



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: 1 PETER – LIVING GOD'S GRACE •

1 PETER 2:13–23 • 2/25/2024

MAIN POINT

Trust God in every circumstance.

INTRODUCTION

What are your best tips for enduring a long road trip?

Discuss examples of endurance outside of the Christian faith—things that require physical or mental endurance.

Share an example of a time when you had to endure something and what that experience was like for you. What motivated you to endure during that time?

Have you heard of the Ironman race? It's a grueling event where participants swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, and finish up by running a marathon (26.2 miles)—all in less than 17 hours. Many people describe the race as the ultimate test of physical endurance. You may never run the Ironman, but you still face challenges each day that require physical, emotional, and mental stamina. For some of us, running a marathon (or a half-marathon) would test the limits of our endurance; yet for others among us, it may only take 15 minutes in the dentist's chair. Most people find it easier to endure when there's an end in sight. We think: I can make it one more mile. It'll only take ten more minutes. This time next year, it will all be behind me. As followers of Christ, difficult situations can test our endurance when it comes to trusting God. Maybe we can trust Him during the first few days after a traumatic experience, such as losing a job. But what if those stressful days stretch out to weeks or months—even a year? It's harder to endure in our trust when we can't see the finish line.

UNDERSTANDING

What conditions make it hard for you to submit to authority?

First Peter 2:21-22 says, “You were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps. He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.” In what ways can these verses seem less like an unattainable standard and more like a goal for how we can endure in faith?

In 1 Peter 2:13-23 we see a much different set of circumstances than what we encounter in life today but a central message that applies to us all—how people of faith are supposed to operate with their culture. As believers we are called to obey our leaders as much as we can. If it is clearly sin, we are obviously not to support or participate, but at times it is harder for us to discern these situations because our

circumstances aren't always as obvious as pagan idolatry. Our faith has to endure in the midst of our cultural context. We are transformed through salvation, but it doesn't stop there. We continue to grow. The reality is that we aren't always going to hit the mark in how we endure through our suffering, but we have a goal—being Christlike. He is the goal, and this life is a process of learning to endure.

READ 1 PETER 2:13-17.

How do we submit to and honor leaders we disagree with?

What emotions do you experience at the thought of submitting to leaders you disagree with?

In your view, what are the implications of Peter's instructions in verses 13-14 in the following areas of authority: (1) federal government; (2) local government; (3) traffic laws; (4) copyright laws; (5) taxes; (6) other _____.

Peter urged the first-century Christians facing the hardship of persecution and discrimination for their faith to concentrate on doing good and not evil. He pointed out that this required submitting to and honoring earthly authorities, even those who practiced cruelty toward them. Peter held up Jesus as their example, who Himself endured undeserved persecution by entrusting Himself to God, who judges justly.

READ 1 PETER 2:18-20.

How can we understand and apply God's command to submit in these verses?

How do these commands apply to your life, specifically?

When have you endured persecution or hostility because of your faith?

How have you changed as a result of experiencing persecution or hostility for the faith?

There is a powerful principle behind this passage: Your circumstances do not define you. Your relationship with God through Christ is what defines you. No matter what your circumstances, you have the opportunity to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus. There is nothing fair about slavery. The Bible never promises us that life will be fair. Peter's teaching on slavery challenges us to see Christ as so precious that we would be willing to suffer anything if it would magnify Jesus. Set your hope completely on Jesus and not on your circumstances (c.f. 1 Peter 1:13). In fact unfair circumstances are a huge opportunity to proclaim the gospel!

READ 1 PETER 2:21-23.

What are your best tips for enduring our culture's hostility against Christians? (This question is a logical follow-up to the previous question. Be mindful to point members back to the biblical text throughout the discussion.)

How can we live by Jesus' example when we're persecuted?

What are your best tips for cultivating a deeper trust in God?

If we are suffering and become angry or bitter, it reveals idols in our hearts. It shows us that we have become entitled to whatever it is we are not getting. To feel entitled to something is to worship it. Peter points out that Jesus "entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly" (v. 23). In other words, Jesus worshiped the Father, not His right to be treated justly. We learn to follow Jesus' example by cultivating a deeper trust in God, which happens through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, stewardship,

fasting, worship, Scripture memorization, confession, submission, community, and Bible study.

APPLICATION

Why is it important to consider how we respond to personal suffering and injustice?

How might we as a group help one another strengthen our faith and endurance?

What in your life is requiring endurance right now? Spend some time this week thinking through how you can be intentional in trusting God with every aspect of this situation, no matter how long it lasts.

PRAYER

Lord You are worthy of our trust in all situations.

COMMENTARY

Peter wrote to Christians in regard to their relation to civic law. (Other New Testament passages on this theme are: Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-7; and Titus 3:1-8.) The human authority, that is, any authority set up among people, ideally seeks the highest good for all people—protection, fairness, justice, and peace. In order for that to happen, the citizens must obey the laws and respect those who enforce them. The term human authority would not refer to each individual law but to the institutions that make and enforce the laws, therefore making it possible to submit to the institutions and still disobey the laws, if those laws infringe on God's law or breach God's will. Human authority covers any and all authority figures in one's life. The reason to obey the governing authorities is because of the Lord. Because of believers' reverence for and submission to Jesus, they are to obey the human institutions.

Peter next explained why believers should submit. Obeying is a matter of God's will or God's desire. Acting in God's will as God's people, believers make a bold statement to an unbelieving community. By submitting to the civil authorities, believers demonstrate they are good citizens, not anarchists trying to overthrow the government. In addition, such good works silence the ignorance of foolish people. The word silence means muzzle, as one might do to control a howling dog.

Peter presented one of the many paradoxes of the Christian life: as God's slaves, live as free people. Believers have entered into a binding relationship with God. He is Master, Lord, Sovereign. Believers are His slaves, His servants. As slaves, believers do not have freedom without limitations. Biblical freedom is not permission to sin but the opportunity and desire to do what is good. Freedom exists only under God's authority. Here's the paradox: only those who are slaves to God will ever know what genuine freedom is; only they can genuinely be free. Believers' liberty comes by the freedom to do what is right. Therefore, believers obey civil laws and government as God's servants.

Peter issued four commands. First, Honor everyone—showing courtesy and respect to all people. That is, believers don't abuse other people or treat them as objects. They treat people with the same respect they would the Emperor. Second, Love the brotherhood—displaying value and worth toward fellow believers. Peter returned to a constant theme: love the fellow members of the Christian family, seeking their

highest good. Third, Fear God—reverently awing God. Believers are to respect and honor earthly authorities, but they aren't to fear them. Fear is only directed toward God because only He grants life and takes life. Fourth, Honor the Emperor—showing respect for government leaders as the ones responsible for civil law and order. In each of Peter's commands in verse 17, the tense calls for ongoing action on the part of believers, a constant display of these attitudes: keep on honoring, loving, fearing, and showing respect.

1 PETER 2:18-20

Peter transitioned from speaking about governmental authorities to addressing household slaves. In other words, he moved from providing instruction for civic responsibilities to household responsibilities. His instruction was prompted because some slaves had converted to Christianity. Apparently they believed that the freedom they received in the spiritual realm at their conversion ought to apply to the personal and political realms as well. Slavery was rampant in the Roman Empire, and it was a social institution in Peter's day. Early believers did not seek to abolish this system, nor did they commend slavery as an institution— but they did recognize godly principles of freedom that would eventually set into motion the abolishment of this practice with the understanding that no person can be owned by another. The slaves were to submit to their masters. Just as citizens are to submit to the government, so slaves were to submit to their masters. They were to submit with all fear. This attitude is more one of respectful submission. Slaves were to submit to their masters out of their fear for God. While this is easier and makes sense when the master is good and gentle, Peter admonished slaves to display this same attitude toward the cruel or crooked, perverse, harsh, or overbearing master as well.

While slavery has largely been abolished in western civilization, Peter's instructions have application to employment today simply by changing household slaves to employees and masters to employers. The verse would read: "Employees, submit yourselves to your employers with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel."

Such action brings favor or has God's approval. It pleases God. It follows Christ's example, who endured mistreatment even when He had done no wrong. Such a person is mindful of God's will or "aware of God." The word grief covers the abuse,

beating, and torture that masters inflicted on their slaves. Slaves can endure grief from suffering unjustly because of their deep commitment to Jesus Christ and because the ultimate purpose of their work is to please God, to “glorify God on the day of visitation” (v. 12). Suffering often comes with being a believer. A test of integrity is how believers respond to suffering. Nothing reveals one’s character quicker than problems and pain.

Peter asked a rhetorical question: For what credit is there if you sin and are punished, and you endure it? Credit, parallel with favor, points to the fact that enduring unjust suffering in a way that honors God will result in His people inheriting a reward from Him. Favor can also mean that a believer’s patient perseverance in the face of unjust suffering demonstrates God’s grace at work. While there is no virtue in acceptance of deserved punishment, the one who patiently accepts mistreatment when he has acted rightly has God’s favor, His approval. This behavior not only brings God glory, it has the potential of witnessing to the masters and to others.

1 PETER 2:21-23

Peter wanted to encourage the slaves, and all people, to trust God in every situation, just as Jesus did when He suffered unjustly. The words to this refers to the times the believers had experienced suffering for doing what was right. The word called pertains to the call God placed on believers’ lives, wooing them to faith, and resulting in their salvation. This lifestyle is not optional; it is expected of believers. Jesus is our example. Christ also suffered for you, as believers now suffer for Him. His suffering is the example. The word example means a writing pattern. More specifically, it refers to children learning to properly write the letters of the alphabet by tracing over correctly formed patterns of the letters. Great power exists in example. Jesus’ suffering provides the example and the help so that believers will follow in His steps. Jesus’ suffering was due to His submission to His Master.

Jesus fulfilled Peter’s admonition to “do what is good,” even in the face of suffering unjustly. He did not commit sin, alluding to Isaiah 53:9. Peter referenced Isaiah 53 several times in the final verses of chapter 2. Peter showed that Jesus provided the ultimate example. Jesus, the servant, committed to His Master, did not sin despite intense and agonizing suffering. He was and is the ultimate suffering servant. The slaves’ identification with Jesus gives dignity to their suffering. This statement—He

did not commit sin— also underscores Jesus' sinless nature and His substitutionary death for sinners. No deceit was found in His mouth. Slaves often would have been tempted to deceit (dishonesty, treachery, deception). Jesus was innocent. No fault could be found in Him during His life or at His death.

Jesus' sinlessness was not easily attained. Reflecting on Isaiah 53:7, He was reviled or insulted. The word conveys a sense of abuse. But He did not reciprocate. He suffered. Because of the hatred from the “human institutions”—the religious and civic authorities— Jesus was brutally beaten, scourged, and sentenced to die an agonizing death on the cross. He suffered as none of us can imagine.

But He did not threaten His accusers, those responsible for His suffering. Jesus suffered in silence. He did not retaliate. He did not seek revenge. His humility and submission were evidence of His power, not weakness. What gave Jesus the strength to refrain from threatening and abusing those who mistreated Him? He entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly. Entrusted expresses a Greek verb tense that communicates ongoing activity. The trust Jesus displayed in the Father during the events surrounding His death and resurrection first distinguished His life and ministry. On the cross, Jesus emphatically declared this commitment: “Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit” (Luke 23:46). Jesus handed the events, the people, and the process over to God. He entrusted the fate of His enemies to God. He knew that God judges justly, vindicating Him and punishing His enemies if they refused to repent. God puts everything right in the end. Jesus trusted God in every situation, even when He died. He provides a fitting and proper example for all believers to follow.