourself to God, keep handing yourself over in submission to Him.

- *The life we've always wanted comes through the surrender we've always avoided.*

We come into this world kicking and screaming because the cozy comfort we've known for the previous nine months is being taken from us. Yet birth and emergence from our mother's womb is the best thing for us. How ironic it is that we often leave this world the same way we entered it?

On the heels of Peter's rebuke, the Bible says:

Matthew 16:24-26—“Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?’”

I can't help but feel that the church is full of a lot of men and women who have failed to take Jesus' words seriously. We're going through life trying to find our lives rather than being willing to lose our lives for His sake. We make our decisions on the basis of “what's in it for me?”

Rather, ask yourself, “Am I surrendered to Christ?”

The gospel demands that we submit to the Lordship of a Savior who set the ultimate example of surrendering His own personal rights for a much greater glory. Peter says that we are to follow in His steps.

One of these days, Jesus Christ is going to return. The skies will open up, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and the Lord Himself will descend with a shout, with a cry of command. And make no mistake about it, when He comes again, He's not coming to take sides—He's coming to take over. He's coming for what's His.

So when the gospel commands you and me to surrender all that we have, all that we are, to the Lordship of Christ, it is not because we're doing Him a favor. It's because He's Lord of all! Our problem is that we often want to negotiate the terms of surrender. But that's not how the Christian life works, my friend. We come to Jesus on His terms. We surrender our lives to Him on His terms, not ours. There's no such thing as halfway surrender.

In Rockefeller Center in midtown Manhattan, right there off Fifth Avenue, there is a gigantic bronze statue of Atlas out front. If you're familiar with Greek mythology, you'll remember that Atlas was the titan who held the world on his shoulders. Every time you see Atlas pictured, he is shrugging under the weight of the world. Well, if you were to walk across the street, you'd be at Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Inside, there is a little statue of Jesus depicted as a child, perhaps eight or nine years old, and with no effort at all He is holding the world in one hand. Two very different perspectives on life, indeed.

Here's the point—why not surrender the weight of your life to Jesus Christ? Too many of us want to live like Atlas, but to no avail. Jesus Christ bore the weight of your sin in His own body on the tree. He carried that heavy burden all the way into the grave, and He emerged on the third day in complete victory and power. Come and surrender your life to Him, and you'll find the rest your soul longs for.

“Father, thank You for giving Your Son to rescue us from our sin and shame. Jesus surrendered His life to save those of us who were under the sentence of death, so that we might have eternal life. May we surrender our lives to Him! Amen.”