

# Enduring Hardship

## Aim

To show through the example of Jesus how we should put our trust in God when enduring hardship

## Reading

**1 Peter 2:18-23** “....Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example....”

## Introduction

- Context of Reading

In verse **18**, we read that servants (*i.e.* employees) are to be submissive to their masters (*i.e.* employers) with all fear and respect – not just to the good, but also to the harsh. Peter then goes on to say that if we endure harsh treatment, even though we may have done nothing wrong to deserve it, then this is commendable before God (verse **20**).

- if we receive harsh treatment as a result of doing the wrong thing, then that is a different matter.

In verse **21**, Peter then goes on to say that this is the way that it is to be for Christians, that is, when we are treated unfairly, we need to patiently endure it. It is not our place to “get even”, seek revenge, etc, quite the opposite. We are to overcome evil with good (**Romans 12:19-21**).

- Peter then goes on to say that Jesus is the example for us to follow when we are treated unjustly. When we think of Jesus suffering, we usually think of the scourging and the crucifixion, *etc.* But we need to remember that Jesus received unfair treatment at various times during His ministry. For example;

**Luke 4:28-29** *The people wanted to throw Him off a cliff.*

**John 10:31-39** *The people wanted to stone Him.*

**Mark 12:13** *The religious leaders were trying to catch Him in His words.*

- In order to appreciate the type of example that Jesus is for us, we need to know and understand what type of suffering He went through. If He didn't suffer very much, then the impact of His example is somewhat diminished. This morning, I would like us to look at what happened to Him from the time of His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, to His trial before Pilate. As we look at these scriptures, take note as to how man acted towards Jesus, and how Jesus acted in response.

## Lesson

### 1) In Gethsemane

Prior to their going out to the Garden, Peter has said that he would stick by Jesus, no matter what, even if it meant dying in the process (**Matthew 26:31-35**). The other apostles said likewise.

In **Matthew 26:47**, we find that a large group of people came out to arrest Jesus. They were armed with swords and clubs to arrest a man who was unarmed. Among this group was one of His followers, Judas, a man who betrayed the Lord God for a few silver coins (**Matthew 26:14-16**).

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We notice that this group came out at night. There was plenty of opportunity to arrest Him during the day (**Mathew 26:55**); but they chose to do their evil deed under the cover of darkness. Perhaps they feared the multitude – **Matthew 21:45-46**. We can see that they were not fearful about the “wrongness” of what they were doing, they were just afraid that the general populace would turn on them if they tried to arrest Him openly. So they came at night.

And so what did Jesus do? He did not try to hide Himself or run away. In fact He approached the crowd and asked them who it was that they were looking for (**John 18:4**), and when they said that they wanted Jesus, He said “*That’s Me*” (**John 18:5**). In fact, He even repeated what He had just said because they didn’t seem to “get it” the first time (**John 18:7-8**). Notice here that Judas didn’t need to betray Jesus at all. Jesus was quite prepared to reveal Himself to those who wanted to arrest Him. Jesus gave Judas the opportunity to not have to betray Him.

We can also see that while the mob were prepared to harm Jesus, Jesus didn’t want anyone else harmed.

- that went for both His disciples, and for those who came to arrest Him;
  - He asked the mob that His followers be allowed to leave (**John 18:8b**), and His disciples fled (**Matthew 26:56**), in spite of their earlier “commitment” about sticking with Jesus (**Matthew 26:35**).
  - When Peter struck the ear off one of the mob (Malchus, **John 18:10**), Jesus restored the man’s ear (**Luke 22:50-51**).

Note: Jesus didn’t take this approach in order to win the crowd’s favour so that they wouldn’t hurt Him. No, He had 12 legions of angels available to Him (**Matthew 26:53**) who could have easily dispensed with this crowd. Jesus took this approach because He knew it was the Father’s Will that He was to be the sacrificial lamb for a world of lost sinners (**Matthew 16:21; Luke 22:42; John 18:11**).

And so, Jesus allowed them to bind Him, and they led Him away (**John 18:12-13**). Jesus, in whom there was not an ounce of malice, allowed men of evil intent to take Him away, in order to comply with the Word of God (**Matthew 26:56a**).

### 2) The trials before Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin

It appears that Jesus was initially taken to Annas (**John 18:13**).

- he was High Priest between (around) 6AD – 15AD, but was removed from the office by Valerius Gratus (a Roman)<sup>1</sup> but was still referred to as “High Priest” (**Luke 3:2**).
- he was also the father in law of Caiaphas, the current High Priest.

Annas asked Him about His disciples and doctrine. And when He gave His answer, he was then slapped across the face by one of the officers (**John 18:19-23**). He was then taken to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (**John 18:24; Matthew 26:57**).

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<sup>1</sup> The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume 1, A-C, page 170, “Annas”

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It was Caiaphas who had previously said that it would be “*expedient if one man should die for the people, rather than the whole nation to suffer*” (**John 11:49-50**). So their intent was quite clear. These people had already decided to have Jesus killed (**John 11:49-53; Matthew 26:3-4**).

Now, most trials in our country are about establishing the facts, and determining the truth of a matter. But not so this trial. As far as the Sanhedrin was concerned, there were going to be some changes take place, namely the removal of Jesus. They wanted the trial to justify what they had already decided to do.

Because Jesus had done nothing wrong (**Hebrews 4:15**), they had to fabricate “evidence”. In **Matthew 26:59-60** we read that “*the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death*”. Many “witnesses” were brought forward, but none had evidence to condemn Jesus. Those who did speak couldn’t agree on what they said (**Mark 14:56**). Finally, they bring forward two more. The number “two” is significant because the Old Law required at least two witnesses in order to condemn someone to death (**Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15**). It is interesting to note that they were quite happy to follow the Law when it suited their purposes, *i.e.* having the two witnesses to make it all legal, but ignore the Law when it didn’t suit them (**Exodus 20:16**), *i.e.* “*Thou shalt not bear false witness*”.

The best that they could come up with was to mis-represent Jesus and take what He had previously said about the Temple in **John 2:19** out of context. When people have no arguments to refute someone who speaks the truth, it is not unusual for them to try to discredit the person who spoke the truth in an attempt to discredit what the person said.

Ultimately, the High Priest asked Jesus whether He really was the Christ, the Son of God (**Matthew 26:63**). Jesus answered truthfully and said that He was (**Matthew 26:64**).

When people reject the truth, they sometimes become quite hostile when the truth is presented to them. And so was the case here. Caiaphas asked for the truth, was given the truth, but it was not what he wanted to here. It didn’t fit in with his plans, so he flatly rejected it, tore his clothes (in violation of **Leviticus 21:10**), and accused Jesus of blasphemy (**Matthew 26:65**). Those present then spat in Jesus’ face, they beat Him, and some struck Him with the palms of their hands (**Matthew 26:67**). In **Mark 14:65** we read that they had blindfolded Him and mocked Him saying, “*Prophesy, who struck you?*”.

Remember, this is the Lord God incarnate standing there and being spat upon by the religious leaders of God’s people.

And while Jesus was being treated this way, Peter, one of His closest disciples (**Matthew 16:18; 17:1**), was in the near vicinity and denying that he was associated with Jesus, and Jesus knew it (**Luke 22:54-61**).

And what did Jesus do?

- He did not strike back, nor did He threaten them.

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- there were times when He remained silent (**Matthew 26:63a**)<sup>2</sup>.
- there were times when He did give an answer, and His answers were truthful (**Matthew 26:64**).

### 3) **The trial before Pilate**

The religious leaders had been presented with the truth about Jesus. But they weren't going to let the truth stop them. They continued on with what they wanted to do and brought Jesus before Pilate. This was necessary because they claimed that were not allowed to put anyone to death themselves (**John 18:31a**).

Now, Pilate was a man of some intelligence. I say that for two reasons;

- a) He could see what was really going on here. In **Matthew 27:18** we read that he could see that the reason the Jews wanted to get rid of Jesus was because of envy. During His ministry, Jesus had multitudes of people following Him to hear His message, to be healed from sickness, *etc.* The religious leaders loved to be the centre of attention and have the praise of men (**Matthew 23:6-7**), but we don't read in the scriptures of the people flocking to the Pharisees like they did to Jesus.
- b) Pilate interrogated Jesus several times and could see that Jesus was innocent. In **Luke 23:14, 15, 22**, Pilate said, "*I have found no fault in this man*". He was all set to release Him.

But Pilate was not one to take a stand for his convictions if it meant going against the majority. He didn't want to be on the "losing" side. So he tried to find a way out of his ethical predicament by trying to please the crowd without having to execute Jesus. We read in **Matthew 27:15** that at the time of the feast, the governor would release a prisoner of the people's choosing. So Pilate presented two prisoners for the crowd to consider:

- Barabbas, a murderer, a rebel. (**Mark 15:7, Luke 23:19**)
- Jesus, the innocent (**Hebrews 4:15**).

Surely the choice would be easy for the people, so he asked them for their decision. But they chose Barabbas (**Matthew 27:21**). God's people chose to have a murderer in their midst, rather than have Jesus.

Next, Pilate tried to abdicate his responsibility by "passing the buck". Rather than take a stand and do what he knew was right, he asked the crowd what they wanted

- **Matthew 27:22** "*What then shall I do with Jesus?*".

When they cried out "*crucify Him*", he tried to absolve himself by washing his hands and saying "*you see to it*" (**Matthew 27:23-24**). He was, in effect, saying to the Jews that this was "*between you and Him, not my problem*".

In **James 4:17** we read, "*..to him who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin*". Pilate was in a position of authority. He had the power to release Jesus (**John 19:10**). Washing his hands did not remove his culpability.

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<sup>2</sup> When people who are not interested in seeking the truth ask us questions with the aim of trying to use our words against us, we don't have to answer them, even if they do say things like "It's a simple question" (**Matthew 7:6**).

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And so, in order to please the crowd, and to protect his own skin, he handed Jesus over to be crucified, knowing full well that Jesus was innocent. (**John 19:4, 12, 13, 16**).

In amongst all this, Jesus was scourged, had a crown of thorns pressed down on His head, and had soldiers mock Him (**John 19:1; Mark 15:16-20**)

And what did Jesus do?

- He did not strike back, nor did He threaten them.
- there were times when He remained silent (**John 19:9b**).
- there were times when He did give an answer, and His answers were truthful (**John 18:36-37**).

**Note:** It was always part of God's plan that Jesus would suffer and die (**Isaiah 53:1-6; Ephesians 1:4**), not because He wanted Jesus to suffer, but because He wanted mankind to be saved from his sins (**Romans 5:6-9**). God has all knowledge (**Psalms 139:1-4**), and we can safely assume that God knew beforehand how those involved in bringing Jesus to the cross would respond when confronted with the above scenarios - after all, the Jews had a history of killing the prophets (**Matthew 23:31; Acts 7:51-52**). And so God was able to use their responses to achieve His will.

But that doesn't mean that the individual actions of those involved were right. The false witnesses in **Matthew 27:60** were sinning (**Exodus 20:16**). The High Priest tearing his clothes in **Matthew 27:65** was sinning (**Leviticus 21:10**). Jesus Himself implied that Pilate and the one who delivered Him to Pilate had sinned (**John 19:11**). In **Luke 23:34** we see that Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him - if they were doing the right thing, then why the need for forgiveness? In **Acts 2:336-37**, the people in Jerusalem were guilty of crucifying the Lord and needed forgiveness.

At the end of time, each of those involved will have to stand before God in judgement and give account (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). To quote an old saying, "*The end doesn't necessarily justify the means*".

### Application

There will be times when we will face hardship and unfair treatment by others. The source of this hardship may be varied. It may come from our employers, our neighbours, people we never met before, people we do know, *etc.* This treatment may or may not be the result of us being Christians. But the apostle Paul said in **2 Timothy 3:12** that "*all who desire to live godly lives will suffer persecution*". So we can expect some harsh treatment somewhere along the way.

In our reading, we were told that Jesus is our example (**1 Peter 2:21**). This is *not* a case of God saying, "*If you think that you have had a hard time, have a look at what I went through.*" And this lesson is not meant to minimize any trials or tribulations that those present may be going through. However, in a sense, the severity of the hardship is not the issue. The issue is how we respond to it.

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Jesus' response was to;

- a) ensure that His own actions were in keeping with God's Word, in keeping with God's teachings and principles (**1 Peter 2:22-23a**), and,
- b) commit Himself to God (**1 Peter 2:23b**), *i.e.* He put His trust in the Father that He (the Father) was in control, in spite of how things appeared (**Luke 23:46**).

So then, we need to follow Jesus' example. This doesn't necessarily mean that we allow ourselves to be a "doormat", *i.e.* that we allow everyone to "walk all over us". We can appeal for justice and fair treatment. For example, that is what Paul did when he was about to be unfairly beaten in **Acts 22:25**. When the Pharisees tried to trip Jesus up with their questions, He sometimes turned the situation around and put questions back to them (**Matthew 21:23-27; 22:15-22**).

But there will be times when we will be treated unfairly and not be able to do much about it. It is not our place to seek revenge – **Romans 12:19** – we are to leave that to God. What we are to do is;

- a) ensure that what we are doing is the right thing, irrespective as to how others may behave. (**Romans 12:20-21; 1 Peter 2:11-12; 3:16**),
- b) patiently endure it, for this is commendable to God (**1 Peter 2:19-20**), and,
- c) trust that God is in control and will do what is best (**1 Peter 2:23b**).