

CANCELLED
A Roadmap for Living in Exile
1 Peter 2:18-25
How to Endure Unjust Suffering
Josh Sugg Sermon

Intro

We're continuing through our study of 1 Peter ...

In 1997, one of the most memorable events in all of sports history occurred. It was the second boxing match between Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield. Holyfield beat Tyson in their first fight, which was one of boxings biggest upsets at the time. So when asked if he was worried about their upcoming second fight, Mike Tyson said to reporters, "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." If you ever listened to any interview he's done, you'll know this is by far the most profound thing Tyson has ever said. He wasn't known for being a good speaker. He told that reporter that you can have a plan, you can have a strategy, but that can all go out the window as soon as adversity comes your way.

Well, what's ironic is that he said this right before his infamous fight when he bit off part of Holyfields ear in round 3. Then in round 11 Tyson tried to bite Holyfields other ear and Holyfield won the fight right then by TKO! Tyson's plan for victory crumbled into one of the most unforgettable moments in sports history because he didn't know how to handle getting punched in the mouth.

Growing up, I loved that quote though. I still love that quote. I reference it often because of how applicable it is to life. Everybody's a plan until they get punched in the mouth. However, my understanding of its application has changed greatly as I've grown as a Christian.

I played hockey from the time I could stand on rollerblades until I stopped playing in high school. For those of you unfamiliar with hockey, it's a sport you play on ice, with skates as sharp as knives, and a stick as tall as you are that you use to hit the puck and try to take your opponent's head off! And if you're good enough to make it to the highest level in the NHL, you've also probably lost some teeth while playing.

Now I wasn't good enough to play in the big leagues, so I've kept all my teeth! But when I did play, I was the goon. I was the enforcer. I wasn't the biggest, but I was typically the baddest dude on the ice. If you had a plan, I was gonna be the one to punch you in the mouth. And if you even thought about trying to hit me, I was going to hit you even harder. So when it came to a fight or flight strategy, I was clearly all fight.

Unfortunately, it wasn't until after years of counseling that I realized I didn't just have this mentality when I was out on the ice, I carried this mentality into all my relationships. I walked around looking to punch people in the mouth, metaphorically of course. Over time, that changed into only punching people in the mouth who first did me wrong in some way, again, metaphorically. But then one day, and God did so much work on my heart in that season of life, I realized that quote from Tyson rang so true to me, not because I was the dude punching people in the mouth, but because I was actually the one getting punched in the mouth!

This had been true all along, but I just began to realize it at that time. They were my plans that were falling apart. And like Tyson in the ring with Holyfield that night when he lost his mind and bit Holyfield's ear, I didn't know what to do or how to handle my plans being destroyed. So I would fight back with everything I had.

Tyson was the baddest dude in the ring, until he wasn't. Tyson was no longer the best fighter in the world. I was the baddest dude on the ice, until I wasn't. I was no longer good enough to play at the next level. Then I was the baddest dude in every room I walked into, until I wasn't. God humbled me and showed me that my desire to be the baddest dude in the room was rooted in self-absorbed, self-focused, self-elevating, self-consumed pride.

D.A. Carson – “The heart of our wretched rebellion [against God] is that each of us wants to be number one. We make ourselves the center of all our thoughts and hopes and imaginings.”¹

Today, we're going to see in 1 Peter what it means to get punched in the mouth, what it means to suffer. But Peter is going to hone in on one specific type of suffering: **Unjust suffering**. This is suffering we don't deserve. Suffering that we have to endure even though we didn't do anything wrong. Even more specifically, this is suffering at the hands of someone who is causing you harm without any cause. This is getting punched in the mouth, when you weren't even in the fight.

This type of suffering is way more hurtful than just having a hard time making friends in high school. This is being bullied because your skin isn't the right color, your parents can't afford the cool clothes, or you can't read good.

This type of suffering is way more hurtful than just having a difficult boss who micromanages you. This is being passed over time and time again for that promotion you're completely qualified for because you have moral integrity in the workplace and you won't cut corners to raise profits.

This type of suffering is way more hurtful than just being cut off in traffic by a mindless driver. This is driving your family down a two-lane road and someone texting crosses the center line and leaves you alone to raise your child while you bury your wife.

Ultimately, this is the type of suffering that Christ endured.

So let's look at what Peter has to say about this specific type of suffering.

Proposition: 1 Peter 2:18-25 gives us 4 lessons on unjust suffering.

The 1st lesson on unjust suffering is that

1) We are commanded to obey our earthly masters, even if they are unjust. (2:18)

A. [18] Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

¹ Carson, D.A. (2004). The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons From 1 Corinthians (p. 14). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

- B.** Austin showed us last week what it looks like to “honor the emperor” from the previous few verses. This context is important because Peter is continuing his theme of properly submitting to authority, even when that authority is terrible and wicked.
- C.** Again, Austin gave us a great summary last week about slavery in the Roman world at the time of Peter, but I want to double-click on this for a minute. To understand this section here, we must understand what is meant by “servants.”
- D.** The type of slaves specifically addressed
- 1.** The particular Greek word translated “servants” indicates that these were household slaves. They were Christian slaves serving for the most part in the homes of pagan masters. The fact that Peter singles them out for special admonitions indicates that slaves, as a class, formed a large part of the early Christian community.²
- E.** How people became slaves in the Roman world
- 1.** We have too long superimposed the slavery in the American South on conditions in the Roman world. Slavery in Roman wasn’t exclusively racially motivated like it was here in the South.
 - 2.** Exposure of newborns was a practiced form of post-birth control, and these infants, who were left exposed to the elements to die, were often gathered by slave traders and sold as slaves.³
 - 3.** Children were also sometimes sold by their fathers due to the pressures of poverty.⁴
 - 4.** Penal slavery was used to punish crimes committed against the state, such as evading a census, taxes, or military service. A judgment against a debtor could force a free person into slavery.⁵
- F.** The system of slavery
- 1.** The living conditions of many slaves were better than those of free men who often slept in the streets of the city or lived in very cheap rooms.
 - 2.** There is considerable evidence to suggest that the slave lived within the confines of his master's house. The quarters for the slaves and freedmen were considered attractive enough to be used for the entertainment of the master’s overnight guests.
 - 3.** When a master freed his slave, he frequently established his freedman in a business and by providing capital he became a shareholder in it. Usually the slave had learned his skill as an

² Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, pp. 63–65). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

apprentice. Then by extra labor he saved enough to buy his freedom or it was granted by his master.

4. All of this evidence suggests that the Roman slave could look forward to a day of freedom. The evidence suggests that hundreds of thousands of slaves were freed by the Romans.⁶
- G. Essentially, Peter is addressing these slaves, who functioned more like indentured servants or those on a military contract, and telling them that no matter how bad their masters or bosses might be, they must submit themselves to their masters with obedience.
- H. This verse carries application to anyone who functions as an inferior to a superior. This means that this verse and the verses to come are filled with application for every single one of us here. We all live under some sort of authority and we're all commanded to be subject to, be submissive to, be obedient to that authority.
- I. This is the message Peter imparts to the slaves. Some of them served masters who were good and considerate, but others had to endure the whims of unjust masters. ... Peter is fully aware of the unjust suffering numerous slaves had to endure.⁷

The 2nd lesson on unjust suffering is that

2) When we suffer how Christ suffered, we will receive God's commendation for enduring unjust suffering. (2:19-20)

- A. **[19] For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. [20] For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.**
- B. Although Peter is conscious of the suffering that defenseless slaves have to endure from perverse masters, he now broadens his scope and includes anyone who experiences the pain of unjust suffering. For this reason Peter writes the term anyone. In other words, Peter no longer addresses only slaves but all the readers of his epistle.⁸
- C. How Christ suffered – **“when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.”**
 1. It isn't solely about enduring unjust suffering, it's about doing it “mindful of God” with the same motives that Christ had.

⁶ Rupprecht, Arthur. (May 1963) “Christianity and the Slavery Question.” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 6.2. (64-69).

⁷ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (Vol. 16, pp. 104–105). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

⁸ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (Vol. 16, p. 105). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

2. Peter reveals the influence Jesus' teaching has had on him, because he uses the same language in evaluating human suffering that Jesus used. Jesus always questioned a person's motives for showing love to someone, doing good to him, or lending something to him.⁹
3. On the outside, we can endure suffering calmly and with patience. However, if on the inside we are filled with rage or bitterness or we're calmly planning out our revenge, we aren't suffering while being "mindful of God."

D. God's commendation – "a gracious thing in the sight of God."

1. But again, the suffering these slaves are enduring is being beaten. Literally, they're being punched in the mouth.
2. K.S. Wuest – "The word here [beaten] could be translated "pummeled." These Christian slaves were being pummeled by their irate masters, the only offence of the former being that they lived Christlike lives which were used of the Holy Spirit to convict the latter of sin. The same Greek word is used in Matthew 26:67 where the Lord Jesus was pummeled by the frenzied Jewish mob. ... This passage bears the marks of Peter's memories of that awful night. His exhortation to these Christian slaves is that when they are being unjustly pummeled by their masters, they should remember the Lord Jesus and how He was unjustly pummeled, and for them, and react towards their masters as Jesus did to those who mistreated Him. They are to take this punishment patiently, and this would be acceptable with God."¹⁰
3. When we are mindful of God and suffer the way Christ suffered, we receive God's commendation. Our text calls this "a gracious thing in the sight of God."
4. We understand what commendations are because of the system of military decorations. A soldier who goes above and beyond the call of duty is praised and rewarded for his efforts by his country.
5. Take the Medal of Honor for example. "The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration that may be awarded by the United States government. It is presented by the President of the United States, in the name of Congress, and is conferred only upon members of the United States Armed Forces who distinguish themselves through conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty."¹¹
6. Yet the greatest commendation of "Well done my good and faithful servant," isn't reserved by God for the best Christians. It's available to all who follow Christ as they suffer. For those who simply just answer the call to suffer like Christ.

⁹ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (Vol. 16, p. 105). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

¹⁰ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, pp. 65–66). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

¹¹ "Description of Awards – U.S. Military Awards for Valor." <https://valor.defense.gov/Description-of-Awards/>

7. **Matthew 5:11-12 – “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”**
8. Our souls long for our eternal, our heavenly reward. We long for the approval of our God. We long for His commendation. We long to receive the highest award available to us. That is to hear from God, **“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” (Matthew 25:21).**
9. But we will only receive this commendation from God when we suffer how Christ suffered.

The 3rd lesson on unjust suffering is that

- 3) **We are called to replicate the example of how Christ suffered. (2:21-23)**
 - A. **[21] 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.**
 - B. The word “example,” here is a Greek word that literally means “writing under.” He pulled the meaning of this word from his childhood when he was learning to write. 2000 years ago Peter learned to write using a similar technique that my kids’ teachers are still using today. Today we could call this the act of “tracing.”
 - C. Show picture of tracing paper.
 - D. You take what is right and true, you take the standard, and you try to replicate and copy over that example as close as possible.
 - E. The idea is that just as a child slowly, with painstaking effort and close application, follows the shape of the letters of his teacher and learns to write, so should we, with painstaking effort and by close application, seek to replicate the Lord Jesus in our own personal lives. In short, this means to be Christlike.¹²
 - F. The example, the standard, He left for us to replicate is this:
 - G. **[22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. [23] 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.**
 - H. Peter begins to recite the famous poem of the Suffering Servant from the book of Isaiah to show us how Christ suffered.
 - I. **Christ kept His testimony of holiness (22-23a)**

¹² Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, pp. 66–70). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

1. He never sinned – “he committed no sin”

- a. Though Peter was certainly scared and three times denied being one of Jesus’ followers, he still personally witnessed the suffering of Jesus. He was present at Jesus’ arrest. He could hear the trial before Pontius Pilate. He knew the accusations of the chief priests and elders. And Peter saw how Jesus responded to all of this suffering: **without sin!**
- b. There was in Christ the highest perfection of innocence. None of us could dare claim this of ourselves. Therefore, he suffered unjustly beyond all others. So if we claim to follow Christ, there is no reason why any one of us should refuse to replicate his example of suffering.¹³

2. He wasn’t deceitful – “neither was deceit found in his mouth”

- a. The word speaks of craftiness or trickery.¹⁴
- b. **James 3:2 – “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.”**
- c. Jesus was able to bridle and to reign His whole body and He demonstrated that by His speech. He never spoke to personally gain.

3. He didn’t revile – “he did not revile in return”

- a. John Calvin defines this reviling as, “A harsher railing, which not only rebukes a man but also sharply bites him, and stamps him with open [insulting language]. It is to wound a man with an accursed sting.”¹⁵
- b. Jesus didn’t seek to wound others for causing His wounds.

4. He didn’t threaten – “he did not threaten”

- a. By contrast, Jesus prayed for his enemies: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34; and see Acts 7:60).¹⁶

- 5. In full disclosure, replicating Christ in this way has been a great struggle of mine. As I’ve prepared for this sermon, this section has echoed in my mind over and over. **“When He was reviled, He did not revile in return.”** God has been showing me just how often I want to revile in return. To take the words used to cause me harm and to turn them back on the person who

¹³ Calvin, J., & Owen, J. (2010). [Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles](#) (pp. 89–92). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

¹⁴ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, pp. 66–70). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

¹⁵ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, pp. 66–70). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

¹⁶ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (Vol. 16, pp. 108–110). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

said them to me with even more intent to injure. **When I get punched in the mouth, I still want to punch back!**

6. But that's not the way of Christ. Christ remained holy. Christ gave up sin. Christ gave up Himself. Christ trusted in God the Father instead of taking things into His own hands.

B. Christ continually surrendered to God (23b)

1. **[23b] but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.**
2. I used to think that this kind of "turn the other cheek" approach was weak sauce. It wasn't alpha, it was beta. It was something a grown man wouldn't do. But my favorite rapper, KB, put it this way, "If you think being meek is weak, try being meek for a week." Working for a good, reasonable boss is easy. It doesn't take the Spirit of God to "endure" this kind of treatment. Having a wicked, mean, terrible boss and yet still working well for him with everything you've got, that takes incredible fortitude, strength, and faith.
3. Here Peter gives us the ultimate reason for all of Jesus' meekness. Jesus is wholly and completely surrendering Himself and His desires to God. He prayed this very thing in the Garden of Gethsemane before He was arrested. **"Father not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22:42).**
4. All His trust is rooted in the justice of God. He trusted in passages like **Psalm 99, "The King in his might loves justice. You have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. ... O LORD our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings."**
5. Even if it seems that God isn't executing His justice in the moment, all those who wrong the children of God will be punished. There is no reason to fear that we will go unprotected. God is our defender. Therefore, if we seek to dish out our own justice through vengeance, we are actually cutting God's justice off at the knees.
6. Instead, we should let God be the justice bearer and we should be so calm in our spirit that we wish and pray for the best for those who've wronged us. I love the way that John Calvin put it, "You, O Lord, know my heart, how I wish them to be saved who seek to destroy me. If they were converted, I would congratulate them. But if they stubbornly continue in their wickedness, for I know that you watch over my safety, I commit my cause to you."¹⁷
7. That type of prayer leads us to our final point.

The 4th lesson on unjust suffering is that

4) When we suffer as Christ suffered, we point people to Jesus our Savior (24-25)

¹⁷ Calvin, J., & Owen, J. (2010). [Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles](#) (pp. 89–92). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

- A. **[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. [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**
- B. These 2 verses could easily have been a sermon in themselves! We've looked at *how* Christ suffered and now we truly look at *why* He suffered.
- C. Jesus our Savior – verse 24
1. **[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.**
 2. Criminals condemned to crucifixion were ordinarily scourged before being executed. So the word “wounds” here in the Greek presents a picture of our Lord’s lacerated back after the scourging He endured at the hands of the Roman soldiers. The Romans were known for their brutal methods of torture and one of those instruments was called the Roman flagrum.
 3. Show picture of Roman flagrum.
 4. Based on research, this is a replica of what this might have looked like. You can see that it was a whipping device made with leather straps. Attached to those straps would’ve been pieces of lead or brass, or small, sharp-pointed bones or nails.
 5. Christ was stripped to the waist and bound in a stooping position, with His hands behind a post or pillar. And then He was frightfully scourged using something like this. You can imagine the type of damage this would’ve done to His back.
 6. It is recorded that the Christian martyrs at Smyrna, which is near modern-day Turkey, around year 155 were so torn by their scourging that their veins were laid bare, and their inner muscles and sinews and even their bowels were exposed. There is no reason to think that Jesus received any less severe punishment.
 7. Also, the word “wounds” is actually singular, not plural. Peter remembered the body of our Lord after the scourging, His flesh so dreadfully mangled that His disfigured form appeared in Peter’s eyes as one single wound.
 8. Thus we have the portrait of the suffering Servant of Jehovah, His blessed face so pummeled by the hard fists of the mob that it did not look like a human face anymore, His back lacerated by the Roman scourging so that it was one mass of open, raw, quivering flesh trickling with blood, His heart torn with anguish because of the bitter, malevolent words hurled at Him. On that bleeding, lacerated back was laid the Cross.¹⁸

¹⁸ Wuest, K. S. (19 97). [Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 11, pp. 66–70). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

9. Jesus Christ suffered all this without cause. It was truly unjust. And He suffered all this without sin, without deceit, without reviling, and without threats. And why did Jesus endure this? FOR YOU!
 10. **Romans 5:6-11 – “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”**
 11. There is a wicked, false teaching that has taken over our “churches” in America and is being exported to other countries throughout the world. It says the healing that Christ procured by His wounds is merely physical and financial healing. This is completely false. He wasn’t beaten, mocked, scorned, and killed so you could avoid having a runny nose or back pain when you wake up in the morning. He didn’t suffer the wrath of God that we deserve so that you could have more commas attached to your bank account.
 12. Abusing the “you have been healed” statement in this way completely rejects the God-focused orientation of the whole passage for a self-focused, me-centered theology that treats Jesus as the means to the end of the desires of our sinful hearts.
 13. The expression healed means “to be forgiven.” **“That we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”** Peter is saying that the scourging Jesus received before He was crucified and the wounds inflicted on him when He was crucified were the penalty Jesus paid for our redemption, for our saving.¹⁹
- D. Jesus the Shepherd of our souls – verse 25
1. **[25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**
 2. On this side of the Industrial Revolution, the image of sheep is somewhat lost on us. If you’ve never lived in the country around sheep, you might think they’re little clean, squishy animals you give your kids stuffed versions of.
 3. I’ll admit, Lincolnton is the most country place I’ve ever lived, but I’ve been to farms and I’ve heard shepherds talk about their sheep. Sheep are dumb and dirty. They’re helpless. They basically have no defense mechanism to defend themselves from predators. Even worse, they’ll kill themselves without intending to.

¹⁹ Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). [Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (Vol. 16, pp. 111–112). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

4. To illustrate what I mean, look at this video.
5. We laugh because this boy is about to get his sheep out of the ditch again. But if left alone, that sheep would die in the very ditch that he was just saved from. And he put himself in it!
6. Peter says that *WE* are that dumb animal! We are not confident and clean. We are dumb and dirty. We are helpless and we'll kill ourselves without intending to. And as sheep, we've gone astray, every one of us. We've abandoned God to pursue our sin. We need our Shepherd. We need our Savior to save us from the sins we've committed and rescue us from the hell we intend to jump into headfirst.

Challenge:

As people, we don't really think we're dumb and helpless though.

If I was to walk off this stage and go down there and punch _____ in the mouth, he'd respond with either fight or flight. He'd either fight me back or run away. The same is true if I hit him with the most vicious onslaught of "yo momma" jokes you've ever heard of. He'd either start hurling the jokes back or he'd sit there and take them quietly. Or I guess he could be like Will Smith at the Oscars and come up here and slap the mess out of me.

Because we think we have the power to defend ourselves, we all have the tendency to respond to unjust suffering either by fight or by flight. Maybe you stand up against this type of suffering and punch back. Maybe you tuck your tail and just take your lumps as they come. Maybe you think you somehow deserve this suffering, so you try your best to fix whatever you might have done wrong.

How you handle unjust suffering reveals the condition of your heart. But the Bible is very, very clear. We're sheep. And like sheep, we don't really have a defense mechanism. Sheep can't fight back. Sheep really can't even run away. The only thing sheep can do is trust that their shepherd will protect them. And that protection, that ultimate justice provided by God, gives us a new, Christlike, third option to respond to unjust suffering with: **forgiveness**.

So here's the challenge:

Challenge: As a Christian living in exile in this world, you're guaranteed to face unjust suffering. Are you able to pass on Christ's forgiveness of you to those who cause your suffering? Do you have forgiveness ready as a tool to endure unjust suffering and proclaim the Gospel to those causing your suffering?

C.S. Lewis – "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. This is hard. It is perhaps not so hard to forgive a single great injury. But to forgive the incessant provocations of daily life—to keep on forgiving the bossy mother-in-law, the bullying husband, the nagging wife, the selfish daughter, the deceitful son—How can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand."²⁰

²⁰ Lewis, C.S. (1949). The Weight of Glory (pp. 182-183). New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

It wasn't that Christ didn't have a plan until he got punched in the mouth. Christ's plan *was* to literally get punched in the mouth for us! That is where we stand. And as He was hanging on the Cross He prayed to God, **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34).

Blood pouring down from His crown of thorns. His hands nailed so far apart that He could barely hold Himself up to breath, let alone use them to fight back. His flesh flayed open by His scourging and splintered by the Cross on His back. His legs weak and weary from carrying the burden of that Cross from Pilate's palace up the hill to Golgotha. His feet nailed to the Cross so He couldn't escape the pain of His suffering.

He suffered all this unjustly. All this done to a sinless man at the hands of sinful men. **And yet, Christ forgave!** Not only that, Christ pleads with God the Father that He would forgive them too!

It wasn't just some Roman soldiers or Jewish council Christ was praying for. He was praying for me. It was my sin that nailed Him to the Cross. He was praying for you. It was your sin that nailed Him to the Cross. We all carry in our pockets the very nails that hung Him on the Cross. (Martin Luther).

To be able to forgive others, we must experience and understand the forgiveness that Christ has provided to us first. On that Cross, Christ paid the eternal debt we owe for our sin and He made the way for us to return back to God. "We must constantly remind ourselves of God's mercy to us, and out of that mercy deal with those who have sinned against us. If we have been shown mercy, how can we not in, in turn, show mercy to others?"²¹

Don't give what you get from men! Give what you get from God!

This is the example that God calls us to replicate. And I can't think of anyone who better replicated this example of forgiveness than of the martyr Stephen. In **Acts 6** it says that, "Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people." But there were Jews that "could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking." So they seized him and brought him before the Jewish council. It was before this council that Stephen gave his great speech in Acts 7. I encourage you to go read his entire speech from Acts chapter 7. But it concludes with this:

Acts 7:51-60 – "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.' Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

²¹ Dever, Mark, & Lawrence, Michael. (2010). It Is Well: Expositions on Substitutionary Atonement (pp. 58-59). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

Stephen didn't simply endure his reputation being slandered by the Jewish council. He wasn't just wrongfully imprisoned and left to rot in a jail cell. He wasn't even beaten to within an inch of his life. No, he was stoned to death by the Jewish council for preaching the Gospel to them! And in his dying breath his final words was a prayer that God would forgive those who were in the act of stoning him!

Doesn't that sound exactly like Jesus!

So, when you're struggling to forgive, when your heart is bitter, when your soul broken, when your strength is gone, when your grace is lacking, praise God, your Hope and Savior, and point people to the Jesus that saved and forgave you through His suffering that you caused.

The goal is to forgive those who've hurt you to the point that they ask you, "Why are you forgiving me?" And then you get to tell them about the Savior that first forgave you!

I've told you already that in giving us these great instructions, Peter recited the famous poem of the Suffering Servant from the book of Isaiah. The early church would have been familiar with it as a hymn and it is one of the most theologically rich messages about Jesus' death and resurrection.²² To close, I'm going to read from this poem. Listen to the suffering. Listen to injustice. Look at *how* Christ suffered. But also see *why* Christ suffered. Praise God that He suffered unjustly for our sin, so that we might never taste the eternal suffering we deserve!

Isaiah 53:3-11

[3] He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

[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 pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds 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;

²² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (1 Pe 2:22–25). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

[8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

[9] And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

[10] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

[11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.