

Don't Mix Up the Verbs – I Peter 2:17

I. Introduction:

A. Are you familiar with the **Rorschach Inkblot Test**?

1. Back in the 1920s Hermann Rorschach came up with the idea that someone could reveal their soul by describing the image created with ink dropped onto a piece of paper which was then folded and reopened.
 - a. What does this look like to you? We might have a dozen different opinions.
 - b. With my native omniscience I might know exactly what sort of person you all are by your answer.
 - c. That might be entertaining, but probably a waste of time except for a laugh. None of us are omniscient.
2. Another psychological game might be done with **word associations**.
 - a. Some psychologists believe that the first thing which comes into your mind after you hear a word reveals the sort of person you are.
 - b. If I say "**kitten**," or "**ocean**" or "**the color blue**," we'd probably all have very different first thoughts.

B. Rather than either of those, let's take the **Oldfield Verb Test**.

1. What, to you, is the most important verb in the English language?
2. If I required you to answer quickly and without any thought, I just might learn something about you.
3. First, your answer would reveal whether or not you know the difference between a noun, a verb, an adverb or an adjective. In other words it would reveal something about your education.
4. But what if I gave you a few seconds to think about your answer: what is the most important verb in your vocabulary?
5. It would be great if it was a Biblical answer, but I'm not sure that any of us would pass that test.
6. Jesus said, "**LOOK unto me**," and "**COME unto me**." Those are important verbs.
7. How about "**TRUST and OBEY**" (there's no other way)?
8. And what about "**BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ**" that thou might be saved?

C. Here in this single verse, Peter shares with us three important verbs.

1. In some ways, they are extremely valuable: "**honor**," "**love**" and "**fear**."
2. He gives them to us in concise, succinct thoughts.
3. There is a lot under laying each of these statements, but all he gives us is the point of the spear.
4. "**Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.**"
5. Let's briefly reconsider these things, but not in Peter's order.

II. "**Honour the king.**"

A. We'll start here, because we've pretty well exhausted this subject already.

1. But we won't ignore it either, because there are a lot of Christians who do not like what Peter is telling us.
2. He says that we are to **habitually** and **continually** honor the king.
3. Some might argue: It's a good thing that the U.S.A. is not a monarchy, meaning that we don't have a king.
 - a. This verse doesn't apply to us because we are supposed to be a republic.
4. But while are a democracy with its mob rule, we still have a president, as supreme, and governors as well.
5. Whether we like the president personally, or whether we like his policies, we, as God's servants are to honor him as the president which God has ordained we have.
6. It is not up to you to decide whether or not to honor him.
 - a. God has made that choice for you. Honor the man in that office
 - b. Someone says, but I think his policies are unbiblical and his morals are questionable.
7. It doesn't matter. God says, "**Honor the king.**"

B. When did Peter write this epistle. There are several theories, but we don't know exactly.

1. But let's say that Peter was born about the same time as the Lord Jesus. Some say it was later.
2. If Peter lived to be 70 years old, then this could have been penned between 40 AD and 80 AD.
3. Some say as late as 80 to 90 AD.

- C. If it was that late, then Domitian, one of the most wicked of all Rome's Emperors was on the throne.
1. He was a murderer and his hands dripped with the blood of God's persecuted and martyred saints.
 2. **He** may have been the king, Peter was telling his readers to honor.
 3. But if this was written earlier, consider the kings before him.
 4. The list includes wicked **Nero**, who purportedly burned down the city of Rome and blamed the Christians.
 5. And there was **Caligula**, whose name is synonymous with immorality.
 6. Along with these there were others who were assassinated because their people couldn't stand them.
 7. These were the people Peter was telling the saints to honor.
- D. It is impossible for today's Christians to say this president or that president – the current president or some past president – was more wicked than the person Peter was telling the saints to honor.
1. There is no way around the exhortation which he has given us: "*Honor the king.*"
 2. And don't even think about saying that Peter was talking about Jehovah, the King. He wasn't.

III. Another of Peter's statements is: "*Love the brotherhood.*"

- A. The Greek words are "*agapeo*" and "*adelphotes.*"
1. This second word is used only by Peter – twice.
 2. But it is directly related to "*brethren,*" and it is translated that way in **I Peter 5:9**.
 3. "*Agapeo*" is the **love word** which is related to the **God of love**.
 4. Peter is telling us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ with the same kind of love with which we have been loved by God.
 5. And he tells us to keep on doing it – don't stop for whatever reason.
- B. Do you remember the day, after Jesus' resurrection, when the disciples were out fishing and catching nothing?
1. The Lord Jesus, standing on the shore yelled over to them to cast their net on opposite side of the boat.
 2. When they did, they encircled one hundred fifty-three big fat fish, stretching their net to the breaking point.
 3. A few minutes later, after they reached the beach and pulled in their haul, they had a fish fry with Christ.
 4. Most likely, under the circumstances, everyone's emotions were running high, including Peter's.
 5. That brings us to **John 21:15** – "*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?*"
 - a. *He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*
 - b. *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*
 - c. *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."*
 6. Jesus used the same word for "*love*" to Peter, which Peter is now using before us.
 7. It is because of Peter's love for the brethren that he is exhorting us to "*love the brotherhood.*"
- C. Notice, Peter doesn't say, "*Love the church,*" and he is not talking only about saints in the immediate vicinity.
1. His use of "*adelphotes*" includes the brethren in Syria and Israel, Egypt and Rome.
 2. And he is speaking about brethren who may be **more challenging** to love than others.
 3. There are **no limits** and **no criteria** placed on this exhortation.
 4. And while talking about brethren, this isn't bland "*brotherly love*" – philadelphian love – nor is it fleshly love.
 5. He is saying, "*Love as you have been loved by the Lord.*"
 6. Love with a willingness to sacrifice and to share.

IV. Peter's first exhortation is "*honour all men.*"

- A. You'll notice that "*men*" is in italics, which indicates that the Greek says only "*honour all.*"
1. Our translators and Bible editors have inserted the word "*men,*" but that doesn't exclude "*women.*"
 2. We might say "*Honor all the brethren,*" but that actually limits Peter's apparent intent.

- B. And this *“honour”* is the same kind as *“honour the king.”*
1. The root word refers to holding something as valuable, as precious. How valuable?
 2. This kind of honor is what we do with the heirloom great grandma gave us. It now sits in a special place.
- C. At the store one day, you see a shriveled up little girl being pushed by her mother in a special wheel chair.
1. She may not have any arms or perhaps they are curled up and useless.
 2. She may have a bandana or a bib under her chin and you see saliva spilling onto it.
 3. Her head may be tilted to one side, because she can't control herself, and she may be blind.
 4. You pity the child or her mother, thinking that the little girl isn't of much value. But I beg to differ.
 5. The soul of that child is of more value than the wealth of entire universe.
 6. And so is the soul of the man in prison and the man living under the overpass in a cardboard box.
- D. We need to honor **all** men, as God's creatures.
1. Didn't the Lord honor humanity through His incarnation?
 2. We need to honor all men as fallen creatures like ourselves.
 3. We need to consider every one of them as redeemable and worthy of the gospel.
- E. This word *“honour”* which Peter uses is an action verb. It's not one of those state-of-being words.
1. It involves more than simply doffing our cap in respect.
 2. It involves something substantial like reaching out to help or to be a blessing to that person.
 3. It involves sharing the gospel with that person.
 4. We honor the Lord and honor “all men,” when we obey the Lord through evangelism.

V. That brings us to the key to everything: *“Fear God.”*

- A. Why do you suppose that Peter gave us these four exhortations in this particular order?
1. Some self-proclaimed experts have tried to offer their opinions, but I'm not one of them.
 2. On the other hand I can see why *“fear God”* might come just before *“honour the king.”*
 3. Isn't it because the Lord our God is the King of kings and Lord of lords? We need to keep first things first.
 4. It is because Jehovah is God that we are to honour all men – including the king.
- B. I have noticed that some commentators say this fear of God refers to awe and reverence; it certainly does.
1. Some took the additional step to say this is not fleshly fear, like the fear we might have of a rattlesnake.
 2. But then A.T. Robertson went out of his way to say that this is both fear and reverence.
 3. Christians have no reason to fear God's wrath because that wrath fell upon our Saviour on our behalf.
 4. But at the same time, shouldn't the Christian fear God's chastising hand?
 5. Shouldn't we fear the omniscient God when we sin?
 6. Will there be any fear when we approach the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ?
 7. It is one thing to come boldly to God's throne of grace, but there should be no boldness before the judgment throne.

VI. Conclusion

- A. Just being silly, I've given this lesson the title: *“Don't mix up the verbs.”*
1. Once again, the verse says, *“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.”*
 2. Don't mix up those verbs.
- B. Peter wasn't telling us to **love** or even to **fear the king**. He is just a man, like any other man.
1. And it doesn't matter if he has the power of life and death over us, the Lord is greater than he is.
 - a. Jesus said, *“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*
 2. Should we fear all men? Again, we should not.
 - a. *“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”*

3. And our exhortation isn't to merely **honor** our **brethren**, we are to go **beyond** that into **love**.
 - a. And again, "**love**" is not just a noun, this love is a verb; it is an action verb.
 - b. It doesn't just sit around on its hands talking about affection. It works to be a blessing.
 4. Should we **love God**? Of course we should, but that isn't what Peter says right here.
 - a. Don't you dare declare your love for the Lord without giving Him the reverence He deserves.
 - b. Jehovah is not like your favorite uncle or like a benevolent grandparent.
 - c. He is to be honored with worship as well as loved and adored.
 - d. He is the **only** one we should worship, because only He is God.
- C. Peter's exhortation here is rather simple: "*Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.*"