

VI. A Beautiful Life

November 9/11/12, 2020

1 Peter 2:11-17

Aim: To live beautiful lives in the midst of the fallen world, glorifying God and respecting others through honorable lives of good deeds and submission to authority.

Dorani: First Peter 2:11-17 occupies a pivotal place in Peter's epistle. The author tells his readers in 1 Peter 1 that they have been purified by the Word of truth, that is, the gospel. He then presents a theology of the Word of God, which concludes with the central exhortation to 'crave pure spiritual milk' (2:2). After presenting a concise theology of the Word, Peter turns to a theology of the Christian's identity in 2:4-10. We are living stones in God's spiritual house. Further, we are a royal priesthood, a chosen people, a holy nation (2:5, 9). First Peter 2:11-17 does not present the gospel, but assumes and builds on the message.... We must live beautiful lives 'among the pagans' (2:11-12). To fashion a beautiful life, we must know how to live as free men operating in a hierarchical world (2:13-17). Thus, 1 Peter 2:11-17 reviews the *status* of believers (2:11-12) and then moves to their right *conduct* in this world—a way of life that is consistent with our identity and follows our convictions (2:13-17).

A. Sojourners and Exiles (1 Peter 2:11-12)

McKnight: This is the pivotal passage in 1 Peter. Some have found in it the summing up of what has gone before and the thematic statement of the ethical exhortations to follow.... Accordingly, although 2:11-12 does not summarize the theology of 1:3-12, it does recapitulate the social status of believers and infers from that basis the nature of the Christian life in society. The thematic summary of these verses is organized as follows: 1) the present condition of Peter's audience (2:11a); 2) and exhortation to good behavior (2:11b); and 3) the purpose of good behavior (2:12). Furthermore, these verses play a critical role in what follows: Christians should live exceptional lives in the midst of a fallen world because such behavior brings glory to God.

Helm: In a very real way these two verses function as the threshold to the remainder of the letter. Enter through them and you enter fully into the home of 1 Peter, where rooms upon rooms explore how the beloved are to live.... Verses 11-12 clearly form an *exhortation* to good and honorable gospel living. In subsequent chapters we will find specific *examples* of the gracious life expressed in the vast array of contexts in which every follower of Jesus must walk. Peter will take us into the rooms of the Christian's relationship to society and government (2:13-17), employment (2:18-25), and marriage (3:1-7). However, in these two verse we arrive merely at the threshold of Peter's house.

1. Our Identity (2:11a)

¹¹*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles...*

a) *Beloved (2:11a)*

¹¹*Beloved, I urge you...*

Gardner: *Beloved*, says Peter. These people, loved by Peter and his close friends, are also loved by God.

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MacArthur: Peter began his exhortation by addressing his readers as *beloved*, which implied that they, as objects of God's immeasurable love, had a duty to obey the One who loved them. On that basis he could *urge* (*parakaleō*, 'to beseech' [KJV], or 'to encourage' as in Rom. 12:1) them to reciprocate God's love by living for Him.

Dorani: Given his status as apostle and elder, Peter could have commanded his readers to behave a certain way. Instead, he appeals to them as 'dear friends.'

Sproul: The NIV translates this as 'friends,' which I think is a weak translation, because the idea goes far beyond the level of human friendship to a higher dimension of affection. There are two aspects to Peter's term of address. First, the term has reference to the people's standing before God. Peter has just shown us that as Christ is the chief cornerstone and the living stone, so by the birth of the Holy Spirit we have been made living stones in Him. Throughout the teaching of the New Testament, we see that Christ is the Beloved, and we are the beloved by extension. Insofar as we are in Christ and participate in the inheritance that the Father gives to Him. We also participate in this special level of affection that the Father has for the Son. So, the first import of this greeting is Peter's reminding his readers, and by extension us, that we are God's beloved. Second, in the greeting there is an element of the Apostle's personal affection for the people of God.

Helm: If human language retains within her possession a word better suited to follow 2:10 than the one Peter chose, I can't think of it. *Beloved*. They were God's beloved. *Beloved* is precisely how they felt. This particular word, and it alone, captures the ascendant affections now rising within the hearts of Peter's readers. *Beloved* is the honored title that accompanies everyone whose spiritual identity and eternal destination are wrapped up in Christ.

b) *Aliens (2:11a)*

...as sojourners and exiles...

Gardner: Yet they are *aliens and strangers in the world*. Peter picks up the theme we saw in 1:1. Those to whom he writes have not escaped the world. They do not meet and live in remote Christian communities or mountain monasteries, for they are part of the normal day to day world that all people experience whether in city or in country life. They enjoy that world and suffer in that world like everyone else does, and yet it is not their home. They may be residents of the land but they belong elsewhere in a place to which God will one day bring them. Meanwhile, they are a holy nation and a people who belong to God (v. 9) and so Peter develops further his thought of 1:17 where he said, 'live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.'

MacArthur: Peter further identified his audience *as aliens and strangers*, which reminded them that they were not truly members of the world's society.... *Aliens* (*paroikous*) literally means 'alongside the house.' The word came to denote any person who lives in a country not his own and is therefore a foreigner. The term fits Christians who do not belong to this world's system but live alongside those who do. Peter also used the term *strangers* (*parepidēmous*), which is a synonym for 'aliens.' It refers to a visitor (the KJV renders the word 'pilgrims') who travel through a country and perhaps make a brief stay there (cp. Heb. 13:14; 11:13-16).

Dorani: The *alien* is a long-term resident, someone not born where he now lives, yet someone who has lived in the new land for a long season. The *stranger*, by contrast, is a temporary resident, the travel whose stay is shorter. But both terms suggest that believers belong *elsewhere*. When Peter calls disciples *aliens and strangers*, he means that we are never fully at

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home in this world. Strangers have no permanent residence. Aliens rarely hold positions of power and privilege. Indeed, there is no sign that Peter’s people ever held special rank.

McKnight: Peter’s exhortation to believers to abstain from sin and live a virtuous life is grounded in the nature of their existence as ‘aliens and strangers.’ ... I agree with those who maintain that Peter has in mind here the *social location* of believers. That is this description does not refer to their ‘pilgrimage from this life to the next’ but to their particular social status as people without rights and without a permanent residence in the Roman empire. They are literally, ‘guests and temporary residents.’ ... Peter’s point is this. Those who are on the low end of the social scale need to be particularly exemplary in their behavior because for the smallest of matters, injustice can be meted out to them with no recourse to justice or to power. Therefore, Peter emphasizes that these socially excluded Christians should provide no basis whatsoever for those above them and against them to persecute them or accuse of improper behavior.

Sproul: The behavior of fallen people should never become the standard of right and wrong.... We must remember that we do not belong to the culture. As Paul wrote, ‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind’ (Rom. 12:2). The way to get a new mind is not by paying attention to Gallup polls but by paying attention to the mind of Christ, so that we begin to think like Jesus. No matter what everyone else does or approves, if Jesus does not approve, then we cannot. We need to remember who we are—citizens of heaven—and our lives are supposed to demonstrate that as we take our cue not from this world but from heaven itself.

Helm: Peter goes on to give his readers two motivations to abstain. The first is found in the worlds immediately following: ‘Abstain *as sojourners and exiles.*’ To put it simply, your commitment to abstain from the impulses and desires of the flesh is based upon your true identity in Christ (2:4-10). You are a sojourner here. You are an exile. Your true identity is tethered to Heaven. Its pull upon you should be irresistible. You don’t belong to this world anymore.

2. Our Responsibility (2:11b-12)

Dorani: Notice, however, that Peter advocates neither despair nor flight.... Peter proposes two responses to the challenge of life in a world that first tempts to seduce us and then mocks those who resist its lures: first, we *fight*; second, we *live beautifully*.

Helm: To highlight the central teaching of this text, consider this question: What is required of us, the beloved, to live in *this* world as citizens worthy of all the wonders and relationships belonging to the *next*? Peter gives us his answer in two simple words: 1) verse 11: *abstain*; 2) verse 12: *keep*. As people marked by the grace of God, we must refrain from some things while at the same time giving ourselves to other things. In verse 11 the ‘how to’ of gracious Christian living is stated negatively, while in verse 12 we find it stated positively.

a) *Abstain (2:11b)*

...to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

(1) *Flesh (2:11b)*

...to abstain from the passions of the flesh...

Gardner: He urges them to live a life in conformity with who they are. Their behavior should reflect the people they have been called to be and, above all, to the God to whom they belong.

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This means they should *abstain from sinful desires*. Christians are expected to take action and deliberately abstain from following the desires that arise within them because of sin.... *Abstain* is a command, and we all need actively to obey this if we are to obey this if we are to see ourselves as citizens of another world.

MacArthur: Since Christians are not part of the world they must *abstain from fleshly lusts* (cp. Rom. 8:5-9, 12-13; 13:14; Gal. 5:13, 16-17). Even though regeneration produces a new disposition with holy longings, that new life force remains incarcerated within the old, unredeemed human flesh, precipitating an ongoing battle between the spirit and the flesh. Nevertheless, believers are no longer slaves of unrighteousness, and sin is not their master—they are free from the dominant and exclusive power. The command to *abstain* signifies that saints have the ability by the new life and the indwelling Spirit to restrain the lustful flesh, even in a postmodern culture dominated by sensuality, immorality, and moral relativism. The term *fleshly lusts* is not limited to sexual immorality, but rather encompasses the evils of humanity's sinful nature.

McKnight: Peter's exhortation here takes a negative form in this verse; in the resumption in 2:12a, it takes on a positive form. Such a repetition allows him to state the same point from two angles. The prohibition reflects the typical Pauline theme of the war between the flesh and the spirit (cp. Rom. 8:1-14; Gal. 5:16-25). Christians are to abstain from *sinful desires* because those desires *war against your soul*.

Dorani: As aliens, we strive to abstain from the sinful paths that our culture presents. Indeed, each society panders to certain *sinful desires*, presenting certain sins as plausible and easily indulged. The disciple both abstains from them and fights them, because they battle us.

Sproul: The fleshly lusts of which Peter speaks here include far more than sexual behavior. Fleshly lusts have to do with the desires of the *sarx*, which is the Greek term translated 'flesh,' in its entirety. To abstain from fleshly lusts is basically to abstain from the desires of this world, in keeping with the One from whom we receive our marching orders. These fleshly lusts, which place success above obedience, have everything to do with the corrupt nature.

Helm: To live in *this* world as citizens worthy of all the wonders and relationships belonging to the *next*, we must refrain from acting upon the impulses and desires of the flesh. To understand what Peter has in mind when he exhorts us to *abstain from the passions of the flesh*, we must reach all the way back to what he wrote in 1:14.... Peter then went on to define what those passions were. He listed them as 'malice,' 'deceit,' 'hypocrisy,' 'envy,' and 'slander' (2:1). These are the things a person in Christ puts away. These are the vices from which we abstain. They are the attitudes, actions, and way of life in which we once walked. They speak of the season when we were tethered to this world without God's indwelling power to resist.... To *abstain from the passions of the flesh* requires us to live with a renewed mind, a disciplined tongue, and a controlled body. For in Christ we are tethered to Heaven and are merely wanderers on earth.

(2) Soul (2:11b)

...which wage war against your soul.

Gardner: The contrast between light and darkness will be most noticeable among God's people in their lifestyle, their behavior, and their priorities.... Peter sees this as an on-going struggle and

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yet one that will be won as Christians live for the Lord and live by His grace. So he gives another charge to his readers.

MacArthur: Peter, by use of the phrase *which wage war against the soul* intensifies his discussion of *fleshly lusts*. In the Greek, *which* indicates that it is the character of such lusts and cravings to *wage war* against the new heart God has created within the *soul* of every believer... *Wage war* is a strong term that generally means to carry out a long-term military campaign. It implies not just antagonism but a relentless, malicious aggression. Since it takes place in *the soul*, it is a kind of civil war. Joined with the concept of *fleshly lusts*, the image is of an army of lustful terrorists waging an internal search and destroy mission to conquer the soul of the believer.

McKnight: *Soul* here has the same meaning that Paul has when he uses ‘spirit’ to refer to that dimension of people that relates to God. Thus, Peter urges his readers to deny themselves the temporary pleasures of indulging in physical, sinful passions because those impulses prevent them from living a spiritual life. Abstaining from fleshly passions, then, is the negative dimension of living a holy and obedient life.

Dorani: We commit sins of the flesh with all our faculties, physical or mental. Therefore, while we resist physical lusts, we also wage war against idolatry, discord, rage, selfish ambition, and even sins such as despair. Peter knew his culture was corrupt, but *he never let his people blame the culture for their problems*. There are evil desires in us (James 4:1-3). Therefore, we must *abstain from sinful desires*, whether they be physical or spiritual. Sins that begin in the mind and the body are equally evil, equally troublesome. The apostles suggest this by labeling both classes of sin the same way: ‘passions of the flesh.’ And we wage war against all of them because all wound our spirit and grieve God’s Spirit.

Sproul: Peter says that these fleshly lusts—desires, passions, or ambitions—war against the soul (cp. Gal. 5:17). They do not simply present stumbling blocks to the soul or set up rival interests, but they are at war with the soul.

Helm: His second motivation to abstain from the passions of the flesh is found at the close of verse 11.... We would expect Peter to say that the passions of the flesh wage war against our body. That, after all, is as far as our world goes today. But Peter goes further. He says there is an intimate relationship between what we do in the body and what happens to our soul. Literally, the human passions are said to be *serving as soldiers* against your soul. They are fighting men, and they intend to keep you tethered here. Disaster awaits those who fail to win this war.

b) *Keep (2:12)*

¹²*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.*

McKnight: Peter now mentions the problems for his readers in such concrete fashion that this letter becomes a virtual mirror of the living conditions of the Christians in Asia Minor. If they live godly, blameless lives in their hostile environment, then even if the pagans accuse them of doing bad things, they will be able to see the good behavior of the Christians and that very behavior will become a source of judgment against the unbelieving world.

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Helm: Interestingly, 1 Peter 2:11-12 are two sentences in English. In the original, however, they are only one. Verse 12 is a continuation of verse 11—we live well not merely by those things from which we abstain, but by the host of things we choose to embrace.

(1) Our Conduct (2:12a)

¹²*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable...*

Gardner: *Live such good lives among the pagans* reminds the reader yet again that Christians are not called to escape the world but are embedded in it. Nevertheless, this holy people will always be differentiated by their worship, by their total commitment to the Lord, and by the lives they live before the world. (The word used in Greek for ‘pagans’ is the same word that is used in the LXX, the Greek version of the Old Testament, to indicate ‘Gentiles.’ It is interesting that, just as Peter has transferred vocabulary describing Jews as the people of God to all Christians [whether or not they are racially Jewish], so he has transferred the term ‘Gentile’ to all who do not believe, and that includes pagans and idol worshippers but also Jews who do not accept Christ. Just as the gospel embraces all people of all races who trust in Christ, so people of all races who reject Christ place themselves among ‘the Gentiles,’ or literally, among the ‘nations.’).

MacArthur: In order to effectively evangelize, Christians’ transformed inner lives must be visible to the outside world. Peter thus commanded his readers to *keep* their *behavior* (daily conduct) at a high level. *Excellent* translates a word (*kalēn*) rich and varied in significance, usually meaning ‘beautiful of outward form.’ At least six other English words and expressions offer insight into its meaning: lovely, fine, winsome, gracious, fair to look at, noble. The term connotes the loveliest kind of visible goodness. *Gentiles* (*ethnos*) refers to ‘nations,’ or the unsaved world (cp. Lk. 2:32; Rom. 2:14; 15:9-12, 16; 1 Cor. 5:1; 12:2). If Peter’s readers were to witness effectively *among the Gentiles*, it was essential for them to manifest behavior beyond reproach.

McKnight: In verse 12, Peter first repeats the ethical exhortation of 2:11b but in positive form, forming the *foundation*: ‘Live such good lives among the pagans....’ Reputation was a dainty thing as much in the first century as it is now; a bad reputation ruined a person’s chances in life. Early Christians were suspect, so they developed an ethic of blamelessness and reputation to give the hostile forces of society no ground for their evil workings.

Dorani: The believer must live so well that the pagan can make no valid accusations. An excellent life shines as an alternative to pagan ways. The antidote is (literally) a *beautiful* way of life. The Greek behind the phrase *live such good lives* in 2:12 is literally ‘having a beautiful lifestyle.’ Peter’s term for *good* (*kalos*) means ‘beautiful’ or ‘attractive,’ rather than ‘morally good’ (for moral goodness, the New Testament typically uses *agathos*). And his word for *life* is not the common *bios* or *zōe*, but *anastrophe*, which denotes a way of life. (The word *anastrophe* is a Petrine favorite. Eight of its thirteen uses in the New Testament are in 1-2 Peter). The Christian life entails more than law-keeping. It is a way of life, a style that slowly attracts people to its beauty.... Jesus points out that this lifestyle is the result of our union with Him. The life He gives becomes a ‘spring of water welling up to eternal life’ (Jn. 4:14; cp. Jn. 15). Paul says that these changes are also the fruit of the Spirit. According to Peter, a beautiful life is also the result of our battle against sin (2:11).

Sproul: Throughout this passage Peter uses some form of the word *honor*.... The word *honor* has all but disappeared from our vocabulary; it belongs to a former era. However, if you look up the word *honor* in a Bible concordance, you may be surprised how frequently the word is used, even

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in the Ten Commandments: ‘Honor your father and your mother’ (Ex. 20:12). Honor goes beyond respect, to honor is to bend over backwards to show respect for other people.

Helm: Our lives are to be filled with good works. Notice: the *honorable...conduct* of the first half of the verse is connected to the *good deeds* of the second half. In other words, we are called to honorable conduct, which is nothing less than doing good deeds. It is nice to know that Christianity is more than a call to abstain from a list of activities. We are to be people who are busy filling our lives with good things as well.

(2) Their Speech (2:12b)

...so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds...

Gardner: Peter acknowledges that unbelievers, the *pagans*, will not give Christians an easy ride. They will make many false accusations against believers. They will accuse them *of doing wrong*. In other words, pagans will deliberately and completely distort the facts saying that Christians are doing wrong even as it is they who are in fact doing right and following the Lord.

MacArthur: In the first century, the label *evildoers* (*kakopoiōn*) brought to mind many of the specific accusations pagans made against Christians—that they rebelled against the Roman government, practiced cannibalism, engaged in incest, engaged in subversive activities that threatened the Empire’s economic and social progress, opposed slavery, and practiced atheism by not worshipping Caesar or the Roman gods (cp. Acts 16:18-21; 19:19, 24-27).

McKnight: Peter situates this ethic of reputation in a specific *problem*: ‘though they accuse you of doing wrong.’ The Christians of Asia Minor, in spite of living good lives, were apparently unjustly being accused of wrongdoing.... Peter urges his readers to live circumspectly and honorably when these accusations are lodged against them and to refrain from insulting their unjust accusers.

Sproul: As a result of your good works, people may say something that, in spite of their hostility toward you and their lack of devotion toward God, in the final analysis gives glory to God.

Helm: The greatest text of all is taken from Matthew 5:16. Here we find the dominical words of Christ: ‘In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.’ Peter appears to have intentionally borrowed the words of Jesus, for verse 12 is a very close paraphrase of what Jesus had taught him long ago. He is staying close to his Lord. Let us therefore do likewise. Let us seek to live lives that model the mature honorable conduct for which Peter is calling. May it be rooted in our knowledge of His love. And may we be faithful until Christ’s return. Indeed, Peter closes out this section by affirming that our works will on that day be seen for what they are and shall give God great glory.

(3) God’s Visitation (2:12c)

...and glorify God on the day of visitation.

(a) Conversion

Gardner: Though unbelievers will probably not acknowledge the fact publicly, they will still see the good works, and perhaps this may lead to their conversion so that they too may *glorify God*. Glorifying God is always something in Scripture which is done by faithful believing people and so it seems Peter is encouraging believers that the way they live may well lead to conversions,

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for God will ‘visit’ some of those unbelievers to bring them to Himself. Living in this way before a watching world is part of what Peter was referring to back in 2:9 when he spoke of ‘declaring the praises of the one who called you out of darkness.’ Difficult as it may be, the Lord can use a Christian’s life to bring even the most hardened unbeliever to the point where he or she also glorifies God.... Peter gives us the bigger picture. A holy people living to God’s glory is a true witness and will be used by God to bring further glory to Himself. Others too will be drawn to a living faith in Jesus (cp. 3:1-2).

MacArthur: *Day of visitation* is an Old Testament concept (cp. Jdg. 13:2-23; Ruth 1:6; 1 Sam. 3:2-21; Ps. 65:9; 106:4; Zech. 10:3) referring to occasions when God visited mankind for either judgment or blessing.... Usually in the New Testament *visitation* indicates blessing and redemption.... God’s redemption is inherent in Peter’s reference to the *day of visitation*. The apostle used the expression to show that because of observation of Christian virtue and good works in the lives of believers, some would be privileged to *glorify God* when He also visited them with salvation.

Dorani: When we lead a beautiful life among secular people, we can anticipate a positive result, at least occasionally. In chapter 3, Peter teaches that pagan men ‘may be won over without talk by the behavior of their wives’ (3:1, 4-5).

(b) Judgment

McKnight: Repeating himself, Peter offers once again the *alternative*: ‘that...they may see your good deeds,’ but this time he adds the *result*, that the opponents will ‘glorify God on the day He visits us.’ While it is clear what *glorify God* means, the issue here is what *on the day He visits us* means. (Literally, the Greek expression can be translated as ‘on the day of visitation’ and is probably a quotation of Isaiah 10:3, where it is clearly a day of judgment). The ambiguity has led interpreters to two main options: 1) the day of their conversion, which was stimulated by the good works of the Christians; or 2) the judgment day, which involved judgment against unbelievers and led them to realize that they were wrong in accusing believers unjustly (Is. 10:3; see also Ex. 32:34; Jer. 6:15; 10:15; 11:23). While it is true that Peter does see the fruit of good works to be conversion (3:1), the more normal response of unbelievers to the gospel behavior of believers is not conversion. Rather, Peter foresees judgment coming on the unbelieving world (cp. 2:15, 23; 3:9-12; 4:5, 17).... While there is some evidence favoring the notion that Peter sees conversions of pagans taking place as a result of the good behavior of the Christians, it is more likely that he has the final day of judgment in view here, the day in which God will vindicate the good behavior of Christians and will drive the hostile accuses to see that they were wrong.

Sproul: God...will be glorified in what Peter calls ‘the day of visitation.’ This is a lengthy expression of a phrase found throughout the Old Testament, ‘the day of the Lord,’ which referred to the day when God would come. Early on in Jewish prophetic history, the day of the God’s coming—the day of His visitation—was anticipated with much joy. Later, however, Israel fell into such corruption that the prophet Amos said to the people, ‘Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is the day of the LORD to you? It will be darkness and not light’ (Amos 5:18). In the New Testament, the word *visit* is formed from the root of the word *bishop*. The concept of the bishop in the New Testament is that of a visitor. It comes from the Greek military community where, from time to time, the general would drop in unannounced and review the troops. If the troops were battle-ready, they received the praise of the general. If troops were ill-prepared, they would receive the judgment of the general. The metaphor is used

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to describe the day of visitation, the day when our heavenly Bishop comes. When He arrives, what will He find?

McKnight: Peter's essential message here is: live holy lives in the midst of secular chaos, and let God take care of the final results. Put differently Peter is calling the churches in Asia Minor to a lifestyle radically different from the surrounding culture as part of their strategy for pleasing God and coping with their environment.

B. Submission to the Emperor (1 Peter 2:13-17)

Gardner: For those of us who live in democratic countries where we can have at least *some* influence on our leaders, we need to remember that Peter speaks here about despotic leaders. If we in democratic countries sometimes find the whole concept of submission to our government and its leaders difficult to swallow, imagine what this must have been like for those who knew their ruler was likely to put some of them to death! Not that long after writing his epistles Peter himself died at the hands of Caesar Nero. So what does Peter expect of Christians here?

McKnight: Peter's comments about the Christian communities' relationship to the Roman emperor and to local governors is his first application of the principle, enunciated in 2:11-12, of living a holy life regardless of the response they find in their social setting. He will go on to apply the same principle to slaves' relationship to their masters (2:18-25) and to the relationship of husbands and wives (3:1-7), before turning to general remarks of the church community itself (3:8-12). In all of this, Peter keeps in view the important impact holy living has on those who observe believers and the value lifestyle has for maintaining good relations with society at large.

McKnight: This passage expresses a common form of early Christian ethical instruction, known as 'Household Codes' (such instructions are also found, in one form or another, at Eph. 5:22-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1; Titus 2:1-10; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 6:1-2). This form of instruction addresses specific 'classes' of people in the church and provides for them specific kinds of ethical direction.... Peter's code is concerned with the themes of Christians' avoiding sin and living a holy life, in the context of being persecuted by those who may end up admitting to God that such behavior is pleasing to Him. The specific topic of this section is the relationship of the churches to governing authorities. Peter begins with an exhortation of submission (2:13-14), explains why believers should be doing good, including a pattern of submission (2:15), cites a condition for submission (2:16), and then repeats his exhortation in both general and specific categories (2:17).

Helm: If we were right in arguing that 2:11-12 serve as Peter's general exhortation to good works, then his intention in 2:13-3:7 is to provide particular examples of what Christian good works look like in society, at work, and in the marital union. Further, a quick glance at the same verses reveals Peter's intent to deal with only one side of these relationships: he wants to talk about good works from the vantage point of the one most likely to be mistreated. In other words, he doesn't intend to write a full treatise on the responsibilities of all parties involved in these relationships. This is a striking feature when compared with other New Testament *haustafel* texts. The passages in Ephesians and Colossians that speak of husbands and wives and servants and masters are much more balanced. They put forward a code of conduct that is more comprehensive than what Peter intends to do here. In those text, the one in authority is told how to act as well. Paul has a lot to say to husbands and masters. Peter, on the other hand, is unconcerned about writing exhaustively. In fact, he omits parents and children altogether,

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replacing them with political leaders and citizens. This is a very important thing to take note of. Peter's intention is highly specific and limited in scope. He desires to provide examples of good works done by the one most likely to be mistreated in the world's institutional economy. And as we will see, they are the good works to be done even when rulers are less than good in return.

1. The Exhortation (2:13a)

¹³*Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution...*

a) *Be Subject (2:13a)*

Gardner: First, we must remember that this command follows the command to 'live such good lives among the pagans.' An important aspect of this good life will be the Christian's approach to the instituted authorities. Peter insists that they should *submit* to these authorities.

MacArthur: Although they are not ultimately under human authority, God still expects believers to submit to the human institutions He ordained.... *Submit yourselves (hupotassō)* is a military expression literally meaning 'to arrange in formation under the commander.' ... Submission to rulers is right because God appoints them; therefore, there is no place for supporting 'those who are given to change,' rebels who might seek to overthrow the government.

McKnight: Whatever 'submit' means, it is important for us to recall that such submission is a form of abstaining from fleshly desires and of good behavior that influence those observing. This connection of 'submission' to 2:11-12 is the natural implication of understanding 2:13-17 as an application of the principles found in those thematic verses. The word 'submit' is a compound verb from the Greek words *hypo* (meaning 'under') and *tasso* (meaning 'to order, place, appoint').... The roots here do give an adequate determination of the meaning of the verb: 'to order oneself under, or according to, a given relationship,' or 'to live according to the governmental order.' Clearly here the notion of 'submitting' to the government is secondary to obey God (1:2, 14, 22) and to doing His will (2:14), because this group of subjects (the church) is 'free' (2:16).

Dorani: *Submit (hupotassō)* does convey the idea that someone in authority can give orders that others ought to follow, but there are differences. *Submit* can be a milder term than *obey*. To *submit* means to arrange one's life under the authority or guidance of another. That is, a person who submits still has some freedom because he or she decides how to follow the leader.

Sproul: We must not wait to be coerced into submission. Submission is something we are to initiate and are responsible to do. We are to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man...but that has to be qualified. We are to do so unless those ordinances prohibit us from doing what God commands or command us to do what God forbids. Then not only may we not be submissive, but we must not submit. Peter is speaking in general terms here.

Helm: What is the content of Peter's instruction? In one word it is *submission*. Submission is the word that unfolds what Peter is looking at about honorable conduct and good deeds. The idea of submission is found in the opening verse of each setting of relationships (2:13, 18; 3:1).

b) *To Every Human Institution (2:13a)*

MacArthur: To maintain peace and order society, God has ordained them all; thus to limit or make exception to the command to submit to *every* authority would condone disobedience and disrespect for God's plan....The Greek word *ktisis* ('foundation'), from which *institution* derives, always occurs in the New Testament in connection with God's creative activities.... God has

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created all the foundations of *human* society—work, family, government. Peter designated society human not as to its origin, but as to its function or sphere of operation. The apostle’s intent was therefore to command submission to *every human institution* because every one is God ordained. Believers submit to civil authorities, to employers (2:18; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22), and in the family (Eph. 5:21-6:2).

McKnight: What he has in mind is either the ‘institution’ itself (government as a human arrangement or, as in Rom. 13:1-7, as a divinely appointed human arrangement) or the person so instituted.... His exhortation, then, is that Christians, in spite of their relative freedom, are nevertheless to live according to every sort of governmental order. The alternative is chaos.

Sproul: There is a hierarchical structure of authority in the universe, and at the top of that structure is the sovereign God, who reigns and rules. He has delegated all authority in heaven and earth to His Son, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. So, at the top of this hierarchical structure of the universe is Christ. Nero, who was king when this epistle was written, was under the authority of Jesus, but he would not submit because his was a spirit of lawlessness, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience.... Every time we do not submit to the rules that plague us all, we are casting our vote with lawlessness, and every time we go out of our way to submit, we bear witness to the One whose law stands above every law. Every time we obey our employer, our schoolteacher, and our parents, we give honor to Christ, who reigns over the whole universe. This is where the word *honor* comes into play.

c) *For the Lord’s Sake (2:13a)*

Gardner: The basis on which Christians are called to submit is *for the Lord’s sake*. He has put these structures in place and Christians should witness to His Lordship in their attitude to people in authority. Peter makes no distinction here between good and bad leaders, between Christians and morally upright kings and those who are pagan and immoral. In fact, the reason this needs to be taught and the reason it has always been difficult for Christians to understand is that no distinction between leaders is made at all. Rather all are to be obeyed for the Lord’s sake. (We can see an example of this in how David, knowing that he is God’s anointed King, still honors and shows respect to King Saul and waits until God Himself brings an end to that reign).

MacArthur: Peter stated the motivation for submitting to authority as clearly as he did the basic command to submit. It is *for the Lord’s sake*, making it obligatory to submit, as with all divinely inspired commands. Christians obey because they desire to honor the Lord.

McKnight: Christians are not to submit to the governmental authorities because of the native authority of government or because governmental officials are particularly charismatic. Rather, they are to submit *for the Lord’s sake*. As has been seen in 2:12, such an idea includes the impact of observers seeing the justice and holiness of God in their behavior and giving praise to the Lord (cp. 2:15 and 3:1).

Dorani: We submit to authority for God’s sake. He ordains this world’s authorities, so we should submit to the *human authorities* that He created.

Sproul: What is important to note is why Peter comes to this conclusion. He tells us to submit to authorities for the Lord’s sake—not for your sake or my sake, but for the Lord’s sake.

Helm: The principle of submission in this section (see 2:13, 18; 3:1) is not our foundation. Instead, *submission* defines the Christian’s ways because ‘being like the Savior’ describes the Christian’s goal.... In essence, Peter wants us to follow in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace. It

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is for this reason that Christian men and women gladly and voluntarily put on the garments of submission. We are not operating out of some blind adherence to a rigid principle but rather out of love for the *One* with whom we have a relationship. At the end of the day, Christians willingly submit themselves to people in authority because we desire our lives to be pleasing to someone not something.

2. The Extent (2:13b-14)

a) *Rulers (2:13b-14a)*

...whether it be to the emperor as supreme,¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him...

Gardner: In fact, Christians are to obey *every* instituted authority. Government provides the main example, of which *the king* is the *supreme authority*. The point is that these authorities are instituted by the Lord (*sent by Him*). In Romans 13:1-2, Paul expands on this same idea.

MacArthur: Breaking authority down to specific categories, he speaks of the highest level of *the one in authority*, the *king*. Obviously, this recognizes the legitimacy of one-man rule as a form of God-ordained government. Monarchy, or its parallel, dictatorship, is a form God uses in the world. It was especially a challenge for believers in Peter's time to obey this part of the command because the king (Caesar) was a deranged tyrant, the Roman emperor Nero. But even he was divinely ordained for his leadership role of carrying out the fundamental purposes of government. *Governors* is a term referring to a lower level of authority (cp. Lk. 2:1-2; 3:1; Acts 7:10), officials under the king who might be *sent by him*.

McKnight: Peter specifies two kinds of human institutions under which the Christians should order their lives: the emperor (*whether to the king as the supreme authority*) and the local governor. If the early dating of 1 Peter is correct (early 60s), then the emperor to whom Peter is referring is none other than the rascal Nero.... Such a setting, which seems reasonable not only for 1 Peter but for much of early Christian teaching, has significant implications for the Christian attitude to the state, for it demonstrates that Christians are expected to be good citizens even in extreme situations.

Dorani: We submit to *all* authorities: first to the king or emperor, for he is the supreme authority, from whom (theoretically) all authority flows (cp. Mt. 8:8-9). After the king, we submit to governors, that is, to the array of local authorities, procurators, proconsuls, and lesser magistrates. Every nation has its supreme and lesser governors, and we must submit to them, even to local commissioners who rule roads, commerce, the military, markets, even (today) parking and sewers. The authorities that rule us most directly are local. These are the authorities at work, in schools, in the family, even in the church.... When Peter wrote this, Nero was emperor. Few had *less* merit than he. Beyond his cruelties, he ruled poorly for most of his reign and, more than most other emperors, claimed deity. If Peter could command the church to submit to Nero, we can certainly submit if our governor takes a stand that we consider erroneous.

Helm: The extent and force of Peter's words on this point only grow in stature when one considers that the emperor in Peter's day was none other than Nero. Nero was the Roman ruler who led a great persecution against the Christians in the first century. In fact historians tell us that it was under Nero that Peter was martyred. Other authorities of this time included governors Pontius Pilate and Felix. The one, Pilate, handed Jesus over to death while Peter stood off in the shadows, while the other, Felix, played with his power in the case of Paul. All three of these men lived in the time of Peter's letter.

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b) Responsibilities (2:14b)

...to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

Gardner: In the case of the governing authorities, they specifically help keep good order in society as they *punish those who do wrong* and *commend those who do right* (see also Rom. 3:3-5). Without these God-given structures of law and order, overseen by the leaders of society, then society itself breaks down.

MacArthur: In reviewing the foundational and detailed teaching on believers' responsibility to civil authority, one can see three essential purposes for government (Rom. 13:3-4)... These purposes—the restraint of evil, promotion of the public good, and punishment of wrongdoing—stemming from the overarching truth that God establishes all authority (Rom. 13:1), explain why Peter's command extends *to every human institution*.... Peter echoed Paul when he said that ruling officials have been designated by God first *for the punishment of evildoers*.... On the other hand, God has appointed civil officials for *the praise of those who do right*. The authorities generally reward good citizenship with fair and favorable treatment (Rom. 13:3; cp. Gen. 39:2-4; 41:37-41; Pr. 14:35; Dan. 1:18-21). The role of government is clear—to create fear that restrains evil, punish those who do wrong, and protect those who do right.

McKnight: The local governor has derived authority and exercises it in a moral direction. Governors had more responsibilities than these two concerns (obviously), but Peter's concern is with the need for Christians to be good people so that the judicial arm of the governor is not raised over the churches. They must remember not only that their governor has authority to punish, but also that he can honor them for their good deeds.

Dorani: Governors have a twofold task: *to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good*. It is universally accepted that the government must maintain public order by punishing crime. Even profoundly flawed governors promote order and preserve some semblance of conformity to pagan standards of good, and that is better than chaos. We might disagree with their methods, but governments do some good. There is criminal law in the Old Testament, and Peter joins Paul in affirming that pagan governors have both a right and an obligation to punish misconduct (Rom. 13:1-4).

3. The Explanation (2:15)

¹⁵*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.*

Gardner: The fact that Christians do obey these authorities for their own reasons (because they are instituted by God) in fact helps *silence the ignorant talk of foolish men*. This foolish talk is no doubt the antagonistic falsehoods Peter has spoken of back in 2:12. Probably one of the easiest ways of stirring up trouble for Christians was to accuse them of being anti-establishment or anti-government. By doing what the Lord wants (*doing good*) in submitting to the authorities they will silence any who are seeking to get the authorities to persecute Christians. At least some of the pagan slander against Christians will be silenced when governors look into these accusations of insurrection and find them to be unfounded.... It is *God's will* that these people should be silence by good behavior and respect with regard to the governing authorities. The word 'talk' is not in the Greek which simply says, 'you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' This ignorance is of course an ignorance of God Himself and of the nature of Christian faith.

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MacArthur: The reason Christians ought to submit to every authority is quite clear and basic—such conduct stops the mouths of the gospel’s critics. It is *the will of God* for Christians to engage in *doing right* by respecting authority, so as to *silence the ignorance of foolish men*. The word rendered *silence* (*phimoun*) means ‘to restrain, muzzle, or make speechless’ (cp. Mt. 22:12, 34; Mk. 1:25; 4:39; Lk. 4:35). It denotes the gagging or stopping of someone’s mouth so as to render that person incapable of response. The word Peter used for *ignorance* (*agnōsian*) means more than merely a lack of knowledge. If that meaning were all he wanted to convey, he would have used a form of *agnoia*. But *agnōsian* indicates a willful, hostile rejection of the truth (cp. 1 Cor. 15:34). It is a settled lack of spiritual perception that the apostle further characterized as *foolish* (*aphronōn*). That term means ‘senseless, without reason,’ and may express a lack of mental sanity. Integrity, impeccable moral fiber, and purity of life are all effective character tools to muzzle the enemies of Christianity.

McKnight: A second part of Peter’s discussion of the relationship to the state concerns the *explanation for doing good* (2:15)... The opening word, *For*, can be interpreted as introducing the cause of their submission. They should submit to the various levels of governing authorities *because* in so doing their behavior will silence their accusing ignorance. More likely, it introduces an explanation of 2:14.... The good conduct exhorted in 2:12 provides an opportunity for Christians to be approved by the governors, whose task it is to approve of good behavior.... While it is naïve to think that Christians will always be saved from social pressure or outright persecution just because they live holy lives, it is not naïve to think that such behavior will sometimes have the desired effect on their opponents so that they will back off their foolish accusations and baseless persecutions.

Dorani: 1 Peter 2:15 summarizes the result of obedience to the previous commands.... Peter is well aware that believers might suffer because of persecution and false condemnation. Still, we do good as much as we can. This includes obedience to civil law (unless it requires sin), but there is more. We should ‘do good’ in ways small and large, from picking up trash to volunteering in homeless shelters. Peter knows that accusations will never finally disappear, but hopes that good deeds may silence the most ignorant and foolish slanders. If we live well enough, people simply refuse to believe the lies.

Helm: Our motivation rests in this: submission to authority is the strongest apologetic against the view that Christians are never up to any good.... Whenever the nonbelieving world picks up the newspaper and is confronted with Christian leaders acting badly, it assumes that all Christians are just like them. Our goodness will be our greatest apologetic for the gospel. Good works silence false accusations. We ought to be throwing ourselves into good things. Submission is the great apologetic for the gospel.

4. The Exercise (2:16)

¹⁶*Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

Gardner: Nevertheless, this submission to the governing authorities, whether to the emperor (‘king’) or to local authorities (‘governors’) is not without qualifications. First, Christ is their ‘Lord’ (v. 13); second, they are to live as *free people*; and third, they are to *live as servants of God*. There is therefore a limit to this submission. It cannot involve participation in sins against the Lord. Obedience to Him takes priority in all things. In the Old Testament, Daniel is a clear example of this on a couple of occasions.

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McKnight: For Peter and the entire church, ‘submit’ does not imply total obedience, for the Israelites and the early Christians participated in civil disobedience when the demands of society overrode the demands of the Lord (e.g., Ex. 1:17; Dan. 3:13-18; Acts 4:18-20; Heb. 11:23). Wolfgang Schrage has expressed it well: ‘They are free with respect to the authorities, and normally this freedom manifests itself in respect and loyalty, submission and honor.’

Dorani: We are free from sin, from the law, and from death, but that is no excuse for insubordination. The Christian is free from sin, but is the slave of God (1 Cor. 7:22; cp. Rom. 6:22).

a) Freedom (2:16a)

¹⁶*Live as people who are free...*

Gardner: It is one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith that we find true freedom when we come to Christ and enter a life of *service* to the Lord (cp. 1 Cor. 7:22)... Peter has already spoken of Christians being ‘redeemed’ in 1:18, which we noted is a picture taken from the world of slavery, and it is this picture of redemption that lies behind his words here. On becoming a Christian, a person is freed from the captivity of sin and darkness.

MacArthur: The right attitude is imperative if submissive Christians are to maintain their credibility among unbelievers. They display that right attitude when they *act as free men*. They must realize that, as a result of Christ’s redemptive work (cp. 1:18-19), they are free from sin’s condemnation (Rom. 6:7, 18; 8:1-2), the Law’s penalty (Gal. 3:13), Satan’s bondage (cp. Rom. 16:20; Col. 1:13; Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:13; 4:4), the world’s control (cp. 1 Cor. 9:19; Gal. 4:3-5; 5:1; Col. 2:20), and death’s power (Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 15:54-56).

McKnight: Next, Peter adds a *condition for submitting to the authorities*. These socially excluded Christians are to submit to the authorities (2:13), not only because they are driven to it by their social location, but also because they are ultimately free from the jurisdiction of these authorities. Christians live under the governing order as free people, not as its slaves, for they are slaves of God, not of Caesar.

b) Antinomianism (2:16b)

...not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil...

Gardner: The reason Peter needs to speak of this freedom is this must balance the submission of which he has been speaking in verses 13-15. While Christians will choose freely to submit to the authorities ‘for the Lord’s sake,’ they are not to be drawn into sin. Nor are they blindly to follow this sort of instruction as some new form of legalism. Rather, theirs is true freedom... Peter understands that an emphasis on freedom can be overplayed and lead to licentiousness. In this case, Christian freedom is used by people to justify behavior that is simply not acceptable for a holy people. Through the ages these two heresies have plague the church. One leads to legalism, to which Peter says, *live as free men*; and the other leads to licentiousness and a rejection of law, to which Peter says, *do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil*.

MacArthur: But Peter cautions those who are free in Christ to *not use* that spiritual *freedom as a covering for the evil* of not submitting to rulers (cp. 1 Cor. 8:9; 10:32; Gal. 5:13). *Covering* indicates placing a mask or veil over something; *evil (kakias)* is a term that means ‘baseness’ and arises from vengeance, bitterness, hostility, and disobedience.

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McKnight: But they are not to use this freedom from human authorities as an excuse for living in chaos and insubordination. That kind of life will only hurt the church and will give ample justification to the persecuting powers that now threaten them.

c) *Slaves (2:16c)*

...but living as servants of God.

Gardner: He then continues by insisting that Christian freedom involves living as *servants of God*. However, if ‘freedom’ for Christians means being ‘servants of God,’ we need to ask in what sense this is truly *freedom*. Even this passage puts a very clear limit on Christian freedom. We do not have freedom to sin! Peter is not talking about what we might call *freedom of choice*. Rather, the freedom bought by redemption results in escaping the darkness of paganism (v. 9) that so terribly blinds people to sin and evil. This freedom is one that allows Christians to do what they now find they most desire to do, that is to choose the light, to follow Christ, and to be servants of God.

MacArthur: A truly righteous attitude will cause Christians to use their freedom *as bondslaves of God* (cp. 1 Cor. 7:22)... Their freedom has delivered them from the bondage of serving sin into the privilege of being slaves of righteousness.... ‘Slave’ (from the same word as *bondslaves*) defined the lowest level of servitude in the Greco-Roman world, yet for believers it described the joyous freedom to be servants of Christ and do what was right rather than what was wrong (cp. Jn. 15:15; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 6:6; Titus 2:14). Freedom in Christ and citizenship in the kingdom of God in no way permit believers to abuse or disregard the standard of conduct God has established for them on earth.

McKnight: It is especially the words of Martin Luther that have crystallized Peter’s point the best: ‘A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.’

Dorani: As Martin Luther observed, ‘A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.’

5. The Examples (2:17)

¹⁷*Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

Gardner: And so Peter returns to a brief summary of the sort of behavior that will be the result of the exercise of this freedom. For separate statements now take further what Peter is saying about a Christian’s responsibility to the people around him or here. He is still thinking about how Christians are to live ‘such good lives among the pagans’ (v. 12).

MacArthur: Peter summarized his demand for submission to all authority—his citizenship theology—into four practical, applicatory dimensions of life.

McKnight: Finally Peter *repeats his exhortation*, doing so in both general and specific terms. Beginning with a general command to *show proper respect to everyone*, Peter then details three specific applications of this ‘proper respect.’ Their holy living, their abstinence from fleshly inspired passions, is to be manifested in respect for all people, whether that means the church, God, or the emperor. Such conduct is thus orderly (under the order of the day) and will prevent the gospel from disrepute and stave off some of the persecution that may be imminent.

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Doriani: Thus he reiterates the summons to honor the emperor and governors, but rearranges it as four commands that govern many relationships. Structurally, honor comes first and last, while love and respect (literally *fear*) stand in the middle. Thus the commands have the simplest chiasmic structure: ABBA. The first and last commands are cooler, demanding honor. The interior imperatives are warmer, requiring love and fear.)

a) *Honor Everyone (2:17a)*

Gardner: *Show proper respect to everyone* is clearly an inclusive command. Men and women are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and are worthy of respect as human beings. This means that those who surround Christians, that is the pagans and even the persecutors, are to be honored with respect.... *Ad hominem* arguments have replaced serious discussion about different world-views or different perspectives on social cohesion or the basis for morality in society, or on politics, or fiscal responses to economic difficulties. Christians should be noticeably different in their approach to people, perhaps specially to those with whom we disagree. In fact, it is probably these that Peter has in mind in this first command because it is in the next sentence that he narrows this down to speak specifically of our attitude to other Christians.

MacArthur: First, believers are to *honor all people*. Every person was created in God's image (Gen. 1:26; 9:6b; James 3:9b; cp. Ps. 100:3a), and therefore is due some degree of respect. In the first century, most people viewed slaves as nonpersons with no rights. But Peter told his readers they were not to treat anyone that way (cp. Col. 4:1). Christians are not to discriminate against any class of people because of race, nationality, or economic status (cp. Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:8-9; James 2:1-9). That does not mean they ignore different levels of authority and social structure or that they engage in mindless tolerance for everyone's conduct, but it does mean they show proper respect for everyone as individuals made in the image of God.

Doriani: First, we *honor all men*, treat everyone with a respect they deserve, if only because they bear God's image.

b) *Love the Brotherhood (2:17b)*

Gardner: The NIV did not need to add the words 'of believers,' since Peter's word *brotherhood* clearly refers to the whole Christian community, men and women. He has already addressed this in 1:22. There is a special degree of commitment and love that should be shown in the church among believers. It is the love that is normally reserved for the family, for they are the family of God.

MacArthur: The second application is that believers *love the brotherhood*. They are to show the world that they love their fellow believers (cp. Jn. 13:34-35; 15:12; 1 Jn. 3:23; 4:7, 21; 5:1).

Doriani: Second, we love the brothers, showing affection and offering aid to all within the family of faith.

c) *Fear God (2:17c)*

Gardner: The idea of fearing God was commented on at 1:17. Here we are reminded that God is greater than the king whom we are told to *honor*. God is the final judge. He is the one who will both discipline and ultimately vindicate His people. Though we are to call Him 'Father' and to love Him, we are also always to keep in mind who He is. We must never reduce God to merely another friend to whom we sometimes talk, sometimes listen, and in whom we are sometimes interested but often leave right alone. His power as our Master and Lord should be reflected in how we approach Him and live our lives under His authority.

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MacArthur: Third, believers are to *fear God* (Dt. 13:4; Ps. 111:10; Pr. 9:10; Eccl. 12:13; Heb. 12:9, 28; Rev. 15:4), which includes trusting Him in all circumstances, no matter how difficult they are. Christians must worship Him as the Sovereign One who orchestrates everything according to His perfect will. Such *fear* also encourages believers to submit to all earthly authorities, because they have the utmost respect for the One who has commanded them to do so.

Doriani: Third, we fear God. This is affectionate fear, not cringing or servile terror, that we owe to a person we respect. We revere the Almighty.

d) *Honor the Emperor (2:17d)*

Gardner: This brings us back to the thought of verses 13-14. There need be of fear of him nor even of those who persecute Christians (3:16), but respect and honor are indeed to be accorded to the one who holds power because the Lord has placed him there.

MacArthur: Finally, believers are to *honor the king*, which brings the issue full circle, back to the basic command of verse 13. This application again echoes Paul's teaching (cp. Rom. 13:7)... As God's agent for carrying out the purposes of government, the monarch, the president, the premier, or prime minister is worthy of the respect God mandates.

Doriani: Fourth, we honor the king—or the emperor, president, or prime minister.

MacArthur: When believers obey the principles of this passage, it gives genuine credibility to their faith. Submission to civil authority is an implementation of what might be called 'evangelistic citizenship.'

McKnight: In sum, Peter's first application of the principle of holy living in the midst of persecution concerns how Christians ought to relate to governing authorities. Here for the first time he addresses the issue of the church and the state. But this theme is critical to the entire letter because it was this tense relationship that formed the context for everything he wrote to these beleaguered churches. It took him some time to get down to specific behaviors because he first had to establish his theological points. In spite of a tyrant for an emperor, Peter exhorts Christians to live under the orders of the day, as free men, for the sake of the Lord and their security. Such an angle on the Christian's relationship to the state has many implications for Christian living in our world.

For next time: Read 1 Peter 2:18-25.

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Lesson Summary

VI. A Beautiful Life (1 Peter 2:11-17)

Aim: To live beautiful lives in the midst of the fallen world, glorifying God and respecting others through honorable lives of good deeds and submission to authority.

A. Sojourners and Exiles (2:11-12)

Based on the theology of our salvation (1:3-2:3) and our identity as God's people (2:4-10), 2:11-12 sets the agenda for most of the rest of Peter's letter: how to live as Christians in the midst of a pagan world.

1. Our Identity (2:11a)

- *Beloved* by God in Christ; beloved by Peter
- *Sojourners* (or 'aliens'; *paroikous*); permanent residents but foreigners to the land
- *Exiles* (or 'strangers'; *parepidēmous*); temporary resident, pilgrims
- Our citizenship/home is in heaven; but we reside on earth for now

2. Our Responsibility (2:11b-12)

- Abstain from the passions of the flesh (*sarx*): negative responsibility
- Fleshly passions or lusts are all evil, sinful desires that arise from our fallen nature
- These passions are like enemy soldiers waging war against our spirit/soul
- Keep your conduct...honorable (*kalēn*, 'excellent, noble, good, winsome, beautiful')
- Living a 'beautiful life' is the calling of all Christians
- It may not stop all slander, reviling, or persecution from non-Christians, but it will bring glory to God and it may lead to conversions, or at least righteous judgment in the day of the Lord

B. Submission to the Emperor (2:13-17)

The next three sections describe how to apply 2:11-12 (living a 'beautiful life') in the context of various relationships: with government (2:13-17); with employment (2:18-25); and with marriage (3:1-7). The key word in all these relationships is 'submit.' Unlike Paul, who gives 'household rules' to both parties in the relationship, Peter focuses on the weaker, more easily oppressed side of the relationship.

1. The Exhortation (2:13a)

- *Submit yourselves* (*hupotassō*, 'to order oneself under the authority of another')
- Submission is different/milder than obedience; it is done willingly
- Human governments are institutions established by God
- We submit to government *for the Lord's sake*, because He established them, even when they are not righteous (cp. Nero, the Roman Emperor when Peter wrote)

2. The Extent (2:13b-14)

- Emperors (kings) and governors; supreme authority and local representatives – all levels of government and authority are covered
- Government responsibility is to punish evildoers and praise those who do good; for the order of a civil society (cp. Rom. 13:1-7)

3. The Explanation (2:15)

- It is God's will for us to submit and live orderly lives (cp. 1 Tim. 2:1-2)
- Give no cause for unrighteous to accuse us of rebellion; silence ignorant fools

4. The Exercise (2:16)

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- We have been freed from the penalty, power, and presence of sin; therefore, we are to exercise our freedom for good (cp. Gal. 5:1, 13-15), which includes submission
 - Our freedom is not an excuse for licentiousness/antinomianism; neither is it a rigid conformance to blind obedience to government (legalism)
 - Submission does not mean we blindly obey when governments prevent us from doing our duty to God or force us to sin /break God's law; our higher allegiance is to God
 - Indeed, we have been freed from sin to become the slaves of God; it is our duty to obey Him
 - Luther: 'A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.'
5. The Examples (2:17)
- We are to honor/respect everyone, because they are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27)
 - We are to love our brothers/sisters in Christ
 - We are to fear/honor/respect God (cp. 1:17)
 - We are to honor the king (cp. 2:13)

Verses 11-12 of chapter 2 are pivotal, programmatic verses in the flow of Peter's first epistle. Having given us the basis for our salvation in Christ (1:3-2:3) and a description of the church as the people of God who are the inheritors of all the OT promises (2:4-10), Peter now sets forth the foundational principles of how God's beloved, although sojourners and exiles in this life, are to live in the world. As citizens of heaven, we are to live heavenly, beautiful lives. Peter's exhortation has both a negative and a positive element. Negatively, we are to abstain from the fleshly lusts (evil desires) that characterize the fallen man. Positively, we are to conduct our lives in such an honorable excellent, beautiful way that even the pagans can recognize and appreciate the difference. Doing so may not eliminate their slander, reviling, and persecution, but it does and will give glory to God.

Peter applies his foundational principle of living a beautiful life in the world within the context of the civil sphere, i.e., in our response to governments and other human institutions of authority. The key here is to *submit*, willingly, voluntarily, even when the governments and its officials are not righteous or godly. God has created all such human institutions, and they derive their authority from Him. Thus, it is right that we should submit for the Lord's sake; indeed, it is His will for our lives. We are able to submit to authorities because we have been freed by Christ from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. While submission is freely given, it is not blind obedience; we cannot obey governments when they prevent us from our duty to God or force us to violate God's law (sin). Nonetheless, licentiousness/antinomianism is not the solution, because we are being observed by the world, and living in such a way would violate the service we owe to God as His servants and bring dishonor to His name. Living a beautiful life means that we can honor and respect everyone because they too have been created in God's image.