

Peter's theme in this passage is our Christian duty to submit ourselves to the human authorities in our life. If we have to suffer as a result, Peter points us to our great example, Jesus Christ, Who endured suffering without retaliation against His persecutors because He had entrusted Himself to His Father's will.

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

“Dearly beloved, I beseech [beg; exhort] you as strangers [foreigners] and pilgrims [dwellers in a foreign land]” - Peter's appeal is based on the fact that as believers his readers are foreigners living in this world. As such, we should not have a vested interest in the things of this world, realizing that our time here is temporary and we will leave it all behind. Our citizenship is in heaven and that's where our focus should be.

“abstain from fleshly [pertaining to the flesh] lusts [desires; cravings]” - We are to avoid the desires of our flesh when they become sinful. For instance, sex itself is not wrong as long as it's kept within the bounds of marriage; a desire to better oneself is not wrong unless it becomes selfish ambition. “Fleshly” refers not only to our body but to the sinful desires that originate from our human nature. Paul describes the works that the flesh produces in Gal. 5:19-21, contrasting them with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). We often think of the “lusts of the flesh” as relating to sexual desire, but Paul's description reveals a much larger variety of sins that our fleshly lusts produce.

Gal. 5:19-21 *“19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

“which war [to fight; to mount a military campaign] against the soul” - The reason Peter gives that we should avoid fleshly lusts is how destructive they are to our very souls. At best they are counter-productive to living a Godly life. At worst they work to destroy us spiritually (primarily) as well as all other facets of our life. Ask the alcoholic or drug addict that has lost everything (money, job, home, health, spouse, children, friends, etc.) what their substance abuse has cost them. We frequently see in the news the where politicians and celebrities are in trouble because they did not resist their sinful desires toward members of the opposite sex. These are extreme examples, for greed, pride, selfishness, and the other sins stemming from our fleshly desires also have their costs. Sin seeks to destroy us. **Rom. 7:11** *“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.”*

12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

“Having your conversation [conduct; behavior] honest [honorable; admirable; beautiful] among the Gentiles” - Instead of yielding to fleshly sins we should be living our life in a manner that is honorable among the Gentiles (unbelievers). Our behavior should be above reproach, which we cannot do if we are yielding to our fleshly lusts.

“that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation [inspection; investigation]” - Our behavior should be honorable among them, so that when they want to slander us as if we are evildoers they will have to admit to witnessing our good works and thereby glorify God. Peter speaks of the timing being “in the day of visitation.” This phrase could refer to a time when the truth comes out in your circumstances and all involved see the truth. More likely it refers to the time when Christ returns and everyone will have to give an account to Him. In that day those who have spoken against us will have to give God the glory and admit that His people were honorable because they have obeyed Him. Daniel's enemies had to admit that the only fault they could find in him was concerning his God so they manipulated circumstances to make it illegal to worship God. In the end Daniel was proven to be honorable and his enemies were destroyed.

Dan. 6:4-5 *“4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”*

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake” - Peter establishes the principle that we are to obey the human authorities in our lives. Notice the reason he gives: “for the Lord's sake,” that is, for His glory and in obedience to Him. Scripture never advocates rebellion against legitimate authority except for one reason: in order to obey a higher authority. In Acts 5, Peter and the other apostles exercise that option in order to disobey the Jewish council's command that they stop preaching in the name of Jesus Christ. **Acts 5:29** *“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”*

“whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him” - We are obligated to submit to authority, whether it be to the “supreme” human authority (the king) or to local governmental officials. The local officials represented the authority of the king and enforced his laws, so to disobey them was to disobey the king.

“for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” - The governors (local government officials) are responsible to the king enforcing law and order. We Christians should never be guilty of being an evildoer for that would not glorify God. However, if obeying the government would require us to disobey God then “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29b).

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

“For so is the will of God” - It is God's will that we submit to human authority in areas that do not conflict with our submission to Him.

“that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” - In Peter's day Christians were accused of all sorts of things, from misconceptions (such as the rumor that the Lord's Supper involved cannibalism) to outright lies, and sometimes even for standing for righteousness. He is advocating here that Christians should live an obedient life so that these foolish men who are ignorant of the truth of the things of God and would accuse them would be proven wrong, either when the truth was presented in the eyes of men or at God's judgment.

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Peter's context of this passage is that we Christians are pilgrims who are not true citizens of this world (v. 11). Our allegiance and accountability is to God alone, and our allegiance to Him requires us to submit ourselves to human authority even though we are not ultimately accountable to it. Therefore we are not to use our liberty (our accountability to God rather than man) as an excuse for lawlessness or showing disrespect to human authority. The Greek word for "maliciousness" means "ill intent; wickedness; evil; trouble."

17 Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

"Honour all *men*" - Notice that "men" is in italics, indicating that the word has been added by the KJV translators. The original Greek reads "Honor all." Peter is summarizing that we should show honor to all authority, then lists them in the next three sentences.

"Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" - Peter emphasizes three areas of accountability: 1) *Love the brotherhood* – we are accountable to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord; 2) *Fear God* – we should fear (reverence) God as our ultimate authority; 3) *Honor the king* – we are to honor human rulers by submitting ourselves to their authority.

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

Peter shifts from governmental authority to the authority of masters over their slaves. We can compare this to today's employer/employee relationship. We are to submit ourselves to our masters (or employers) "with all fear" (all reverence and respect). While slaves had no choice in who their masters were, we today do have the option of leaving a job if we do not like the working conditions. However, while we are getting paid to work for a person or company we should respect and obey our employer. Our supervisor deserves our respect based on his/her position, not on how he/she treats us. The Greek word for "froward" means "wicked or perverse" or metaphorically "unfair or surly." We are to respect our employer whether they are good to us or treat us unfairly.

19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

The Greek word for "thankworthy" means "to exhibit grace." A man is exhibiting grace if he is being wrongfully punished and he does not retaliate or protest because of his trust in God. By exhibiting grace in the face of unfair treatment he is acting like Jesus, as Peter describes in vs. 21-23.

20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted [beaten] for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?" - If you are receiving a punishment you deserve, you don't deserve any glory even if you are accepting it without protest. You are just getting what you deserve.

"but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" - On the other hand, God is pleased if you are patiently suffering undeserved punishment. Peter explains why this pleases God in the next three verses.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

"For even hereunto were ye called" - We are called to follow Jesus Christ, therefore we are to follow His example.

"because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" - If we want to see an example of suffering wrongfully, we need to look to Jesus Christ and follow His example of how He responded to it.

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" - When Jesus suffered, it was definitely not because of something He did.

"Who, when he was reviled [to use vile and abusive language against], reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" - When people use abusive or vile language against us our human nature wants to respond in kind and retaliate, but Christ did not respond in this way. When someone causes us to suffer, whether physically, emotionally, or otherwise, our nature is to respond with threatening language or actions. Jesus Christ did not seek to retaliate when it happened to Him. Instead, He prayed for His persecutors even as they were crucifying Him ("Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34a).

"but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" - Instead of seeking to obtain justice for Himself, Christ placed Himself in the hands of His Father, trusting Himself to His Father's will. In the garden He had prayed "Not my will but thine be done." Paul quotes from Deut. 32:35 in **Rom. 12:19** "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." When we seek to get justice for ourselves we are saying that we don't trust God to handle things properly. We should be like Christ and trust that our Father will judge righteously.

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" - We should be willing to suffer in obedience to Christ for He was willing to suffer for us by bearing our sins on the cross.

"that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" - Why did He die for us? To set us free from sin so that we would no longer succumb to it ("being dead to sins") and instead live lives of righteousness. We would be sinning if we took things into our own hands when we were mistreated rather than letting God handle it.

"by whose stripes ye were healed" - The stripes Christ endured serves to not only be an example to us but also was part of our redemption that healed us from our sin. His stripes will heal whatever stripes we get from serving Him.

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop [overseer] of your souls" - Left to our own devices we are like sheep going astray, but as believers in Christ we now belong to Christ, our Great Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.