

1 Peter 2:24-25

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[0 : 00] Charles Spurgeon, the nineteenth-century Baptist preacher, is always a rich source of memorable quotes. And one of his most quoted lines, certainly one that I've heard quoted on more than one occasion, refers to how he described his preaching method. And he said something along these lines. I'm not sure if this is an exact quote, but something along these lines.

I take my text and make a beeline to the cross. Now, in that regard, in that preaching method that Spurgeon claims was the one that he worked to, in that regard, he is in good company with New Testament writers who often do something very similar. On the occasion that we're thinking about this evening, in 1 Peter chapter 2, you'll remember that this morning we began our reading and our consideration of the chapter at verse 18, where Peter is giving instructions to slaves concerning the need for them to submit to their masters, even when their masters were very harsh.

Now, you might have imagined that a subject matter such as this would not readily lead to making a beeline to the cross, but that is exactly what Peter does. Even when dealing with such a matter, he is able very coherently to make his way to Calvary and the significance of Calvary, even to such a matter as the one he was dealing with. And this morning we saw how Peter did this, how he moved swiftly from these instructions to slaves to submit to their masters to presenting to us a suffering Jesus as our example in the difficult matter of enduring unjust suffering.

But Peter, as he develops his thoughts in the letter that he is writing, he's not content to only present Jesus as our example. He does so, and he does so explicitly. And we do recognize that this is an important aspect of Christ's work as an example for us. It's perhaps not the one that we ordinarily lay great stress on, though the Bible does, and very, as I say, Peter here very explicitly does so.

But Peter doesn't just present Jesus, even in these verses, as an example. He moves on in his thinking as he is presenting Jesus as an example. He then moves on to speak of Jesus as the one who is more than an example, as the one who is our Savior, our Redeemer, as the one who died an atoning death for us. And that shift in emphasis, if you wish, is found in verse 24, where he moves on to speak of Jesus in those terms. And that's going to be our concern this evening, to think briefly on what we are presented with by Peter in these closing two verses of the chapter.

[3 : 31] Now, the way in which I want to consider what is said here in these two verses is to distinguish between what Jesus has already done, and as it's presented to us in these verses, and what Jesus continues to do. And to put it in a way that is maybe a little bit more memorable and easy to remember, and picking up on some of the language of the text, we want to think about what Jesus did on the tree.

And that's the language we have there in verse 24, what Jesus did on the tree, and what Jesus does now from the throne. He died on the tree. He rose again. He ascended to the right hand of the Father.

He reigns from that place, and He continues to work on our behalf. And in these two verses, we have then these two aspects, or at least that's the way we're going to be considering these two verses, what Jesus did on the tree, and what He continues to do now from the throne. And there's four truths concerning the work of Jesus that we're going to think about. What He did on the tree, the two things we're going to consider is that He bore our sins, and also that He healed our wounds. And what He continues to do on the throne is that He empowers our lives, and He shepherds our souls. So, these are the things that we're going to be thinking about this evening. First of all, then, what Jesus did for us on the tree.

And first of all, the language that we find there in verse 24, He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree. Now, what does this mean, that Jesus bore our sins? One of the difficulties I think we have when we pose a question like that, even to ourselves, as we would perhaps in our own minds think, well, what does that mean? One of the difficulties, in a way I suppose it's a good thing, but it can constitute a difficulty, is that we probably already think that we know the answer. We know what the right answer is. We certainly hope that it's the right answer. But though that's a good thing, that we have that prior knowledge, nonetheless, it can make us a little bit lazy and not think carefully about, well, what is Peter saying, and what does Peter mean when he uses this language? What clues are there in the passage that would allow us to allow us to allow us to allow us to have an understanding of what it is Peter means when he uses this language that Jesus Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree? And I want us to just notice something of what Peter means by taking advantage, I suppose, of some clues of some clues that He gives us in these verses. And I think there are two important clues that help us to establish what Peter means by this expression, that Jesus bore our sins in His body on the tree. And the two important clues are the passages that Peter quotes and the words that he uses, or particularly one word that he uses. The passage that he quotes, we know where he is quoting from, we read in Isaiah chapter 53, and particularly in verse 22, we have a direct quotation from Isaiah.

He committed no sin and no deceit was found in His mouth, but then He continues to use language from that chapter, even if it's not direct word for word quotations. And there is a sense in which what Peter is doing here in these closing verses of this chapter is preaching a wee sermon on Isaiah 53 and directing his readers to Jesus as the suffering servant described and prophesied by the prophet. Well, how can the passage that he alludes to and quotes from in the Old Testament, how can that help us understand what Peter means when he speaks of Jesus as the one who bore our sins? And I think that the verse that particularly helps us in that chapter, in Isaiah chapter 53, is verse 6, where we have insight into what Peter has in mind by using the language of Jesus bearing our sins. And what do we read there in that verse in Isaiah?

[8 : 20] We all, like sheep, have gone astray. We recognize that language also from the final verse of the chapter. We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, but then particularly, what is it that the prophet says? And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

So, here the prophet is speaking of the promised Messiah, the suffering servant, and he says that God the Father laid on him the iniquity of us all. And so, there we have from the passage that Peter is employing an explanation, if you wish, of what he means when he speaks of Jesus as the one who bore our sins in his body on the tree. Jesus bore our sins as the one upon whom the Father laid our sins.

The Father takes our sins, and he lays them on Jesus. And Jesus bears our sins in his body on the tree. The Father takes our sins. Note that it is in the plural, not just sin in some general sense, but our actual individual sins that we are guilty of, each and every last one of them. And he lays them on Jesus as our substitute. And so, as we look to the passage that Peter draws on in order to present this truth concerning Jesus as the one who bore our sins, we are given an insight into what he means by using that language. But in addition to very specific passages that he refers to or quotes from in Isaiah, there's also another clue that helps us, and that is the word that he uses here in verse 24 that at first sight might seem a little surprising. We read there, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. Now, maybe the word we would have been expecting there is on the cross. Clearly, it's referring to the cross, but rather than use the word cross, Peter uses the word tree. Now, what clue does that give us concerning the meaning of what he is saying? Well, by using the language of tree rather than the language of cross, there is in Peter a deliberate allusion to language that we find in Deuteronomy chapter 21. In Deuteronomy chapter 21 and from verse 22 through to the beginning of verse 23, listen to what we read. If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. And notice especially that final statement that we find there in Deuteronomy, that anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. Now, we know that Paul picks up on this reality on this language in the letter that he writes to the Galatians. In Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13, we read as follows, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. So, when Peter uses the language of tree and deliberately uses a word that he would not ordinarily have used or ordinarily have been used, the more usual word, simply the cross, by using the language of tree, he's helping us understand what it is he's saying. He's helping us understand what it was that happened at Calvary, and he's helping us understand how Jesus as our Redeemer, as our substitute, became a curse for us, as Paul also much more explicitly highlights in the verse that we've read there in Galatians. Indeed, Paul, in a similar vein, in writing to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21, speaks about this same truth in this very vivid way. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. So, as we identify both the Old Testament passage in Isaiah that Peter draws on in writing these words in this letter, as we identify the Old Testament language that he chooses to employ, and very particularly the language of tree rather than cross, we are able to establish clearly what he means by speaking of Jesus bearing our sins at Calvary. Jesus died as our substitute. His death is an atoning death on behalf of sinners. If you are a believer, and if you have put your trust in Jesus, as your Savior, as your Savior, then your sins, each and every last one of them, were laid on Jesus by the

Father, and your sins were judged and definitively dealt with and punished on the cross. So, on the tree, Jesus bore our sins. It's one of the things that happened there on the tree. But there's a second thing that Peter speaks of and refers to in these two verses. He speaks of how Jesus healed our wounds.

[14 : 21] There in that same verse 24, He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. At Calvary on the tree, our wounds were healed. And again, the language that He's employing is language that He draws from Isaiah chapter 53, in this case from verse 5. But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. Peter uses the language of Isaiah in a way that speaks of this healing as a done deal, as something that has already happened, as something that was achieved on the tree, rather than as something future that awaits us.

But the question that arises, the big question really is, of what healing are Isaiah and Peter speaking? Now, I think the context in both Isaiah and in Peter's letter points clearly in the first instance to spiritual healing. We are healed from sin and its guilt and its ravages. Now, that's not to ignore, and I think it is important to stress this, that's not to ignore that the redeeming work of Christ also has to do with physical healing. Physical sickness and disease ultimately are a consequence of sin. And so, Christ's redeeming work also deals with this matter of our physical illness and disease.

But this effect of Christ's redeeming work as it relates to our physical bodies is in the first instance or is primarily a future benefit of our physical disease. When our bodies, as the Bible clearly tells us, will be glorified and we will be definitively redeemed from sin and all its consequences, including physical disease. Now, it is, of course, within God's prerogative to, as He chooses, give us a foretaste of that aspect of Christ's redeeming work in the here and now. And so, we can and we ought to, as we are encouraged to do, pray that God would heal those who are ill. And God, if He so chooses, can do so. He can do so miraculously here and now. But those miraculous incursions, if you wish, are a foretaste of what awaits. We often speak when we consider the work of redemption of the already and the not yet. The healing of our sin is a done deal. It's already been not only secured but delivered to us. But this healing of our physical disease is something that awaits. We will enjoy that, but it is yet a future benefit of redemption.

So, on the tree, Jesus bore our sins. He healed our wounds. But what about now? Jesus, as we commented at the beginning, is now enthroned at the right hand of the Father. What does Jesus do for us and now? There's two things I want us to just quickly notice. First of all, Jesus empowers our lives. Now, if you read the two verses that we've read, you might say, well, I don't see anything about that there. So, let me explain what I mean by that. Peter, in verse 24, identifies the purpose, or certainly a purpose, of Christ's sin-bearing work. Notice the way he puts it. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that... Those words immediately help us to see that he's talking about a purpose, an outcome of what Jesus has done, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. Now, the way that is presented here in the version of the Bible that we're using suggests a dual purpose that is presently and concurrently happening, or ought to be happening in our lives, dying to sin and living for righteousness. And that may well be what Peter is saying. But there is another way in which what Peter says could be translated. And those of you who are more familiar with the authorized version may remember the way in which these words are translated in that version. And you'll notice a slight difference. There we read that being dead to sins,

[19:16] Jesus bating our sins on his body in the tree, being dead to sins, or to put it another way, or having died to sin, we should live unto righteousness. And there is, of course, a slight difference there. Rather than presenting these two outcomes, if you wish, of Christ's redeeming work, dying to sin and living for righteousness as two present concurrent activities. Rather, there is this order of events that we have died to sin, and now having died to sin, we are enabled to live for righteousness. The way in which the AV translates what Peter says, and both translations are defensible, are defensible. But the way the AV translates it, you have death to sin portrayed as a done deal. On the tree, if you wish, in union with Christ, we have died to sin. And what is now left for us is to live for righteousness. Now, theologically, we don't need to choose between the two, because the two are true. We have, in union with Christ, died to sin. And yet, we are also called, regardless of how we understand this particular verse, we are also called to mortify, or to put to death, sin in the here and now. Think of what Paul says as he writes to the Colossians, put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry, put to death. Paul doesn't say, oh, that's already happened. You don't need to do that anymore. No, put to death in the here and now. Mortify these things. But what is all this to do with Jesus empowering our lives from the throne?

Well, the question, the practical question that arises is, how can we mortify sin and live for righteousness? If we understand these things to be two things that we have a current responsibility to do, to mortify sin and to live for righteousness? How can we do that? Is this something that we can do in our own strength as Christians? Is this our job? That might be a reasonable way of thinking about it.

Well, Jesus has done His bit. You know, He came and He died on Calvary. He's done His part. Now it's our turn. Now it's our turn to do our bit. And this is what we have to do. We have to mortify sin and live for righteousness. But of course, what we know to be true from our experience, but more importantly, from the teaching of Scripture, is that we can't do this alone. Yes, it is a responsibility laid upon us, but it is not one that we can do by ourselves. In this matter, also, Jesus is active. He empowers us by the Spirit. Again, if we listen to what Paul says in the letter to the Romans that helps us see the manner in which God helps us to do that which we are called to do. In Romans chapter 8 and verses 10 to 14, 18. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation, but it is not to the sinful nature to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Without getting into all that Paul says here, Paul picks up on this duty to mortify sin, to die to sin and live for righteousness.

And he recognizes that this is something we can do only by the Spirit. And so, as we remember Jesus, when He was leaving the disciples, and they were so perturbed by the fact that He would leave them, what did He say? He said, it's better for me to go, because if I go, I will send another. And so, Jesus continues to be acting on our behalf, empowering us by the Spirit to live this life that we are called to live, that we have been saved to live, dying to sin and living for righteousness.

[24 : 08] Well, let's just notice one final thing that we can see that Jesus does for us from the throne, and that is that He cares for our souls. And there we're thinking of this final verse. Verse 25, for you were like sheep going astray. Again, the echoes of Isaiah are so clear, but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. We return or turn to Jesus, not to be forgiven and forgotten, but to the one who will permanently care and provide for us as our shepherd. Here, Peter speaks of Jesus as a shepherd and an overseer. Now, the word that he uses here that is translated overseer is a word you'll recognize when I say what it is in Greek, because it's one that is similar to English words. It's the word episkopos. We get episcopalian, and it's sometimes translated bishop, another way of translating the word. But what it does mean, what it literally means, the very construction of the word is an overseer, one who oversees.

And here, Peter speaks of Jesus as the one who is the shepherd and overseer of our souls. When we think of a bishop or an elder, what was his duty? What is the duty of a bishop, an overseer?

Well, it is to oversee. It is to have a pastoral oversight over the flock that God has commended to him. But we know that for those who are bishops, elders, overseers, we are subject to multiple limitations that we often are very inadequate in performing that function. And one of our limitations that we will never overcome is that we cannot know or see the souls of those who have been entrusted to us. But how different the one who is our shepherd and overseer, the one who Peter describes as the shepherd and overseer of your souls? To speak of Jesus as the overseer of our souls implies the full knowledge of us that allows Him to exercise perfect oversight over us, because He is the shepherd and overseer of our souls. And so, we look back, and we celebrate, and we consider and stand in wonder at what Jesus has done on the tree for us. But we also celebrate that Jesus continues to serve us, continues to attend to our needs as He empowers our lives and as He cares for our souls.

On the tree, Jesus bore our sins and healed our wounds, and from the throne, He empowers our lives and shepherds our souls. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You for such a Savior. We thank You for Your Son, Jesus, for what He has done and for what He continues to do, and indeed, what He will continue to do for us into the future. And we pray that we would ever be those who delight in His work and submit to His rule and authority over us. We thank You for what we have been able to consider even this evening in these verses that Peter directed to the believers. Lord, we pray that You would help us to ponder on these truths and to have an ever greater understanding of them and gratitude to You for them. And these things we pray in in Jesus' name, amen. Well, we're going to sing a psalm that speaks of our shepherd, the one who is the shepherd of our soul. Psalm 23. And sing psalms, and we'll sing the whole of the psalm to the tune at Tarwathi.

Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

[28 : 43] Psalm 23. We'll sing the whole of the psalm. We'll stand to sing. Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow.

He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow. My wandering steps He brings back to His way.

His strength of righteousness, He brings back to His way. And this He has done His great name to display.

The Lord is my shepherd, no one shall be with me.

In the sight of my enemies, the table you spread. The oil of rejoicing you pour on my hand.

[30 : 39] My couple of earth flows and I'm graciously fed. Surely your covenant, mercy and grace, will follow me closely in all of my ways.

I will dwell in the house of the Lord Almighty. Amen.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always. Amen.