

Place Lurgan Baptist 20:7:2008

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

Reading: 1 Peter 2:18-25

8. FOLLOWING HIS FOOTSTEPS

Do you remember when you were in school learning your ABC's ? I don't know if they did this way with you or not. They probably do it on computer now. But when I was learning my ABC's, there was a pattern placed under a piece of tracing paper so the original images could be duplicated. Usually the pattern was the letters of the alphabet. *Do you remember that ?* Our job was to trace those letters of the alphabet. We learned the alphabet by following the pattern that had been laid out for us. Now that is the word that Peter uses right here. Do you see what he says in (2:22) *“ Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.”* The word *“ example,”* (hupogrammon) literally means *“ writing under.”* It refers to the means whereby children were taught to write in New Testament times and as I have said many of us were schooled in the same way. Outside the New Testament a similar word is used for the *“ print,”* of a foot. Peter goes on to speak of our following in the steps of our Lord, and it's quite possible that this image also was in his mind as he wrote.

Have you ever seen a little boy following the steps of his Daddy, trying to step where the Daddy is stepping and the

Dad looks over his shoulder and sees the little boy following. My we are to follow Him, *“ to follow His steps.”*

**O let me see Thy footmarks
And in them plant mine own
My hope to follow duly
Is in thy strength alone**

We are called to follow, to emulate, and to imitate our blessed Lord. We are to follow His steps. Would that statement not have back some real memories to Simon Peter ? He was a fisherman and working around the Sea of Galilee one day with his nets the Saviour came by and said *“ Come ye after Me,”* (Mk 1:17) *“ Follow Me.”* Simon Peter started following in the steps of His Lord. Then perhaps Peter thought about that night before the Lord was crucified, that night of His trial and the Bible tells us that *“ Peter followed afar off.”* (Lk 22:54) Sometimes we don't follow the Lord as we should follow, and Peter must have remembered that. Maybe he remembered after the resurrection when the Risen Lord gathered them with them on the shore at Galilee and cooked breakfast for them and the Lord said to Simon Peter *“ Follow Me.”* (Jn 20:19) Are you walking in His steps ? Are you following Christ closely, continually, conscientiously ? Well, let's see if you are by looking at what Peter says.

(1) THE CHRISTIAN'S SUBMISSION

The word that Peter uses for “*servant*,” here is not that of a common slave but that of a household slave. It referred mainly to household and domestic slaves. Now in the Roman empire there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves. In New Testament times slaves were counted by the millions. I mean they had all kinds of slaves. Doctors, teachers, musicians, actors, secretaries, stewards were slaves. In fact all the work of Rome was done by slaves. The Roman attitude was that there was no point in being master of the world and doing work. Let the slaves do that and let the citizens live in pampered idleness.

Now it would quite wrong to think that the lot of slaves was always wretched and unhappy, and that they were always treated with cruelty. Many slaves were loved and trusted members of the family, but one great fact dominated the situation. In Roman law a slave was not a person he was a thing, and he had no legal rights whatsoever. Now what happened was this. As the gospel spread throughout the Empire most of the converts were slaves. Do you recall what Paul told the Corinthians ? “*For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*,” (1 Cor 1:26-28)

You see, many of the churches were often made up of such people, and it was quite possible in one of the early assemblies that the slave could be the elder and the master could be the member. That could present problems. So Peter wants to ensure that the attitude of the servants is

right. Thus he writes, “*servants be subject to your masters with all fear*,” (2:18) Do you see here,

(a) THE MANDATE FOR SUBMISSION:

Peter is taking us into the workplace and telling slaves to be submissive to their masters. You see, it would have been easy for slaves who became believers to think that the gospel gave them the freedom to break with their masters. But Peter says this is not so. Centuries later, Christianity pervaded the culture and overcame slavery but it didn't happen in the first century. *Now does this mean that the employee is under obligation to submit to the employer in respect to every demand he makes ?* No. The same principle applies in the workplace as in the country. That is, no employer has a right to command anything that is inconsistent with the law of God. Quite simply the rule is plain and absolute, when the will of an earthly master is opposed to the will of our Master in heaven “*we ought to obey God rather than men.*” (Acts 5:29) You see, what Peter says has application for us today. We are to be submissive to those who are over us in the workplace whether they are kind or unkind to us.

The word “*froward*,” means “*crooked, perverse, dishonest.*” Those who are unreasonable. Do you have an uncaring boss ? Do you have a supervisor or a manager who isn't fair ? Do you have to deal with unreasonable people ? You may not want to hear this today, but there is a lot of truth for you in this passage, none of which will ever appear in your newspaper or on a television talk show. You see, the natural tendency of the human heart is

to fight back against unfair and unreasonable treatment. Some American military were stationed in Korea during the Korean war. While they were there they hired a boy to cook and clean for them. Being a bunch of jokesters these fellows soon took advantage of this young man. They would smear Vaseline on the stove handles so that when he'd turn the stove on in the morning he would get grease all over his fingers. They'd put little water buckets over the doors so he would get soaked when he opened the doors. They'd even nail his shoes to the floor during the night. Day after day the little fellow took it all without saying anything. Finally the men felt guilty about what they were doing with the young Korean and they said, "Look we know these pranks aren't funny anymore. We're sorry. We're never going to take advantage of you again." "No more sticky," on the stove he asked. "No." "No more water on the door," he said. "No." "No more nail shoes to the floor." "Never again," they said.

"Okay," said the lad with a smile. "Me, no more spit in your soup." Anyone can hit back, but it takes a Spirit filled Christian to submit and let God fight his battle. Do you recall what Paul says to Titus? "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters and to please them well in all things not answering again, not pilfering but showing all good fidelity that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus 2:2-10) (a)

(b) THE MOTIVE FOR SUBMISSION:

Why should we model workers? Why should we do an honest day's work? Why should we submit to our boss?

1. Because of our RELATIONSHIP with God:

Do you see that word "fear," in (2:18) I believe it refers to the fear of God for Peter has already mentioned that in (2:17) Then in (2:19) he talks about "a conscience toward God," that is the employee's conscious sense of his relation to God. Peter is saying that we should offering our services primarily to God, that everything we do should have this quality about it irrespective of the worthiness or unworthiness of our earthly employers. On that score, we should submit to our employers for it is what the Lord requires of us. (Col 3:22 Eph 6:5) Tell me, are you God centered in your attitude to work? Whom do you serve? Who do you work for? Many believers have never seen this important principle and are therefore dominated by their awkward employers, but listen to what the Word says. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col 3:17) Paul says, "Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor 10:31) Instead of setting out to impress the employer, perhaps with a view to promotion, we need to see our work first of all as done "unto the Lord." Well may pray with the hymn writer,

**Teach me, my God and King
In all things Thee to see
And what I do in anything
To do as it for Thee**

This is why we should submit to our boss because (a)

(b) Because of our REWARD from God:

The word “*thankworthy*,” in (2:19) means “*favour or grace*,” as does the word “*acceptable*,” in (2:20) It always pleases God to see believers do their work in a submissive way and faithfully accept and deal with any adversity. If you break into a house and steal, you will be arrested and possibly imprisoned. You won’t be elected “***Citizen of the Year.***” But if you are a hard working, faithful employee, diligent, honest, prompt, working for a boss who is hard to get along with, and if you patiently endure that finds favour with God. You see, when you endure you put grace on display. And when you put grace on display for the glory of God you could transform your workplace. (1)

(2) THE CHRISTIANS STANDARD

Peter moves from the servant to the Saviour. You see, no one was ever more “*ripped off*,” than Christ. Absolutely no one. The Lord Jesus was the only Perfect Man who ever lived, yet He suffered continually during his brief life on this earth. He was misunderstood, maligned, hated, arrested, and tortured. Finally, they crucified Him. And Peter says we are to walk in His steps. Now it’s important that we distinguish here between the expiatory nature of Christ’s sufferings and the exemplary nature of His sufferings. His expiatory suffering as the one sacrifice for sin finds no parallel in our sufferings. But the exemplary nature of His sufferings is set before us so that we should “*follow His steps.*” Sinners need a Saviour, but saints need an example. Notice that the Lord Jesus our example,

(a) SUFFERED SINLESSLY:

“*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,*” (2:22) Peter is quoting here from (Is 53:9) which says, “*Because He had done no violence neither was any deceit in His mouth.*” Here is a statement about the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Without fear of condemnation He could appeal even to His bitterest enemies, “*which of you convinceth me of sin ?*” (Jn 8:46) Even His enemies acknowledged the sinlessness of the Saviour. Judas for instance said about Him, “*I have betrayed the innocent blood.*” (Matt 27:4) Pontius Pilate said, “*I find no fault in Him.*” (Jn 19:6) And his wife said to him, “*have thou nothing to do with that just man.*” (Matt 27:19) What an insight this sinlessness gives to us of the Lord’s excellence, for not to sin in deed or word is an indication of His thoughts and feelings. His outward perfection flowed from a pure inner spring. Truly He was “*holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.*” (Heb 7:26) And believers are to be like Him.

A man said to a Bible teacher, “*I have such a bad temper, but I excuse myself because I got it from my father. He had a bad temper and I am just like him.*” The preacher asked, “*have you been born again ?*” “*Yes certainly ?*” “*Were you born of God ?*” “*Yes.*” “*Well, is God your Father ?*” “*Yes.*” “*Well, what kind of temper did you get when you were born again ?*” Sure, we still possess traits of the old nature but we are also “*partakers of the divine nature,*” (2 Pet 1:4) if we belong to Christ. And Peter says we are to follow His steps. (a)

(b) SUFFERED SILENTLY:

“ *Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not.* ” (2:23) Truly He was as “ *a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth.* ” (Is 53:7) “ *He was reviled,* ” it means “ *to pile abuse on someone.* ” My the Saviour did not live in a bubble. He was not off on some mountain somewhere or stuck in some monastery in seclusion. He lived in the real world and when He was verbally abused, He did not return that verbal abuse. That’s not easy to do. Is this not what is getting you into trouble at work ? You’re too quick with the tongue, and too slow in following His steps. Is this not what is getting you into trouble at home ? Is this why your marriage is in trouble ? I mean when someone says something ugly to you, what does your flesh want to do ? You want to say something ugly back to them. “ *But when he was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not.* ” Do you not hear Him in the extremity of His sufferings crying, “ *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.* ” (Lk 23:34) (a) (b)

(c) SUFFERED SUBMISSIVELY:

For “ He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” (2:23) The tense of the verb “ *committed,* ” means that He continually committed. The word “ *committed,* ” means “ *to deliver up.* ” Interestingly enough the word is used to describe what the enemies did to the Lord Jesus. Judas delivered Christ up to the Jewish leaders. (Matt 26:15) Then the Jewish leaders delivered

Christ up to the Roman authorities. (Matt 27:2) But along the way, they committed Him to His enemies, He committed Himself to God. They betrayed Him. He committed Himself up to God. They lied about Him. He committed Himself up to God. They put Him on a cross. He committed Himself up to God. He was continuously and submissively turning His life over to His Father because He knew that God would vindicate Him. My is this not what we are supposed to do ? Is this not how we are supposed to live ? Paul says, “ *being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer it.* ” He says, “ *Vengeance is mine I will repay saith the Lord.* ”

(1 Cor 4:12 Rom 12:19) If you are having a tough day, do you commit yourself to God ? If people are saying unkind things about you, do you commit yourself to God ? If your boss is being unreasonable do you leave it all with the Lord ? I mean we are so quick to defend ourselves. We are a fight back generation. Quick to take offence. Quick to get mad. Quick to fight back. Quick to answer back. Quick to threaten legal action. “ *I’ve got my rights,* ” you know. Tell me, when was the last time you acted or reacted just like Christ ? When was the last time you turned the other cheek, kept your mouth shut and gave Him all the glory ? My He has left us an example. Are we following His steps ? (1) (2)

(3) THE CHRISTIAN’S SUBSTITUTE

Peter said that we are to follow His example, but here is a place where we cannot follow. We can follow His example in that we do not retaliate in the midst of

injustice, but now we are taken in a direction where we cannot follow, for Peter brings before us the fact that Christ died as a substitute for sinners. When we read of “*the tree*,” on which Christ bore our sins, we are meant to think of the Roman gibbet or cross on which the Lord was crucified. Peter sees the cross here from three angels. He tells us that,

(a) *THE CROSS IS THE PLACE OF TRANSFERENCE:*

“*Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.*” (2:24) The word “*bear*,” literally means that He offered up Himself for our sins on the tree. In the Old Testament those who had sinned would bring to the priest an animal for slaughter, and by laying their hands on it would symbolize the transfer of their sins. The animal would then be killed and its flesh consumed on the altar. And through the sacrifice that was offered the sins of the offender were covered. (Lev 1:2-5) But do you see what Christ did ? “*He bare our sins in His own body*,” not the body of a dead animal, but His own body and where is the altar ? Peter says it was the tree. My who can tell the intensity of Christ’s sufferings when He took the burden of all our sin ? Who can tell what the Saviour went through when He exposed Himself to the fire of God’s wrath ? When my sin was transferred to Him and He was wounded for me ?

During World War 1 the Prince of Wales was invited to visit 36 men who were severely wounded and who were being treated in a hospital on the outskirts of London. He

accepted the invitation and on arrival was shown through the main ward. He brought words of encouragement and sympathy to each. Then looking around he said, “*I thought there were 36 but I have seen only 30 men.*” He was told that six of the worst cases were in a ward not usually visited. “*But I must see them*,” said the Prince. He was guided to the bruised and maimed physical wrecks. “*But there are only five*,” the Prince exclaimed. “*Where is the other man ?*” He was told that the poor man was so badly mutilated he was kept in a room alone and that it would be wise not to see him. “*I must see him, too*,” he insisted. Taken into a little room, the Prince of Wales saw an unforgettable sight. There lay what remained of a brave soldier. He was blind, deaf, legless, armless, and disfigured almost beyond recognition as a man. Standing silent for a moment, immeasurably touched, the prince stooped down, kissed the soldier’s brow and with a break in his voice exclaimed “*Wounded for me.*” As you stand under the shadow of the cross this do you see it as the place of transference where Christ was wounded for you ?

(b) *THE CROSS IS THE PLACE OF TRANSFORMATION:*

“*That we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.*” (2:24) What does that mean ? Does it mean that we don’t sin anymore ? No. But it does mean that you are loosed from the power of sin. It means that you now don’t have to sin. You can choose not to sin. Think of it. We bear the same relationship to our sins as the dead to do to the world they left none at all. Paul

says “ *Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Him.* ” (Rom 6:6) You see, He bore our sins so that we could bear His righteousness. The believer is now energized to live a life of usefulness. One summer day in the early 1700’s a young German Count strolled into Düsseldorf Art Gallery. His eye was attracted to a painting of the crucifixion of Christ. He stood gazing with reverence at every detail. Then his eye moved to the inscription below the painting. He read it time and again. “ *This I have done for thee, what hast thou done for Me ?* ” That day he left the Art Gallery with a new purpose in life. The inspired nobleman was Nikolaus Ludwig Count Von Zinzendorf, who became the distinguished leader of the Moravian Church. He saw Europe begin to burn for God in one of the greatest revivals of all time. Though continually sniped at from every angle by friends and foes alike he shouted, “ ***I have one passion. It is Christ and Christ alone.*** ” Tell me, has the cross for you become the place of transformation ? So much so, that you are no longer living unto yourself but unto Him which died and rose again ? (2 Cor 5:15)

(a) (b)

(c) *THE CROSS IS THE PLACE OF TRANSACTION:*

“ *For ye were as sheep going astray but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.* ” What a picture of our natural condition and spiritual conversion.

***Tis done the great transactions done
I am my Lord’s and He is mine
He drew me and I followed on
Charmed to confess the voice divine***

1. *Shepherd: That means He is the Provider of His People*

For a shepherd is responsible to provide for the sheep. He provides for me. He provides food. He provides guidance. He provides care. The wee boy misquoted it, but he did not miss the message, “ *The Lord is my shepherd that’s all I want.* ”

2. *Bishop: That means He is the Protector of His People:*

It is the word usually translated “ *bishop or overseer,* ” (1 Tim 3:1 Titus 1:5) describing Christ’s care for His flock. He’s watching over us. He’s got His eyes on you. A friend was once visiting another friend for morning coffee and noticed on the wall a picture of the Lord. The artist had so drawn the eyes in that picture of Christ that wherever you went in the room those eyes followed. The friend said, “ *I noticed that on the picture of Christ those eyes of the Lord are following you in the room. Doesn’t that bother you a little ?* The other said, “ *Oh no. It doesn’t bother me. It just simply means that the Lord Jesus loves me so much He can’t take His eyes off me.* ”

His eyes are on you today. He is the Shepherd and Bishop of your soul, who calls you to follow His footsteps.