

An In-Depth Study of the First Letter of Apostle Peter

[Part 4]

1 Peter 2:13-15 [NIV] *“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, 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 men.”*

The key words in this passage of scripture are “for the Lord’s sake.”

When Peter told his readers to submit to civil authorities, he was speaking of the Roman Empire under Nero, a notoriously cruel tyrant.

Acts 5:29 [NIV] *“Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!”*

Obviously Peter was **not** telling believers to compromise their consciences.

In most aspects of daily life it is possible and desirable for Christians to live according to the law of their land.

Today some Christians still live with freedom to worship their Creator God, but even in such countries hostility towards Christians is increasing every year.

Other Christians live under repressive governments but still are to co-operate with their physical rulers as far as their consciences will allow.

We do this “for the Lord’s sake,” that the Good News that Jesus Christ brought from the Heavenly Father will continue to be preached to this darkened world.

Preached by words and by lives that are submissive to the rule of Jesus Christ, that rule of love and sacrifice for the good of other human beings.

If we are to be persecuted as Christians it should be for obeying God and **not** for breaking moral or civil laws.

For more on the relationship that a Christian should have with government read **Romans 13:1-14**.

1 Peter 2:16 [NIV] *“Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.”*

Our lives as true Christians should reflect a freedom from the fear of death and the mind of a bond slave of our Master Jesus Christ.

First and foremost in our minds should be the fulfilling of the will of our Master Jesus Christ, read **Matthew 28:16-20**, as part of the will of Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father.

Any Christian doctrine can be perverted into an excuse for evil.

The doctrine of grace can be perverted into an excuse to continue to sin.

Romans 6:1-4 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all*

*of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may **live a new life.***”

Grace is given to allow us to live a new life that is sin-free **not** for an excuse to become more sinful.

The doctrine of the new life to come after the return of Jesus Christ can be perverted into a reason for neglecting life in this present world.

Luke 10:30-37 [NIV] *“In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, **he took pity on him.** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ **“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”***”

The priest and the Levite were so wrapped up in their religious lives that they ignored the physical needs of their neighbour.

Jesus Christ told them to change such neglect of others.

First and foremost in the life of Jesus Christ, when here on earth, was the physical as well as the spiritual needs of other human beings.

Christian freedom and Christian living must always be conditioned by Christian responsibility.

1 Peter 2:17 [NIV] *“**Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.**”*

To understand how we “*show respect to everyone*” we need to remember what Paul told the church at Philippi.

Philippians 2:1-4 [NIV] *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.**”*

When we read further in this letter we are told that this would be following the example of our Master and only Saviour.

“Love the brotherhood of believers”

1 John 4:7-12 [NIV] *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; **but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.**”*

The love of God in us is **only** “made complete” or mature if we love other human beings.

John 13:34-35 [NIV] *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Expressing this love for other human beings inside or outside the Christian fellowship is a powerful witness for Jesus Christ, proving to others we truly are His disciples, students learning His new way of living.

How do we as Christians show this love in our lives?

Such love is only revealed **by our actions**.

By helping others when it's **not** convenient.

By giving when it hurts us financially.

By devoting energy to others' welfare rather than our own.

By absorbing hurts from others **without** complaining or fighting back.

This kind of loving is very hard to do.

This is why people will notice when you love others in this way and know that you must be receiving power from a supernatural source.

To fully understand such love read **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**.

“Fear God” –

Proverbs 1:7 [NIV] *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”*

The Hebrew word translated “fear” is “yirâh” refers to reverence towards the being who is our Creator and Sustainer of life, but **not** associated with terror.

Romans 1:18-20 [NIV] *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*

When we with open minds, not minds clouded by Satan's “*delusion of evolution*” [see our articles on the subject of ‘*Evolution*’], we can see the eternal power and divine nature of God through this wonderful physical created world.

Romans 1:21-27 [NIV] *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is for ever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”*

When we do **not** have a reverent fear of our Creator God then our minds are darkened and our lives are given over to unnatural lusts.

1 Peter 2:18-20 [NIV] *“Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”*

When Peter wrote this letter many Christians were household slaves.

It would be easy to submit to masters who were kind to them, but Peter encouraged loyalty and perseverance even in the face of unjust treatment.

In the same way Christians today should submit to those who employ us whether they are kind or harsh in their treatment of us as employees.

Also read **Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-24; Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:32-36.**

1 Peter 2:21 [NIV] *“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*

Even if we face unjust treatment at work, if we as Christians build up a reputation of people who always do an honest day’s work for their employer it may become a way in which God brings our employer and fellow employees to accepting Jesus Christ and His way of living.

Philippians 2:6-8 [NIV] *“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”*

This is the humble serving nature that Jesus Christ has that we are to follow.

A way of life that will lead to personal sacrifice of our will and personal desires.

1 Peter 2:22-23 [NIV] *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did **not** retaliate; when he suffered, he made **no** threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”*

Jesus Christ never sinned, yet He suffered so that we could be set free from sin.

We today may suffer for many reasons –

Some suffering is the direct result of our own sins against God and our own body and minds.

Some suffering is the result of foolishness.

Some suffering is the result of living in a polluted and satanic-influenced world.

Peter is writing about suffering that is the result of doing good to other people.

Good that may cause people to feel personally guilty and then lash out in an attempt to relieve that guilty feeling.

Our goal in life should be to face any suffering we encounter with patience, calmness and confidence that God is in control of the final outcome of our lives.

1 Peter 2:24 [NIV] *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”*

Always remember that Jesus Christ died for **our** sins, He died in our place so that we would **not** have to suffer the punishment we rightly deserve.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

Every human being has sinned and failed to deserve eternal life, being glorified by God.

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

All we earn, even when we in our own power seek to live a “good life”, is eternal death.

Only when we accept the death of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, as a substitute for our deserved death can we receive the gift of eternal life from God.

1 John 1:8-10 [NIV] *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

It is part of Satan’s deception for us to consider that we are without sin in our lives.

Confession of our sins to God is the **only** hope we have to be freed from the consequences of our sinful lives.

Hebrews 3:12-13 [NIV] *“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*

The deceitfulness of sin could cause us to turn our backs on God and lead us on the path to eternal oblivion.

1 Peter 2:25 [NIV] *“For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”*

This verse gives us two of the precious names for God.

“**Shepherd**” – the word shepherd is one of the oldest descriptions given to the true Creator God.

Psalms 23:1 [NIV] *“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”*

King David looked upon God as the shepherd of his life providing for all his needs.

Isaiah 40:10-11 [NIV] *“See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. **He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.**”*

Isaiah foretells the coming of Jesus Christ as a shepherd who would take care of his flock.

John 10:11 [NIV] *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

Jesus took on the title of “the good shepherd” who would lay down His life for His sheep.

Mark 6:34 [NIV] *“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like **sheep without a shepherd**. So he began teaching them many things.”*

Jesus looks on people who do **not** know Him as people **without** a shepherd to take care of them.

John 21:15-17 [NIV] *“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “**Feed my lambs.**” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “**Take care of my sheep.**” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “**Feed my sheep.**”*

Just as Jesus Christ gave Peter the task of feeding and caring for his sheep, every Christian also has this great privilege.

1 Peter 5:1-4 [NIV] *“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: **Be shepherds of God’s flock** that is under your care, **servicing as overseers**, not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but **eager to serve**; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but **being examples to the flock**. And when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”*

All Christian ministers are to act as caring and serving shepherds to their congregations.

Indeed, the word shepherd tells us most vividly of the ceaseless vigilance and self-sacrificing love of God for those who are part of His flock. [**Psalms 100:3**]

“Overseer” – the Greek word is “*ēpiskōsōs*” referring to one who is mature spiritually and an experienced servant of God, the word also indicates the character of the job of work to be undertaken.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 [NIV] *“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. **Now the overseer must be above reproach**, the husband of but one wife, **temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach**, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must **not be a recent convert**, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also **have a good reputation with outsiders**, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*

This passage of scripture describes what an overseer should be like.

Not every Christian will mature enough in this life to hold such a position of authority and responsibility.

To be a church leader, an overseer brings with it heavy responsibility because the church belongs to the living God.

Church leaders should **not** be elected because they are popular, nor should they be allowed to push their way into the office.

Instead, they should be chosen by the church because of their respect for the truth, both in what they believe and in how they live their lives.

All Christians should strive to fulfil the qualifications of an overseer that requires effort and self-discipline.

The strength to live according to these strict guidelines will **only** be found in the working of the Holy Spirit in a person.

Titus 1:7-9 [NIV] *“Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. **He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**”*

Paul gives a similar list of qualifications to Titus, and adds then the reason why only such a person should be given the task of a church overseer. [v10-11].

Jesus Christ in His life on earth qualified perfectly for the office of overseer.

Hebrews 4:15-16 [NIV] *“**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**”*

Jesus as our High Priest [Old Testament position of overseer] is perfect in every way to take very good care of our future lives [souls].

Hebrews 7:23-28 [NIV] *“Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but **because Jesus lives for ever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.** Such a high priest meets our need, one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. **For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect for ever.**”*

A description of the perfect eternal overseer [high priest] for every human being.