JESUS---OUR MODEL IN SUFFERING

May 7, 2017 1 Peter 2:19-23

Have you heard the term—suffer in silence? Just stand there and take it. Well, Jesus actually did. At the hands of the Roman soldiers, He was beaten, struck repeatedly, treated like a criminal, whipped mercilessly and finally nailed to a cross.

Did Jesus retaliate in any way? Did He do anything to get back at His tormentors? No, He did not. He suffered in silence. In fact, from the cross He said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Some may answer this by saying---Yes, but Jesus is God and God can do anything. True. But Jesus is also true man. He wept. He got thirsty. He got tired. He felt the pain as a man. He was tempted to retaliate, to get even make his tormentors suffer. But he fought the urge and did nothing. Scripture says that He was tempted in every way, just as we are---yet without sinning.

How did Jesus do it? Peter reveals it in the last phrase of our text: “He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.”

Jesus turned the whole matter over to His Father, believing that the Father knew exactly what was happening and left it to the Father to do what was right.

If there is anything that comes easy, it’s returning insult for insult and hurt for hurt. This is the stuff of family legend. Someone asks; ‘so how come Joe and Larry don’t get along? There then follows the sad litany of who started it and the pay back. Sometimes no one can remember exactly why they don’t get along.

We see this in sports; hockey, football and baseball. Someone takes a bad hit and sooner or later it’s pay back time. Bad feelings escalate the whole thing.

What should you do if your boss or supervisor dresses you down in front of your coworkers? If deserving, he should have done it in private, true. Your choices are three. Say nothing. Speak bad of him to everyone or just say, ‘well, I surely deserved that.’

Our whole life should be one of remembering who we are---we are the redeemed of Christ. We are children of Almighty God and as such, we are different.

When we feel pressure to retaliate, to get even for some hurt with hateful words or actions, fight the urge. Don’t do it. The devil will be overjoyed if you do. As strange as it may seem to our sinful way of thinking, God never asks us to seek revenge. In fact, He tells us just the opposite; “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, My friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written; ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12).’

Wise King Solomon has something to say on this in Proverbs 25:21,22: “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”

This is a way to diffuse a difficult situation. Instead of fighting, which is never good, do the unexpected. Do something nice. Burning coals is not nice, but the meaning is it is unexpected.

Why not do the Christian thing-----turn the other cheek. Turn away from what is natural and expected to what God would want you to do.

None of us knows when or how we will have to suffer because of our faith in Jesus. We do know that we live in a world that is not always kind to those who believe.

Our former administration put into place laws that made it difficult for Christians to live their faith in the military. There were two examples in the May issue of Reporter, the Synodical monthly that pastors and church officers receive. Former U. S. Marine Lance Cpl. Monifa Sterling was court-martialed and discharged for refusing to remove a Bible-themed passage from her workspace.

In another case, U.S. Air Force COL. Michael Madrid was accused of making derogatory comments about homosexuality by an openly gay airman who was being court-martialed. COL. Madrid believes in traditional marriage. Madrid’s commander put an official admonishment in the COL.’s records which will have an effect on future promotions.

Both cases are being represented by the First Liberty Institute.

None of us should be surprised if our faith in Jesus is the cause for some sort of bad treatment in this sinful, God-hating world. It could be some spiteful words or it could be physical. Remember that in the first century, Christians were fed to the lions in Rome.

Here is what Peter says in Chapter 4 of this letter. “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

It’s always easy to get angry and upset and get even. It takes Christian love, patience and prayer to turn the other cheek. To turn back words of anger with a soft answer.

No matter what kind of trials come our way, we know that it is only temporary and Jesus, for our sakes, had to endure the suffering in hell that none of us will ever have to suffer, by God’s grace.