

25/10/20

“Are you doing good?” - 1 Peter 2:11-17

Steve Christian

☉ Are you doin’ good? I trust you are, doing, good!

It was around 64AD when Peter wrote his first letter to Christians scattered into Turkey. They were living like refugees on the run. ☉ They had left their homes, and for their own safety they had moved into unknown areas and were trying to survive. There was no social security system; no UN to bring provisions into their camps; no Red Cross to try to reunite people with lost loved ones. They were trying to survive; some sold themselves as slaves to provide for their families; others used their trades to set up their own businesses in local villages. They feared for their lives as Emperor Nero had set about persecuting and killing Christians as a sport.



Do you consider your present and momentary troubles too hard to handle? Are you struggling to find peace and meaning and purpose in life? Do you consider yourself hard done by, and feel that God is not treating you fairly? Is your faith in God being tested? Are you sick and tired of Covid-19, and the present restrictions? Do you find yourself worried, anxious, fearful and living in uncertainty?

Consider again these refugees living in the First Century; in fear and in an unfamiliar culture. How long will this persecution last? And life is so unfair; as Christians we are not being treated with any sense of justice or compassion. We are being pursued; and mistrusted at every turn.


Thus Peter reminds them of who they are as God’s beloved children. He’s spent the first chapter and a half reassuring them of their privileged position. They may have felt like aliens in a foreign land and as sojourners just passing through – just trying to survive. They may not have felt like a royal priesthood, or a holy nation, but Peter reminds them that they are indeed – chosen by God and belonging to Him. They may feel like the world is ashamed of them, but God will never reject them.

But as they settle into a foreign land, ☉ Peter seeks to answer the questions of how they should now live as foreigners in Turkey. If they are in such a privileged and wonderful position as children of God and their citizenship is in heaven, then how should they respond to local society rules and leaders? Although they are being treated unjustly, how should they live best to reflect the holiness of God; to bring honour and glory to God? Should they withdraw from society? Should they seek to “fit in” with the local culture? Or should they stand up and fight for their rights and defend themselves? Should they demand justice?

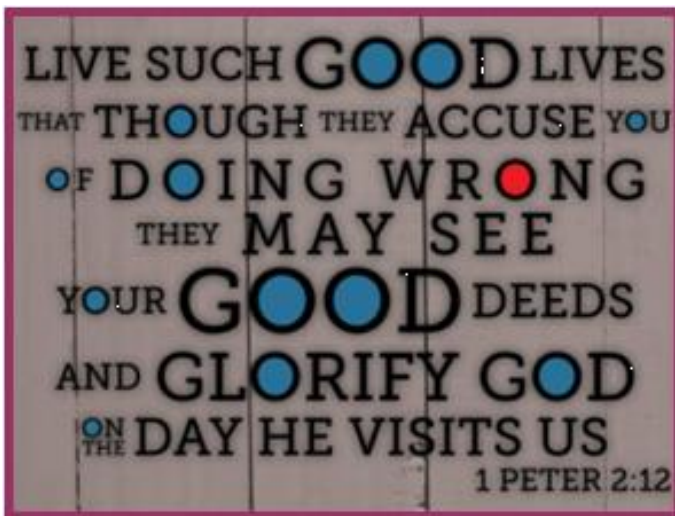
As Christians today living in Australia; as aliens just passing through as we live on this earth; as citizens of heaven; how should we live our daily lives? How should we respond to those in authority?

V.11-12 then is the transition through which Peter seeks to answer these questions. **“Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”**

“Dear friends – ‘beloved’ – I urge you to abstain from sinful desires which wage war against your soul.” You might feel like there is a war against you from Rome, being led by the Emperor, but the real war is against your soul. Don’t give in to sinful fleshly desires! Peter is not referring to sinful sexual desires, but to the fleshly desires of the human nature that arise from self-centredness. “Self” seeks to defend self. “Self” seeks to value self above all others. “Self” seeks to exalt self. And “self” wages war against your soul! The real battle in this life is on the inside!

So how do you live in such a way as to abstain from your sinful desires?  **“Live such a good life among non-Christians, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God.”**

Although they accuse you of doing wrong; they slander you as evil doers, let your life of good deeds speak otherwise. You see, Christianity was a new religious sect and it was easy for Nero to blame this new mysterious and somewhat secretive, exclusive sect for trouble in Rome; mistrust and suspicion was rife; the rumour mill of what this sect got up to behind closed doors, was going like a wild fire.



Do find that people outside of the church are suspicious of the church? Do some suggest that the church is only after your money? Do some suggest that the church is full of hypocrites; and that there is a major problem within the church when it comes to child and sexual abuse? How should we respond? “Live such a good life through your good deeds that God is glorified.”

Now comes the kicker! As one who has been branded among the people responsible for destroying much of the city of Rome; as one under suspicion and therefore to be avoided; as one unjustly accused; as one wanting to stand your ground and proclaim your innocence...

V.13-15, **“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.”**

The meaning for the Greek word used here for “submit” means “to line up or arrange under a commander.” It was a military term used to instruct soldiers to fall into line under the officer in charge. And so it simply means, “to obey the boss.”

As much as you want to fight against the Emperor and the system – submit to them – fall into line. As much as you might hate the Emperor, submit to him. Why? Because if for nothing else, they do have laws in place that they seek to uphold for the wellbeing of society. They are seeking to prevent chaos by punishing those who do wrong and commending those who do right. ☉ Therefore, do what is right. **“For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.”**

But you say, “I don’t like the Emperor; I don’t like the PM, or the Premier; I don’t like the system; I don’t think they’re worthy of my respect.” As Christians we must trust in a sovereign God who reigns supreme over all. Ungodly men were used of God all through the OT to accomplish His purposes. So the quality of the governing officials should not determine whether or not we submit.

You see, we live in a world that values “being offended.” ☉ It is almost a badge of honour to say that you’re offended. It’s a way of exalting ourselves as having an opinion that’s worth listening to and agreeing with. We also live in a world that values justice over mercy. ☉ And so when we feel hard done by, or we see another being treated unjustly, we stand up and voice our opinion as loud as we can. We see it as our right to speak up and be heard, and demand that our opinion is the only one that matters. Often we are drawn into the ways and attitudes of the world without even realising it. And we become an offensive voice, and people who also value justice before mercy.

God on the other hand lifts mercy above justice. If God valued justice above mercy then Jesus would not have died on our Cross. God would have ensured that He was treated with justice as not guilty of any crime worthy of the death penalty. But God values mercy above justice. Praise God for His mercy – that we do not receive what we deserve. For mercy has brought us forgiveness for our sin and the hope of eternal life in the glories of heaven with our loving God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

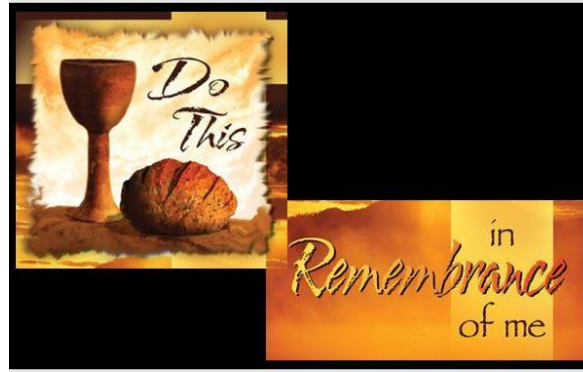


We’re about to share in communion...


V.15, **“it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence ignorant talk”** Consider Jesus: as He was **“..oppressed and afflicted, He did not open his mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open his mouth.”** (Isa 53:7) As Jesus stood before Pilate, he was amazed at His attitude, love and compassion; he was amazed at the little that Jesus did say – that he sought not to defend Himself. As the Centurion at the foot of the Cross observed – Jesus love for His fellow man; His considered words of compassion and forgiveness; the lack of anger and hatred toward the system and the Roman government; he declared, “surely this man was the Son of God.” By doing good, Jesus silenced the ignorant.

And we were once ignorant. As David wrote in Psalm 73:22, “I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.” Before we were saved we were so full of pride and sin – we lived in ignorance. But now having met Jesus and accepted that His death has paid the price for my sin, we are forgiven and saved. We have come from darkness into His glorious light. We too have declared, surely Jesus is indeed the Son of God who takes away my sin.

## COMMUNION



There was a time when Peter fought for His rights, rather than submit to the authorities. When Judas came to the Garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. And then Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him, and then submitted to their authority and was taken away.

Jesus example made a huge impact on Peter. Jesus didn't have to heal this man, but he did. He did good. Peter who once fought against the leading governing authorities, now writes in V.16-17,  **“Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.”**

Regardless of which side of the fence you sit in politics, if you were to meet your opposition today, how should you treat them? With respect. No, you don't throw a rotten egg at them, but you do them good. You treat them well. It is God's will that you do good. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour those in positions of authority over you. As strangers and aliens in this world, abstain from sin, submit to authority, and do good to all. Do good to all; even, or especially to those you don't like, respect or wish to honour.

V.12 and 15 are key to understanding Peter and his message. **“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”** **“For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.”** Do good to all!

TN 277 Highly Exalted

Hymn: O Jesus I have promised

