

A STUDY OF 1 PETER

Christian Submission (1 Peter 2:11-25)

In 1 Peter 2:11, Peter begins a new session. The word “Beloved” indicates a new address and the pivot to a new idea. Peter feels strongly about what he is writing using the word “urge” to indicate the intensity of what he is about to write. He continues to refer to his first readers in a way (sojourners and exiles) that shows they are only temporary residents of this world and in this section it also describes their low social status in the world.

These Christians are confronted by many difficulties. 1) They are under persecution; 2) They lived in this world, but their real home was in heaven; 3) They still faced the persecution of their old lives. Peter strongly urges them to “*abstain from the passions of the flesh, which war against your soul.*” These “*passions of the flesh*” are their own selfish desires and the sinful appetites of the body. These are so strong that they likened to a war. The Greek grammar indicates that this is an ongoing and continual battle.

1. Why are the “passions of the flesh” so difficult to overcome?

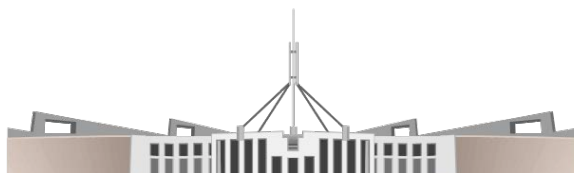
2. Why is this struggle called a “war?”

In the midst of persecution and temptation, the world carefully watches the lives of Christians. Because of this, Peter encourages his readers to keep their conduct honourable. A Christ-like lifestyle will not prevent non-Christians from ridiculing, criticising, or even being untruthful about the conduct of Christians; however Peter says the Gentiles (referring here to all non-Christians) will see the good deeds of the Christian. The word translated as “*they may see*” is the same word that is used in 1 Peter 3:2 and translated “*when they see*” and indicates a long term reflection or observation. As non-Christians observe Christians, sometimes they are convinced to follow Christ and this allows them to “*glorify God on the day of visitation*” which refers to the second coming of Christ.

3. What might a non-Christian observe in the life of the Christian that would convince them to also become a Christian?

The institution of government is by divine design. Though individual governments may be opposed to God, the idea of government is necessary and allows for an orderly society. (See Romans 13:1). We are to obey the government because God desires this from us (v. 13). In verses 13-14, Peter refers to the emperor who is the ruling Caesar or king (probably Nero at this time) and the Roman governor who ruled over a province and who heard court cases and provided local order.

4. What is the role of government? (v.14)



Verse 15 serves as sort of a summary or explanation of the previous verses. It answers the question of why Christians keep their conduct honourable among the Gentiles and why Christians obey those in authority over them. Those who act ignorantly towards those who obey God will silence their critics, if not in this life the in the next. Christians were often falsely accused, even of sedition, but their lifestyles of obedience prove to those who watch that the accusations are false. The word “silence comes from a root that means ‘to muzzle, to gag, to restrain.’”¹

The Scripture often talks of the freedom a Christian has in Christ (Galatians 5:13; John 8:32), so some might argue that this freedom is being undermined by a requirement to submit to authority. The freedom of the Christian is a freedom from sin and the Old Testament Law. Our freedom is not a license to sin and it does not remove our responsibility to obey God and those in authority over us.

5. What responsibilities do we have according to v. 17?

- a. Honour _____.
- b. Love _____.
- c. Fear _____.
- d. Honour _____.

Slavery was common in New Testament times and treatment of slaves could be kind or harsh. Some slaves (or servants) worked in the home and even taught and cared for the children, but their social status was the lowest. Obedience to Christ meant respecting those masters who were in authority; even those who were unjust. Here the Christian is urged to deny self.

6. Why doesn't Peter condemn slavery?

7. For what reason were Christian servants to obey their masters? (v. 19)

8. Define the word “endures” as it is used in v. 19.

Some harsh masters brought “sorrows” and these were to be endured even though they were unjust. These sorrows were endured because of a desire to please God. A slave did not submit and serve their masters because they respected their masters, but because they respected God.

The word “beaten” in verse 20 is also used in Matthew 26:67 and Mark 14:65 in reference to Jesus before his crucifixion. Just as Jesus was beaten unjustly, a Christian who suffers unjustly for Christ it is a gracious thing in the sight of God. (See Acts 5:40-41). Christians should expect to suffer because this is our calling (v. 20-21).

¹ Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com. p. 53.

Christians often say that they want to be like Jesus, but to be like Jesus means more than to just live a life that is good. Jesus suffered immensely at the hands of those who opposed him. He was beaten, spat upon, unjustly accused, and killed. To be like Jesus can mean severe suffering and in the midst of suffering the Christian slave is told to submit so that he does not suffer for doing evil.

10. What credit comes from suffering for sin?

11. How is Jesus our example? (v. 21)

12. How do we follow in the steps of Jesus? (v. 21)

13. Describe the life of Jesus from verse 22.

14. Much of verses 22-25 comes from Isaiah 53. Read and describe the submission of Christ from Isaiah 53.

The word “*entrusting*” in verse 23 requires a deliberate action on the part of the believer to give allegiance to Christ with confidence that God will always judge justly.

15. What was the purpose of Christ’s suffering? (v. 24)

16. What description is used of the Christians prior to their conversion? (v. 25) (Verse 25 comes from Ezekiel 34:11-16)