

Facing Warfare Against The Soul

by Warren Henderson

This sermon delves into 1 Peter chapter two, focusing on the theme of facing warfare against the soul. It emphasizes the importance of abstaining from fleshly lusts, following the example of Christ in suffering patiently for wrongdoing, and submitting to God's ordained authority. The message highlights the need to trust God's justice, prioritize behavior over asserting facts when wronged, and expect opposition while staying on target in imitating Christ.

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Scripture: 1 Peter 2:11, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Peter 2:25, James 1:2, Job 23:10, Philippians 3:10, Ephesians 4:32

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Imitating Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Well, it's a joy to be with you. That is my favorite hymn. It's really hard coming up here wiping your eyes of tears right before you preach.

It's hard for me to get over verse two. All right, if you would turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter two, and I do have a handout. If you did not get one, just raise your hand or a few left.

Caleb, can you pass out the remainder? Thank you. And we'll be looking at the subject, as Paul mentioned, facing warfare against the soul. Now, I've started by giving you a little outline of 1 Peter.

I don't think that's been done so far. And I did not see the other topics that the other brothers were speaking on. And so it's been a real delight just to see how the Lord would lead me in putting together this simple outline for our time together this week.

So we started in 1 Peter in chapter one and verses three through chapter 10 or chapter two, verse 10, the new birth, the new life. And her brother George was telling us about that and new life in Christ then leads to new behavior were to be a holy people for he is holy. And I will be starting to kick off that section and then Brother Sam will be finishing that up this evening.

And then a new life in Christ brings new behavior, also brings new suffering. There's consequences for living for the Lord Jesus Christ. And so there'll be new persecution and there'll be suffering.

And but there's also a new responsibility as those who are strangers and pilgrims. And so that's just a little brief outline for the entire epistle. And it's interesting now, as we start in verse 11 of chapter two, that most of the rest of the epistle deals with relationships and how we're going to interact with other people, other believers as being strangers and pilgrims.

So we'll be beginning in chapter two, verse 11. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. And the title of this message is facing warfare against the soul.

He starts out by saying, Beloved, I find eight times in the two epistles that Peter wrote that he uses this terminology. I don't think Peter was saying, I love you. What he was saying is you're loved, you're loved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so he begins this section, Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims. The King James says strangers, the word there basically means a foreigner. Strangers don't belong where they're at.

Pilgrims belong where they're going. And that describes the believer in the world. And he says, in light of being beloved by the Lord Jesus Christ, in light of being strangers sojourning in the world, in light of being pilgrims that are venturing heavenward, abstain from fleshly lusts, abstain literally there means to hold oneself back.

It's in the middle voice. So it has to be a personal decision. And what Peter is laying out here in the groundwork is why the believer would want to make that decision.

What are the benefits of making that decision of holding back from pursuing fleshly lusts? The word lusts in the Greek is not necessarily a negative or positive word, but fleshly modifies it. And so in this context, it's clearly a negative thought. It's speaking of sinful appetites.

Those things are not consistent with the will of God. And then he says that war against the soul. Now, he uses this word *sukkah* a number of times in the book.

In chapter three, I think Joe will be handling that portion of text. He'll talk about eight souls saved by water. Sometimes we use that terminology, the ship went down and a hundred souls were lost.

A hundred people were lost in that disaster. I like the way that it's used. And I think that's the thought here.

It's the soul is who we are, where Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians in chapter five, he talks about the fact that our spirit, our soul and body are to be sanctified. The spirit is God conscious. The soul is self-conscious and our body is flesh conscious.

And so God speaks to us through the spirit. The world is reaching into us through the five senses and the battle zone really is in the soul with the mind being at the center. And in the handout, I provide just a few verses about the soul.

We could say it's total self. It's unique. Each one has a unique soul.

There's no one like you. And that was nice not to hear an amen with that. We're unique, right? Every person is unique and it exists after death.

We get that picture in Revelation chapter six, verse nine with martyred souls being under the altar waiting for judgment. So the soul continues on. It expresses the entire personality of the person, Psalm 3320.

It includes intellect, desires, emotions, and decisions. And so in John chapter 10, that passage just talks about the good shepherd laying his life down for the sheep. Well, that's the word *sukkot*.

And the Lord gave his total self. He gave all that he had. He gave his entire life when he laid his life down for the sheep.

And so looking through this passage and thinking about it, I came up with five practical things I think that Peter is trying to convey to us, to these Christians that were suffering throughout Asia Minor, these five different provinces that George mentioned earlier. And he wants them not to suffer from tunnel vision. He doesn't want to suffer from hurting themselves by pursuing carnal lusts.

He wants them to go on for the glory of God. And so in each of these five points, I just want to preface it based on who you are, that's dearly beloved in Christ, where you are at, that's strangers in the world, and where you are going, that's pilgrims headed to glory, refrain from fleshly lusts, why? And the first reason we have in verse 11 is you don't want to war against your own soul. You don't want to war against your own soul.

Flip over to 1st John, not 1st John, 3rd John. I don't know how many times I read this epistle, but I don't know that I really contemplated this verse before doing this study. John says, beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things.

And I think he's speaking there of the walk that they have, the walk of serving the Lord in verses 3 and 4, so that you may prosper in all things and be in health just as your soul prospers. So the point here is that you prosper when your soul prospers. Why would you want to do something against your own soul that would hurt your own health, hurt your own ministry? And so as we're thinking about the practical ramifications of this, when trials come, and they will come, Peter, in chapter 1, verse 13, says gird up the loins of your mind, right? When you had a ship that was going into a bad storm, the sailors would undergird the ship with cables and ropes to keep it together, knowing the hard times were coming, that hopefully they could ride out the storm and survive.

And so the believer is to gird up the loins of their mind, think ahead as the suffering's coming, so that when you head into it, you don't do things that will adversely affect your walk and undermine the glory of God. And so when trials come, yield to and abide with the Lord, don't permit things like depression and carnal thinking rule you. We have a new behavior to live out.

The life of Christ within us brings a new behavior that the world must see. They need to see the life of Christ. And it would be easier for believers when times get hard to say, why would I ever want to keep going on? This is just not worth it.

Or what's the use? Why does it matter? And so we can actually start adapting the mindset of the world and pour ourselves into things that the world would say, that's really good, education, making money. We might slip into depression and become lethargic. All these things, or we might, as our brother was just teaching in the previous session, we might want to get even, seek revenge.

Sometimes the world says, yeah, that's good, but that's not the way of the Lord. And so we don't think like the world would think, the things that the world would applaud are not those things which the Lord

applauds. Hamilton Smith, he's one of my favorite writers from yesteryear, he says this, we are exhorted to abstain from fleshly lusts.

We are not called to war against these lusts, but rather to abstain from them. It is hardly our business to wage war against the evils in the world, but rather to show forth the excellencies of him who has called us out of the darkness into light. William Kelly.

Now this is typically William Kelly wordy, but this is a really good quote, if you can follow with me. According to the mind of Christ, the high privileges of faith were but to strengthen the believer's delight in God and vigilance as strangers and sojourners in holding aloof from the fleshly lusts that were against the soul. How often through a lack of prayer and watchfulness, fleshly lusts spring from sincere esteem, pure affection, unawares gliding into carnality.

These fleshly desires, many which men praise as doing well to self, war against the soul and are an abomination in God's sight. How contrary to the new and eternal life we have in Christ and inconsistent with God's wonderful light in which we walk. How mischievous and debasing to the Christian.

They grieve the Holy Spirit, dishonor Christ, and they fight against the soul. They injure the believer. And it's not the life of Christ shining through, it's the old life getting its way.

And that will never propagate the glory of God. So the first point is don't do things that war against your own soul. And then the second point is in verse 12.

He says, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. So, again, based on who you are, dearly beloved in Christ, where you are, strangers in the world and where you're going, pilgrims headed to glory, refrain from fleshly lusts because you want the unregenerate to be saved and glorify God. Amen.

In other words, if you respond to the ill will of the world, the weakness of the world, if we pursue fleshly lusts, the world sees nothing different than what it sees every day. And so as the darkness grows, there's more opportunity to shine brightly for the Lord Jesus. And so what the world really needs to see today is the validity of the gospel in the believer's life.

And so as we're evil spoken of or things are done evil to us, then there's that opportunity for the light of the gospel to come through. When we lived up in Rockford, Illinois, we had a little farm out outside of town and we had a neighbor who had cattle, he was a dairy farmer, he had cattle across the road and occasionally they would get out. This man was a pretty vile man.

He was very rude to us, never said a kind thing. Any interaction we had, there was cursings. But as the time went on, his cattle would get out, heifers would get out.

I would call him and say, hey, Randy, your cattle are out, I'll help you put them in. Sometimes I just put them in and I call him and say, now put your cattle in, but you may need to come and fix your fence. And this went on for two years.

And we just met his hostility with kindness over and over and over again. We had a big snowstorm. And early in the morning, I heard this tractor and Randy came up and plowed out our entire driveway.

It was like 10, 12 inches of snow. I took a cup of coffee out to him, I said, I really appreciate that, Randy. He says, yeah, I don't know why I've been so nasty with you guys.

You're good neighbors. I almost said, I don't know why you've been so nasty either, but I didn't. So I came back in the house and there were all the kids around the table.

I said, see guys, you see what happens when the world experiences the love of Christ? That's different. And that's what we want. Now, the commentators have a little disagreement on what this is, glorify God in the day of visitation.

By the way, the word there is the same word in 1 Timothy 3, verse 1, when Paul's talking to Timothy and he says, a man that desires the office of a bishop desires a good work. Episcopate is the word there for office of a bishop. It's not the actual title of the office, that's episkopos, but episcopate, and it means the superintendent's, the outworking of that office.

And that's the same word here translated visitation. Some commentators think that, well, if you live the light of the gospel before the lost and they reject that and don't respond to it, then there's more accountability on the day of judgment and then they'll bring more glory to God. I tend to think this is probably more like the usage in Acts 15, verse 14.

The whole tenor of this passage is God wants lost sinners to be saved. And so the idea here is that as we live the gospel and we show forth the light of Christ, that God in his administration and his stewardship of things brings people to himself. And that's already been brought out in an earlier message.

He's drawing people to himself. And so when people do evil, and there will be people that do evil by your good works, they observe and glorify God. Now there's examples of that.

He's going to get into talking about our relationship to government authorities. He's going to talk about relationships from slaves to masters. At the time that this was written, the Roman Empire was about 120 million people and half of them were slaves.

So that was something they could very much relate to. As we think through it and walk through the passage today, I would like us to think more of the employer type of relationship. And Sam will be addressing tonight the submission of the wife to the husband.

So there's these three different usages of how to relate to authority over us, which is what he brings up in verse 13. So submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to king as supreme or to governors or to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good, you'll put to silence the ignorance of foolish men as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak or for vice, but as a bondservant of God.

We'll pause our reading there. So the third reason, again, based on who you are, dearly beloved in Christ, where you are, that stranger in the world, and where you're going, pilgrims headed to glory, refrain from fleshly lusts, point three, you should want to honor God by submitting to and respecting his ordained authority. This is a huge problem today.

God instituted human government in Genesis chapter eight to teach us submission. Human government is not perfect. God is perfect, but he's teaching us submission by submitting to ordained authorities.

And so if you think of God's authority like this big funnel, he's bringing it down to us. There's civil authority, there's home authority, and there's church authority. And as we yield to that authority, we rest under that.

God funnels down blessings to us. When we rebel against God ordained authority, we really have not removed ourselves from authority. If a woman runs away from her husband and says, I don't want to live with you anymore, she hasn't escaped his authority.

She has now put herself under satanic authority, because there's only two authority structures in the world today. What God has ordained and he blesses and what's opposing him. And so when we start getting this mindset, God's teaching us submission through these authority structures, although they're not perfect.

What he's doing is teaching us submission to himself. So we submit unto these stories, unto the Lord, as long as they don't directly contradict the scripture. And we see the apostles holding that up, that teaching in Acts chapter 4 and chapter 5. So in verse 13, therefore submit, it's an aorist imperative.

It just means be obedient to some ordinances of men. Doesn't say that, does it? Be obedient to those ordinances you think are correct. Doesn't say that either.

I hear a lot of rationalizing today about not submitting. But God is honored as long as it isn't contradictory to his word. When we submit to authorities over us, even when we know they're not right.

My wife has told me several times, she goes, you know, I am so glad I'm not a man. And I said, you know, I'm really glad you're not a man too. And she said, you know, as long as I submit to you, you follow the Lord.

I get off scot-free. I said, the buck rests with you. Boy, that's a lot of accountability, isn't it? And whenever God gives authority, there is responsibility, which is a transition that we get into in chapter 4. So he says, be obedient to those ordinances which the governors have put in place.

And then notice it's also to those sub-levels of government in verse 14. Now in Romans chapter 13, Paul tells us that God has instituted these earthly authorities. And anyone who resists those authorities resists him and brings judgment to themselves.

And so we have an obligation before a world that needs to see Christ to not be complaining, not be bittered against those authorities. It doesn't mean that we agree. There's a lot of things I do not agree with that's going on in this country right now.

But it's not my place to be out criticizing and giving all kinds of nasty expressions against the government. What the world needs to see is either a quiet, submitted spirit or just a respectful attitude. Submission has the aspect of obedience and respect.

He gets to the point of respect in verse 17. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. This is an interesting word in the Greek.

Peter actually uses several metaphors, but in verse 15, see where it says to put to silence? That word actually means to muzzle, to muzzle. Now when you muzzle something, it doesn't mean that they can't make sound, but it does mean that they're not going to have a distinct sound. And so as you live Christ before those who are doing evil things against you and they see a submitted spirit, there's nothing really that there can be.

There's no legitimate basis for accusation. And what it does is it muzzles them. It doesn't mean they might murmur and groan, but they have no distinct sound that will carry any weight against you.

And so that's powerful, isn't it? What that means is we can actually control the situation by taking the low, humble, obedient, respectful route. And I like what Paul says. It's in Philippians chapter one towards the end of the chapter.

He says that when you live the gospel out and when there's suffering, he says that does two things. First of all, it's proof to you of your own salvation. He tells the church that that's the like of the same thing.

And otherwise, why would you ever suffer for the Lord if you didn't really believe it and were saved? You wouldn't do it. So it's a token of your salvation, but it's also a condemnation to those persecuting you because you're revealing more truth to them. The truth of Christ is coming out before them, and it's an appeal to their conscience.

And so you're also giving a testimony of Christ to the oppressors. It's also a benefit to yourself because you say, hey, I wouldn't do this. I wouldn't be going on and suffering like this if I wasn't saved.

I really do believe this. And you go on with the Lord for 17, he says, honor all people. That just means respect.

Love the brotherhood. He's talking about the body of Christ. Fear God.

I appreciate our brothers, George's message. This is a real issue, and even among believers, you know, when Moses took the people up to Mount Sinai, and this in Exodus 20, 21, Mary had them three days to consecrate themselves, clean themselves up, and Moses brought them up to Mount Sinai, and they couldn't come to the Mount, the border, just the border, they went on the Mount, they died. And then the Lord came on the Mount, and the Mount shook, and there was fire and smoke and rumbling.

And you remember what the people did? They started backing away. Moses, you go talk to the Lord lest we die. And that was exactly the response God wanted.

In other words, the first response and the holiness of God is recognizing who he is. And I think our brother made that point. And then once the people started backing away, then the next thing you see is Moses building an altar and the sacrifices were put and the blood was sprinkled on the people.

And just a couple chapters later, you have the 70 elders of Israel and Moses and Aaron on the bottom of the Mount. If they went there a few days earlier, they would have died. And there they are enjoying a meal before the God of the universe.

He talks about the bottom of God's sapphire throne being seen. It's a beautiful picture of fellowship of the Lord, but it didn't happen until they recognized who he was and all of his glory. And so when the writer of Hebrews brings that up, he says Moses was exceedingly fearful on that site.

And he ends the chapter, our God is a consuming fire. By the way, that's New Testament, right? He's speaking to believers. That's New Testament.

And so that's the concept that this great and this awesome God that we have, same God as the Old Testament, nothing's changed. And yet we've lost. There's this kind of superficial familiarity with the Lord that sometimes, I think, belittles his holiness.

Let's keep him on the throne. He is the God of the universe. He deserves all worship and all honor.

And then point four, this is verses 18 through 20. He says, servants be submissive to your masters. Now submissive here is a participle.

It's a verbal adjective. So it's describing the attitude of the servant and servant here. The Greek word is not the slave, the bond servant, but a household servant.

So there's a little more familiarity here with these servants, but they were to have a submissive spirit to their masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. Now this is actually another metaphor that he uses. The Greek word for harsh there is skolios, where we get skoliosis, and that's the curve of the spine.

And so what Peter is saying, you be submissive to your masters. Whether they're good or whether they're crooked, whether they're abusive, whether they're not good masters, because you have a master that's higher than that master who is good. And you submit to your good highest master as you would this master.

Well that's hard, isn't it? I mean, I've been in this employee situations that were very hard to submit. Actually when I started at Sunstream years ago in the aerospace, I told my boss who was not a Christian, I started easy, I just said, now I want you to know that I take my instructions for you, but I choose to serve a Jewish carpenter who is now in heaven. And he didn't quite understand what he was saying, but as the years went on, I was able to tell him more and more about the fact that I took my instructions from him.

And I also said this, I think if I please him, I'll please you. And that's the idea. All right, so for this is commendable, this is thankworthy.

If because of conscience towards God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully, for what credit is it when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently, but when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God, or this is thankworthy. And so, based on who you are, dearly beloved in Christ, where you are, strangers in the world and where you are going, pilgrims headed to glory, refrain from fleshly lusts, because suffering patiently for wrongdoing, that's others wrongdoing to you, refreshes God's heart because it reminds him of his son. When we look at the text, when it says, what credit is it when you are beaten, the word there literally means to strike, strike a blow for your faults, you take it patiently.

In other words, that would be normal, you do something wrong, and there's a corporal punishment for it. But when you do good and suffer, in other words, you have not done anything wrong. If you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

It reminds the father of his son, he breathes it in. That reminds me of my son. He didn't do anything wrong.

He was buffeted, and he took it patiently. And so that is, I think, an encouragement to the heart of God. There have been times that in the Lord's Supper, just that time between me and the Lord, where in a very personal way, it wouldn't be something I would say audibly, but I said, Lord, this happened, and I don't believe I've done anything wrong, but your son suffered like this, and I just release this to you as a sacrifice.

And it can be an act of worship if you look at that, knowing how it refreshes the heart of God. Now, if you release the incense up, you can't pull it back down, right? It's only a sacrifice if it costs you something. And that's why Ephesians 4.32, also Colossians, I think it's 3.13, tell us about forgiving one another, charadzomei, the idea of unconditionally releasing.

Why? Because we've experienced the love of God. We've experienced the forgiveness of God. So it is a sacrifice pleasing to God.

It puts his son into remembrance. Anything that we can do in our Christian lives that put the Lord Jesus into remembrance for the Father to appreciate, that's a good thing, amen? That's a good thing. And anything that we can do that makes the lost be able to see the Lord Jesus, that's a good thing.

Bill McDonald writes this, it is the mark of deepest and truest humility to see ourselves condemned without a cause, to be silent under insult and wrong is very noble imitation of our Lord. Oh my Lord, when I remember in how many ways you did suffer, who in no way deserved it, I know not where my senses are when I am in haste to defend and excuse myself. Is it possible I should desire anyone to speak any good of me or to think it when so many ill things were thought and spoken of you? Oh, that's good.

When we look at the Lord and what he did and how he submitted himself, and that's where Peter goes next, we have such a beautiful pattern to follow. He says, and by the way, verses 21 through 25, Peter is pulling out of Isaiah 53, verses 1 through 11, pretty consecutively. He says, for to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, why? Leaving us an example that you should follow in his steps.

It's interesting that the word example there actually is a very specific. It means a copy to follow or copy to pattern off of. We have a four year old in our meeting whose name is Lily.

She's learning her letters and so in her ABC book she has A's and it shows the strokes in order to make a letter A and a little A and so forth. She's got her capital. She's working on her little letters.

Now, if that copy book was clear at the end of the auditorium and she was standing up here, how well would she be able to learn her letters? Not very well. But with the copy book right near her, she's able to, with great accuracy, learn to write her letters. And that's the thought.

The closer that we are to Christ, the better we're going to be able to copy his example in our own lives, to pattern after it. He is the copy to follow and we want to be as close to the original as possible in order to properly imitate him. We were hiking with another couple up in the Canadian Rockies in June and they had a very cold winter, deep snow, and even in the third week of June we got turned back on three hikes because of snow.

But we wanted to get to this one place, this is Gorman Lake, and at 6,000 feet we started running in the snow and it just got deeper and we were going through four and five feet of snow. And it was interesting, Mike was leading and he's kind of a shorter guy, he's light, he's 72 but he still runs two miles a day, he's in great shape. And then the ladies followed and then I followed up the rear and the thought was we had the lightest to the heaviest.

And as they stepped through the snow, hopefully it would hold me by the time I got there. And occasionally we'd fall through and go clear up to our crotch, I mean we were in deep snow and actually we didn't get to the lake. But that's what the Lord has left us, he has these steps, this close pattern to follow and we try our best by grace and the power of the Holy Spirit to put our foot down specifically.

But as Johnny reminded us, this practical sanctification, we're not going to do perfect. The goal is to follow Christ's example and by God's grace we want to, but we just realize until we have a glorified body that's not going to happen. But he, the closer we are to him, the better we're going to follow the copy.

And that's a great take home point for that verse. He says, who committed no sin, nor was deceit, now Johnny talked about that word earlier, no guile, it just means what you see is what you get. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, there was no deceitfulness about it, what you saw in Christ on the cross is exactly what God was doing.

And he was a propitiation for us. No deceit found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, did not revile in return. Now in English it doesn't quite come out as strong as the Greek, the word, the first time we see reviled there, it means to heap upon abuse.

And that's what happened with the Lord Jesus. Abuse was heaped on him, but he did not retort back in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously.

In Luke 23, when the Lord, he'd been on the cross for three hours, I count in the six hours he was on the cross, he probably took about 5,000 breaths of air, meaning he had to push against the nail in his feet to get the air out of his diaphragm to breathe, and exhausting, his back has been plowed open with the Roman scourge, and 5,000 plus times our Savior went up and back on that cross just to breathe. And then he says this, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Now the Greek verb there, said, is in the imperfect tense.

We have these seven statements of Christ on the cross, but that one he didn't say just once. Imperfect implies he said it, and he said it for a period of time, and then he stopped. He said it over and over again, meaning to get the air through his vocal cords to make the words, it caused excruciating pain.

Why did the Lord say it over and over again? If you examine the text, the rulers, as they mocked our Savior, and the passersby, as they hurled insults at him, and the soldiers mocked him, every one of those is in the imperfect tense. Here's all these accusations and blasphemy coming up to our Savior, why he's suffering, he's agonizing, and he's calling out to the Father, Father, *aphiemi* means let it be, suffer it, Father, suffer it, Father, don't judge it, Father, let it be. He wasn't forgiving them for their sins, he was making intercession to the Father in heaven.

He didn't revile back at them, he showed the love of God for them, even while he was suffering. Isn't that incredible? Heaped on abuses, and here he is making intercession, the love of God pouring out to the Savior. Beloved, how does that compare with what you and I suffer in this world? It just doesn't.

And so this was the pattern that the Lord is leaving us. He says he committed himself to the one who judges righteously. Let me ask you this, beloved, do you trust God to act justly on your behalf? Do you trust God to act justly on your behalf? Amen.

The Lord did, and that's the pattern. He was given 100% complete surrender without reservation, he trusted God. And this is a great help.

When the trials come in and so forth, to follow his pattern, completely being given over to what God would have us do, keeping on the mark. I guess one confession, I've always been a nut for science fiction movies. And when, back in 1977, Star Wars came out, and I went to see that.

And it was just an incredible movie. And the reason I'm bringing this up is, if you remember at the end of the movie, when they're trying to take out the Death Star, and they're in that trench run, right? And here's all the fire coming, and the enemy's trying to take the rebels out. And you remember the commander? He says, stay on target, stay on target, stay on target, right? And he's leading them all the way through to the end objective.

And I think that's what Peter's trying to get across on us. There is this dark world, there's the phrase coming in, and we need to keep on target. Follow the pattern, stay the course, don't be sidetracked, gird your mind, follow the example.

And when we talk of the Lord, it says, he who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, whose stripes you are healed. This is a very unusual phenomenon. The healer suffered the cost to heal.

And so here the Lord Jesus bore in his own body the price, the cost, God's wrath for sin. He says that we, having died to sin, and I believe that's probably a positional truth, literally it's being dead, in Adam, everything that we were in Adam that died, we were co-crucified with Christ and now we're alive with Christ, by whose stripes, in the Greek it's singular. And the idea here is that the Lord Jesus was just one big, massive welt, by whose stripes you were healed.

For you were like sheep going astray, that talks about us in our ungoverned state, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of our souls, the guardian of our souls. That's the example. Based on who you are, dearly beloved in Christ, where you are, strangers in the world, and where you are going, pilgrims headed to glory, refrained from fleshly lust, it's an example that Christ left for us to follow.

And when the suffering comes, I like Paul, he puts it this way in Philippians 3.10, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, mark this, the fellowship or the sharing of his sufferings, being conformed to his death. So when you go, when you suffer for wrong, for somebody else's wrongdoing, you haven't done anything, that's what the Lord did. You actually can identify closer with the Lord.

You're sharing in something the Lord shared in that you never shared before, and so it brings you closer enjoyment and fellowship with the Lord. Christ did nothing wrong, but he released wrongs against him to his father to be judged. He didn't seek justice.

And I just want to make this point. The enemy wants to keep us from not being on target. And so if the enemy can take us off the target into a just cause like defending yourself, he wins, because you've pulled yourself out of ministry to defend yourself.

God is very capable of defending you, and he will if it's a just point. The point is, keep to the work. So that's the exposition of the passage.

I just want to leave you with a couple equipping thoughts, three points. Christ has waited 2,000 years to vindicate his name. Can we wait a little while with him? He's waited 2,000 years.

Can we wait a few months, a few years, before God vindicates? What you do, this is very important, the Lord has taught me this, what you do when wronged is more important than asserting the facts. I would say that's got to be one of the main points I want to get across to you. I have learned it through practical experience.

When you are falsely accused, when people say things against you, Paul says in 1 Corinthians, in chapter 11, verse 19, these things must occur to show who's approved. In other words, we know they're coming. And so look through the Bible.

A lot of godly men were accused of wrongdoing. They hadn't done anything. But Satan was trying to get them off target, pull them away from the work, pull away the pattern that the world desperately needs to see of Christ.

And so we need to keep on the mark, keep imitating Christ, keep showing the world the love of Christ in all things. The world would expect us to defend ourselves. But what I've found is that facts really aren't important to assert.

It doesn't really matter. Because even in defending yourself, you can damage the body. You cause division.

It's best just to keep still, keep the course, and the way you behave when accused of wrongdoing is more important than actually getting justice out of it. Isn't that what the Lord shows us? And then point 2, we expect opposition from the lost, but most often, but often the most grievous wounds are from other believers. Don't jump on the devil's side to get even, that's the Lord's way.

And I mentioned the book there, The Evil Nexus. I brought about 120 copies, free copies of the conference. They're back on the end table in the foyer.

There was an elder that read this up in B.C. He says, this is mandatory reading for every believer. I said, I think you're right. One sister said, boy, that's a scary cover.

I said, it's a scary topic to think that we would leave imitating Christ and showing the glory of God to hold hands with a devil and hurt his bride. And so, free copies on the back table of The Evil Nexus. Shepherding work, a lot of you are involved with shepherding work.

Stubborn sheep under conviction will bite. I'm glad some of you are laughing. Rather than yielding to truth, some will resort to fault finding.

We're finding this right now with a couple we've been working with two years. They've gone pretty far, but now they're at a point where they don't want to yield and submit. It is natural for sheep to go into a fault finding mode to justify not going on.

So just expect that. In the last session, in First Peter, we'll learn about the example that elders are to exhibit before the sheep. So expect criticism.

Those who do the least have more time on their hands to criticize those doing the most. Yeah, I figured there'd be a little laughter on that. Keep busy in the Lord's work and be given to prayer.

I find these are strong defenses. If I'm keeping real busy in the Lord and I'm making time to pray... By the way, if you're not praying with different brothers and sisters throughout the week, just set that up. There's several brothers in this room I pray with weekly, and it's a huge encouragement to my soul.

We need each other. So spend time in prayer. If you're busy in the Lord's work, you're not going to have time to look and criticize others or even defend yourself.

Again, stay on target. And then lastly, just to kind of end this with a devotional thought, God uses incredible pressure and heat to take a base element like carbon to fashion a beautiful diamond. Likewise, He uses tribulation and affliction.

And what's interesting, the Greek word *thaliptos* is what's translated, generally, tribulations and affliction. In the New Testament, the word means pressure. And so James tells us in chapter 1 that there's no other way than trials to work this quality of patience within our life.

God led Job into a trial. Job was the most righteous man on the planet. That's what I read in the text.

I can only imagine how the Jews read that. That'd be quite upsetting to them. But yet there was something lurking in Job's heart that he wasn't even aware.

And so God led him into a deep trial to expose that, to refine him, to greater bless Job and bring more glory to himself. And so we need to expect this. If the trials are coming from opposition, from a critical spirit, from believers, James says, don't try to make sense of it.

It's demonical. I think sometimes we try to make sense of these things and there is no sense of it. Just stay on target.

Keep going forward. So God uses these trials and these afflictions as pressure to make us into a priceless trophy of His grace. The thing that the Lord has shown me is there's just no other way to accomplish it.

We have to have these kind of deep trials. The Lord strips us away of the things that we hold in pride, our name, our reputation, whatever it might be, in order to fashion what He wants that will better imitate His Son. And isn't that what we want? So we end where we begin.

He says, Now return to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. We started by not engaging in fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. And if we're close to the Lord in fellowship with Him, then we're resting in the guardian of our souls and that's where we're really going to have peace and communion.

I really hope this has been helpful to you. Stay on target. Keep on target.

Don't let the enemy drift you off. The new life is worthy to live out for the glory of God. And it brings on a new behavior and new responsibilities.

And we owe God everything. And we need to live for Him. Father, we just thank You for this text.

We thank You for this week that we can come along together with You and be led. And Father, we pray that You might speak to each one of us in a very personal way. Lord, I look back over my life and so many failures and things I wish I could do different.

And yet You keep going on with me and I'm so thankful for that. And I pray, Father, that You would speak to each one in a very personal way this week. And that for the glory of God that we might go on.

And we might be fashioned into this beautiful gem of grace that would so imitate Christ that all the world would want them to. And we just want to end this time by saying, Lord, we love You. Thank You for suffering for us.

Thank You for dying for us. Thank You for going on with us. For Your intercession, Your advocacy.

And thank You for the hope that we have in You. We give thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/9uyx8K0tM_1.mp4

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