

1st Peter Series
COMFORT FOR THE SUFFERING
"Your Separation (2), Your Submission"

Last time we ended with Peter's powerful words regarding God's sublime purpose, His sovereign priesthood, His secret principality, and His secured people, all having to do with us, His church.

Now, we're continuing through chapter 2, and what Peter has to say about our separation from this world. We are *IN* it but not *OF* it. Peter has already discussed our separation by *birth* (the new birth) in 2:2-3, and by *belief* (2:4-10). Now he turns to our separation by *behavior*.

2:11 "Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,"

Notice first what our attitude is to be toward the world—we are "strangers and pilgrims," just passing through! The world, as found in the Bible, is simply human life and society—with God left out. It is the devil's lair for sinners and his lure for saints.

We are STRANGERS here. A PILGRIM is a man going home. He has his eye on another place. His affections are elsewhere. This is part and parcel of our separation—the way we view the world.

Not only are we to have a new attitude toward the *world* around us, but also toward the *war* within us. "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

The word "abstain" means "to hold oneself from" these lusts. The word "fleshly" refers to the cravings and strong desires of the sensual side of our nature.

The Bible teaches that the old nature in the believer coexists with the new nature (Rom.7). It "wars" against our soul. The word for "war" is *strateuomai*, the word for an encamped army. It is akin to the Greek word for soldier.

The picture that Peter paints here is that of the flesh carrying on a sustained military campaign against the believer's soul. While we can't lose our salvation, we *can* be defeated if we don't appropriate the victory God has given us over the flesh.

So Peter says, "Abstain," while Paul says "Flee!" "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). Bottom line, there are some books we ought not read, some things we ought not watch, and some people we ought not be with. *Hold yourself from them.*

Next, Peter talks about our witness:

2:12 “having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

“Conduct” is about your lifestyle. Let it be honorable. Someone is always watching. If they speak against you as an evildoer, let it be a lie.

The word “visitation” is from the word *episkope* from which we get the word “bishop” or “overseer.” The ultimate overseer is God, who sees and knows all things. The “day of visitation” Peter mentions has to do with God visiting the earth, which He often does. It may be in grace, or it may be in judgment.

Peter’s thought is that those who witnessed your honorable lifestyle were affected by it and some turned to Christ. Hence, they glorify God in the day of His visitation rather than cringe in fear.

Next, Peter shifts gears from your *separation* to your *submission*:

2:13-14 “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the

punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.”

First, we are to submit to *human laws*—“Every ordinance of man.” We do it “for the Lord’s sake.” This verse wouldn’t preach well in our culture. We are filled with marches, protests, demonstrations, and mass campaigns of civil disobedience. Our country is filled with lawlessness and rebellion against God’s order.

The word “submit” is a Greek military term regarding the rank and file of an organized group of soldiers. They may not like their orders or even agree with them, but they submit, and with a good attitude.

We don’t have a king, but we do have a president, and he, along with all civil authority beneath him, are to be obeyed. As mentioned earlier in this series, the emperor Nero was wreaking havoc with the church, imprisoning and murdering God’s people. Yet Peter and the church led no revolt against him, put together no marches, organized no resistance, nor called for any violence. He had learned from Jesus that the way to deal with *social* ills is to first deal with *spiritual* ills. Jesus “went about everywhere doing good,” and changed the world!

Next, Peter explains why we must submit to those in authority over us.

2:15-17 “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

We are to be a law abiding people so that those who would want to slander or accuse us are “put to silence.” This phrase is from a Greek word meaning “to muzzle.”

And the word “ignorance” he uses to describe our critics means “culpable, self imposed ignorance.” The word “foolish” means “senseless ones.” Put together, the phrase means “willfully culpable, senseless fools.”

Peter says that when we obey the law and live uprightly, the “willfully culpable, senseless fools” who want to slander us won’t find what they’re looking for!

He also exhorts Christians to never use their liberty in Christ as a cloak for vice. That is, don’t say to yourself, “Well, I’m set free in Christ to do what I please!” No, *liberty is not the freedom to do what you want, but the power to do what you ought.*

Verse 17 is all about how to respond to men and to God. Peter exhorts us to, “Honor all men.” No matter their color, class, or creed, we’re to honor them. We do this by seeing them through God’s eyes, who loves all men. And “love the brethren,” Peter says. “Fear God, and honor the king.”

Honor is a lost virtue in our culture. If we don’t like a person in authority we turn on them, despise and even hate them. But the person who understands honor knows that you can honor a person’s God-given position, whether or not you honor the person.

Peter next turns from the Christian’s submission to the State to his submission to those over him in the everyday affairs of life:

2:18 “Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.”

This is hard, because no one likes the thought of submitting to someone who is harsh. The word Peter uses for *servant* is the Greek word that means *household servant*. This person could have been either a slave or a freedman who decided to stay in their former master’s employ.

The idea is that, as long as you are there, do your best to maintain a submissive spirit, even if the master (boss) is harsh,

for this reflects the spirit of Christ who, “made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant” (Phil 2:7).

Since we live in a free, capitalist society where a person is free to leave one job for another, this verse is not advising that we must remain in a bad situation. Only that, as long as you are there, reflect the spirit of Jesus with a submissive spirit.

Peter goes on to say:

2:19-20 “For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God.”

Peter is saying that, if a Christian is employed in a place that requires him to do something against his Christian conscience, then he out of “conscience toward God” must refuse. This refusal sometimes brings suffering on account of an angry boss. Peter says, if you “do good and suffer patiently for it, this is commendable before God.”

It’s not an easy thing to suffer for doing what is right. Yet Jesus is our prime example. The Bible says, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus suffered

supremely for doing only good. He is our example, which is what Peter elaborates on next:

2:21-22 “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth;”

Jesus is our example in suffering for doing what is right. Peter says in vs. 21 that He “suffered for us.” This is amazing when you think about it! Commentator John Phillips writes, “We picture Him light years before time ever began, dwelling in unapproachable light, dwelling in perfect harmony with the Father and the Holy Spirit in indescribable glory. He was uncreated, self-existing, coeternal, coequal, and coexistent with the Father and the Spirit.”

He was God the Son, the second Person of the triune Godhead. His wisdom was infinite, and His power without measure. He existed in unimaginable glory and bliss. Yet...He suffered for us!

Phillips continues, “In the council chambers of eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit agreed that They would act in creation. The Son was the active agent (Col. 1:16); He made all things (John 1:1-3). He exerted His wisdom and His power, and galaxies of stars sprang into being and filled space with

billions of sources of light. Planet earth, a bright blue sphere in the Milky Way, was chosen to be the home of man."

Jesus proceeded to command countless forms of life into existence. And His crowning creation was man. This Creator Jesus is the one who "suffered for us" when sin raised its ugly head. Because Adam sinned, the Creator must become the Christ. This mighty Messiah stepped out of glory to be born of the Virgin Mary. He further condescended to become servant of all. And condescended even more to finally die on the Cross where He took our sin upon Himself. Amazing!

Peter says in vs. 21 we are to follow in His steps regarding submission. In verse 22 he details the total innocence of Jesus. He never committed a sin. He never told a lie. A completely innocent God/Man died on the tree for you and me!

In verse 23 Peter describes His response to being wronged:

2:23 "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;"

The word for "revile" is not only "to rebuke" but also "to abuse." Our Lord was constantly verbally abused by the Pharisees and religious leaders. He was accused of being born out of wedlock, a child of fornication (John 8:41). They accused

Him of being demon possessed, a false teacher and false prophet (John 8:48). Our Lord did not retort in kind. Nor did He ever threaten revenge.

Why didn't Jesus defend Himself? Because He knew His case was in higher hands. He "committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."

We are to follow His steps. I have left all kinds of things that have been done to me, primarily in ministry, in the hands of the God who judges righteously. I find peace with that. Either on this earth or at the judgment, He will handle it.

Peter closes with reminding us that Jesus died for our sins:

2:24-25 "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

He bore your sins and mine in His own body, so that our old man, the sin nature, might be crucified with Him, that we might live unto God.

The word for "healed" here refers primarily to spiritual healing (Matt. 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Heb. 12:13).

Before our wonderful Savior died for us, we were like lost sheep going astray. But now we have come home to our Shepherd and the overseer of our souls!

