

# 1 Peter 2:13-25

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Date: 29 February 2012

Preacher: Bob Fyall

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Now, in our Bibles, if you would turn, please, to page 1015, to the final study in 1 Peter 1 and 2, which we've been following over the last week or two.

I'm going to read verses 13 to 25 of chapter 2. Before that, I want to read again verses 4 and 5, which have been the very heart of this particular study.

Come to him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious, and you yourselves like living stones being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Then down to verse 13, where Peter writes, Be subject for the Lord's sake to every institution, whether it be to the emperor supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as the servants of God.

[ 1 : 2 2 ] Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and the gentle, but also to the unjust.

For this is a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure?

But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

He committed no sin. Neither was the seat found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

[ 2 : 4 3 ] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. This is the word of God made blessed to our hearts and to our minds.

In one of his great speeches during the Second World War, Winston Churchill said, I have nothing to offer you but blood and toil and tears and sweat.

Very stark, very unignorable words. But he went on then to say that the end is victory. Victory, however long it takes, however hardly it is achieved.

Laying out the facts and making sure that people were under no illusion. That is what Peter has been doing in these first two chapters.

In a sense, he's been saying, I have nothing to offer you but blood and toil and tears and sweat. He's talked about your faith tested by fire.

- [ 3 : 53 ] For some of the Christians at Peter's time, literally, as Nero launched his persecution on the church, a persecution in which the apostle himself and also Paul almost certainly suffered martyrdom.
- There is, as I said in the first of this series, there is no small print in Peter's letter. He doesn't present all the good things.
- He doesn't present all the desirable things and leave out the problems. Peter lays it on the line. Peter is straightforward. Peter is uncompromising.
- But you notice both these aspects are important. It's not that Peter is in love with suffering. Peter's not some kind of masochist. He's not saying these things are good in themselves.
- What he's saying is these trials, these temptations, these sufferings actually are to be rejoiced in, not because they're good in themselves, because it shows you're part of the family.
- [ 4 : 55 ] But that is part of what happens in the family of God. Secondly, he doesn't talk about the victory without the trials, which may be a kind of fantasy.
- What he says is it's going to be wonderful. It's going to be wonderful beyond all understanding. And that's why he said in chapter 1, verse 8, you rejoice with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.
- And he's told us about the living hope that comes through the resurrection. He's told us about the holy life that's the response to this. He's told us about the trustworthy Savior.
- He's told us about the people for God alone. And now he's turning to true discipleship. I said at the beginning, if you grasp 1 Peter, a fairly small and fairly short letter, you have any good grasp of what the gospel is about.
- And the gospel is summed up in these words, come to him. And he calls us not to be spectators, not simply to be interested bystanders.
- [ 6 : 02 ] He calls us not to have the gospel as a hobby. He says Christ is calling us to be his disciples, learning from him, following him. He's calling us to follow.
- And as we look at this last section, just there are three movements as the section develops. First of all, verses 13 to 17. ESV headings are always hopelessly unimaginative.
- They simply describe what's there, and submission to authority. I don't know if it excites you. It certainly does not excite me. I'm going to call this section, verses 13 to 17, living as free people.
- Taking the key to this section in verse 16, live as people who are free. Ultimately, Peter is talking about responsible freedom.
- Don't live cowed and subdued. Live as free people. And you'll notice in the other phrase in verse 13, for the Lord's sake.
- [ 7 : 05 ] If he simply said be subject to every human institution, we might well resent it. But he says be subject for the Lord's sake. Now, if you think this is hopelessly idealistic, basically he says the subject to the Lord's sake, emperor, governors, and so on.
- I think it is hopelessly idealistic. Think of the terrors that come when a society breaks down into anarchy. Syria, Somalia, and so on.
- That's not a free society. That's a society where people's lives are governed by fear. Think about a school where discipline breaks down.
- Think about places where people are afraid to go out in the streets after dark. And these are not free places. These are places with the most dreadful tyranny. Because you cannot live as free people in these kind of places.

And that's why it's not so much... Peter had little reason to idealize human government for its own sake. He says, as Paul also says in Romans 13, that government, when it's working properly, and not just government, any institution, mentioned other institutions, such as schools, and for the same applies to offices, and other places, anywhere where there's legitimate authority, authority, this is verse 15.

[ 8 : 32 ] This is the will of God, that by doing good... Now notice that doing good is paralleled in verse 16 as living as servants of God.

Now, it would be highly unlikely if there was nobody here who had not worked at some point for a cantankerous boss, who had not been in a situation where authority was unpleasant.

Rather than liberating. That's where the phrase is so important. For the Lord's sake. For this is the will of God.

You see, we're ultimately not serving these people, we're ultimately serving Him. And that's what the Christian life is about. Living as free people means that ultimately we belong to another kingdom, following the rules of that kingdom.

And therefore, it's possible to do good. And remember, this is not doing good for salvation because Peter's made it very clear earlier on that we are born again by the precious blood of Christ.

[ 9 : 37 ] This is a way for our Christians to behave. Living as free people. Living as servants of God. Doing what we do for Him. And you'll notice verse 17 talks about the motivation, about attitudes.

Honour everyone. Now, that's a, maybe that's a very general phrase, but it's what it means, treat other human beings with respect.

Don't despise people. Don't look down on them. Their lifestyle may be different. There may be, you may not approve of it, and you may be right not to approve of it, but honour everyone. Love the brotherhood, the special, the family solidarity.

And of course, like all families, there'll be tensions and problems. Peter is not being idealistic. He simply talks about the motivation. But in the middle of it is fear God.

Now, the Old Testament tells us the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To fear God is both to tremble before Him and to obey His commands. And that governs all these other phrases, including honour the emperor.

[ 10 : 44 ] If we fear God, then these other things become possible. This other living of responsible freedom. The general phrase for honour everyone, honour the emperor.

And I suppose that everyone here is just literally everyone we meet. And the emperor is not just the particular emperor, but any kind of authority which we are called upon to serve under.

It's in the context of fearing God. That that can happen. So the first thing he says is when we are true disciples, we will live as free people.

And secondly, verses 18 to 20, there will be suffering for the sake of the gospel. Verses 18 to 20. And once again, the key here is in verse 19.

Mindful of God. In other words, the particular context we live in, whatever the difficulties, we need to be mindful. And mindful is much stronger than just simply, so yes, the believers of God.

[ 11 : 51 ] This is meaning our thoughts of God dominate and control our thoughts of everything else. The attitude of being a servant of God. Now, notice verse 19.

This is a gracious thing. The word gracious has been, has rather been watered down in common parlance. We mean little more by gracious than that somebody is pleasant.

But you see, that's not the point. The point is, gracious is somebody whose life has been touched by the grace of God. Somebody in whom the spirit of Jesus who died, who gave his life, who suffered, and who rose again.

That's what gracious means. And we do use it too vaguely often. And that means, of course, this is not the stiff British upper lip.

We're not called to be Stoics. We're called to be Christians. And I think sometimes, sometimes as Christians, we imagine that what we're being called to is to be Stoics. Keep a stiff upper lip.

[ 12 : 57 ] Never, never feel any, any pain or anything. No, this is about grace. It's about God filling our hearts and life.

And if you, and then again, the word is repeated in verse 20, if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure. This is a gracious thing in the sight of God. See if God's, you know, it's as if God looks down and says, oh, that's my child.

That's the, that's the child in whom I've placed my spirit and they're behaving like my child. As I said last week, Peter is not saying you belong to the family of the king.

Therefore, you should do this and should do that. Peter is saying you've been called into the family of the king. Live that way. So, living as free people, suffering for the sake of the gospel.

And finally, verses 21 to 25, following in the steps of Christ. For to this you have been called.

[ 14 : 03 ] And I think the key text here is verse 24. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

Now, if we try to follow Christ without our sins being forgiven, if we try to follow Christ as a way to salvation, one of two things is going to happen.

First of all, we are going to feel extremely depressed because we can't make it. However hard we try, we're not going to make it.

Or else, we can feel very complacent, very self-satisfied, feeling, I'm doing rather well. And both these things are a denial of grace. We can only follow him because he bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

That means only in the power of his death and his resurrection can we die to sin and live to righteousness. So, he suffered for us.

[ 15 : 13 ] Therefore, our discipleship needs to be cross-shaped. That is the point. It's not that we gain merit. It's not that we gain credit.

It's that this is the way it is. Verse 21, Christ suffered for you, leaving an example that you might follow in his steps. What were his steps?

He committed no sin. That's impossible for us, of course, because we are sinners. But that's got to be governed by he bore our sins.

As a fridge magnet says, Christians are not perfect. They are forgiven. I think we must never forget that. As I said, I think, in the first of these sessions, this is a world away, light years away from religion.

Religion says, I do good, therefore God accepts me. The gospel says, God accepts me, therefore I do good. This comes through all the way in 1 Peter.

[ 16 : 18 ] Neither was the seat found in his mouth. was utter integrity. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten. And why?

Committed, continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. Why is it possible to behave this way? It's possible to behave this way because Jesus died for us to forgive our sins.

It's possible to forgive this way because there is one who judges justly. In other words, it's not the temporary opinions of the world. It's the just judgment of the Lord.

And there's so many things here in these little phrases. Control of the tongue. Neither was the seat found in his mouth. Control of our thoughts and attitudes. Did not revile in return on suffering.

He did not threaten. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, picking up here from Isaiah 53, but have now returned to the shepherd, the overseer, of your souls.

[ 17 : 22 ] See, as Peter moves on in the letter, he's going to continue this. I'm not going to go on to that at the moment. He's going to continue life in the world.

He's talked about the church, now he's talking about the world. And the important thing in his following Christ. Now, that's the call to everybody.

Remember the story in the Gospels, which Peter would know well about the rich man who came to Jesus and rejected the call to discipleship, because he had great riches.

And Jesus said, sell everything you have and give to the poor and come and follow me. Now, obviously that first thing, sell everything and give to the poor, is not applicable to everybody, is it?

A young woman, single parent, gets converted. She can't sell everything, she hasn't given to the poor, she is the poor. And so, what Jesus is saying is in everybody's life there is a basic hindrance to discipleship, a basic desire to deny the cross, a basic desire to live to ourselves.

[ 18 : 39 ] But you see the other command, come follow me, which is really what's being talked about here, following Christ. Christ. That is the absolute. That's the call that comes again today to every single one of us.

One thing is needful, says Jesus, come and follow me. So, you see, if you live in poverty and are struggling to make ends meet, one thing is needful, that you follow Christ.

If you have great wealth, no problems financially, then one thing is needful, that you follow Christ. If you live in obscurity, known by nobody outside your family and your friends, then one thing is needful, that you follow Christ.

If you're a household name, people hang on every word, wouldn't that be nice, then one thing is needful, that you follow Christ. Christ. If your life is one series of struggles from one end to the other, then one thing is needful, that you follow Christ.

And if, improbably, you go through your whole life with no real trouble and no real difficulty, then one thing is needful, that you follow Christ.

[ 20 : 03 ] Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. God, our Father, we need this call, we need it every day, and we pray that we will respond.

We all have different circumstances, we all have different temptations, we all have many different hindrances to discipleship, and we pray that each of us, whether we are Christians for many years, whether we have just begun the journey, or whether perhaps we haven't even begun the journey yet, and are contemplating it, help us to be true disciples, and to follow Christ all the days of our lives.

We ask this in his name. Amen.