

## **1 Peter 2:21 Follow in Jesus' Footsteps Easter 4 Good Shepherd Sunday May 7, 2017**

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God's grace and peace are ours through our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus our Good Shepherd! Amen.

God calls us to follow Jesus as our Good Shepherd in 1 Peter 2:21

These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Help us to hear them to follow in Christ's footsteps. Your Word...

Dear Friends, in Christ, our Good Shepherd,

All of us have had people that we try to pattern our lives after. It may be friends, parents, teachers, great people from the Bible or others who set a good example not because life was easy for them, but because they faced difficulties or challenges when many would quit, but they continued. By following their example, we hope have the same stamina to finish the course of life that God has set before us. No one in this world is a perfect example nor can we follow anyone perfectly. But there is One we can look to and follow especially in challenging times.

### **Follow in Jesus' footsteps!**

Peter wrote, *"To this you have been called, because Christ... left you an example that you might follow in His steps."* (v.21) **How can we come close to following Christ's example?** The word "example" referred to copying letters. A blank parchment was placed on top of a parchment with letters so children could trace them precisely. As children of God, we want to see Christ through His Word and we ask the Holy Spirit to help us put into practice His way of thinking and have His love for God and all people.

We are to follow Christ's steps. If any of you have walked in dry sand, you know that it's not easy to walk far. So, think if you were a little child walking up a high sand dune. Someone older with you has walked ahead. He's calling from the top, "Keep coming up! It's a beautiful view. Don't give up." You hear his voice and you see His footprints up the steep path, but it seems impossible to follow.

So, we need to hear Christ's voice. Peter was writing to Christians who were suffering because of their faith. Peter was telling them, Jesus suffered evil when He did good things and He endured it, so can you. We say, Jesus is the Son of God and a perfect man. We got to think that He would have no trouble continuing His walk with God! Yet, during His life here, He humbled Himself and didn't use His power as God. He was tempted and suffered pain just like we do. Yet, if we had a large stain glass window with several picture frames in it, how would Jesus' life on earth be pictured?

In one frame we'd see an image of a perfect child at His birth. In another, we'd see Him as a 12 year-old in the temple with no sin. We see Him in the wilderness, tempted by the devil, but still having a perfect trust in God. We would see a picture of Jesus healing the sick, feeding the poor, and comforting those who were hurting. We'd see Him preaching God's truth out of love for God and for people, even when the truth touched people's sensitive nerves about sinning. We see a picture of Jesus suffering on the cross yet with no revenge for His enemies. Peter wrote, *"When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to Him who judges justly."* (v.23) And the last frame in the glass is of Jesus risen from death and as King of kings judging unbelievers with swift and fierce justice and opening up His heart to believers with eternal love and blessing. In all the pictures on the glass, there is not one mistake and not one pane is broken.

Now, compare that to if God had stain glass pictures of our lives. The first picture shows us born with a sinful nature and sinful as infants. There are later frames, when it pictures us not telling the truth in love and not doing our duty to God or parents or people. God desires to see a picture of us following Jesus' example: like forgiving people who hurt us, but He saw us holding a grudge. He would love to see a picture of us being selfless and putting others before us, but picture after picture shows our selfish nature in control. Peter gave an accurate picture when he quoted Isaiah, "we are like sheep going astray." (v. 25) Our pictures in glass are stained with sin and every frame of our lives is broken before God.

**We follow Jesus by faith!** Following does not begin with actions, but with faith in Him as our Savior. Jesus tells us to confess our sinful attitudes and ways and seek His forgiveness. Our verse reminds us: "*Jesus suffered for us.*" (v.21) He wasn't just our example, He was our substitute. Peter later wrote, "*He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness....*" (v.24) Every sin that we have ever thought, said, or done was put on Jesus and carried to the cross. He innocently suffered and died a full payment for our sins. "*God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us.*" (2 Corinthians 5:21)

How would this gospel message that we believe change the look in our stain glass window? God took the brokenness of our lives and put them into Jesus' frame and attached His name to it and threw them into the fire of judgment while Jesus hung on the cross. He took Jesus' perfect glass window and put our names and our faces in every frame. Through Christ, God looks at each believer and says, "This one is going to fit perfectly in heaven. I have a place for it in My mansion!"

Getting to heaven is not about keeping up with Jesus. It's about trusting in Him to provide what we cannot do. The book of Revelation pictures us this way: "*They are without fault before the throne of God.*" (Revelation 14:5) Imagine God in heaven viewing all our hearts and sinful actions, Yet in Christ, God sees us without sin! In this life, we will always fight against sin. But, in heaven we will be made new in Christ!

So, as we grow in faith and understanding in Christ, our lives become more Christ-like. Our own troubles and sufferings are transformed from misery into a powerful witness to the saving truth. We are not just like the little child walking up the hill by ourselves. Jesus is walking with us and giving us strength! When the Holy Spirit brought us to faith in Christ, Jesus made a commitment to us. He is our Shepherd, that is, the one who guides, protects, and cares for His sheep. Jesus was willing to die to save us from the devil that would devour us. Now, we trust in Christ to give us strength to live for Him with patience, endurance, and faithfulness in our daily lives!

The only way to follow in Jesus' footsteps is to realize that Christ has saved us! He found us lost in sin. Our Good Shepherd led us through His Word from the way of death to life. He has washed away our sin through water and His Word in baptism. He refreshes us with His forgiveness offered in the Lord's Supper. He has promised to be with us and care for us every step of our way to heaven. There are many examples of people who are inspirational when it comes getting through life's challenges. Of all examples that we can follow in life, we will be glad by faith to follow Jesus, our Savior. Amen.