

Always Show Them Christ

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening. Last year I saw a video. I've got a clip from it coming up. And it started actually with a blank screen.

There was text that said, we created a fake job and advertised it online and in the newspapers. Then we held real interviews. And the man in the suit is interviewing different applicants. He tells them at the start, he says, it's probably the most important job, director of operations. And he reads this list of requirements. First, mobility, constantly working on your feet, exerting yourself, high stamina. And they say, OK. Some of them ask, well, are there breaks? Surely there are breaks.

No breaks. You can only have lunch when the associate does. You have to constantly follow the associate and even stay up late when the associate does. And so some of them want to know, OK, well, there must be holidays.

[1 : 13] No holidays. In fact, the workload intensifies over these periods. If you had a life, we'd ask you to basically give that up. And some of them start questioning, is this legal?

Is this three, six, five days a year? Yes, the guy says. That's really cruel. That's just too much. The connections you make and the feeling you get from really helping your associate are immeasurable. And crickets chirp and eyes shift. And then he says, let's cover salary. We'd be asking you to work pro bono, so absolutely nothing.

And then they laugh and some of them just shout out, nobody is going to do that. And then soft classical music fades into the video. And the interviewer says, what if I told you there was someone holding the position right now?

Billions of people. Who? Moms. And they both laugh. The jig is up. And as they're smiling in relief to know that nobody's going to have to take the post, they go back through the requirements.

[2 : 34] And listing them, they realize that their moms, their mothers meet those requirements. They've always been on their feet. There's no pay. And it's every day. And the sense of gratitude when the applicants start holding all of that together, it's overwhelming for some of them.

And they just tell short stories about how amazing their mothers have been. And they really express full gratitude. It's a fantastic Mother's Day video.

And we'll come back to this story. My title today is Always Show Them Christ. So we're three weeks into a series on 1 Peter.

And just a little bit of context first. The author is Peter. It's such an encouragement that it's him because Peter was the bombastic one.

Sometimes he got things spectacularly right. When Jesus asks his disciples, who do you say I am? And Peter says, you are the Messiah, son of the living God.

[3 : 43] And Jesus says, God the Father gave you those words. Fantastic. Then there were times when Peter got things wrong.

When Jesus describes the events of his death that are to come and his resurrection, Peter's the one who blurts out, no, surely, no, no, no.

Not you, Jesus. These terrible things, they don't have to happen to you. And he gets a rebuke from Jesus who says, get behind me, Satan. Then you have in mind the things of men and not the things of God.

Well, Peter moves past those failures. We can see that in his letter. Peter. And in his perseverance, in the powerful example of Jesus Christ that he was so close to, Peter's now in a position where he's actually leading others through their trials.

In a letter like this, he can prevent them from making his mistakes. And it's so encouraging to us to see Peter's transformation, hold it here in this letter, and think, you know, even people like us who

get bogged down in our failures, knowing Christ can be transformed.

[5 : 05] In his opening sentence to this section, 2 verse 11, Peter does some more context work for us because he harks back to the previous chapters.

He says, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

Beloved, he says. He's writing to the Hebrew church under Roman rule, and he knows they are suffering, not just suffering, but they are persecuted.

But he also knows who they are in Christ. He knows they follow Christ. He spent the beginning of the letter telling them how wonderful that is, encouraging them that they are God's elect, shown in everlasting mercy through Christ's death and resurrection.

There are those who love Christ, even though they haven't seen him. He reminds them they're going through trials, but these will serve a purpose, proving their faith and glorifying God.

[6 : 20] They're a people of inexpressible joy. Inexpressible joy because God's mercy has surpassed understanding.

God has used his awesome power to love them into an identity and a future they could have never earned. God has used them.

And we are dearly beloved with them. He calls them exiles. Ruled by another nation and away from home, perhaps.

But their deepest sense of exile comes from knowing that they're just passing through this earth to a home in heaven. It comes from the joy of being truly loved by God in a world that rejects God.

And we are exiles with them. And he writes about war. In this sentence, this is a painting by Joseph Gray, a man from Dundee who fought in World War I.

[7 : 37] It's a man telling us from experience about the danger of war and about staying vigilant in war. Peter is like this painter.

In his letter, he's warning us of the danger of our own evil desires. And Peter has been there. He knows how bad it can get.

In the passion of pride, he told Jesus he wouldn't have to suffer. In the passion of self-pity, he denied knowing Jesus three times so that he wouldn't be arrested.

He was rebuked. And he wept bitterly because of these things. He's urging the church away from pain that he knows. From losses that he's taken.

And his words are sharpened in love. Sharper than we might expect because he's a veteran. So he writes, Christ gave you a new identity and it is glorious.

[8 : 44] Now your very desires are against you. So we'll look at three real examples of this in the rest of the text. The first answers the question, how should Christians respond to a non-Christian government?

He writes, submit to government. Jesus submitted to his so that you could be sure that's how you show your government Christ. And that's how we should think about this submission.

Nero's government would appall anyone reading about it today. He enjoyed persecuting Christians. They called him the Antichrist.

Peter never questions Nero's leadership. But he never forgets God's sovereignty. So he says, submit to the emperor and his officers.

Did his listeners struggle to hear this? Almost certainly. Do we struggle to do what Christ tells us today?

[9 : 58] Yes. Yes. But in the heat of that struggle, our job is to make God visible through perseverance, through returning good for every evil.

And showing Christ to your accusers, as 2 verse 12 says, Those who speak ill of you may see God in your actions and glorify God with you.

Do we disagree with our government when they take the other stance on something and essentially say we're getting in the way of their progress? Yes, we disagree with them.

But let's not chew them out for it. Let's not get in the way of their progress. Let's not get in the way of their progress. Returning good for evil, let's maintain respect. Because our hope is that even someone like Nero would, seeing Christ, come to know him and glorify God on the day he visits us. As Jesus said, when someone slaps you, turn the other cheek. When someone sues you for your shirt, give them your coat also.

[11 : 22] Who's troubling you? Who's stirring your passion to turn anger into vengeance? How can you turn the other cheek to them?

Peter develops this practice of showing Christ with a second example. Show your boss Christ. This goes for good bosses and terrible bosses.

This holds when the innocent are wrongly punished at work. Have the humility to bear unjust punishment, and God will celebrate you.

Verse 20 says, keeping God in mind, submit to that kind of boss. Why? Verse 21 says, to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

He's saying, wait a minute. We're the benefactors of this kind of submission. This is how we were saved. He says, the example is there, set by Christ.

[12 : 43] Will we not follow it? Peter spells out that example. The abused Christ, who was insulted, but did not return the abuse.

He trusted the one who judges justly. Maybe you don't like your boss. Maybe your coworkers have humiliated you.

Cruel jokes, treating you like an outsider. Maybe they're slightly rude. And maybe your attempts to fix it seem meaningless. Is it time for self-pity?

Or is this an opportunity to show Christ-like endurance? When you are conscious of God, abuse isn't about you.

It's about what the Holy Spirit can do in your relationship to the abuser. I'll tell you a quick story where my friend works.

[13 : 50] Some of her colleagues used to go well out of their way to insult her, things about her age, trying to give the impression that she's less competent than them, just making her life miserable.

And it took years for these deeply insecure people to stop. Now they call her aside in the office, and they get into long conversations over the phone to confide in her.

They say sorry, and they talk about the tragic ways they were abused in the past. They ask for her advice and prayers on things they're currently struggling with, crises that they blame others for.

But my friend can see their past, evils there, their insecurities, their own evil desires echoing. They trust her when she gives that advice, when she talks with them, because she showed the depth that Christ shows.

And more than saying she puts God first, she lived it for years. I think about her, and I'm blown away by Jesus' command, the understanding in it, when he says, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

[15 : 23] If you're going to work tomorrow, I hope it goes well. But if things go bad, and it's unfair, will you self-pity, or will you trust God?

Because this is how we live out the gospel. And this is how those who know that they're God's beloveds act.

So when things get difficult at work, don't get in a rage about your rights and your dignity. Look at it as the answer to your prayers for God to use you.

And we may all ask God that if one more person can come to know Christ because of it, that he disgrace us at work.

In the third example, Peter gets personal. Show your spouse Christ. He starts his address to men and women with the same words.

[16 : 37] He says, in the same way. He's applying it again. Show them Christ. Some of the women were trapped in the idea of getting all the attention they could by decorating themselves and maybe influencing men.

Some of the men had to be reminded to be considerate, to not be harsh. Another kind of power play. But Christ doesn't tempt us into doing what he wants, and he won't force us.

So Peter encourages the gentle and quiet behavior that has always pleased God. And he says, this can show people the God they've always wanted to know.

This can bring people to Christ without a spoken word. Let this be our evangelism. But we so often don't choose that, and Peter knows that he was like that too.

Jesus wouldn't tolerate movements of self-pity, but when Jesus was being arrested wrongly in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter shows that he's willing to fight for Christ, and he draws his sword,

and he cuts off the ear of one of the arresting soldiers.

[18:07] Well, Jesus not only rejects this option, but he reverses it, showing that fighting for Christ is not showing them Christ.

He heals the ear of the wounded soldier. It's no coincidence that the transformative power of loving your enemies brought this guy's hearing back up to speed.

The fact that Jesus had to undo his followers' damage shows us how important it is to know the Christ we show.

So we'll look at him in these verses. Verse 22, he committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When Jesus was wrongly arrested, he was silent. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate, it says in verse 23.

[19:16] When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. Jesus was sure.

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. Jesus was servant and salve. He's the source of our healing.

And it says, for you were going astray like sheep. But now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Jesus is our shepherd. And he wants us to look after each other even by submitting to each other.

[20:20] He was all of this in his darkest moments so that he could be the light in ours. So that when things go wrong, we have someone to look to and we know what to do.

When Jesus' soul was overwhelmed with pain, praying in that garden, when he sweat blood and collapsed in the dirt, praying to his father, he held firm to his trust in God.

When they beat him at his false trial just after that, he showed more submission. And when he was flogged and beaten again and then crucified, he prayed for his murderers.

Father, forgive them. And standing at the epicenter of this much concentrated integrity and love, one of his murderers changed.

A Roman soldier looks up at the naked and crying, red wreck of Christ, crucified, and his words are unforgettable. Surely, he was the Son of God.

[21:42] Are we ashamed of the brutalized Jesus Christ, humiliated in his torture and death?

Or are we proud that he chose to endure for us? If we're proud of him, will we choose to endure like him?

That's how we will know him. So three times, Peter describes this pattern, this arc of someone pushing us down.

We submit. We're showing Christ. We're praying for the suppressor. And our trust in God is recognized by him. It's seen as only Christ's behavior.

And God raises us up and others with us. And we all glorify him, even those who were once lost in their evil desires, transformed by powerful love.

[22:49] This is the love Christ showed us. Peter commends it to us always, at the most public level, government, the relationship to government.

At the most private level, the marriage relationship. And at an intermediate level, the most common set of relationships going to work.

His words are backed by Christ's example and so many of Christ's words. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you when someone slaps you.

Turn the other cheek when they sue you for your shirt. Give them your coat also. And the Beatitudes, which say, when you're persecuted and reviled for his sake, blessed are you.

Rejoice. Great is your reward in heaven. This is what happened to the prophets. So it's not just for these three contexts, but it's a universal, God-like example to follow.

[24:05] Well, while preparing this sermon, I talked to people about this submission and this always show them Christ. There were two responses.

shocked acceptance and shocking rejection. The acceptors admitted it's a difficult call, but they acknowledged that it's God calling and with his help, we can do this.

The rejectors tried to run scenarios where this wouldn't fit, where the moral thing to do would fit what they wanted to do, what they feel entitled to do.

Please don't make this slide about finding a way to avoid living like this. Peter says, God is pleased when our trust in him overcomes the fear even of unfair punishment.

It is to this trust and this example that you were called and Christ died so that we could follow it. my question is, are you sure you want to avoid this at all?

[25 : 22] If you dig into it, the most fulfilling parts of our lives are good precisely because of this principle at work. If we think back to the example of parenthood that I started with, the mother goes through intense pain, there are many moments of putting herself last and repeatedly having to hold her temper.

Does she regret those times with the child? What if you're training for a marathon and you push yourself through pain, maybe you're getting up early, it's a difficult regime and eventually you're running well and when you cross the finish line and you throw your hands in the air, there's no sense of I wish I put that weight back on.

When you go through tough times with good friends who encourage you and you bear it all together and you get through and you talk to them about it afterwards, do they tell you I regret helping you through that, I regret going through all of that for your sake?

There's no regret. In fact, so often the regret comes if we avoid those opportunities and we don't follow this principle through to fulfillment.

The truth is, however bad this looks and feels, and it does, it doesn't end there. Always showing them Christ has a sequel, as Paul put it, if we are united to him in a death like his, we will certainly be united to him in a resurrection like his.

[27 : 15] This is a picture of Christ's resurrected body and he's getting Thomas to probe his wound. It's striking because of Christ's death and his suffering.

And so this is the upward movement in this arc. It's described each time in each of the examples. In the most public, Peter finishes by saying that they may glorify God on the day he comes to judge. They, the ones who clearly hated you, who spoke all kinds of evil about you, they will glorify God with you.

that is a goal that will break each of our own evil desires. In the most private arc, he says that they may be one without a word by nothing but the force of God's character displayed in your life as you patiently and persistently gently and quietly return good for evil.

And then in the most common arc, he says by his wounds we are healed. Wounds are physical and psychological and I know in my struggles almost nothing has been so sweet and effective a cure as the words of someone who knows the same pain who has come through it and encouraged me with authority from their personal experience saying I can get through it, I will get through it.

[29 : 08] Wounds are the rule not the exception. There are lots of wounded people kicking around. We have our own wounds. wounds. The question is can I live in such a way that my wounds like Christ's become God's resource in the lives of hurting people?

Always show them Christ and on the other side of the difficulty you will have a powerful compassion, the character and the authority to heal like Christ.

Christ. So I hope you will. I hope you'll look again at what Peter says in chapter 1 talking about who we are and in this text talking about what we must do in difficult times.

And when I think through these things and maybe reactions to them the question that it all comes down to is which Christ do I want to know?

Miracle worker, the one who suffered and died, the resurrected Christ, they're all the same.

[30 : 32] Let me close in prayer. Our Father, only you can help us to follow the perfect example of your Son, Jesus Christ.

He so faithfully held to the toughest of what you called him to do, and only he so fully enjoys the freedom of adhering to your good will.

We're easily confused. Help us to appreciate what Christ has done and to be more shocked by our desire to make an example than we are by your call to follow Christ's difficult example.

Thank you that our pain isn't comparable to his, that you never give us more than we can bear, but that even still our joy in knowing him will lack nothing.

So, forgive us as we forgive others, and let your kingdom come to earth.

[31 : 48] Thank you for showing us where our current culture fails and where we need to show Christ. Because we want to honor you, not just being nice people like the culture dictates, but celebrating the God who brings joy through healing, who is the only just judge, and the lover of our

souls.

In the eternal name of Christ. Amen.