

1 Peter 2.11-25 for COB; 07.28.13

Introduction

† [Slide 1: Title]

Witty introductory remark?

PRAY!

- † LeeAnn and I stayed for several days at Yad HaShmonah, which is a Christian communal enclave near Jerusalem, in the hills of Judea. It is a beautiful place. Many of the people associated with it are Jewish believers in Christ. We also met a Jewish believer in Christ who runs an educational life-size tabernacle out in the wilderness. She gave us a hard time. We were instructed on our tour to not antagonize any locals by forcing our beliefs on them: they get bombarded with Christian thought from tourists, but it only serves to harden their hearts; you have to get to know them to really influence them. We did not know that this lady was a believer, and immediately she was demanding to know whom we thought was the Messiah [which is the Jewish term for Christ]. It got a little awkward. One of our professors finally ventured that Jesus was the Messiah, and she got angry at us and said, “No!” Then she told us she was a believer, but that we had to use Jesus’ Hebrew name, [yay-SHOO-uh] יֵשׁוּעַ, if we were going to reach Jews for Christ. To the Jews, “Jesus” is a western, Christian, name, not a Jewish one.
- In the old section of Jerusalem, which dates back to the Crusades, we met some Palestinian believers in Christ. These Palestinian believers were shop keepers, and they assured us that they would give us the absolute best deal, so we bargained with them and got the absolute best deal on a beautiful olive wood nativity set. Then we found another couple on our tour got a better absolute best deal from the same vendor for the same product, but oh well.
 - Consider how hard it must be for these people who believe in Christ: whether they are of Jewish descent or Palestinian descent, they are outcasts who are reviled by all the other groups in the land. They must obey the local governing authorities and functionally interact with the rest of society, but because they will not conform to either Jewish or Muslim beliefs and traditions, they suffer social, economic, political, and sometimes even physical consequences.
- † Peter’s original readers had the same problem. They had been exiled to pagan lands in Turkey, where they faced persecution. They could have avoided much of their suffering by conforming to the culture around them, but they chose to stand for their faith and take the consequences. As we have seen the past few weeks, Peter has assured them that their suffering is just part of Christian life and not a sign of disfavor with God. Peter has taught them about God’s promise of deliverance, and instructed them to remain firm in faith and obedience.
- Last week, Peter taught us about Christ being the cornerstone – the pivotal part – in what God is doing during this time period, so if we put our faith in Christ and participate in the life of the church, then we are engaged with God’s plan. Then he went on to describe us as royal priests!
 - Today, Peter will elaborate on those ideas, explaining what it means to live like citizens of Heaven even though we are living here on Earth. We need to understand this, if we want to experience a healthy relationship with God and fulfill our obligation to represent God to others.
 - So let’s look at our text. If you are not sure where 1 Peter is in the Bible, you can check the table of contents to find it. I will be reading the NET today, but you can follow along in whatever translation you have.

Living as Citizens of Heaven

- † [Slide 2: vv.11-12] *1 Peter 2.11-12 NET: Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to keep away from fleshly desires that do battle against the soul, and maintain good conduct among the non-*

Christians, so that though they now malign you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God when he appears.

- † Peter is writing to people who had been deported from their homes and exiled into rural Turkey, but here he again treats them – and us – as exiles in any worldly culture, when he contrasts our foreign status with worldly desires. We are citizens of Heaven, who temporarily are residing in this fallen world.
 - **[Slide 3: worldly desires]** Because we recognize ourselves as God’s people, we try to represent God by refraining from our fleshly desires or lusts. Lusts are sinful desires, such as those for improper sex, harm to others, greed and materialism, or getting high.
 - It could even be lust for acceptance, such that our desire to be accepted by others taints our perspective and behavior. Peter’s readers, who were being persecuted, might have felt this kind of strong worldly desire to conform to the sinful culture instead of standing out as Christians.
- † Peter describes these lusts as “doing battle” against our souls, a striking image that testifies to the intensity of our struggle even after coming to Christ, and to the damage lusts can do to us.
 - How many of you feel this struggle within you sometimes, the battle between what you know is right and a strong desire to do what you know is wrong? Those of you who did not raise your hands are experiencing the battle right now, because you know it is right to be honest and admit you feel this! We all experience this, unless we are so deceived that we cannot tell what is right. So when you face this battle, don’t think you are strange or alone; we all face this sometimes.
 - We must be vigilant about resisting these sinful impulses! The good news is that Christ has broken your bondage to sin, so that you can choose to resist these impulses, and in general your battle will get easier as you grow more spiritually healthy and mature.
 - I am sure that you know the destruction lusts can do to us. The lust itself can torment us and it can distort our perspective to effectively blind us to truth. Giving in to the lust usually makes it stronger in the long-run and leads to physical addiction and emotional habit formation.
- † **[Slide 4: live properly]** As citizens of Heaven we seek to reflect God’s character and represent God by resisting our fleshly lusts, so we can live in such a way that non-believers who generally criticize and slander us might see the reality of Christ in us.
 - Our hope is that by seeing the change Christ has worked in us, they too will come out of the darkness and into the light, resulting in praise for God when Christ returns to judge. Think of the testimony you have when God helps you beat addiction, give up pornography or drunkenness, or learn to find your self worth in Christ instead of in achievement, popularity, or wealth.
 - LeeAnn and I went to Celebrate Recovery this Friday. The convention is to introduce yourself as soandso who is experiencing victory through Christ over whatever held you in bondage. I was thinking of all the things I would have to list! Hi, I’m Will, and I am experiencing victory in Christ over lust, womanizing, compulsive lying and mischief, depression, anger, escapism, arrogance, selfishness, and on and on. You didn’t hire a pastor with a perfect past, you know.
 - Friday was a strange day, not the least of which was when LeeAnn called around noon to tell me that my high school girl friend’s parents were at our house here in Parkesburg. Seriously? So I hurried over there, and it was great: he is a pastor, and she has been a pastor’s wife for decades, and they showered us with encouragement and wisdom. They didn’t like me much when I was sixteen, because I was dating their daughter, and – while I was not a criminal young man – I was a fleshly young man. I asked them if they ever could have believed that I would turn out to be a

pastor! They told me that their daughter, with whom I am still friends, had kept them abreast of my progress over the years, and they were thrilled with the work Christ had done in me.

- You didn't hire a pastor with a perfect past, but you did hire one that can testify that the transformation described in the new testament is real! We have been talking about this a little each week, but I don't know if you really believe in it, and you must. I look back and cannot believe I am the same person. I mean, God has kept alive the unique things he created in me, but my character is so much more like Christ now that it was before. Of course, we never become perfect, not in this lifetime, but we can become more like Christ continually. If you have not changed in the past year, then something is wrong, and you need to come to me so we can figure out how to get you back on track.
- We witness by living a Christian lifestyle in front of non-believers. Your translation might say in front of the "nations," as pagans often were called in Peter's homeland. This is not to say that we never verbally share the gospel, but people will accept our message more readily if they can see Christ's reality in our transformation and they can see that we are living out what we believe.
- We must live out our Christian values *always*: sometimes our values will overlap with those of society, and then people will recognize our goodness; other times our values will differ from those of society, but even then people will recognize our self control and sacrifice to live up to what we believe, especially if we endure our isolation or persecution with grace. Let's read on...

† **[Slide 5: vv.13-17]** *1 Peter 2.13-17: Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to a king as supreme or to governors as those he commissions to punish wrongdoers and praise those who do good. For God wants you to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. Live as free people, not using your freedom as a pretext for evil, but as God's slaves. Honor all people, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the king.*

† Peter instructs us to submit to the civil governing authorities, even though they are not part of the church. God is of higher authority than the government, but God commands we obey the government, at least in anything that does not go against Christian teaching. This includes even such things as not speeding on the highway. Half the church was on the road last week: y'all better check your consciences and repent if it is necessary.

† One reason for this command is that God intends human government to represent him by administering safety and justice. If the government fails to represent God by telling us to do something that is against our beliefs, then in that we will not comply, but even in that case, we still should submit to the government's authority by undergoing its punishment. The apostle Paul expressed similar ideas in Romans 13.1-6, and he himself submitted to imprisonment by the Romans.

- So if the government tells me that as a pastor I have to be willing to marry any two people who request it, I would have to disobey, because I think the Bible lays out certain guidelines and safeguards for marriage, and I would be sinning if I ignored them. But if the government then imposed a fine or jail time for my disobedience, I would have to comply with that.
- And perhaps as with Paul, this would be part of God's plan to further the gospel! We can't know, and that is why we cannot pick and choose when to submit. When you willfully break the speed limit, what does that say to your kids? what does it say to the cop who pulls you over? what does it say to the other drivers who see the fish on your car? What it says to me is that you don't take this part of God's Word seriously. That's not the message you want to send!

- † **[Slide 6: honorable lives]** One purpose in our obedience is that our upright living will shine God's light and silence those who slander believers.
 - In Peter's day, there was a lot of concern that groups like Christians, who did not worship the emperor, could foment revolution. We might not be viewed as so dangerous today, but there are those who would accuse us, because they feel socially threatened that our beliefs and standards are different from theirs.
 - By choosing to work within the law whenever that does not compromise following Christ, we show that we are good citizens who should not face accusation.
- † **[Slide 7: submit as slaves]** Peter stresses that we do not submit as slaves of the government, rather as slaves to God. He provides an interesting contrast between freedom and slavery.
 - We can submit to God and the government because we are free people, we are free to pursue righteousness, since Christ has broken our bondage to sin. We still are tempted by sin, but sin no longer has full power over us once we have come to Christ – that's part of our deliverance – so we are now free to choose righteousness rather than sin.
 - Because God is good and because he has broken our bondage to sin, we are willing to obey him, which means we are willing to submit to him, even as slaves. We always have a choice: we can walk with God in obedience or we can turn away from God to walk in sin, and thus we submit like slaves to God or we submit like slaves to Satan and sin. The apostle Paul discusses similar thoughts on being a slave to God instead of a slave to sin in Romans 6.15-23.
 - God's will is that we do what is right no matter what the consequences, and one thing he commands us to do is to submit to the government. That might mean you have to drive a little slower than you like sometimes, but that's better than turning away from God and joining in Satan's rebellion.

- † **[Slide 8: vv.18-20]** *1 Peter 2.18-20: Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are perverse. For this finds God's favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God.*
- † I think there are two common mistakes people make about this passage.
 - First, how many of you have ever been legal slaves: I don't mean your boss worked you like a dog, I mean you were legally owned by another person? None. So there is a tendency to think this passage is not relevant for today and dismiss it. That would be a mistake.
 - The other mistake is to take one idea out of its context and distort it. I grew up with a folk-Catholic understanding that undeserved suffering would bring redemption from my sins. I tell you emphatically, that is not what Peter is saying! All redemption comes through Christ.
 - So pay attention: this is an important passage which we need to understand.
- † Writers in the Greek and Roman cultures often were concerned about household relationships as the foundation of a stable society. This included writing about the relationship of slaves and masters. With this passage and the following section, Peter made a deliberate attempt to engage the culture by addressing this concern with a form similar to what other writers had used.

- † While the apostles did not defend slavery as an institution [like they did with marriage], they did not see their purpose to be overthrowing the cultural institutions of their day.
 - Rather, they addressed how people could come to know God and be transformed by him, and then how such transformed people should operate within society. They knew that a continual process of transforming individuals would eventually lead to societal change.

- † While Peter asks people to continue operating within the household structures of society, he also brings a Christian influence to them. For example, unlike the secular writers of his day, Peter addressed slaves and women directly instead of just talking about them, thereby subtly asserting their dignity and their freedom to make moral choices.
 - While Peter instructed slaves to submit to their masters, he told them to do so as people who have found freedom in Christ to do the right thing, and who know that in God's sight they are just as accepted and important as anyone else in society.

- † **[Slide 9: suffering for righteousness]** Peter also suggested that the slave had the right to worship God, even if his master did not, which was a strong departure from the cultural norm.
 - Vv.18-20 paint a picture of a slave being subject to his master, but also suffering under that master for doing what is right. This suggests that the slave, like the citizen under the authority of the government, sometimes suffers for not obeying when the command goes against Christian principles. In such a case, as we said before, we still submit in that we accept the punishment for not obeying.

- † The general principle Peter offers in vv.19-20 is that when people suffer for doing what is right, that finds favor with God. By adding this general statement of theology, Peter lets us know that this discussion of slaves and masters can be a model for how to endure injustice in many social contexts.
 - First, we submit to authority over us, even if that authority is unscrupulous.
 - Second, in submission, we obey whenever we can without compromising the moral principles we have received from God.
 - Third, in submission, when we cannot obey for moral reasons, we accept the punishment for not obeying.
 - For example, my wife, LeeAnn, at a previous job was asked by her boss to do something illegal. Up to that time, she had always complied with the commands of her boss at this company. But she was not willing to sin for them. So she politely explained to them why she would not do as they asked, but she was willing to accept whatever punishment they delivered, such as getting reprimanded, losing status within the company, or even getting fired. Eventually, LeeAnn decided to risk unemployment rather than stay at a company that would ask her to break the law.

- † Next, Peter will connect these ideas of being a slave for God and doing what is right regardless of consequences, so let's read on...

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- † **[Slide 10: vv.21-23]** *1 Peter 2.21-23: For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps. He committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth. When he was maligned, he did not answer back; when he suffered, he threatened no retaliation, but committed himself to God who judges justly.*

- † Peter makes a shocking statement: we *all* are called to suffer like slaves for righteousness! This is brought out more if we look at vv.20-21 together: “But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God. For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps.”
- † **[Slide 11: Christ as example]** Peter offers two reasons why we are to suffer. First, Christ is the *example* for us: we follow Christ, who allowed himself to be treated with contempt like a slave and even to die a slave’s death on the Roman cross [vv.21-24].
- † The Greek word ὑπογραμμός, translated as “example” in v.21, referred to the patterns of letters that children would copy when they were learning how to write: it requires effort to make the closest copy possible. Jesus is the only “stencil,” the only example we are to follow, and his way involves effort, even suffering. To live as slaves of God [v.16] is to suffer unjustly, like Jesus.

- † **[Slide 12: vv.24-25]** *1 Peter 2.24-25: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we may cease from sinning and live for righteousness. By his wounds you were healed. For you were going astray like sheep but now you have turned back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.*
- † Peter quoted several times in this chapter from Isaiah 52.13-53.12. Isaiah described God’s suffering servant [the Messiah], and how he would suffer and die to bring healing to God’s people.
 - Christ, in dying on the cross, paid the penalty for your sin, so that you could be free from the bondage *to* sin and free from the penalty *for* sin.
- † So the second reason we accept our suffering is that Christ died so that we could die to sin and thus live righteously [v.24]. We follow Christ, because he saved and transforms us [v.25]. His fatal physical wounds healed our fatal spiritual wounds.
 - Suffering is part of our identification with Christ. We follow Christ to the safety of our deliverance in Heaven, even though the path takes us through times of suffering first [v.25].
- † **[Slide 13: Christ’s example]** Since We are all called to suffer for righteousness, following Christ’s example [v.21], let’s consider what this example is.
 - Christ’s example was to undergo unjust and sacrificial suffering for the sake of the gospel mission; to undergo unjust and sacrificial suffering for the sake of righteousness; to undergo unjust and sacrificial suffering for the sake of others [vv.21, 24].
 - Christ’s example was to remain sinless, to continue doing what was right, even if it led to more suffering; to keep his heart from turning against his antagonists and to avoid even threatening them with retaliation.
 - And Christ’s example was to trust himself to God, trusting in the deliverance we know we can expect [deliverance out of suffering and into our inheritance in Heaven, and eventual resurrection of the body when Christ returns] and trusting in God’s judgment at the end to make things right [vv.22-23].
 - Injustice will reign on Earth until Christ returns to judge, so we endure it gracefully without sinning in response, trusting in Christ’s example and in his promise of deliverance and judgment.

† **[Slide 14: title] Let me ask you some questions to close us out today...**

- Are you willing to suffer rejection, humiliation, scorn, or even threats to share the gospel? I have been talking about the gospel with the mailman, the UPS man, the gardener my landlady sent over, my landlady herself... So far, everyone has been polite and even pleasant about it, but every opportunity carries risk. This week, take the risk to share some spiritual truth with someone.
- Are you willing to sacrifice your time and money to help the church in its gospel mission? We have done a great job collecting school supplies for the underprivileged children of our area. Are you willing to continue giving up some things you could have, to give to the ministry and to the needy? Are you willing to devote some of your time to growing stronger spiritually and then ministering to others? This week is VBS, and we are going to have a blast, but we will be up late every night trying to help these children with faith issues. VBS is not for everyone, but you can find your way to sacrificially serve for Christ.
- Are you willing to confess your faith and live righteously, even though it means you will not fit in? Are you willing to make it obvious you have faith in Christ even if it means being thought of as strange in your workplace, school, and neighborhood?
- Are you willing to do what is right, even when nobody else is doing it and they laugh at you? One year, LeeAnn had some coworkers who were running a movie pirating club. Some of them went to church too. They laughed at LeeAnn when she told them she didn't believe in pirating movies. LeeAnn is quiet and non-confrontational, but she is bold enough to stand up for what she believes: are you?
- Are you willing to love your enemies? This is a hard sacrifice. Hollywood wants us to seek revenge, to hate and condemn our enemies, but the teaching of Christ and the example of Christ are to love your enemies and seek to lead them to salvation.
- Are you willing to do what is right, even when it hurts you in some way? Going the speed limit can be a painful sacrifice sometimes. It is even harder to tell the truth when it means you will get in trouble, or to own up to a mistake, or to do what is right even though it might get you fired. Do the right thing, walk with Christ, even if it hurts.
- Are you willing to do what is right, even when you don't want to? Sometimes we know what is right but our own thoughts and emotions are not lining up with God's will. Are you willing to submit to God in all situations, even these?

† Let's have a few minutes of prayerful reflection. Think through these issues with God. Confess, repent, commit. When we are done, I will close us with a benediction.

[Carol's anointing for Haiti?]

Benediction: Through Christ, we have been given everything that matters: salvation, new spiritual life, a relationship with God, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, a glorious inheritance in Heaven. But in return, God actually wants everything from us. As you grow more sanctified, more like Christ, you increasingly will become more submitted to God, even as a slave. Like Peter and Paul, indeed, like Christ himself, you will become willing to sacrifice for the gospel. It is a comfort, as we wait for this change to come upon us in stages, that we can know we already have grace and peace from God. Go and be blessed...