

Title: On Being a Real Christian
Date: October 7, 2018
Subject: Christ is the only way for people to get to heaven
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:24 - 25

We're going to take a "time out" before moving on to the next section of 1 Peter. I'd anticipated plunging into chapter 3 but it seems like there's a perfect storm through which the Lord is guiding to not do so. There've been events locally, nationally and around the world; surveys that indicate only 6-10% of people in America really have a relationship with Christ yet many people call themselves Christians; there's a great deal of confusion about what it means to be a true Christian as that term is used but many don't hold to the essential basic beliefs about God, Jesus, the Bible. Add in my Bible reading and the fact that it's communion today, next week beginning *Making Your Case For Christ* and we kind of zoomed past some powerful verses at the end of chapter 2 to which we didn't do justice. For our own sakes and to know what we're facing around us.

READ 1 Peter 2:24, 25.

The previous three verses speak of Christ's work of salvation continuing the theme of suffering. It's tied to him being an example. Some people will only go that far when it comes to Jesus' death on the cross. They'll say the lesson to learn is that he provided an example of how we can be courageous in the face of suffering. That's it. Nothing about the consequences and effects of Christ' death as far as the redemptive work of Christ in bringing salvation and a right relationship with God.

Obviously, there's more, much more to what happened on the cross. The verses we read are the tip of the tip of the iceberg of truth about what Christ has done. Jesus bore ours sins on the cross. He was a real person. He was a perfect meshing of full Godness and full humanity. It's one of those magnificent mysteries which we mere humans can't fully fathom. Why would the absolute perfect One allow himself to be so mistreated as to suffer one of the most horrendous deaths imaginable? For that matter why would he stoop to becoming human in the first place?

The answer is provided in two words -- "our sins." Our sins had dug a deep hole that stretched all the way to the deepest reaches of hell. Someone had to pull us out. I remember a story about a man who compared belief systems to see which leader he would follow. He described himself as being in a pit. Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius and many others told him to work harder to get himself out or just believe you are out and you'll be out. He explained he chose Jesus because Jesus came down into the pit with him and carried him out.

There's absolutely nothing we can offer that would appease God's justice. Not our wealth, not our goodness, not even ourselves. All of that is of inferior quality and insufficient quantity to begin to scratch the surface of our sin problem. Someone had to pay for our sins in order for us to get to God. The only thing that would be accepted was Someone who was perfect. Jesus became our Substitute and took our sins on himself.

He's brings healing, which is restoration, of the relationship with God and emotional healing, physical healing, relational healing, etc. He's the Shepherd who brings his wandering sheep back into the fold.

Here's where my reading through the Bible chronologically this week comes into play. In the initial episodes of the New Testament Jesus encounters people with incorrect views of how people can get forgiveness of sins and eternal life. And it will reoccur numerous times during his life.

Among them were the religious leaders such as the Pharisees and Sadducees who form the bulk of the opposition to Jesus. We're introduced to them in Matthew 3 where they encounter, not Jesus, but John the Baptist as he's leading a people movement to God. READ Matthew 3:7-9.

John doesn't exactly start off on the right foot. You wouldn't expect to either if you called someone a "brood of vipers." He points out their false assumption that they're part of God's family because of their human family heritage. They felt that as long as they could trace their ancestry to Abraham they were good. John told them they had it wrong as God could change stones into Abraham's children.

There are people today say they are Christian because their parents and grandparents, etc. were Christians and they aren't Muslim or Buddhist. It doesn't work that way. Family heritage can be influential but it isn't the method to get to God.

One of Jesus' interactions with these religious leaders comes in John 5. Even this early in his ministry there was an increasing desire to have Jesus killed. He confronts his opponents by talking about his connection with the Father and why people should believe and accept him. In v. 44 he points out their problem. READ John 5:44. The Pharisees and Sadducees counted on the fact they were good people. They were moral. They were spiritual. They didn't commit murder. They went to worship. They strove to be nice and not mean. They put a lot of confidence in their ability to keep the rules and live a good life. They took great pride in their good works and how they were better than others. If they received praise it meant they were better. Being better people get into heaven gave them a better shot at being with God after they died. God's doesn't grade on a curve. And he doesn't take a person's own goodness into consideration.

Jesus knew the Pharisees said they believed God's Word. Back up a few verses. READ John 5:38-40. They had a reverence for Scripture that boggles the mind. They developed rituals for the way it could be approached, how the book could be handled, movements to coincide with the reading, expressions to be used when listening. But they didn't get the message. Jesus said it pointed to him. They refused to believe him, refused to accept him as the Savior.

One of their group approached Jesus to have a private conversation. Nicodemus was well versed in Scripture but he didn't get it. There are people who say they're atheists or agnostics and have memorized massive amounts of the Bible. I'm not sure of their motivation but it's merely an intellectual exercise as they don't believe a word of it. There are lots of people in churches, even solid Bible-proclaiming churches who have a reverence for the Bible, read it, are able to discuss it but they don't get it either. Mere familiarity with the teachings of the Bible and the claims of Christ doesn't equal admittance to heaven.

In between these two episodes Jesus encounters the woman at the well. She represents those who believe all roads lead to heaven. READ John 4:19, 20, 25. She attempts to dodge and deflect the truth coming from Jesus. She asserts that her people worship in one place and Jesus' group worships in another. It doesn't make any difference. They're pretty much the same. And then she adds that it's all beyond our understanding and way too important for mere humans to comprehend. Just leave it alone and it will all work out. No, it won't just work out. Jesus is very firm about how it has to be.

There was a group that believed. They rightly understood who Jesus was, what he came to do and the life-giving power he had. These were the demons. They frequently shouted out Christ's real identity. We're told that the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19). But they won't make it to heaven based on their belief that Jesus is God and is great and powerful. Jesus told the demons to be quiet as he didn't want them to be the ones to acknowledge his true identity (Mark 1:25, 3:11; Luke 4:35, 41).

Jesus constantly made himself the center of attention. He made it clear that people don't have to deal with theories, concepts, regulations, etc., but have to deal with him a real, live person. He told the Pharisees that he was God, equal in every respect to the Father (John 5:17, 18). He and the Father are intimately connected. He's different from humanity as he has life in himself and is the one who gives life (John 5:21, 26). He's the one people will have to face as he's the judge (John 5:22, 27).

He confronted Nicodemus with the truth that he, as the Son of Man, was the only one who had gone into heaven. He would be the one who would be lifted up on the cross so "that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:15).

He made it clear that forgiveness of sins comes through him (Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24). He is the gift from God who gives living water (John 4:10, 14). He presents himself as the one who was sent from the Father to bring the good news of salvation (Luke 4:16-21; John 4:26). He's the one on whom people's fate hinges. If they come to him they'll be accepted by the Father and if they don't come to him they won't be accepted by the Father (John 5:23).

He called for people to follow him (Mark 1:17) and not at a long distance but up close. He called for repentance, a recognition of a person's sinfulness and the desire to turn from it. He came for those who know they aren't righteous in and of themselves but are sinners who need the forgiveness he offers (Mark 2:17). Our human author, Peter, is one example. He told the Lord to go away from him because he was sinful (Luke 5:8). A Roman centurion demonstrated the humility as he said he didn't deserve to have Christ come to his house and that he was unworthy to be in Christ's presence (Luke 7:6, 7). They knew their hearts.

The woman at the well just wanted some water, whatever kind of water Jesus was giving out. He pressed her on the issue of the need for repentance by bringing up her immoral lifestyle to see if she was willing to change (John 4:15-18). He told the man who had been an invalid for 38 years that he needed to turn away from sin (John 5: 14). John the Baptist told those who came to him to show the reality of their profession by producing fruit in keeping with repentance (Matthew 3:8).

Jesus used the word picture of bearing fruit when he said fruit is the evidence of what's inside of a life (Matthew 7:15-20; Luke 6:43-45). He connected it to one of his most hard to hear sayings, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like" (Matthew 7:21-23). He then goes on to describe the person who puts his word into practice as a wise man who properly builds a foundation for a home.

The Pharisees and many others fit into the category of not bearing fruit. They looked good – had reverence for God's Word, acted morally for the most part, did good but they lacked the vital thing. They did all of that without having established a connection with Jesus. The Lord is concerned not with rituals and forms but with the heart.

Bear fruit means to have an interest in spiritual matters like connecting with God by reading his Word and prayer, connecting with his children through fellowship, lifestyle changes from the previous sinful life. A person may struggle with sin but they have an underlying hatred for sin. Fruit is that stuff that comes after salvation not as a prelude to it.

Back to 1 Peter 2. We focused on the first part of v. 24 and the last part. Here's the middle. READ 1 Peter 2:24b. The expressed purpose of Christ's death comes in two parts. The first is a past action. Might be better translated as "having died to sins." It's the aspect of justification where a person is granted legal status and the initial part of sanctification. They've begun the journey as they've had a life-altering encounter with Jesus. The second part is "live for righteousness." This describes the ongoing sanctification which is the process of becoming more like Christ.

Jesus made it all about believing him by receiving him into their life, accepting him as the one and only payment for their sin and turning from sin. The Thursday Bible study group will encounter people and their various responses to Jesus as the Gospel of John is all about what it means to believe. What do people think of Jesus? What do they believe about him? How do they respond? Do they truly believe?

Believe is to accept something as true and act upon it. Zac went sky-diving a few weeks ago. He could have said I believe the parachute will hold him and the instructor and stayed in the plane. He really wouldn't have had true faith in the chute. He had to get out of the plane to demonstrate his faith. Believing in Jesus is taking him at His word and acting upon that truth.

The Pharisees as a whole didn't get it. Nicodemus did but it isn't revealed in the immediate narrative. The Samaritan woman got it and told her neighbors and friends about it. They really got it as they implored Jesus to stay with them for two days. The result was that many of the people of the area believed that Jesus was the Savior of the world and of themselves personally (John 4:39-42).

People won't get to heaven based on family heritage, being good, being better than others, reading the Bible, knowing facts about Jesus, or thinking everyone will get there. Just because someone mentions God in a positive way and talks about Jesus in the same manner isn't an indication a person truly has a right relationship with the Lord. Gandhi had warm feelings for Jesus but never committed his life to the Savior. A lot of people who call themselves Christian go through rituals and do good works thinking it's at least part of the way to be accepted by God. They think that what Jesus did is great but they need to help out to get over the top. Salvation isn't Jesus plus human works or anything else. It's just through trusting in Jesus, who He is and what He's done. Remember what Jesus said, "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

John 3:16-18, 36; 5:24.

????????????????????????????

Men and women are different – emotionally, “Clearly, women have cultural permission to feel and express emotion in ways different from those of men...the differences in chromosomes (women are XX and men are XY), the differences in hormones (the balance of testosterone and estrogen, for example), and the differences in physical features such as body hair, muscle mass, skin tone, and strength. Gender, on the other hand, refers to everything we associate with being masculine or feminine –Deborah Tannen’s You Just Don’t Understand: Men and Women in Conversation. Tannen makes the point that men and women use conversation for different purposes: Women use conversation to seek confirmation, to make connections, and to reinforce intimacy; men, on the other hand, use conversation primarily to protect their independence and to negotiate status.

Have the same dignity of personhood, spiritual standing before God.

READ 1 Peter 3:1-7

You probably noticed the inequity in the amount of material with 6 to women and one to men. I think I can get away with this shot across the bow. It’s because men’s attention span is shorter???

Husband is not commanded to get his wife to do what she is supposed to do. “woman you need to submit to me!” The wife is not commanded to get the husband to do what he is supposed to do. “Husband you need to be considerate.” Each is responsible for themselves as they relate to God’s instructions.

The passage is about duties which is inescapably more important than the assertion of rights. It’s not about the self but the other.

The overall theme of how to live in a pagan world began back in 2:11 where we’re reminded that we are aliens and strangers to this plane of existence and time frame. If a woman in Peter’s day came to Christ and her husband didn’t it could have been viewed as cultural time bomb. The counsel was to not add to the explosive situation by being defiant or thinking that she was spiritually free in Christ she was also free from previous human responsibility.

There’s that word “submission” again. Began back in 2:13. READ 13a. Repeat the definition “Submission is an attitude of respect that results in obedience to authority and positive good deeds” (Steven J. Cole). Another repeat customer is “in the same way.” The teaching is linked to what came before. Submission starts with the Lord. It’s for the Lord’s sake. It’s extended to those in authority -- government, masters and now the marriage relationship. We’re to copy the example of Christ who submitted himself to suffering and endured without resorting to threats and retaliation. It’s commanded to bear up under unjust suffering. Through it all, we are to be agents of grace as he was an agent of grace. Show proper respect. Do good so that you will be able to silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

“the purpose of authority is to protect and bless those under authority, not to benefit the one in authority” (Cole).

Wayne Grudem. “mutual submission” within marriage... husbands and wives are to be thoughtful and considerate toward one another and put each other’s interests and preferences before their own. If people use the phrase to apply to such *mutual consideration and deference*, then they are speaking of an idea that is fully consistent with the teachings of the New Testament and that still allows for a unique leadership role for the husband and a unique responsibility for the wife to submit to his authority or leadership. “Mutual submission” would then mean that the husband is to be unselfish in his exercise of leadership in the family and the wife is to be unselfish in her submission to and support of that leadership. Although we might think that this is using the word *submission* in a rather unusual way, we would probably agree that this is a possible sense of “mutual submission.” We would then say that there is “mutual submission” in *some* senses in marriage, but not in *all* senses, because the wife still has to submit to her husband’s authority and leadership in a way that the husband does not have to—indeed, *should not*—submit to his wife’s authority or leadership. He has a unique leadership role in the family that he should not abdicate.

Submission does not mean putting a husband in the place of Christ. Submission does not mean giving up independent thought. Submission does not mean a wife should give up efforts to influence and guide her husband. Submission does not mean a wife should give in to every demand of her husband. Submission is not based on lesser intelligence or competence. Submission is not inconsistent with equality in Christ.

A Hindu woman was converted, chiefly by hearing the Word of God read. She suffered very much persecution from her husband. One day a missionary asked her, “When your husband is angry and persecutes you, what do you do?” She replied: “Well, sir, I cook his food better; when he complains, I sweep the floor cleaner; and when he speaks unkindly, I answer him mildly. I try, sir, to show him that when I became a Christian, I became a better wife and a better mother.

Grudem. Considerate leadership does not mean harsh or domineering use of authority. Considerate leadership does not imply equal sharing of leadership in the family. Considerate leadership does not imply lesser importance for a wife. Considerate leadership does not mean always giving in to a wife’s wishes.

????????????????????????????

Suffering 3:8ff

No attempts to shred the other's reputation. Don't lower selves to engage in the tactics that are.....

After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 ironworker Frank Silecchia helped to recover bodies. He noticed two steel beams in the shape of a cross standing upright in the middle of all the debris. Appointing himself as the steward of the striking symbol of God's love, he often took heartbroken visitors to see it. Many were comforted by the silent testimony to God's presence in the worst of tragedies. When journalist Barbara Walters came with tearful friends who'd lost a son in the catastrophe, Frank simply led them to the cross.

Bryan Clark (10/8/17) "relationships that are difficult, that are unfair — ways you are treated at work, ways you're treated in your family, ways you're treated at school, ways you're treated with a coach — that kind of just unfair treatment. Maybe at work there's a lot of politics and you don't play that particular game but you are treated unfairly as a result of it. Whatever it may be, it's that kind of an application for us today, which probably describes all of us in many environments. So how do you respond? We as the people of God understand at one time we were sinful and offensive to God, nothing more than sinners and misfits and losers, and yet rather than experiencing the condemnation and rejection we deserve — which would be justice — we have received grace and mercy. We have experienced God's forgiveness. He has made us His people. Our story is the grace story. If that's true, conscious of that's how God has treated us, then what God is saying is, "I am asking you as a witness to the life-changing power of Jesus in you, to respond to those who treat you unfairly as I have responded to you, in order to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has taken us from darkness into His marvelous light."

Now stop and think about how dramatically different this is than the culture in which we live. Because we as a culture have decided to be our own gods, we are moving down this pathway of secularism — that everything in life is about me. It's about my little world; it's about what I think is right and wrong. Therefore we are selfish and self-centered to the core, and because of that we are keenly aware of everything that seems unfair to us. Every week we are constantly viewing ourselves as victims; we are offended by everything. Now one of the things that is interesting about this is that we, as a culture, claim that there are no moral absolutes. We claim to be relativists — that there are no moral absolutes, that morality is relative, and yet every week we're offended by the way people treat us. Now stop and think about this: If we were true relativists, the best we could do is say, "I don't like the way you're treating me," but I can't say that it's right or wrong because there is no such thing as right and wrong. But we don't say that. We say, "I have a moral standard, and you have violated it, and by the way, you are wrong! You are so wrong you owe me an apology," which is, in essence, saying, "My moral standard applies to you and you have violated it; therefore, you owe me an apology." It's just

a reminder that, at the end of the day, nobody actually lives that way. Nobody fully buys into this relativism; we all think there's a sense of right and wrong, and when somebody violates that, we don't hesitate to say so. I've been convinced for years that relativism is nothing more than an excuse to do as we please, but nobody actually lives that way. So, in a culture that is so selfish, that is so self-centered, that is constantly offended by everything, think how dramatic it would be if there was a group of people, when treated unfairly, who respond with grace and mercy. We endure with an unusual patience that is so other than the rest of the culture, that it causes people to kind of back up and wonder, "Who are these people and what makes them respond so differently? How serious is this?"

"It should be noted when Christ went into the temple, he pulled out a whip and turned over tables (John 2:13-17). He did not just accept the injustice. How do we reconcile this? Here are a few thoughts: 1. Especially in *personal offense*, the believer should practice submission even to unjust treatment. We should practice turning the cheek (Matt 5:39). 2. When others are experiencing injustice or when God is defamed, the Christians should seek justice. Christ turned the other cheek with personal offense but responded with a righteous anger when God was dishonored and others were harmed (John 2:13-17). 3. Since all authority is from God, there are times when we should *use these authorities*. This may mean calling the police, talking to leadership, writing our congressman, etc. 4. In all these times, there is a need for *wisdom* to discern which to do in what circumstance. God often gives his wisdom through prayer (Jas 1:5) and seeking the advice of others (Prov 12:15) (Gregory Brown, bible.org/seriespage/10-submission-authorities-1-peter-213-25)

"Once we've identified whether or not we are under the authority of the person who is mistreating us, we then must examine our own attitude and motives and ask: **Do I have a proper attitude of submission, or am I selfishly fighting for my rights?** If I'm truly in submission and I'm not acting for selfish reasons, I would argue that there is a proper place for respectful communication that seeks to clarify falsehood and promote the truth. In other words, if our attitude and motives are in submission to God, we need not always silently endure unjust treatment as Christian doormats. There is a proper place for self-defense and for confronting the errors of those who have mistreated us, as long as we work through proper channels.

I make this point because many take the overly simplistic (and erroneous) view that Christians must always endure mistreatment in silence and that self-defense is always wrong. But Jesus Himself did not do this, nor did the Apostle Paul who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For example, in [John 8](#) the Jews attacked Jesus' character and authority by saying that He was bearing false witness about Himself and that He was illegitimately born. Jesus did not silently endure this attack. Rather, He defended Himself as being sent from the Father and He attacked these critics by saying that they were of their father, the devil! That's hardly a passive, silent response! Nor was Jesus passive when He attacked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy ([Matthew](#)

23). The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and parts of other epistles to defend his character and ministry which were under attack. He put down his critics in a strong and, at times, sarcastic manner.

How can we harmonize such vigorous self-defense with Peter's exhortation to silent submission? It seems to me that there are several factors to consider in deciding whether to defend myself or silently to bear reproach. First, **Am I under the authority of the one attacking me?** If so, I need to examine my life to see if I'm doing something to provoke the attack. If so, I deserve punishment (2:20). I may need to ask the person to help me with a blind spot. I may need to explain my motivation. If I conclude that the superior is simply out to get me because of my faith, I probably need to bear the unfair treatment patiently for Christ's sake.

A second question: **Is God's truth being called into question or ridiculed?** If so, I should clearly defend the truth. During Jesus' mockery of a trial before the Sanhedrin, He was silent until the high priest said, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus couldn't remain silent to that question, so He answered, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" ([Matt. 26:63-64](#)).

A third factor concerns **our witness to outsiders**. If I am being falsely attacked on the job, I need to ask myself how I can bear the most effective witness for Jesus Christ. It may be that a quiet but confident answer would be most effective. But if they've heard where I stand, it may be that quiet submission, where I let go of my rights, would be most effective. More on this in a moment.

The main principle is, am I under the authority of the person who is acting unfairly toward me? If I am, then I can appeal with the proper attitude of submission. But if the appeal fails, I must submit. Does that mean that I must remain under unjust authority for the rest of my life? Isn't there a place for getting out from under corrupt authority? The answer is, "Yes, but be careful!" There is a place for Christians to flee from a corrupt government. There is a time to get out from under corrupt spiritual authority (as in the Reformation). There is a time for moving from a bad employer. But if you move too quickly, you may miss what God is seeking to do in the difficult situation. He may want to teach you some hard lessons of being like Christ. He may want to bear witness through you. So weigh things carefully before you make a move. If you are defiant or impulsive, you probably should stay put and learn to submit.

>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Alexander MacLaren (1 Peter 1:22) "Practical obedience works inwards as well as outwards, and purifies the soul which renders it. People generally turn that round the other way, and, instead of saying that to do right helps to make a man right within, they say 'make the tree good, and its fruit good'--first the pure soul, and then the practical obedience. Both statements are true. For every act that a man does reacts upon the doer, just as, whether the shot hits the target or not, the gun kicks back on the shoulder of the man that fired it.

Conduct comes from character, but conduct works back upon character, and character is largely the deposit from the vanished seas of actions. So, then, whilst the deepest thought is, be good and you will do good, it is not to be forgotten that the other side is true--do good, and it will tend to make you good. Obedience purifies the soul, while, on the other hand, a man that lives ill comes to think as he lives, and to become tenfold more a child of evil. "The dyer's hand is subdued to what it works in."