

Regent College

Exegesis Paper: 1 Peter 2.24-25

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1 Peter 2.18-25

¹⁸House servants¹, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are crooked. ¹⁹For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God², you endure pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. ²¹For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²²“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”³ ²³When he was abused, he did not abuse in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten⁴; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges righteously. ²⁴He Himself carried our sins⁵ in His body onto the tree, in order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed⁶. ²⁵For you were being misled as sheep⁷, but now you have been returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Introduction

1 Peter 2.18-25 is a section of ethical exhortation and verses 24 and 25 cap off the exhortation with a call to live righteously even when suffering unjustly. One of the main difficulties with this section is how to understand the nature of “healing” and needs to be

¹ Ephesians 6.5

² Romans 13.5

³ Isaiah 53.9b

⁴ Isaiah 53.7

⁵ Isaiah 53.4a

⁶ Isaiah 53.5b

⁷ Isaiah 53.6a

understood in the context of the suffering servant passage of Isaiah 53 that is alluded to by Peter. I plan to argue that 1 Peter 2.24-25 is part of a call to imitate Christ in action with the need to understand that suffering is part of following Christ and that healing is from the destruction of sin and not necessarily from physical pain or ailments.

Historical Context

The First Epistle of Peter was written to the Christian church as encouragement and as pastoral exhortation.⁸ Tradition holds that the Apostle Peter was the writer of this letter⁹ but there have been arguments for and against Petrine authorship. Two arguments for 1 Peter being pseudonymous are the high quality of the Greek and lack of evidence that Peter had much contact with the churches in Asia Minor.¹⁰ The arguments against Peter as author have merit but don't seem to offer enough conclusive evidence to be convincing.¹¹ Regardless of the arguments, the early church ascribed Petrine authority to this letter and we should do nothing less.¹² Assuming that Peter was the author, the epistle was most likely written between 64 and 68 AD. The persecution of the Christian church does not appear to be state sponsored which implies the letter was written before Domitian (81-96) and Trajan (97-117), most likely during the reign of Nero.¹³ Most would set the latest date for Peter's martyrdom at 68 AD as he was most likely

⁸ Achtemeier 2001, 515 and Davids 1990, 3

⁹ 1 Peter 1.1a

¹⁰ For other arguments see Marshall 1991, 22 and Grudem 1988, 24f.

¹¹ While Peter was a fisherman, he could have also been trained in Greek and Hebrew. Also, Peter's scribe Silvanus, who probably did the actual writing, could have used higher quality Greek than Peter knew but in the style of and with the ideas of Peter in mind. For other arguments against pseudonymous authorship, see Marshall 1991, 22ff and Grudem 1988, 25-33.

¹² Grudem 1988, 21

¹³ Achtemeier 2001, 520

killed by Nero (who died in 68). It is also not very likely it was written before 64 because of the appearance of Silvanus in Rome.¹⁴

1 Peter 1.1b addresses churches in Asia Minor who are in dispersion. Most commentators suggest that Peter was writing to Gentile Christians¹⁵ as verse 1.18 would hardly be applied to Jewish Christians. Christians (not just the Jews) were also considered to be in dispersion. Barclay suggests that “a Christian is always a sojourner on the earth.”¹⁶ Elliott uses the term “resident aliens” for the dispersed Christians implying that because of their faith they will always be at odds with the surrounding culture.¹⁷

1 Peter is considered to be one the “Catholic”¹⁸ epistles and therefore doesn’t have a very specific setting in which it was written. It is clear that the readers are having to deal with persecution most likely because they would not take part in religious activities (including emperor worship) of the community.¹⁹ The letter is intended to build up the church and give them meaning for their hardships. Calvin states the reason for the letter as being “to exhort the faithful to a denial of the world and a contempt of it... that being elevated by hope, supported by patience, and fortified by courage and perseverance, they might overcome all kinds of temptations....”²⁰ Calvin is overly harsh of the world here, but in the context of suffering and persecution of the readers, it is somewhat fitting.

¹⁴ Davids 1990, 10. If Silvanus was in Rome (“Babylon” in v.5.13) with Peter, Paul had already been there leading to a post-64 date.

¹⁵ Although there were probably Jewish Christians represented as well. See Achtemeier 2001, 517f and Grudem 1988, 38.

¹⁶ Barclay 1976, 144

¹⁷ Elliott 1981

¹⁸ Also “general” or “universal”

¹⁹ As mentioned above, this persecution is probably not state sponsored. At this time the state sponsored persecution by Nero was limited to the area around Rome. See Achtemeier 2001, 519.

²⁰ Calvin 1999, 21

Literary Context

The two verses fit into the larger context of 1 Peter so knowing where they are located in the text is important. As was common with Epistles, Peter starts out with an introduction (1.1-2) and blessing (1.3-12). Peter then calls his readers to live a life of holiness (1.13-25). The first part of chapter two lets the readers know who they are as a chosen people of God (2.1-10). An introduction to the call to an ethical lifestyle (2.11-12) leads into a larger section about ethics (2.13-4.11) including the *Haustafeln* or “household code” section (2.13-3.17), which is where our passage resides.²¹ The first part of the *Haustafeln* deals with relation to the government (2.13-17), the next with relations between slaves and their masters (2.18-25), the next with relations between husbands and wives (3.1-7) and the final section is a summary of the ethical response to persecution and suffering (3.8-17). The remaining section of chapter three has more about why Christ suffered (3.18-22). Chapter four begins with an exhortation to live by the will of God and not human desires (4.1-11). Peter lets us know that we are not alone in our suffering and suggests that if we are called (using the then pejorative term) Christian or “Christ-lackey”²² we should glorify God (4.12-19). This ends the larger section of ethical teachings (2.11-4.19). The final chapter deals with authority in the church (5.1-6) and the call to resist evil (5.7-11). Peter then closes with a benediction and farewell (5.12-14).

1 Peter is full of ethical teachings, he has suffering and the Christian response as main themes. Christ is the example both in how he acted and how he suffered. Verses 2.24-25 have both of those themes as their focus.

²¹ “New Testament *Haustafeln* are never isolated from the theology of the entire epistle in which they are found.” (Thompson 1966, 67)

²² Pilch 1991, 359

Exegetical Discussion

Peter is directly addressing house servants (οἰκέτης) (who were slaves) but because his focus is on the household and family situation,²³ he does not use the typical Pauline word²⁴ δοῦλος.²⁵ The distinction is probably important in that slaves of the time had a low status in society but Christian slaves had equal status in the church.²⁶ Peter could possibly be directing these comments at the house slaves because they might have been questioning how much they were supposed to follow their non-Christian masters if they were actually free in Christ.²⁷ Peter uses the ethics of Jesus to encourage the slaves to act the same way: don't abuse or threaten in return.²⁸ Slaves in general were considered property, just things. They were required to do whatever the master required.²⁹ According to Jeffers, the Roman world didn't think slaves were less human, just property, so there were limitations on how much abuse would be allowed.³⁰ Although abuse was still common and the Jewish historian Josephus suggests that forced slavery was a form of punishment for criminals.³¹

Addressing servants means that Peter can draw on suffering both from harsh masters as well as the culture at large that is antagonist towards Christians. While there are many that believe the persecution was state sponsored, Elliott's position seems more probable: persecution was local.³² It is also suggested that the language used in 1 Peter may imply more of a mental

²³ Wilson 1989, 75

²⁴ Paul uses δοῦλος some 27 times in his letters compared to the once used οἰκέτης.

²⁵ Barclay 1976, 210

²⁶ Davids 1990, 105

²⁷ Llewelyn 1992, 53

²⁸ *Ibid* 76

²⁹ Ferguson 1993, 57

³⁰ Jeffers 1999, 227f

³¹ Josephus *Antiquities* 16.1

³² See Elliott 1981, 252 for a discussion of the arguments.

persecution rather than physical (although that does not mean the possibility of physical persecution should be rejected).³³

A. 1 Peter 2.24

He Himself carried our sins in His body onto the tree, in order that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

With persecution in mind, we come to verse 24. Our verse is embedded in the *Haustafeln* in the section where Peter is specifically addressing household servants. Verse 19 and 20 suggest that suffering and enduring pain will find favor from God. The four relative pronouns in verses 22-24 link everything back to Christ.³⁴ Using ὃς αὐτὸς (“who himself”) and οὗ τῶ μώλωπι (“[by] whose wounds”), Peter links this verse back to what Christ has done for his readers. Peter also sandwiches ἵνα (“that”) in between the relative pronouns so that his readers know that what follows (being dead to sin and live in righteousness) is important.

Peter wants the reader to understand that what Christ did was a physical, real event. Christ literally took our sins for us and was punished for them.³⁵ The context of ἀναφέρω (“carried”) suggests more than just the act of carrying, but also that of “bearing of” and “suffering for”.³⁶ Because Christ really did that for us, Peter tells us, we are to act accordingly. Although ἀπογίνομαι (“have no part in” or “die”) is less strong than the more commonly used θανατόω, it still has a strong sense when compared with the use of ζάω (“we might live”).³⁷ Peter calls the

³³ Wilson 1989, 36f

³⁴ See Appendix B

³⁵ Marshall 1991, 94

³⁶ Grudem 1988, 132

³⁷ See Davids 1990, 113 and for an opposing argument see Kelly 1969, 123.

reader to accept Christ's sacrifice, die to our sins, and live righteously. Indeed, we are to "Love [our] enemies and pray for those who persecute [us]."^{38 39}

The use of ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον ("onto the tree") will link Christ's suffering and punishment for our sins back to imagery in Deuteronomy: "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree."^{40 41} Christ suffering as a criminal (as hanging on a tree implies) will connect with slaves (as possible criminals) as well as all Christians: all are sinners that need to be forgiven.

Even the Maccabees before the time of Christ knew that they messed up and needed redemption: "For we are suffering because of our own sins. And if our Lord is angry for a little while, to rebuke and discipline us, he will again be reconciled with his own servants...."⁴² Christ took the discipline and rebuke and carried it to the cross.

Peter draws (as he frequently does in this Epistle) on the Old Testament: Isaiah 53.5 is invoked. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed."⁴³ The verb ἰάομαι ("to be healed") is the same in both 1 Peter and in the Septuagint (LXX)⁴⁴ and has often been understood to mean physical healing.⁴⁵ Marshall suggests that "the readers are people who were

³⁸Matthew 5.44, *NRSV*

³⁹ See also Schwager (1985, 117) for his discussion of Christ's non-violence.

⁴⁰Deuteronomy 21.22, *NASB*

⁴¹ Thompson 1966, 76

⁴² 2 Macc. 7.32-3 quoted in Wright 1992, 276

⁴³ *NRSV*

⁴⁴ Peter uses the second person ἰάθητε instead of the LXX's first person ἰάθημεν possibly because Peter is speaking specifically to the servants, see Thompson 1966, 77. There is a textual variant appearing in 81*, P049, *pc*, *t*, *vg*^{mss}, and a few others that seem to have appeared to fit Peter's text to the LXX and is not likely to be original.

⁴⁵ Wilkinson (1991, 156) points to T.J. McCrossan, *Bodily Healing and the Atonement* (Youngstown, Ohio: 1930), 17-34 and R. Hubbard, *Isaiah 53: Is there Healing in the Atonement?* (Bromley, Kent: 1972) for these arguments.

suffering from illness but are now restored to health. Illness signifies weakness and inability to resist temptation.”⁴⁶

Other scholars have gone back to look at Isaiah, its use of רָפָא (‘‘to heal’’), and suggest that Peter doesn’t believe that Christ’s atonement and sacrifice will bring physical healing. Analysis of רָפָא in Isaiah suggests that the healing being referred to is about restoration and used figuratively, so not necessarily about physical healing.⁴⁷ That analysis is aided by looking at the words מַכָּאב (‘‘pain’’) and חַלִּי (‘‘sickness’’ or ‘‘infirmities’’) in Isaiah 53.3 and 4 respectively which can offer insight into how ‘‘healing’’ should be understood. Mayhue suggests that these terms ‘‘may’’ refer to physical issues, but not necessarily.⁴⁸ Even though those terms may suggest physical healing, the surrounding context of Isaiah 53 is on sin (which is a possible reason the LXX focused on sin in 53.4).⁴⁹ Another strong argument for healing referring to sin comes from Wilkinson as he suggests that ‘‘disease is not sin, but a consequence of sin. Disease carries no penalty which must be atoned for as sin does.’’⁵⁰ Isaiah seems to point towards a time when the suffering servant will heal his people.⁵¹ With the allusion to Isaiah, Peter tells his readers that they need to imitate Christ which will include suffering under persecution and that they are healed from their sin which does not mean they will always be healthy or without pain.⁵²

⁴⁶ Marshall 1991, 95. Thompson (1966, 77) doesn’t explicitly state whether he believes it is a physical healing, but he seems to suggest that physical healing is included.

⁴⁷ See Isaiah 6.10, 19.22, 30.26, 53.5, 57.18 and 57.19.

⁴⁸ Mayhue 1995, 126

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 127

⁵⁰ Wilkinson 1991, 162

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 158

⁵² See Mayhue 1995 and Wilkinson 1991 for addition support for this argument.

It seems pretty clear that Peter's use of ἰάομαι was intended to be used figuratively as a way to tell his readers that Christ died for them and they have been restored through his atonement.⁵³ "Christ's atoning death provided the basis for spiritual health and eternal life."⁵⁴

B. 1 Peter 2.25

For you were being misled as sheep, but now you have been returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Once again Peter alludes to Isaiah, this time 53.6⁵⁵: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."⁵⁶ The nice difference between Isaiah and Peter is that Peter uses the past tense: we *were* misled, but now, because of Christ, we are not.⁵⁷ As indicated in verse 24, "Peter is preparing his audience to endure more suffering, not to be relieved of it."⁵⁸ Peter tells us that even though Christians will suffer, God is watching over us. We could not survive of our own accord, just as sheep cannot, but just as sheep have their shepherd, we have Christ to lead us.

Most translations use the active form of ἐπιστρέφομαι ("return"), but it seems to be true to the text, the passive form (ἐπεστράφητε) should be used. It is true that we must return to and follow Christ, but the sense of the passage is that "we have been returned to the shepherd". It is not by our means, but by Christ's that we can return.⁵⁹

⁵³ Oepke, *TDNT*

⁵⁴ Mayhue 1995, 139

⁵⁵ Cf. Ezekiel 37.24: "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd"

⁵⁶ *NRSV*

⁵⁷ Grudem 1988, 132

⁵⁸ Mayhue 1995, 136

⁵⁹ Calvin (1999, 94) seems to understand that when he briefly comments "we are all going astray from the way of salvation... until Christ brings us back from this wandering."

The shepherd and guardian is one who watches over everything, makes sure everything is okay.⁶⁰ Since Christ is the shepherd and guardian of our souls⁶¹, we are, again, called to imitate him in our lives. Acts 20 uses the same imagery in talking about the church: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”⁶² ⁶³ Part of living righteously is to become shepherds and guardians for others in the community. This has practical applications for the community that Peter is writing. They are a community in dispersion but persecution is not to keep them from joining together to watch over each other as Christ does. This is great news for Christians, even if persecuted physically or emotionally, Christ is still there caring for His flock alongside the church.⁶⁴

Conclusion

1 Peter was written to Christians living as aliens in an un-Christian culture. Verses 2.24 and 25 are reminders that they have been called to a new life of righteousness because of His atonement of sins. Christ’s death gives healing, not necessarily from physical ailments, but from destruction as a result of sin. God then brings his followers to himself as one who watches over and guides His people and church. Peter uses his ethical teachings to suggest that Christ, as the suffering servant from Isaiah, will carry people through persecution and suffering. If Christ suffered and people are called to act as He does, suffering will be part of life. Suffering, though, is not the final thought, Christ’s atonement brings eternal life and healing to all who accept it.

⁶⁰ See Barclay (1976, 215) for his discussion of the shepherd.

⁶¹ ψυχή is more than just soul, it implies everything that defines who a person is (life, soul, person, inner self, heart, mind, living being).

⁶² Acts 20.28, *NIV*

⁶³ Davids 1990, 114

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 114 and cf. Matthew 5.10

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Appendix A

Exegetical Outline

Exegetical Summary:

1 Peter 2.18-25: Christ died for our sins and lived as an example of perfect submission to the will of the Father so we should therefore respond by submitting to the will of the father not just when it is easy, but when it is painful as living righteously will glorify God.

Logical Units:

1 Peter 2.18-20: Servants should submit not only when expected, but at all times even when that is difficult or painful as that is what will bring God glory.

1 Peter 2.21-23: Christ is an example to all as one who submitted to the Father not only when expected, but during all situations while suffering even though he was sinless.

1 Peter 2.24-25: Since Christ bore our sins for us we are to submit to the will of the Father and live righteously.

Appendix B

Sentence Flow

<u>v. 18)</u>	Οἱ οἰκέται	(ἐσμεν)	ὑποτασσόμενοι	τοῖς	δεσπόταις
			ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ		
			οὐ μόνον	τοῖς	ἀγαθοῖς
					καὶ
					ἐπιεικέσιν
				ἀλλὰ καὶ	
				τοῖς	σκολιοῖς
	Servants	(you(pl) are)	being subject	to the	masters
			in all fear		
			not alone	to the	good
					and
					gentle
				but also	
				to the	crooked

<u>v. 19)</u>	γὰρ	τοῦτο	χάρις	ὑποφέρει	τις λύπας
	εἰ		διὰ συνείδησιν		πάσχω
			θεοῦ		ἀδίκως
For	if	one has	favor	endures	some grief
			through conscience		of suffering
			of God		unjustly

v. 20)

γὰρ	ποῖον κλέος	ὑπομενεῖτε
εἰ		ἁμαρτάνοντες
		καὶ
		κολαφιζόμενοι
	ἀλλ' εἰ	
	τοῦτο χάρις	ὑπομενεῖτε
	παρὰ θεῶ	ἀγαθοποιούντες
		καὶ
		πάσχοντες
For	what credit	you will endure
if		sinning
		and
		being beaten
	but	
	if	
	(you have) this favor	you will endure
	from God	doing good
		and
		suffering

<u>v. 21)</u>			
εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ	(σὺ)	ἐκλήθητε	
ὅτι καὶ	Χριστὸς	ἔπαθεν	
		ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν	ὑμῖν
		ὑπολιμπάνων	
		ὑπογραμμὸν	
ἵνα	(σὺ)	ἐπακολουθήσητε	τοῖς ἵχνεσιν αὐτοῦ
For into this	(you)	were called	
and that also	Christ	suffered	
		on behalf of you	to you
		leaving behind	
		an example	
in order that	(you)	might follow	in the footsteps of him

v. 22)

	ὅς	οὐκ ἐποίησεν	ἁμαρτίαν
οὐδὲ	δόλος	εὐρέθη	
		ἐν	τῷ στόματι
			αὐτοῦ
Who	he did not	sin	
and not	deceit	was found	
		in	the mouth
			of him

v. 23)

	ὅς	λοιδορούμενος	οὐκ ἀντελοιδόρει
		πάσχων	οὐκ ἠπειλεί
δὲ			παρεδίδου
			τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως
Who	the one being abused	he did not abuse back	
	suffering	he was not threatening	
but		he entrusted himself	to the one judging rightly

v. 24) ὅς

αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας
 ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν
 ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον αὐτοῦ

ἵνα

ζήσωμεν
 τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ
 ἀπογενόμενοι

ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις

οὐ τῷ μώλωπι

ἰάθητε

Who

himself bore

the sins

in the body

of us

of him

on the wood

so that

we might live
 in righteousness
 being dead

to the sins

(by) whose wounds

you were cured

v. 25)

γὰρ

ὡς πρόβατα ἦτε
πλανώμενοι

ἀλλὰ

ἐπεστράφητε

νῦν

ἐπὶ

τὸν ποιμένα

καὶ

ἐπίσκοπον

τῶν ψυχῶν

ὑμῶν

For

as sheep

you were

being deceived

but

you were returned

now

to

the shepherd

and

overseer

of the souls

of you