



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY IN A CIVIL SOCIETY

1 Peter 2:11-20

Like every other faithful minister of the gospel, Peter was concerned about the Christian life of the believers. Practical Christian living is as important as the sound doctrine taught in God's Word. The undeniable evidence that we believe sound doctrine is that we live in conformity to God's Word. In these verses, Peter instructs believers on their responsibilities as sojourners on earth, as citizens in a nation and as servants working under some masters. He speaks on the spiritual inner life of the believer, his submission to constituted authority in the society and his service as he earns his living in a legitimate way.

If people around us are to be drawn to the Lord, we must let the light of the gospel shine through us. An unbelieving writer once challenged Christians, saying, '*show me your redeemed life, then I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer*'. Sinners do not understand the gospel; our lives can be the means of seeing the gospel clearly, thereby being drawn to desire genuine salvation. If they do not see any difference between our so-called new life and their conduct, they will not be drawn to the Saviour to be born again.

OUR SEPARATION AND SPIRITUALITY TO GLORIFY GOD

1 Peter 2:11,12; 1:1,17; Psalm 119:19,54; 2 Timothy 2:22; Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:19-21,24; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philipians 4:8; Matthew 5:16.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims". Christians are not properly citizens of this world but our citizenship is in heaven. Partakers of the riches of heaven, we are pilgrims on earth. Being sons of the King of heaven, we are strangers here. We are foreigners here on earth and our heart and affection should be on our eternal home. We have no permanent home on earth, we are mere sojourners and we are travelling to our eternal home in heaven. We should not be so attached to anything on earth that we would lose the desire to go home. We are called to separation. **"Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul"** (1 Peter 2:11). We must not, we cannot be entangled or encumbered with the affairs of this world which draw souls away from God. A traveller takes along as few things as possible so that he can make rapid progress in his journey to his final home. **"Fleshly lusts"**, carnal appetites, sinful passions and desires, sins and works of the flesh, sensual indulgence and pleasures war against the soul, defeat and deaden the soul, defile and disqualify us from reaching the Promised Land. The world is given to the flesh and its pleasures but Christians must abstain and flee from anything that blunts the moral sense, pollutes the memory, defiles the imagination, weakens the conscience and hardens the heart. The world is dirty but we must remain clean, different and separate.

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles". The word "*conversation*" means (in the original) conduct, character, way of living, manner of life. The original word for "*honest*" means good, lovely, winsome. The Christian, by his life, is to advertise and commend Christ to the world around him. We are to live upright and consistent lives, let our light so shine that the unbelievers will glorify our heavenly Father and be willing to receive Christ as their Saviour. They may **"speak against us as evildoers"** but our **"good works"** and righteous lives should be radiant enough to put our critics to silence. The world is watching the way we live out our new life in Christ. The Spirit of God can use our honest, upright lifestyle to convict sinners and make them **"glorify God in the day of visitation"** - either in the day when God visits them to call them to salvation or in the day when God visits them to bring them to judgment and they will have no excuse.

OUR SUBJECTION AND SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNMENT

1 Peter 2:13-17; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; Matthew 22:17-21; Titus 2:7,8; Romans 12:10; John 13:34,35; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Proverbs 24:21.

The Christian cannot be lawless under the pretext that he is not a full citizen of the kingdom of this world. A foreigner living in a country still has to be law-abiding. God's Word consistently commands us to **"submit to**

every ordinance of man for the Lord's sakes: to the king, ... unto governors, ... for so is the will of God" (1 Peter 2:13-15). There must be subjection to civil authority so that there will be orderliness and security in the society and so that society itself will be preserved. Our submission is "**for the Lord's sake**" and it is "**the will of God**". God Himself instituted governance so that there will be no anarchy in the society. Civil authorities "**are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well**" (1 Peter 2:14). As long as the human authority does not ask us to do anything contrary to the law of God, we must obey. Our upright, righteous lives and submission to the laws of the government will "**put to silence the ignorance of foolish men**", will silence mischievous men who falsely accuse us of being insubordinate and opposed to the government.

"As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1 Peter 2:16). Though the Son of God has set us free from sin, our freedom or liberty is not to be used as excuse or covering for lawlessness. We are free to be righteous, not to be rebellious. As the servants of God, we are not free from His restraints, we are not at liberty to indulge in sinful pleasures and practices, but we are to serve God in faithful obedience to His commandments. We are to "**honour all men**", "*love*" the brethren, "**fear God**" and "**honour the king**".

THE SERVANTS' SERVICE AS UNTO GOD

1 Peter 2:18-20; Ephesians 6:5-7; Colossians 3:22-25; Titus 2:9,10; 1 Peter 3:14-16; 4:14-16.

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear". The exhortation here is applicable to anyone employed in the home, in an office or in any establishment. Servants or employees are to perform their duties in all honesty and faithfulness as Christians. They are to work faithfully under the working conditions with Christian meekness. "**Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward**". Whatever the spiritual condition of the master or the boss, the servant or the employee is to show honour and respect to him and do his work as unto the Lord. "**For this is thank-worthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully**". Christians are called to live and work in peace because the Prince of Peace lives within us. Even if we have to "**endure grief, suffering wrongfully**" under our employers, we are to be conscientious, hard working, honest and christlike in all things related to our duty. "**For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?**" Sinners react negatively to corrections and rebukes when they do wrong. Believers are to take rebukes and "*buffeting*" graciously and with a meek spirit when they know that they are at fault. "**But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God**" (1 Peter 2:20). We may sometimes be blamed for the faults of others by our employers. Or we may erroneously be accused of doing wrong when we have done well with the best intentions. We are to take all rebukes, justified or misplaced, patiently and in the spirit of meekness. That Christian attitude makes our service acceptable in the sight of God.

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