

Good morning, church. Also, I know Gilbert introduced himself and welcomed those of you who are new to our service this morning. I want to do the same and just say hi. I know some of you are here in town for graduation or for other reasons, maybe even Mother's Day perhaps. So glad you're with us. My name is Beau. I'm one of the pastors here. Just thankful you're with us today for however long you're in town here.

So if you have a Bible, turn to 1 Peter. If you have not been here the last couple of weeks, we've just been studying right through this little letter Peter wrote a couple of thousand years ago and seeing together, I think, how incredibly relevant the Word of God always is.

This little letter has been and is for us today as Christians, especially as Christians who are making our way in faith, persevering together on this journey in the midst of a culture that is increasingly hostile to what we believe. So it's been great the last couple of weeks studying this with you. I hope it's been helpful. I hope this morning will be helpful. We'll close it up next week.

So today we're going to take chapter 2, verse 11, and go all the way to chapter 4, verse 11. So buckle up. Dig in with me. We'll look through this letter. Of course if you've been reading and following with us, we've spent the first couple of weeks just seeing how Peter at the beginning of this letter sort of drops anchor and gives the Christians, which is really what we all need, a vision of their salvation, a vision of their hope, a vision of their inheritance.

Then he moves into, "Okay, based on that vision and based on our identity now as Christians, how to live in light of that identity." That's what we talked about last week, being a people who are holy, a people who fear God, who don't fear man, a people who love one another above all in light of our faith. We're loving each other as we await our Savior to return.

So we're going to get in now to really the middle section of the letter, which in many ways is the actual heart of the letter. It's the meat of what he was really wanting to convey. Of course, what we studied the last two weeks is the foundation for what he is going to say today. So having reminded the church of their hope and of their salvation, of their identity through Jesus Christ and his ransoming work, he is now going to say, "Okay, in light of that salvation, set your hope totally on the Lord and his return. Pursue holiness. Put to death what's unrighteous about you. Love each other. Fear God."

Then he is going to get to the pressing concern he really has, which is how do we as a church, as we're living in our identity and living in light of our identity, be in the world, live in the world, but not be or live of it? That's what he is going to write about today. That's what we're going to study. How do we live in right relationship with unbelievers in the midst of a culture where our faith and our belief and hope in Jesus are increasingly marginalized? What does it really look like? What do we do? That's the question we're going to get into today.

So let's pray again. I know Ben prayed. I know Gilbert prayed. Let's pray again because when we read the Bible, it's God's word to us. We don't come to God. God has spoken to us. So we're receiving here. This is not a letter to be studied and parsed apart; it's a word, it's a revelation from God to us to be received and obeyed.

So when we come to the Word, that's the posture we come to. We don't come sort of looking at the Word as an object of God there. We really are the ones who are in that position of just receiving humbly what God has said. So let's just pray for open ears and open eyes, even if you're not a Christian this morning.

So Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you, as we do every week, that you have spoken to us. You've not left us alone in this world to figure out these things we're going to be talking about this morning. So O God, would you help us to hear, help us to receive? Where we're proud and stubborn and prone to not receive, would you humble us right now?

Where we are busy and distracted in mind and not prone to receive, would you, Lord, help us to know there is nothing more important we need to hear than what you have to say to us today? On and on we could go. So Spirit of God, come now and illuminate our hearts. Both together and personally we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, let's just jump right in. I'm going to try to get through this sooner than later. Let's jump in. Verse 11. This is what he writes. You can see here at the beginning of verse 11 he says, "**Beloved...**" That is really a way of sort of transitioning what he has written thus far into a new section of his letter. He says, "**Beloved...**" I just love that that's the way he views the church, as the beloved of God.

"**Beloved, I urge you** [I admonish you] **as sojourners and exiles...**" Here is that language again, this theme that is throughout the letter that this is who we are. We're elect exiles in God. Elect, yes, but sojourners and exiles, nonetheless. "I urge you, therefore, in light of that identity to abstain from the passions, the unbridled impulses of your flesh..." That is what we've already talked about. "...these things which wage war against your soul.

**Keep your conduct among the Gentiles [those who are not the people of God] honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."** That is the day when Jesus Christ returns to judge the living and the dead in his great glory.

So this is really the main point he is making here: "Keep your conduct, as Christians who are in the world and not of it, honorable among the Gentiles, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation." Because the Christians (we're going to read this even as we get into chapter 4) Peter is writing to were living such countercultural lives of holiness in light of their salvation, because they were living as those who had a living hope, they began to be mocked by those who were not Christians who were looking in on their lives and not understanding why they were living the way they were living.

It says in chapter 4, verses 4 and 5, "When you don't join the people in their flood of debauchery, they malign you." This was what was going on in these churches. Indeed, in many of your lives, this is what is going on. The people are looking in on how you're living your life in light of being a Christian, and they're maligning you. They're slandering you.

Part of what Peter is saying here is, "That's okay." That's part of what he is trying to get across. He knows at some level there is nothing that can be done about this rumor mill. People are going to say what they're going to say about Christianity. His point, though, is really the same point Jesus makes. So even as we read this today, you're hearing again echoes of the Sermon on the Mount. Peter is arguing for a steady course of righteousness in our lives as Christians, in our life as a church. In doing so, even the pagans, those who are slandering and persecuting both them and us today, will have to approve of our lives in the end.

That is what he is arguing. He is saying, "They're going to say what they will. You can't do much about that. What you can do is make sure if they're saying something about you, it's because of your good conduct, not because your good conduct isn't really good and your lives aren't honorable." Does that make sense? So that is what he is really aiming for here. Everything he is going to say is going to push toward this direction as we study today.

He is going to say, "Let your lives be so honorable among non-Christians because you're a Christian and because you have a living hope that even if they persecute you, even if they slander you now, on the last day when Jesus returns, they will know what we believed is true." That's what he is arguing for here. That's how we're to live in the world but yet to remain distinct from it. So even if you're reading this more particularly, "Okay, great. I get it. That's the general idea. How do I do that? More specifically, Peter. That's great. It's a general statement and truth. I get it. Can you help me out and get a little bit more specific?"

Indeed, yes, he can. So he is going to answer, "What does this look like to live this way in front of the world in our relationships, in our work places, in our marriages, in our classrooms and dorm rooms, in our neighborhoods? How do we, out of an overflow of our living hope, announce the excellencies, as he talked about in chapter 2, verse 9, of our God in the midst of our culture that is increasingly hostile?"

So he is basically going to say the way you do it in all of these fears of life (he is going to walk through some of them) is by following after the example of our Lord Jesus in suffering and in submission. Bottom line. The way this is going to work itself out in our lives, in our marriages, in our classrooms, in our relationships, in our neighborhoods is in us following after our Lord Jesus Christ's example in the way he submitted to his Father and in the way he suffered at the hands of those who didn't like his life.

So the heart of this letter is a powerful exhortation to make much of God to those around us by submitting and suffering just like Christ did. It is a powerful, powerful encouragement. He is going to get into the weeds a little bit, okay? So let's just pick it up here in verse 13. Here is what he is going to say. Here is how we do this. He starts by saying, **"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution..."** This is really the anchor of everything he is about to say.

He is going to talk about government. He is going to talk about slaves and masters. He is going to talk about husbands and wives. He is going to talk about how we as a church do this. Everything he is going to say in those different categories is rooted in this verse here, verse 13. **"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution..."**

As Christians, one of the primary ways we live evangelistic lives in this day is through a posture of submission, a posture of honoring those above us and around us and below us and everywhere near us. We seek their good. We seek their welfare in every sphere or institution of the life we're a part of. We give up as Christians striving for power. For some of you, that's tough. Some of us. I'll include myself. I'm preaching to myself as well. It's tough.

So we give up striving for power in a worldly sense and authority over other human beings. Instead, as much as we can, we submit to them. We seek their welfare and their good. This is submission. He is saying, "You want to live evangelistically in the midst of a culture that is hostile to your faith? Submit. Be subject for the Lord's sake." This is why we do it.

Because ultimately, we know the Lord is the one behind every human agency, every human institution, every human rendering of authority. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one behind it. He is sovereign. So because we know that, he is saying, "In light of that, we submit and subject ourselves and honor those around us in every way." Obviously there is a time and a place where we do not as Christians subject or

submit ourselves to authorities. So every list we're going to go through here, there is a time and a place where we don't submit.

When anyone (a government, a spouse, an employee, a friend, a coworker, a professor, a band-mate or teammate, a roommate) asks or demands of us to live a life contrary to the commands of our God, we respectfully say no every time, even if that means we suffer for it, which is part of why submission and suffering here hold hands. It's part of why they hold hands. We'll get into that here in a minute. He is saying as much as it is "Christianly" possible, Christians are to submit to and do good to seek the welfare of those around us.

We are to excel at this. This is what we're to excel at as Christians in light of our identity in Christ because perhaps by doing so we'll silence the slanderers around us to some degree. We'll help people see that Christianity, far from making those who believe in it bigoted idiots, actually makes us better citizens. Christianity makes us better spouses. The Spirit of God working in us makes us better neighbors and coworkers and bosses and professors and teachers and leaders and politicians and everything we're doing.

The way of Christianity, the way of Jesus is the best possible way for human flourishing. People need to see that in this day and age. To the degree they see it or don't see it, we can't do anything about that. As Christians, what we can do is make sure we're living in such a way that in every way possible we are portraying to them that this is the truth of Christianity. It doesn't make us idiots; it makes us better citizens. It makes us better husbands and wives and children and sons and daughters and on and on and on.

Peter is going to say this. This is what he is saying. This is what is beautiful about what he is going to say here. This quote is from one of the commentaries I read. "The challenge Peter is going to present to thoughtful Christians..." I hope that categorizes us. We're increasingly thoughtful as a church. "...is to live by and to excel in the good values of society that are consistent with Christian values and to reject those that are not."

So in other words, we're going to take the common grace, the good values of society, and as Christians we're going to excel in those while at the same time rejecting those values of society that are contrary to our faith. So it's this tension we continue to walk in as elect exiles. What he is going to focus in on really is taking the good values of society.

This list we're going to read... Peter didn't make it up. Paul didn't either. You've read these lists in Paul's writings and Peter's writings about husbands and wives and slaves and masters. You know those were common in the writings of the day from non-Christians? These were all over the literature of the day. These lists were called the *household codes of culture* in the ancient Near East, in Greek and Roman life.

So what Peter is going to do is take this household code from the literature of the day, and he is basically going to Christianize it and say, "This is what society is saying. Let me affirm what is good about these household codes and encourage you as Christians to strive and excel in them. At the same time, let me show you and tweak these a bit to make them more distinctively Christian."

His purpose in doing this in these lists is evangelistic, which makes it different than why Paul uses it. If you read Ephesians and Paul talks about these lists, his reason for including those lists, although there is some overlap, is different. Peter is primarily concerned here with evangelism. He is primarily concerned with us exhibiting a certain way of life to non-Christians that makes our faith attractive, even to those who would demean it and to slander us.

So he is going to talk about government. He is going to talk about slavery and employment. He is going to talk about husbands and wives and the church, but he is going to do so in order to show how we, as we live in certain ways in these institutions submitting ourselves to the Father ultimately, are to make much of Jesus Christ and evangelize through them. Does that make sense? So it's just amazing what he does here.

So this is what he says. **"Be subject...to every human institution, whether it to be to the emperor as supreme, or to the governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good."** It's just amazing how pertinent this is. I won't go too in depth here. Matt preached a sermon on God and government back in January you can go listen to.

Peter is saying one of the most profound ways we can glorify God is by subjecting ourselves to those who govern us and even those who govern us we don't agree with. You think Peter agreed with the emperor who would eventually kill him in every way? You have to get in your mind the culture he is writing to. He is still saying this. It's amazing he is saying this. He is saying, "Subject yourself to those who govern us."

The primary ways we do this are by praying, by voting (I hope you voted in the elections this weekend. If you didn't, you can repent about it later and we'll talk), by paying our taxes without grumbling. Some of you chew on that. Seriously. That we just be good citizens in such a way that when the culture looks in on us, they go, "These Christians don't agree with everything, but they sure are honorable in the way they go about disagreeing, in submitting despite their disagreements." This is what he is saying here. We render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and we do it without grumbling, with grateful and humble hearts. It's amazing.

He says in verse 15, **"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** [those who are enslaved to God and not their

own desires], **not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.**" He says, "Honor everyone."

You love Christians differently and you fear God, but you honor everyone. He is making a distinction here. He turns back around and says, "**Honor the emperor.**" Let's get more specific here. So I just pause and ask you... Are you honoring and showing honor to everyone, brothers and sisters, even those politicians who you disagree with, even those making laws you disagree with or that have negative ramifications for your life?

Do you honor fellow voters even within our own church who cast their ballots differently than you? Do you live your lives as if God is ultimately the one behind our government? Or by the way you just spew your poison and your ignorance out, do you belittle our God and thus belittle our faith in the midst of a culture that is increasingly polarized, especially when it comes to this particular issue? This particular issue provides us a unique opportunity in our country to live lives like Peter is talking about.

So as we engage, as we should engage in politics and every other sphere of government, then may the Lord help us to be subject and honor those who are above us. This is the first category. Then he goes into verse 18. He moves into servants, slaves. Now I just want to say a quick word about slavery. We've talked about this before. When we think of slavery, we think about American slavery and the American Revolution and even before what came from that, which was sinful and horrible and based on the color of skin above all else.

That's not the same thing as what was happening in the first century. Not to say what was happening in the first century was all that great, but it's different. I just need you to know that. Especially as a diverse congregation, we have to be able to talk about these things. Slavery, when Peter was writing, was different than the slavery that immediately comes to our minds. So in order to even read these things, you have to sort of get your mind in a different place than where it would be historically based on our own country, okay?

When he writes to slaves, he is writing to slaves who for one reason or another, probably not for ethnic reasons, had become slaves. Some of them were captured in war. Some of them had decided within themselves to sell themselves into slavery to make a living or to pay a debt. No doubt there were masters who were cruel. Paul actually writes about this and says to the masters, "Hey, you need to remember you have a master in heaven too. So if you're tempted to belittle or to treat your slaves in a demeaning way, you need to think about that your master is in heaven."

As we talked about last week, he cannot just kill your body; he can drag your soul to hell, which is very powerful. The fact that Peter is writing here to slaves... He is not affirming slavery. The fact that he even addresses slaves in this letter is uniquely Christian. Most letters and household codes like this didn't even address slaves because slaves were thought of as less than human. So they weren't even worth writing about. They weren't human fully, and so they didn't even have a moral compass.

So what Peter is writing here is he is saying, "No, these slaves are our brothers and sisters. They're made in the image of God. They're fully human. So therefore, I'm going to write to them. I'm going to say some really beautiful and powerful things to them." His purpose here is not to write an essay on the evils of slavery. He is not trying to speak to how this institution could go away. He is just assuming it's a reality in the lives of those people. So into that reality he is writing how they should live as Christians, subjecting themselves and trusting the Lord.

Later on, as we'll see in American history or in history in general, the seeds Peter and Paul planted as they talked about slavery in the New Testament would actually be the very seeds that would blossom into this reality that would dismantle the institution of slavery all together. I'd love to talk with you about that offline, but what he is saying here is, **"Servants [those of you who are slaves], be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing [brothers and sisters], when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly."**

Then he goes into it. "For what credit is it if, when you sin, when you do something wrong and you're beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and you still suffer for it and you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of our God. For to this you have been called..." If you could just pause for a minute and imagine how helpful and comforting and yet at the same time how profoundly challenging this exhortation would have been to our brothers and sisters in Peter's day who were slaves and even in our own day, if you could just feel the force of what he is saying.

It has been a long time since I was preparing a message and I was reading through and I just wept. I read this this week, and I really started to ponder our brothers and sisters even currently who are enslaved and what Peter writes to them and to think about how difficult what he just wrote is, how challenging it is. It just broke me up. Kimberly called me to talk to me about something, and I was just crying right in the middle of studying this, thinking about, and praying about even today our brothers and sisters around the world who this is what God would say to them in the midst of their suffering, in the midst of their slavery.

He would say, "Brother, sister, keep enduring, not just when your master is good and treats you well, but even especially when they're treating you poorly and unjustly." Unbelievably powerful. He says, "Absorb the evil and the suffering they're exhausting upon you. Don't revile. Don't threaten. Keep entrusting

yourself to God." Why? Because this is what Jesus did for us. That's what he says in the end of verse 21. He says, "Because this is what you've been called to why? Because Christ has also suffered for you and for me, leaving us an example so that we might follow in his steps."

He says, "**He [Jesus] committed no sin...**" He was doing good. He was subjecting himself to the human authorities because he knew ultimately he was subjecting himself to God. "**...neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued...**" What? "**...entrusting himself to...**" Who? The Father, who judges justly and will one day take care of things.

**"He himself [Jesus] 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. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."** So he doesn't just give these slaves a hard word. He also then says, "The power for doing this, the power to be able to live like this, especially when you're unjustly being persecuted, comes from remembering that this is exactly what Jesus Christ endured and suffered for your sake so he could bring you to God."

Just think about it later this week, how powerful this word is. You think about those who are in slavery, sex slavery, just slavery in factories all over the world, our brothers and sisters, and how this speaks to them. It's unbelievably powerful and challenging. It's so much so that it's really a stretch for me to sort of apply this to us. I think the best way to apply it to us would sort of be in terms of just employment because many of these slaves were operating much like indentured servants. They were basically employees of these masters.

So if we wanted to, sort of in a non-trite way, try to apply some of this to us, it would help you to think through okay, so in your place of an employment... Maybe you're an employer. Maybe you're just the employed. Is your attitude toward those who are persecuting and threatening you at your job like this? They're not even beating you. They're not even doing the things Peter is writing about. They're just saying bad things about you or giving you bad grades, which is not a small thing, but compared to what we're talking about at some level, it really is. It's helpful to have this perspective.

Is this same attitude the one you have toward the mistreatment you receive at your workplace, toward the way your boss is toward you or your coworker is toward you? Do you revile back? I talk to you well enough. I go to lunch with enough of you. Every one of you complains about your job to some degree. Some of you are complaining in a godly way and just saying, "It's hard. Lord, how long?"

This is what people in the world talk about: their jobs. You can loosen up. I know every person we talk to... Only the ones who are managing the others are the ones who have no problem. You hear this all the time. It's like, "Great. You complain about your boss. Then *you* become the boss, and then your employees come to me and complain about you." So this is just how it works in the world.

So is this your attitude? Do you revile back? Do you join in with the threats and the slander around the water cooler? Do you stop working hard? When they ask you to do something and don't thank you or don't appreciate you, do you just start surfing the Web and watching videos on YouTube because that's what you can do? Let's just get really into the nitty-gritty here. These are the kinds of attitudes he is getting at. What do you do? How are you living your life in the workplace even when your boss is a jerk? That's what he is saying. Is your tone in your heart deceitful? None of these things are okay for Christians.

I was in Barnes & Noble yesterday with my kiddos. I had to get some new shoes, and Haddon wanted to go to the train set. This magazine, *Us Weekly*... This was on *Us Weekly*. I thought about this in light of this. Listen to this. This is this week. "They called her Big Bird and plotted to get rid of her: How Ann Curry's coworkers tortured her and why she won't forgive Matt Lauer."

What he is talking about is the opposite of that culture. As Christians, even if we're the ones who are being stabbed in the back and "tortured" at work, we do forgive. I don't know Ann so I'm not making a statement about her personally. I'm just saying this is just a great example from our culture to say the opposite of that is what he is saying we work toward as Christians, how we live as Christians, how we think as Christians. We don't do that.

We entrust ourselves to the Father, and in doing so, hopefully our coworkers will go, "Wow, why don't you ever slander the boss in front of me?" You'll have an opportunity to tell them. That's part of what he is saying here, and it's just terribly convicting. Then he goes on to submission among husbands and wives. So he says, "**Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands...**" So he is just moving through some of these categories. "**...so that even if some do not obey the word...**" So he is talking to wives primarily who are married to non-Christians.

He says, "...even if they don't obey the word, that by your conduct they will be won without a word. When they see your respectful and your pure conduct, they will know something of our God." So he says the same thing he just said to the slaves. "Submit to your husbands. Not just those who are godly; even those who are ungodly. Not just those who are romantic; even those who are not romantic." Why? So they possibly (especially those who are non-Christians) would become Christians.

Again, his concern here is how we as Christians interface with those who are not believers, even our own spouses. That's what he is writing through. He says (this is a quote), "Peter's concern is that the church not be known among culture for its production of rebellious wives who have an attitude of superiority." You can just imagine a wife who has a husband who is not a Christian and how condescending you can easily become.

It goes both ways, I know, but he is talking to wives here, so I'm talking to wives. He is saying, "That's not what Peter wants for us to produce as the church, but women instead who, because they know God will reward them and will set everything right at the end of the days, demonstrate the virtue of gentle submission where Christianly possible."

This happens primarily through your lifestyle, not through your manipulating words or your manipulating clothing, which is what he goes into next, and outward appearance. **"Do not let your adorning be external..."** That's what the culture does in order to control, and oftentimes women will use their external adornment to control their husbands. That's not what we do as Christians.

He is just getting into it this morning. **"...the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry..."** If you don't like gold, silver, whatever it is for you. **"...or the clothing you wear..."** Don't let those adorn you. Don't let those be what you identify yourself by. Don't let that be the foot you're leading with in your marriages. You're trying to evangelize your husband who is not a Christian or is a Christian but doesn't act like one.

He is saying, **"...but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."** Same thing he was saying to the slaves. **"For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."** When you hear Kimberly call me *lord*, this is the text we use. I just want you to know that. (I'll just absorb that one later. It's worth it.)

He says, "You're in good company. This is how the people of God have always done it. And you are her children. You are Sarah's children if you do good and you don't fear anything that is frightening." So wives, "Are you one of Sarah's children?" is a great question to ask. Could you say this about your own conduct as a wife?

Whether your husband is a Christian or not, romantic or not, honorable in your mind or not, do you try to win your husband over by hoping in God in your respectful and pure conduct, or by trying to manipulate him through your words or through the bedroom or through your external appearance or something else? That's what he is saying here.

As Christians who are interfacing with non-Christians, we have a responsibility as spouses to act honorably, to seek the welfare of our spouse, to subject ourselves to them for the Lord's sake. It's a challenging word especially to those of you who are wives who live your life justifying your behavior toward your husband based on his behavior toward you. Peter will have none of it, and therefore, God ultimately will have none of it.

That's not going to hold up in court on the last day. I know it's a reality. I know it's the natural place to go. The Lord will not have any of it. Your behavior toward your spouse is not justified by their behavior toward you. It's challenging. He turns around. I know you're waiting. He is going to talk to the husbands too, okay? He says something just as challenging to the husbands in verse 7. He says, "**Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way...**"

Husbands, this word *understanding* means you have personal insight about your wife that leads to loving and considerate care. In other words, you pay attention to your wife. You care. You're thoughtful. You love her. You know it's Mother's Day. You know it's her birthday. I'm just giving general, low-bar expectations here, not even big ones. He is saying, "**...live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life.** You do this, brothers, so your prayers and my prayers may not be hindered."

I'll just read from John Henderson. This is our premarital counseling book that will have plenty to say for those of us who are past premarital life. This is what John says about these verses. He is my counselor. Many of you have seen him. He says, "Since she is a woman, Peter says be gentle and tender, as with someone weaker. In other words, don't you dare intimidate her with your size and strength, but you protect her. Don't force your way because you're bigger and stronger, but handle her with gentleness. Husbands should use their size and their strength to serve and guard their wives, not threaten and control them."

Then he goes on to say, "Just in case a husband might be tempted to view and treat his wife as less important than himself, Peter commands the husbands to show honor. God takes this so seriously that he will refuse the prayers of any man who deals dishonorably with his wife. In a way, God is telling husbands this: If you will not show your wife honor, neither will I show you honor. If you will not live with her in an understanding way, neither will I live with you in an understanding way. If you will not hear her petitions, neither will I hear your petitions. I receive you in the same way you receive my daughter." It's convicting.

So husbands, how are you receiving God's daughter in your marriage? Are you understanding? Do you honor her? Do you view her as your equal? Or are you condescending and abusive with your words or otherwise, negligent, heartless, thoughtless, careless at the end of the day? Brothers, some of you wonder

why God seems distant. You wonder why you come in here week after week, and you just can't seem to draw near to the Lord. I'm not saying for sure this is the reason, obviously, but this is a good place to look if you haven't looked here.

Maybe there is some repentance to do for your marriage in the way you've treated your wife or not treated her. Maybe the Lord is just waiting for you to humble yourself and to do that before he draws near to you because he loves the humble. Again, listen. This is how we live in a way as Christians that says something about the reputation and the excellencies of our God to the world. This is the culture in our marriages, even those marriages where your spouse isn't a Christian. This is the main part. I don't want you to miss the forest for the trees we're going through. That's part of my concern here.

Then he says the whole church should basically submit to each other and honor each other and love each other. He says, "**Finally** [in summary], **all of you...**" Okay, if you didn't have one of these categories, all of us now as a church "**...have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love...**" That is right here in the middle of this list. Love.

He sort of makes a pyramid with this list. He goes mind, heart, brotherly love. Then he comes back to the heart, mind. It's just this beautiful way to say these things. He says, "**Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling.** We don't live that way as Christians. On the contrary, we bless. For this is what we were called to, that we may obtain a blessing."

So in other words, he is saying just as we have received as Christians an unmerited blessing through Christ and our inheritance in him, we should just bless others, whether they merit it or not. We should honor them. We should submit. This is how we live in the world and not of it in a way that exalts the reputation of Christ. Then he quotes Psalm 34 to validate everything he has just said. You can tell he has Psalm 34 in his mind as he writes this letter because last week as we saw, "If you've tasted and seen the Lord is good..." Psalm 34. So he has it in his mind, and he is applying it as he goes through the letter.

He says in verse 10, "**For 'Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit...'**" That's what he just got through saying. "**...let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace [submission, honoring] and pursue it.**" Why? "**For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.**"

This is the promise we have as elect exiles. This is what empowers us to do good, knowing as we live this way the eyes of the Lord are toward us. He draws near to us even if evil is being done to us. He still draws

near to us. This is why we seek the welfare of our city and our government and our neighbors and our spouses and everybody the Lord has put around us.

Then he transitions in verse 13. So he is sort of done with that thought, and he says, "[In light of all that], **who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?**" In other words, by doing what is good, you will minimize your suffering perhaps because of your virtuous lives. Perhaps. So he says, "So who is there to harm you if you're doing good? If you're doing good, it's less likely you're going to be persecuted. It's less likely they're going to marginalize you and do those things to you. If you're being good and excelling at these things even the culture affirms as good, surely that is going to help you out."

Then he says in verse 14, "**But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake** [for doing what is good because you love Jesus and you're trying to obey him] **you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared** [brothers and sisters] **to make a defense to anyone who asks for you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered** [when you are reviled], **those who revile your good behavior in Christ eventually may be put to shame.**"

They're shaming you now, but you live this way, and eventually they're going to be put to shame. "**For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will...**" For many of you, for many of us, maybe for all of us moving forward in this culture, it will be God's will. "**...than for doing evil.**" So he is saying again, "If you're going to suffer, don't make it because you're an idiot. Don't make it because you're unrighteous. Don't make it because you're not paying attention and living in the ways I just outlined. Make it because you're doing those things, despite the fact that you're doing those things. Make it that."

That is just incredible. Again, Jesus is the example here. How do we do that? You should feel the weight of that. This gets tiring to live this way, does it not? You're not getting pats on the back. You're not getting rewarded by culture, which some of us are just still addicted to. We live off of that. When it goes away, we don't know what to do. When you're not getting that by your culture or by your neighbors or by anyone, then how do we persevere in this when it gets hard? Again, he just says, "Keep looking to Jesus. He is the example in all of this."

For Christ also suffered unjustly and for doing good. Jesus did nothing but good, unlike you and me. He did everything right, and he still suffered "**...once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous...**" Why? "**...that he might bring us to God...**" The next four verses are going to get a little weird on the surface, but I just want you to stay with me. The point he is making here is we suffer well because we follow the example of Jesus, and we need to have the mindset of Jesus.

He is going to get there a different way. He says, "Jesus was put to death in the flesh but made alive. He was raised from the dead in the Spirit, in which after he was raised from the dead he went and he proclaimed to the spirits in prison," which is one of the weirder verses in the New Testament. It's at different places in the New Testament, and it's from this intertestamental literature where they believed there were these spirits from Genesis 6 that had been put in prison because of their disobedience to God.

Basically what Peter is saying here is Jesus suffered. In fact, he was crucified. He was raised from the dead. When he got up from the dead, he went to those spirits that were somewhere, and he proclaimed through his resurrection he was Lord. He had finished it. Judgment was indeed coming. He says, "These spirits were in prison because they didn't obey formerly when God's patience waited in the days of Noah." So he brings in Noah. To the readers it would have been, "Oh, I know what he is talking about." To us, it's like, "What is he talking about? Why is he going to Noah in the middle? What are you doing, Peter?"

He says, **"...while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water."** Here is the point I think he is making. He is saying, "Church, you're just like Noah and his family. You are a persecuted minority suffering in the hands and at the hands of an unjust majority who are controlled by their flesh and by disobedient spirits. Just like God saved Noah, just like God saved and kept that little minority of his people, just like he did that through their faith and then he used the flood as a visible demonstration of that salvation, God is going to save us too."

What a comforting illustration for a minority who is being persecuted. He is saying, "Baptism, like the flood, is the visible expression of the salvation God has through faith in the resurrection of his Son pronounced upon us," which is what he says next. He says, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, the story and the illustration of Noah, now saves you through faith and the resurrection of Jesus."

So it's not our faith in baptism. Baptism doesn't save us, just like the flood didn't save Noah. Noah's faith in God that then demonstrated itself in God's salvation through the flood is what saved Noah. In the same way, our faith in the resurrection of Jesus, which we demonstrate visibly and publicly through being baptized now, then validates that we're saved. This is going to be true.

This is what he is saying here. He is saying, **"...not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."** Jesus Christ has caused us to be born again through a living hope through his resurrection. He is saying the same thing here. **"...Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."** Jesus is Lord. Everything is under his feet now, even those spirits that were disobedient that he went back and preached to and reminded them they were.

This is fierce. Peter just got fierce. Here is the whole point of the section. It comes back. Since Jesus suffered in the flesh for doing good and being obedient, as we look to our own suffering, he says, "**...arm yourselves with the same way of thinking...**" In other words, even if you're suffering for doing good, arm yourself with the same mindset, the same resolve that was in Christ. The mindset is one that says, "I am going to be obedient to my God and Father and stay faithful to him even if it means I suffer for it." That's the heart of what he is saying. We do good as much as we can. We submit as much as Christianly possible.

Even when we do good and we suffer, we have to have in our minds the mind of Christ, which says, "I am going to keep doing good. I am going to keep being obedient to my Father, even if it means I suffer for it. It doesn't matter what they do to me. I'm going to stay faithful. I'm going to stay the course. I'm going to keep entrusting myself to the Father all the way to the end."

This is the heart of Peter's entire exhortation here. Can you imagine how helpful this is for Christians who are being persecuted? This is what I'm going to say to you when I come to your office or when I have that conversation with you and you're being persecuted. The same thing. I'm going to take you to the text. I'm going to remind you what I remind myself of. We have to have this mind and this resolve Christ had.

"**...for whoever has suffered in the flesh** [for doing good and being obedient to God] **has ceased from sin...**" That doesn't mean we don't sin; it means we have made up our minds that we're through with sin. That's what he is saying here. The person who is saying, "I'm going to suffer and I'm going to be holy even if I'm being persecuted," you've made up your mind. "I'm through with this. I'm through with sin. My chips are on the table, and I'm going this direction. The direction is after Jesus Christ and the way he led out for us."

Unbelievably powerful. So he is saying, "Keep living for the will of God, brothers and sisters, even if it means you suffer. Whatever it takes." Then he says, "**For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do...**" In other words, church, brothers and sisters, we've spent enough time and wasted enough time giving our lives to the things the world has to offer. We've spent enough time doing that. "**...living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.**

**With respect to this** [the people who are doing them, your neighbors and coworkers and teammates and dorm-mates and roommates] **they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people they are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.**"

In other words, what he is saying is even people who have died are still going to be judged. Judgment day is coming, and you will be vindicated. You will be given glory and not shame. You will trade your shame here for glory in front of God, the glory he gives. It's amazing. Then he ends by saying, **"The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded..."** Those are the same two virtues we talked about last week. Do you remember?

"Set your hope totally on the grace that is going to appear in Jesus Christ. Get your mind ready and be self-controlled." He says it again. **"...for the sake of your prayers. Above all..."** Same thing we said last week. **"...keep loving one another [church] earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."** Then he talks about some of the ways this love works its way out.

**"Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."**

That is a powerful section of a letter, and there is so much to work through in that and think about. I just trust as we chew on that this week, even as we sing now and come to the Lord's Table, some of these things would surface in our hearts. You just take a deep breath and go, "That brother is serious about us persevering." Yes, he is. Not me. I was thinking about Peter, but I am too.

Let me just close by asking you a few questions. Then we'll come to the Table. One commentary I read summed it up this way. He says, "Though non-Christians don't know it, there is coming a day when God will come back in person. He will return in the person of his royal son. At that moment of his arrival, those who are not following Christ who have watched our lives ought to be saying to themselves, 'Wow. Those Christians were right.'" That's part of the big point he is making here.

So brothers and sisters, would the non-Christians around you say that about you today if he came back? He might. Would they say that about your life? Is this the way, friends, in your homes and at your workplaces and in your classrooms and on your sports teams, you're living your life? In what venues of your life would those around you be surprised to learn you're a Christian? Is there anybody in your life who, if you told them you were a Christian, would be surprised because of the way you live your life in front of them or you don't live your life in front of them?

In what ways does your life look no different than your non-Christian friends, neighbors, and coworkers? In your speech, in your grumbling, in your submission (or lack thereof) to authority? In what ways are you

hoping in the same things as those not following Christ? Maybe that is why they never ask you for the hope that is within you because they assume it's the same hope that is within them. In what ways maybe even today are you tempted to forsake God and to forsake holiness because you don't want to suffer?

I'm not talking about being thrown in prison. I'm just talking about people saying bad things about you primarily. In what ways are you controlled by the fear of man instead of the fear of God? This is a great opportunity to repent of some of those things, to ask the Lord to help us, to strengthen us. As we come to the Table, we remember the Lord Jesus Christ, who as Peter said, **"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree [to bring us to God], that we might die to sin and live to righteousness."**

Only him and what he has done and us remembering who he is and what he has done will motivate us to persevere to the end. To the degree we see that Jesus has submitted himself to the Father and suffered for us is to the degree we'll submit and suffer for the sake of others in the hopes that they might know our God.

So Father, we thank you for just line after line of hope and truth and encouragement and exhortation Peter has written for us. As we come to the Table now, O God, might you give us a clearer and more beautiful vision in our hearts of the beauty of what Christ has done in giving his body and his blood on the tree to bring us to you, that we might live to righteousness and die to everything else. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.