

February 17, 2008 by Steve Brandon



The Suffering Servant

1 Peter 2:21-25

1. Jesus is Our Example (verses 21-23).
2. Jesus is Our Substitute (verse 24).
3. Jesus is Our Shepherd (verse 25).

In 1896, Charles Sheldon wrote a fictional book, which he entitled, "In His Steps." The story begins on a Friday morning. A pastor named Henry Maxwell was attempting to finish his sermon for Sunday. After several interruptions, he eventually found himself all alone in a quiet house at his desk, where he was able to write his message. His text for that morning's sermon was 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 21, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." As this pastor was pondering these last few words, "In His Steps," he wondered what it really meant. And was thinking long and hard at how he might expound them to his congregation.

At that moment, a "shabby-looking young man" came to the door of his home. He explained that he was out of work, and looking for some sort of job. The minister replied, "I don't know of anything. Jobs are scarce--" As he began to close the door, the tramp made one more appeal, "I didn't know but you might perhaps be able to give me a line to the city railway or the superintendent of the shops, or something." But, Henry Maxwell replied, "It would be of no use. You will have to excuse me. I am very busy this morning. I hope you will find something. Sorry I can't give you something to do here. But I keep only a horse and a cow and do the work myself." And so, he closed the door and returned to his study to finish his sermon.

To make a long story short, this same man showed up at First Church of Raymond on Sunday morning. At the end of Henry Maxwell's sermon, he came to the front of the church and told the congregation his story in a non-offensive, non-complaining manner. He was a printer by trade, but had fallen upon hard times. His wife had died. His daughter was currently at the home of a fellow printer friend. And he had traveled the country for months, looking for work. He had spent the last three days in Raymond, looking for work. And with all the nice churches, nobody had helped him. And then, he said, "What would Jesus do? Is that what you mean by following His steps?" Soon afterwards, he collapsed in front of the entire congregation, and died a few days later.

The next Sunday, Henry Maxwell told his congregation of the impact that these events had on his life. He said, "I want volunteers from the First Church who will pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the question, 'What would Jesus do?'" The rest of the book presents the wondrous things that took place in this fictional church as people began to ask themselves the question, "What would Jesus do." They began to live out their Christianity and many were saved through their efforts.

This book has been immensely popular. In our generation, this book has spawned the entire movement in our generation of WWJD. Today, the merchandise surrounding WWJD is unbelievable. Today, you can purchase bracelets that say WWJD. You can buy posters that say WWJD. You can purchase WWJD study guides. You can purchase WWJD bumper stickers and mugs and bibs. You can purchase WWJD rings and T-Shirts and Necklaces and Sweatshirts. [U](#) And it all stemmed from the text that we have before us this morning.

1 Peter 2:21-25

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

1. Jesus is Our Example (verses 21-23).

You can clearly see that here in verse 21, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."

From this verse, it indeed is good to ask ourselves the question often, "What Would Jesus Do?" Such a question can bring a clarity into your life, when facing various events that come your way. And the Scripture calls us in other places to imitate the life of Christ. It's not only here in 1 Peter. Consider the following verses:

"The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

"Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also love you and gave Himself up for us" (Eph. 5:1-2).

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).

After taking the apron of a slave and washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus said "I gave you an example that you also should do as I did" (John 13:15).

Jesus told His very first disciples, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).

The clear implication of all of these verse is that we should imitate the life of Jesus. We should walk as He walked, love as He loved, serve as He served and preach as He preached. It is good to ask ourselves, "What Would Jesus Do?" It will lead us to walking in righteousness (1 John 2:6). It will lead us to be forgiving people (Eph. 5:1-2). It will lead us to give of ourselves in service to others (Eph. 5:25; John 13:15). It will lead us into paths of evangelism (Matt. 4:19).

However, as with many simple solutions to life, this question, "What Would Jesus Do?" is not without its problems. We can easily drift with these things into thinking that the Christian life is more about doing for God, rather than resting upon what God has done for us. Many times, those who ask this question, "What Would Jesus Do?" have some fuzzy thinking about Jesus. They don't realize that the Bible speaks far more about what Jesus did, than it calls us ever to do what Jesus did.

For that reason, it would be good to carry around two bracelets upon your wrist. The first one should read, "WDJD" - What Did Jesus Do? Then, having reminded yourself of the glorious work of Christ on the cross for your sins, are you ready to ask yourself the question, "WWJD."

Even here in 1 Peter 2:21, we see Christ's example for us to follow as grounded in the model of what Jesus did. "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." Jesus suffered. You are also to suffer. That's what this verse is speaking about.

There is a link in this passage to the previous verses. "For you have been called for this purpose." At this point, you can rightly ask, "What's the purpose?" The purpose came in verses 18-20. In verse 18, Peter wrote, "Servants, be submissive to your masters." It doesn't matter whether they are good or whether they are bad. Verses 19 and 20 then detail the situation in which a servant finds himself under a bad master. In such cases, Peter still calls us to be submissive to them, because when you to "patiently endure" the unjust suffering, God is particularly pleased with your action. Verse 19 says it this way, "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly." Verse 20 explains the same thing, ... "If when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."

And now, here in verse 21, Peter says, "For you have been called for this purpose." Verse 21 speaks about the calling of salvation. This is the calling of all Christians. You have been called to suffer. There are many passages of Scripture that speak of this very thing. Jesus said, "In the world, you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). Paul told the churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). To the church of the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, "You yourselves know that we have been destined for [affliction]." To Timothy, he wrote, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). The reason is simple: Christians are followers of Christ. As Christ was hated by the world, so too are His followers hated. This is what Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

As Peter writes to those who are being "distressed by various trials," Peter reminds them that they have been called to suffer. Christians have been called to suffer. You can't simply let this pass you by. God's intent for your life is that you suffer. In the near context of our text this morning, it may come in the form of affliction from the government (2:13-17). It may be the result of your work environment (2:18-20). It may come from your unbelieving spouse (3:1-7). Your suffering may come from the desires of your flesh (2:11-12). Your suffering may come from being on the receiving end of evil people around you.

Now, there may be seasons where your suffering is less. And, there may be seasons where your suffering is more. And, suffering isn't something that we should seek. In fact, it's something that we should avoid. Jesus, Himself, taught us to pray, "Deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13). But, when you suffer, be assured that it is God's will for your life. Because, "we have been called for this purpose" (2:21).

Over in chapter 4, verse 19, Peter said that "those who suffer" do so "according to the will of God." And the God who brought the suffering in your life has given you the way through suffering: "patiently endure it." The reason is simple: because this is what Jesus did. Since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.

Do you want to learn how to suffer well? Look to Jesus. He suffered well. Christ's example of suffering is our model to follow. Christ's example is particularly helpful for those who are undergoing suffering, whether it's servants (as verse 18 addresses), or whether it's citizens (as verse 13 addresses), or whether it's a wife of an unbelieving husband (as chapter 3, verse 1 addresses), the way Christ suffered is an example for all of us.

So, how did He suffer? The answer comes in verse 22-23, "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously;" Bottom line is that Jesus suffered sinlessly.

Verse 22 begins with the summary statement of this, "He committed no sin." This is astonishing if you would think for a moment who wrote these words. Peter wrote these words. It's one thing for the apostle Paul to say in 2 Corinthians 5:21, that Jesus Christ "had no sin." But, it's another thing altogether for Peter to corroborate with the same testimony. If anybody ever had an opportunity to see Jesus sin, it was Peter. For the span of more than three years, Peter was by the side of Jesus. He went where Jesus went. He slept where Jesus slept. He watched His every move. And Peter's testimony is that "He committed no sin."

Not only was Jesus sinless in His conduct (what He did), but Jesus was also sinless in His conversation (what He said). The next phrase here tells us that "[No] deceit was found in His mouth." Everything that Jesus said was absolutely true. He never lied. He never deceived. He never sinned with his lips.

The apostle James says, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well" (James 3:2). Indeed, Jesus was the perfect man. Jesus never stumbled in what He said. Jesus was able to bridle His entire body so as not to sin.

Now, this does have theological implications. Being the perfect man, Jesus was our perfect sacrifice. The reason why Jesus could bear our sins in His body on the cross (as verse 24 indicates), is because He was the perfect sacrifice.

One of the clearest testimonies of the sinlessness of Jesus came when He was being delivered up to be crucified. This is what Peter is describing in verse 23, "and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously;"

When you read through the gospel accounts, it is often stunning to see how Jesus dealt with his accusers. He often remained silent. He was brought before the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin, late at night. The religious leaders "kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus" (Matt. 26:59). Many witnesses were brought forward to testify against Jesus. But, for various reasons, their accusations didn't stick. Finally, two men came forward and said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days" (Matt. 27:61). To these things, Jesus kept silent (Matt. 27:63). Even when the high priest stood up and said, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" Jesus was still silent (Matt. 27:62-63).

Only when the high priest commanded Jesus saying, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 27:63). Then Jesus calmly replied, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). At that point, the high priest tore his robes and accused Jesus of blasphemy (Matt. 27:65). The entire counsel agreed, "He deserves death" (Matt. 27:66). They began to spit in His face and beat Him with their fists and slap Him (Matt. 27:67). And through it all, Jesus remained silent. He didn't revile them in return. He didn't utter threats against them. But, He kept on entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.

In this case, Jesus modeled for us how it is that we ought to live. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matt. 5:39). There were many evil people in that room that evening, but Jesus, didn't resist or seek to retaliation in any way.

If anything, even that scene alone demonstrates the sinlessness of Jesus. When people strike you or injure you or hurt you, isn't it your natural response to get back at them? By not responding, Jesus demonstrated His sinlessness. Isn't it difficult not to sin when others are pushing and prodding you? Isn't it at that moment that you are most vulnerable to sin against others? It's amazing what we'll do when hurt by others. We will often attempt to hurt them in return. We may well strike back at them. Or, we may speak harshly toward them. Perhaps even we will threaten them, seeking to inflict upon them some anxiety of the future. But, Jesus did none of this.

As the evening wore on, Jesus responded the same way to the unjust accusations against Him. When the Jews handed him over to Pilate,

the chief priests and elders were accusing Jesus of all His "crimes" (Matt. 27:12). But, Jesus did not answer them "with regard to even a single charge" and so, Pilate "was quite amazed" (Matt. 27:14).

As Pilate didn't quite know what to do with Jesus, he sent Him off to Herod (who happened to be in town that day (Luke 23:7). Herod was "very glad when he saw Jesus ... because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him" (Luke 23:8). But, Herod was disappointed on that day, because Jesus was silent before Him. Herod "questioned Him at some length, but [Jesus] answered him nothing" (Luke 23:9). Even with the chief priests and scribes, standing there vigorously accusing Him, Jesus was silent (Luke 23:10). Even when Herod and his soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, Jesus was silent (Luke 23:11).

Eventually Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate (Luke 23:11). Pilate took Jesus into the Praetorium, where they had a private conversation (John 18:33-38). Never once did Jesus revile His accusers or attempt to set the matter straight. Standing before the Jews, who were crying out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Jesus was silent.

Eventually, they led Him out to be crucified (Matt. 27:26). This led to a whole series of sufferings. First, the soldiers took him and "stripped Him and ... mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" (Matt. 27:28-29). They spat on Him, and ... beat Him on the head" (Matt. 27:30-31). Then, they forced Him to walk the via Dolorosa, "The way of suffering."

When they reached the hill called Calvary, they stretched Him out upon the cross and pounded nails into His hands and His feet, and hoisted Him up to let Him die. His suffering still wasn't finished. When upon the cross, He faced incredible verbal abuse from people. Matthew records the scene: ...

Matthew 27:38-44

At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him." "He trusts in God; Let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

Jesus ignored all of their insults. Rather than firing back at their threats with threats of his own, Jesus prayed for forgiveness, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Rather than condemning the thief on the cross, Jesus promised him a home in Paradise with Jesus.

Now catch the point: (1) Jesus is Our Example (verses 21-23). Peter said, "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." And so, when you suffer in this life, you need to ask yourself the question, "What Would Jesus Do?" Well, when Jesus was reviled and suffered, He didn't retaliate. He uttered no threats in return. This is how we are called to suffer.

Now, how did Jesus do this? How was He able to remain composed when insulted and beaten and nailed to a cross? Some might quickly point out that Jesus was God. Certainly this is true, but as a man, His suffering was just as difficult for Him as it is for us.

Fortunately, verse 23 gives us an insight into how Jesus did this. He "kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." In other words, Jesus continually entrusted the situation to His heavenly Father. He knew that His Father would deal with the situation fairly. He knew well what was written in Deuteronomy 32:35, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19). And while Jesus was suffering upon the cross was not the time for Him to try to establish justice. Rather, it was the Lord's will for Him to submit Himself completely to His Father in this situation.

What Jesus did is exactly what we are called to do as well. Chapter 4, verse 19 holds the key, "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." When suffering unjustly, we ought to entrust our souls to God, who will always do what is right.

There is an amazing correlation between your belief in God's ultimate just judgment and your ability to respond rightly to trials. If you fully believe that God will right every wrong someday, then you will feel very little need to defend yourself and justify yourself and protect yourself from the attacks of others.

Furthermore, as you put your faith in God's ultimate justice on display by walking patiently through trials, God is well pleased with you. Look at how Peter said it in verses 19 and 20, "This finds favor [with God], if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly." If you receive unjust suffering and patiently endure under it, you have the favor of God upon your life. The end of verse 20 says the same thing, "If when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God." God is well-pleased when you suffer well, because you are putting your faith on display for all to see.

As I have counseled people using these verses, it is amazing to see the calm that comes upon people's faces when they realize that as they suffer patiently through their trials, they will find favor in God's sight. This was certainly true of Jesus. He knew that He would receive favor from God as He entrusted the entire situation into the Lord's hands.

And as Christians, we have been called for this purpose. You have seen what Jesus did in suffering. Go and do likewise. My second point comes in verse 24, ...

2. Jesus is Our Substitute (verse 24).

You can see it right there in verse 24, "and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

The simple truth of this verse is summed up in the word "substitution." Jesus was our substitute upon the cross. Our sins were upon His body when Jesus was dying upon the cross. Although Jesus was sinless, He took our sins upon Himself. And as our sin was upon Him, it is no longer upon us. We are free of our sin.

This is the glorious gospel. Though we are guilty, we walk free, because of what Christ did for us. And that ought to thrill your soul! As Horatio Spafford said, ...

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! [\[2\]](#)

Last week in my exposition of verses 18-20, I read for you a bedtime story that I recently read with my children that illustrated the power of a good master upon a rebellious slave. This week, I read a bedtime story to my children which illustrates this truth of substitution perfectly. I

want to read it for you now. (So, picture yourself in bed, with your head on your pillow and your father reading to you). This story is entitled, "The Stowaway."

Some years ago a small steamer encountered a terrific storm in the South Atlantic Ocean. For three days the ship was tossed and buffeted by the mighty waves. One mast was carried away, and the steering gear was damaged.

Toward the close of the third day, the storm seemed to increase in severity. The sky became blacker than ever, and the poor sailors realized that still worse times were ahead. Suddenly, amid the crashing of awful peals of thunder, the cry was raised that the ship had sprung a leak.

In a moment the pumps were manned, but soon it was discovered that the water was rising in the hold faster than the men could pump it out. They worked desperately for another hour, but all in vain. Seeing the task was hopeless and the ship was doomed, the captain ordered that the boats be lowered.

To the dismay of all, it was not discovered that there was but one of the boats that remained undamaged by the waves--the rest were so battered that no one could expect them to live in such a sea. There was nothing to do but to cram the entire crew into the one boat.

Quickly the men climbed in, filling the boat to its utmost capacity. There was just room enough to squeeze in the captain, who, like the noble Englishman he was, had remained behind till the last.

He was about to step over the side of the ship to climb down the ladder to the boat, when, hearing a cry, he looked around. There running toward him across the deck, was a strange young lad, dirty-faced and clothed in rags. He was a stowaway.

Where the lad had hidden himself or how he had kept himself alive since the ship left port, the captain did not know, and there was no time to inquire.

"Quick, lad!" he shouted, stepping back on to the ship. "Down the ladder!"

The lad needed no second invitation. He was over the side and into the boat in a moment--filling the last few inches of space.

"Come on!" shouted the men to the captain, willing to overload the boat rather than leave him behind.

"Push off!" yelled the captain, above the howling of the storm. He knew full well that one more in the boat would certainly capsize it and cause the death of all.

So the men pushed off, and not a moment too soon. Hardly were they at a safe distance from the ship than it turned on its side and plunged into the sea, bearing the noble captain to his ocean grave.

After many days of hardship, the men in the boat were picked up by a passing vessel and finally reached home again. Never did the stowaway forget the captain's self-sacrifice. The memory of that heroic deed changed his life. He felt he must be worthy of so priceless a gift. In his pocket he carried the captain's photograph, to which he would point as he told and retold the thrilling story, saying, "He gave his life for me."

And, now, children, does not this story help us to understand what Jesus has done for each one of us? He is the Captain, we the stowaways. We do not in the least deserve to be saved and have a place in His beautiful home. But Jesus died to bring this about; And although it was many, many years ago that He made His wonderful sacrifice, it is available for everyone of us who believes. As the stowaway afterwards talked about the captain, so we, too should be glad to tell others of what Jesus has done for us. We, too, can say, "He died for me." [\[3\]](#)

That's a perfect picture of what Christ has done for us upon the cross. His death gives us life. We live because He died. This is what 1 Peter 2:24 teaches us. Jesus died as our substitute. One of the clearest places that this is taught is in Isaiah 53.

Notice the verses here that speak of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus.

Isaiah 53:4, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore.

Isaiah 53:4, "Our sorrows He carried."

Isaiah 53:5, "He was pierced through for our transgressions."

Isaiah 53:5, "He was crushed for our iniquities."

Isaiah 53:5, "The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him."

Isaiah 53:5, "By His scourging we are healed."

Isaiah 53:6, "The LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

Isaiah 53:8, "He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due."

Isaiah 53:10, "He would render Himself as a guilt offering."

Isaiah 53:11, "He will bear their iniquities."

Isaiah 53:12, "He Himself bore the sin of many."

The idea of substitution is plain in these passages. It's the same idea as 1 Peter 2:24, "And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross." And I believe that this passage was in the mind of Peter as he wrote, because Peter used much of the same terminology in our passage as He did here. The verbal parallels are overwhelming.

One parallel with Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2 is found in Isaiah 53:9 says this, "His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth." Peter quoted directly from this passage in 1 Peter 2:22, "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth." Both of these verses talk about the sinlessness of Jesus. He never sinned in his actions. He never sinned in his words.

Another parallel comes in Isaiah 53:7, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before His shearers, so He did not open His mouth." That sounds quite a bit like 1 Peter 2:23, "and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously;" Both of these verses focus upon the silence of Jesus in His sufferings. When being oppressed and afflicted and reviled and whipped, Jesus was silent.

There is yet another parallel with 1 Peter. Look at Isaiah 53:6, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." In a few moments, we will come to 1 Peter 2:25, "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." Here we see Peter's link with straying sheep. In

Isaiah 53, we are straying sheep. In 1 Peter 2, we are straying sheep.

Without a doubt, Peter is taking the language of Isaiah 53, which prophesies of the suffering servant, and applies it directly to Jesus. This is why I entitled my message this morning, "The Suffering Servant." Not only is this title appropriate as Peter links his thoughts to Isaiah 53, which many title, "The Suffering Servant." But, it's also an appropriate title because of my message last week, which was entitled, "Suffering Servants," as Peter called the servants to suffer.

I hope you see clearly now how important it is for us to first ask, "WDJD" before we ever ask "WWJD." It's important to see that Jesus "bore our sins in His body on the cross." And that settles all issues of our standing before God right then and there. We don't seek to do what Jesus would do in any way to merit our salvation, because our salvation was accomplished upon the cross completely for us.

However, this doesn't mean that we don't have a rightful response to the cross. Because we do. It's found in the last half of 1 Peter 2:24, which speaks of how we ought to imitate His life. Look once again at verse 24, "and he Himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

One of the purposes in the redemption of Jesus was so that we would live righteously. Or, to put it another way, Jesus died so that we would follow in His steps. He was sinless. Our life is to seek such a life as well. Now, obviously, in this flesh, we will never reach sinless perfection, but it will be our desire. We will desire to die to sin and live to righteousness. And that desire comes from love and adoration of our Savior. And all our lives, we ought to be like the stowaway, pulling out a picture of the captain who gave His life for us.

This is what Peter tells us to do. Earlier in this epistle, Peter gave us another reason why we were called to salvation, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We have been called to tell the world how excellent Jesus is. He has called us out of darkness into light. He has taken our sins upon Himself! What a wonderful Savior we have! How I long to be like Him! How I long to walk in His ways! How I long to live as He lived!

Isn't this the way that the stowaway in our story would speak!, ...

When I was eight years old, I was a naughty boy. I ran away from home and hid myself on a ship. I spent most of my time in the cargo hatch, but I would go out every night to steal some food from the kitchen. I knew that it wasn't right.

Then came this storm. I was scared to death. I didn't know what to do. And then, I saw that the crew was abandoning the ship. I ran as fast as I could to get on that lifeboat. The captain stood up from his place and let me sit in his seat. I didn't realize it at the time, but there was no room for him on the lifeboat.

Here, I was, a criminal, stealing from the cargo on the ship. There he was, an honorable professional man in charge of the entire ship. He gave up his seat to give it to me. He died so that I would live.

I have never forgotten what he has done for me. What an honorable man! I want to be like him someday! In fact, even now, I'm training to be a ship captain!

Again, you need to see that the desire for imitation comes from the work of substitution. We owe our lives to Christ because of what Christ has first done for us.

3. Jesus is Our Shepherd (verse 25).

This comes in verse 25, "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

This is a great paraphrase of the gospel. We were living our lives for ourselves, wandering aimlessly, like sheep without a shepherd. We didn't know where to find the good pasture. We didn't know where the quiet waters were. We wandered into the paths of unrighteousness, thinking that we would find our pleasures there, but in the end, we always found them barren. But now, we have seen the glory of Christ. We have embraced our Shepherd, who takes care of us in this life.

Sheep without a shepherd will die! But, sheep with a shepherd will be led to the pastures and live! And this is our life! We strayed in our own sin. But, as we have repented of our sin, we have returned to the shepherd of our souls. Peter says that he is the "guardian" of our souls. This word for "shepherd" is the same word from which we get the word, "pastor." This word for "guardian" is the same word from which we get the word, "overseer." Both of these words are often used to describe the spiritual leaders of the church. And so, we could easily translate verse 25, "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Pastor and Overseer of your souls."

I consider myself to be a "pastor" and "overseer" of this church. But even pastors of churches need a pastor to watch over them. At the beginning of 1 Peter, chapter 5, Peter is addressing the elders of the church. And though they are providing oversight to the church, they are all under another overseer. In 1 Peter 5:4, we read, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." Jesus is the "Chief Shepherd." Jesus is the "Senior Pastor" of Rock Valley Bible Church.

I'm so glad that Christ is the Chief Shepherd of our souls. I see my failures in pastoring this church every week. But, I am comforted to know that (3) Jesus is Our Shepherd (verse 25). He is ultimately the one who will watch over and care for our souls in ways that any earthly pastor cannot do.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 17, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] The following web sites were consulted.

http://www.art.com/asp/sp-asp/_pd--10224655/WWJD.htm,
http://www.valorebooks.com/froogle/buy/siteID=DITBZZ/ISBN=0310222575?utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=froogle&date=02/13/08&utm_source=froogle,
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<http://www.google.com/products?hl=en&q=WWJD+products&price1=30.00&price2=&lnk=prugg>.

[2] Horatio Spafford, "It Is Well With My Soul."

[3] Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stores, Vol. 1, pp. 13-15 (modified slightly).