

PETER #17 Proclaiming in a Hostile World [Supp. Material]

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners & exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil & to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good & gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin & are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good & suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin & live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd & Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:11-25)

- I. Defining Christians & their activities (1 Pet. 2:9)
 - A. Who we are - chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, special people
 - B. What we are able to do – proclaim the excellencies of Him [God]
 1. Proclaim, tell out, tell forth (Psa. 9:14; 79:13; 71:15; 73:28; 107:22; 119:13)
 2. Excellencies, His mighty & glorious deeds (Reinecker)
- II. Where Christians Are Meant to Proclaim God (1 Pet. 2:12-20)
 - A. In church gatherings large & small—
 1. “Let us...stir up one another to love & good works, not neglecting to meet together...but encouraging one another, & all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:24-25)
 2. **Note:** Christian perseverance is a community endeavor. Community encouragement...requires being together & meeting together. ESV
 - B. In Hostile Society (1 Pet. 2:12-17)
 1. Live honorably [or “having (pres.) your manner of life honorable”] in a hostile world (v. 12) **Note:** Peter exhorts Christians to honorable conduct as citizens (2:13-17), slaves (2:18-25), wives (3:1-6), & husbands (3:7). This section “focuses primarily on the believers being God’s people for the sake of the pagan world. (2:12)—those responsible for their suffering. Peter begins by urging Christ-like submission in specific institutional settings (pagan government [2:13-17]; pagan masters [2:18-25]; & pagan husbands [3:1-6]) in which believers may expect to suffer.” [Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, p 403] Peter addresses Christians living within a certain social context—in this case the first century Roman Empire. In order to apply this teaching to our 21st century N. American context, we have to ask—what are the underlying principles that apply regardless of time & place? What points apply specifically to the 1st century context?
 2. Be subject to *every human institution* for the Lord’s sake (vv. 13-14; Rom. 13:1-5; Tit. 3:1-2) **Note:** Christians are to *be subject* to every civil authority. The government’s role is *to punish* (Greek *ekdikēsis*, “justice, punishment, retribution”). It includes not just deterring evil but carrying out retribution against *those who do evil*. By contrast, governments are to *praise* or reward *those who do good*, thus encouraging more good behavior. ESV

- Paul writes, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there’s no authority except from God, & those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, & those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad...Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. Because of this you pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what’s owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” (Rom. 13:1-7) **Note:** This addresses Christians’ responsibility to governing authorities. They are to “be subject to” (generally meaning ‘obey’) the government because it’s ordained by God. Paul gives the general principle of submission to government. Other passages show God approves of Christians disobeying...when obedience would mean disobeying God. ESV
 - Daniel’s 3 friends disobey: “King Nebuchadnezzar decreed that every man shall fall down & worship the golden image. Whoever doesn’t fall down & worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. He was told, “Certain Jews --Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego... do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” The king asked them, “Is it true... that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I’ve set up? They answered, “O King...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, & he will deliver us...But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” (Daniel 3:9-18)
 - Daniel disobeys: The high officials of Babylon went to King Darius & proposed a new law: that for the next 30 days no one was to petition any god or man...except the king himself; all offenders to be cast into the den of lions. “King Darius signed the document & injunction. When Daniel knew the document had been signed, he went to his house & opened windows in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees 3 times a day & prayed & gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.” (Daniel 6:6-10)
 - The Apostles disobeyed the Jewish Council which “charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter & John answered, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we’ve seen & heard.’” (Acts 4:18-20) **Note:** Believers have the responsibility *not* to obey authorities when such authorities prohibit preaching the gospel or otherwise require Christians to disobey God’s explicit commandments. ESV God’s authority trumps human authorities.
3. By doing good, Christians silence *foolish people* (v. 15) **Note:** The godly lives of believers will *put to silence* any false charges raised against them. ESV
 4. Live as people who are free & are servants of God (v. 16) **Note:** *Freedom* in Scripture is not a license to sin but expresses itself in devotion to what is good. ESV
 5. Honor everyone & love the brotherhood (v. 17a) **Note:** *honor everyone*. All people deserve the same honor & respect as the emperor (17b). Believers should love for each other as members of the same family. ESV
 6. Fear God & honor the Emperor [or “king”] (v. 17b; Ac. 5:29; Dan. 3:16-18; 6:7, 10, 21) Only God is to be feared, not the Emperor [or “king”].
- C. In Work Situations (1 Pet. 2:18-20)
1. **Note:** Peter addresses “bond-servants” or “slaves.” The Roman institution of “bondservant” or “slave” (Gk. *doulos*) was different from the institution of slavery in North America during the 17th to 19th centuries. Slaves (bondservants, servants) generally were permitted to work for pay & to save enough to buy their freedom (In Matt. 25:15 “servants” [Greek, *doulos*] were entrusted with immense amounts of money & responsibility). The NT assumes that trafficking in human beings is a sin (1 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 18:11-13), & Paul (1 Cor. 7:21) urges Christian bondservants who *can gain...*

freedom to do so. The released bondservant was officially designated a “freedman” & frequently continued to work for his former master. ESV [See “*Does the NT Condone Slavery?*” (below)]

2. Be subject to your good or bad masters (v. 18) **Note:** Within slavery in the Greco-Roman world, Masters had extensive authority over slaves, & slaves were often mistreated by their masters. Still, Peter calls on slaves to *be subject* even to evil masters, *with all respect*. ESV
3. Be mindful of God & endure sorrows while suffering unjustly (v. 19)
 - a. No credit when you sin and bear the results, & endure (v. 20a)
 - b. Credit when you do good, suffer for it & endure (v. 20b) **Note:** ‘*Gracious thing*’ comes from “grace” (Gk. *charis*) & in this context seems to be synonymous with ‘*credit*.’ Both words indicate that God’s people will receive a reward from him if they endure suffering righteously. ‘*Gracious thing*’ could also mean that patient endurance of suffering is evidence of God’s grace at work. These 2 interpretations are compatible, for along with God’s enabling grace come his favor & blessing. ESV.

III. Christians are Called to Suffer –Christ’s Story is Our Example (1 Pet. 2:21-25)—“To this you’ve been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving an example, that you might follow in his steps.” (v. 21)

- **Note:** “Peter’s primary concern is for truly Christian living in the context of hostility & suffering” (p. 402) “What propels the letter from beginning to end is [God’s peoples’] suffering. Peter’s concern is that they understand their suffering in the larger context of God’s saving purposes.” (p. 403) “Peter—significantly—always refers to Christ’s redeeming work in terms of His suffering (rather than ‘dying’) for us, which... serves as the example to be followed (2:21-24).” [Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to read the Bible Book by Book*, p. 404]

A. Christ’s unjust suffering (vv. 21b-23)—

1. “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he didn’t revile in return; when he suffered, he didn’t threaten, but continued entrusting himself to Him who judges justly.” (1 Pet. 2:22-23)
2. **Note:** It’s common to long for retaliation in the face of unjust criticism or suffering, but Jesus would do so because he *continued entrusting* both himself & those who mistreated him entirely to God, knowing that God is just & will make all things right in the end. Likewise believers, knowing that God *judges justly*, are able to forgive others & to entrust all judgment & vengeance to God. Every wrong deed in the universe will be either covered by the blood of Christ or repaid justly by God at the final judgment. ESV

B. Christians are called to suffer by following in Christ’s steps (vv. 24-25)

1. We can die to sin & live to righteousness because He bore our sin (v. 24a)
2. “By his wounds you have been healed.” (v. 24) The wounds & damage of sin have been healed by His death. **Note:** The healing in the atonement does *not* refer to physical healing in this context (though see Matt. 8:17) but to the forgiveness of sins. Jesus’ death should lead to a profound change in the lives of believers, so that they now sever all ties with evil (*‘die to sin’*) & devote themselves to living in a holy manner (*‘live to righteousness’*). ESV By Christ’s wounds Christians should be ‘healed’ from the natural responses to unjust criticism & abuse, e.g. the desire for revenge, the urge to retaliate, the tendency to threaten, etc
3. We should rely on the Shepherd & Overseer of our souls (v. 25)

Does The New Testament Condone Slavery?

The New Testament writers—the Apostles Paul, Peter, etc.—address Christians who were slaves, believers living under the yoke of slavery in the 1st-century Roman Empire. Neither Peter, nor Paul, called for the overthrow of institutionalized slavery; they didn’t use their writings to promote the cause of emancipation. Some modern readers criticize them on this score. Why didn’t Paul or Peter denounce slavery? Why didn’t they propound the

cause of liberty, like Abraham Lincoln or William Wilberforce? The following article, written by Brian LePort responds to these charges:

Some people allege “that the Apostle Paul’s letter [to *Philemon* regarding his returning slave, Onesimus,] was ‘vindicating the owning of slaves.’ As someone who has given years to studying the Apostle Paul I find this statement to be *seriously misleading*. It is one thing to *not demand* that Philemon [a slave-owning master] release [his returning slave] Onesimus; it is something altogether different to applaud slavery! We must read Paul in his historical context.

It is well known that the Roman Empire stood on the backs of slaves. Slavery was a given in the Greco-Roman world. For Paul to have attempted to overthrow this institution [slavery] he may as well have forsaken the spread of the gospel. He would have been crushed if he has tried to use force [to free slaves. Slave revolts in the Roman Empire were brutally suppressed].

We must remember Paul did not have any political clout. He was not a government official. He did not have a voice in the court of Caesar. He was not the citizen of a democracy. He would have had little to no impact if he had attempted to start some sort of riot [to free slaves]. Rather, the gospel would’ve been seen by people as something other than the message that it was for Paul. It would’ve been the loss of many audiences to his message.

Furthermore, it seems apparent that Paul was pacifistic. He did not support violence in any of his epistles. While the slave situation was gray in Paul’s world view, it seems that violence was black and white. While the institution of slavery was something much too large for him to fix he could maintain control over any urge to use violence. Therefore, we can count revolution out as an option.

Even here in the United States it was bloodshed [the Civil War] that led to the freeing of slaves. Even though our current situation is better than it was before Abraham Lincoln, even the northern victory [ending US slavery] did not fix root causes such as racism. Do we dare demand from a first-century Christian what we may demand from a twenty-first century Christian? Hardly.

We must realize that Paul’s calling as an apostle is to call people to allegiance with his risen Lord. He lived in an apocalyptic mindset that was aware that what was of primary importance was not changing all of society, but being ready to meet the returning King [Jesus]. Any social reform (which we have already seen was not even possible) would have been distracting.

When Paul writes to Philemon he does not demand that Philemon let Onesimus be free. He uses wise words reminding Philemon that he owes Paul, but Paul lets Philemon make the decision on his own. Furthermore, Paul realizes Philemon is a product of his era, so he massages his ego emphasizing that Philemon has the opportunity to do the good on his own that will inevitably be a benefit to the Kingdom of God...”

An extract from: Brian LePort, “*The Apostle Paul Supported Slavery?*” July 6, 2010
<http://nearemmaus.com/2010/07/06/the-apostle-paul-supported-slavery/>