

Living Differently

This book is so helpful for best Christian thinking and then translating those thoughts to Christian living. Peter lays so many things out for us in such an interconnective way. It's important to note, that even though we are taking many months to go through this book, and rightfully so, one section builds upon another. The main idea of the passage today is that the testimony we say about what we believe needs to match how we live.

Peter has spent so much time to this point in the letter outlining who we are as Christians and what that means. You could say that a mini theme highlighted so far is that followers of Christ have rewards that are out of this world and in a very real sense very much belong to a different world, a different kingdom.

And having made that case with such emphatic language, Peter spends time in the verses we will look at today guarding against wrongly applying some of the principles he has underscored. Because some readers may take what he wrote so far and said, "We are a holy nation belonging to God, so what does it matter how we choose to live here on earth. The Gentiles look like they are having fun. Let's do the same. Why do we even have to follow what the Roman Empire tells us to do? They are illegitimate rulers over us and God is our only legitimate king." Peter says not so fast.

There are two main points for this passage today, Christian Conduct and Under Authority.

Christian Conduct

Peter once again says that we are sojourners, temporarily here on earth. But we are here for a time and therefore he urges us to conduct ourselves while on earth in a particular way. Followers of Christ should live in a noticeably, different way than those in the world. It should be obvious. **Our lives should be honorable.** Honorable means morally correct, principled, righteous but also praise worthy.

Peter urges us to abstain or keep away from the passions of our flesh. Our own desires want to do things that sin against God. James helps us understand the sin process in the first chapter of his book, that most of the time sin starts with our

desire for something wrong. That desire springs forth inside of us and sometimes it pops in out of nowhere but then we give it room to grow. We dwell on it, spend time thinking about how we think it will satisfy us. When that desire has time to grow, it allures us, entices us, or pulls us closer towards sin to the point, that we say let's fulfill this sinful desire.

This is what the passions of our flesh are trying to stir up inside of us. For those born again, there is an active war taking place. **Because the new nature inside our soul has the capacity to resist and overcome sin,** the Spirit of God gives us the tools to turn way from or not give in to the sin. It's still hard to resist sin in plenty of places and we don't get it right all of the time. So the war rages on inside while we are here on earth.

Having honorable conduct or holy living as Peter wrote about in the previous chapter will many times stand apart from the actions of the world. We are to be peculiar in the sense that our **behaviors will stand in stark contrast** to unethical or impure actions that non-believers grow perfectly comfortable doing. It should grab the attention of the world. They may not understand it, but they will notice it. They will take notice because it will be upright and proper. **Simeon and cussing illustration.**

Holy living honors all people. It treats them with a dignity and respect as someone made in the image of God and full of the worth that comes with that designation. This means we don't flaunt our righteous behavior to try and belittle those who don't live like us. We don't ridicule them for their different decisions. Nor do we celebrate their disobedience. Honoring everyone means being kind when they don't deserve it, gracious to overlook their offenses, and also gently encouraging them towards the ways of God.

Now let's look at the other side. **For those living outside of the family of God, sin becomes an increasingly normal lifestyle.** The reason why pure conduct stands out to the Gentiles is that it doesn't match up with the way they are used to living. Don't be surprised my friends when sinning is natural for people still controlled completely by their sin nature. The Gentiles of this day did many things we see happening around us today, sexual immorality, anti-God rituals and idol worshipping, backbiting, envy, deceit of all kinds. And the list goes on and on.

Not only is sin normal to those in the world but there is a tendency to speak against those who do differently. That phrase means to speak in an abusive or incriminating way towards someone else. People in the world are going to frequently call evil good and good evil. Peter says, they will look at your honorable conduct and call you the evil doer. They do this because they want to be able to chase their wildest desires without restraint. **They are trying to run away from what is staring them in the face**; mainly the thing they are pursuing is not right and they should avoid it or change their evil ways. The tendency is to lash out at those doing good in order to invalidate the good behavior and to validate their own bad behavior.

There is a moral compass embedded in each of us by God, called our conscience, that applies a force within us towards doing good. We can override it and frequently do so to the degree that its force upon us to do good becomes real faint. Those who rebel against God spend their life trying to completely silence their conscience so they can truly enjoy their sin and avoid experiencing any conviction. Sadly some temporarily achieve that goal.

But as Peter ends, **our consistent righteous conduct very often directs people to a humble acknowledgement that God is real and God is good.** Our good deeds will convince some to turn to God and glorify him before the end of their life. Others will resist their whole life until it is too late. Nevertheless for those individuals, when Christ returns the second time, they will be forced to acknowledge that they recognize the good deeds they observed by believers on earth as a reflection upon God's holiness and glory. **Desmond Doss turned his Infantry regiment around.**

People Under Authority

After encouraging the exiles with how to behave towards their physical neighbors who had a different way of life than what the believers were called to, Peter shifts to instructing the exiles for how to live in connection to their rulers. Whatever institution God set up, we see in Scripture a clear human chain of command. The institution of marriage, husband is the head of the wife. The institution of family, parents are the head of children, the institution of church elders are the leaders of the saints, and the institution of government rulers are leaders of civilians.

Christians are to be subject to the rules and leaders of the country God has placed them in. This stands true with very little exceptions. Peter and Paul (Romans 13) wrote these passages when Nero was emperor of Rome. Nero had the reputation of unjustly persecuting Christians, torturing them and executing them like no other emperor. And these men wrote what they wrote, living under that setting, watching heinous things happen to their friends as followers of Christ. And if we only had these two passages, one would be left to conclude that there is absolutely no circumstance where a Christian can disobey their government and its leaders. The point is we are to have an overwhelming heart position of submitting, willing to listen, heed counsel and instruction with a cooperative attitude. We follow our leaders because our leaders operate under the authority of God. Our leaders are under God's sovereign appointment and control whether you or I like the situation or not.

I challenge any of you to identify a more important life trait than being a person under authority. The fall of man happened because of a refusal to submit to what God commanded. Our relationship with Jesus hinges on him being our Lord, Master, King, which means we obey Him no matter what. And we get to practice by submitting to other humans in different relational contexts. The idea of submitting plays out in every arena of life; in our homes, churches, places of work. And we can grow in our submission if it doesn't come easy to us. **Zach**

Submitting is for the purpose of exalting the reputation of the Lord. When we live as a person in proper submission to our relationships it brings glory to God. Look at the example of Daniel. He submitted to God and to King Darius by accepting the punishment of disobeying the king's order and continuing to bow to and worship the God of the Bible. The king spent the entire day looking for a way out and then when he could not find one, went and fasted on behalf of Daniel's life. When God delivered Daniel from the lion's den, King Darius rejoiced and led his kingdom in exalting God. Daniel's submission to the king's punishment led to a pagan nation honoring Daniel's God.

Our overarching mindset when submitting is to do good under all circumstances. We have a responsibility to live right. When the people around us cut corners and lie and cheat to get ahead, our charge is to perform the good and noble thing at all times. When our leaders get off track in carrying out justice, which as Peter defines here is to promote good and punish evil, we are to do the right and good

thing. There will be times when God wills it, where society vs 15 gets confused about what is good and what is evil. We are in that season now in our country. God's remedy is for the people of God to carry on with what is good and right so that those confused and living in foolish ignorance will eventually be silenced by the continual good of God's followers. There are two remarks in what we are looking at today where conducting ourselves in a honorable way leads to silencing the talk of us as evildoers.

While we submit to the governing authorities, **we still live as free servants of God.** There is a great privilege in being a servant of God no matter where he has placed you geographically. We enjoy real freedoms where we can gather together without fear or intimidation and worship God and do good for our fellow citizens. Others live in oppressive regimes where it is illegal to follow Christ and comes at risk of death. But in either situation there are still ways for us to live as servants of God, however difficult that may be. We serve God and worship him in various just and unjust settings. God's promise as Pastor Mark reminded us last week is that living stones continue to be added to the church and fit together day by day.

Notice the warning here to not let this reality of serving Christ give us the excuse to do evil. We must not say, since we are servants of God first and of the state second, we are entitled to live however we want. We live free but what does Peter say we are free to do? We are completely free to serve God. The only place where we have no restraints on earth is in serving God. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Christ, therefore we go and make disciples. That is the foundation for our freedom. Our freedom is not permission to do what we want to do, freedom is not an excuse or a disguise to do evil things. Our freedom is not a cover for our heart of disobedience.

And since we are on the topic of living freely for God, let's address the million-dollar question. Do we really have to follow the government's every direction? I said earlier that we need to have the overwhelming attitude of submitting to the rulers and rules of government. These two passages strongly support that. But all of Scripture shows us there are times when we can't follow the laws or decrees our leaders make.

Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, refused after helping deliver Hebrew male babies to kill them by throwing them in the Nile as Pharaoh commanded. Rahab,

a prostitute, hid the two Hebrew spies Joshua sent into Jericho and lied to the soldiers by misdirecting them on their whereabouts. She was honored by God to be grafted into the genetic lineage of Jesus. We already mentioned Daniel and there are several others. But perhaps the one that came to your mind first, is Peter and John arrested and told not to preach Jesus. And they said in essence, yes there is your law but there is also a law above your law. And we must obey God rather than man.

So how do we know when we can disobey our rulers and how we should go about it?

When

When government commands you to sin or perform evil, we must resist.

If the government asks us to disobey the clear commands of God, then we cannot follow suit. Midwives, Jezebel order of killing prophets of God. Obadiah hid 100 in caves.

When the government keeps us from serving God and doing good. Daniel testimony. Shadrach and peter and Paul. When the government gets out of their lane on ordering society and interfering with the church then the church continues to church!

How

We can work peacefully within the laws of our land to promote what is good and right. Remember the big ideal here is that we do the good and right thing, even if chaos is going on around us. We use our spiritual weapons, prayer, fasting and begging God to change the circumstances and leaders for good. We honor everyone as we trust in God. We challenge but we do not disrespect, revile, or demean those in leadership or the people on their side who promote evil. to society while we do good and then God muzzles or silences his opposition.

One last thing, if we disobey an evil government then we should be ready to accept the punishments that come our way if we cannot flee away. Jesus did not resist and even rebuked Peter when he drew his sword. Paul, Peter, all imprisoned unjustly for speaking about the kingdom and they did not resist. Instead they fully entrusted themselves to God.

We do good at all times, live so that our testimony is believable, unite in our brother and sisterhood as a church, honor everyone and watch for God to silence and even change the foolish ignorance. Maybe it doesn't happen immediately but the promise is that at least on the day of visitation there will be because of our witness a resulting glory to God.

LEAD COMMUNION. Greek word for giving of thanks. Jesus, his promises, his forgiveness,

Take a moment to give thanks and renew ourselves in the promises of God