

1 Peter 2

When You're Persecuted

J.D. Farag

1 Peter, Chapter 2. Lord willing, we're going to finish Chapter 2 today. Last week we finished Chapter 1, and so Chapter 2 comes after Chapter 1. We're off to a great start, right?

So now I'll ask you to stand, but where you're seated is fine, especially because it's kind of lengthy from verse 4 to verse 25. So up to you, if you want you can stand, follow along. By the way, the standing for the reading of God's Word comes from Ezra in the Old Testament. Just so you know it's not – in case you were wondering, if you were asking why we stand for the reading of God's Word. So now who's going to sit after that, right? No, you can stand, okay, man.

All right, the Apostle Peter, *verse 4*, by the Holy Spirit is writing and says, **“As you come to Him, [Speaking of Jesus] the living Stone— rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him— you also, [Verse 5] like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: [Verse 6] “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”**

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, **“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and “A stone [Verse 8] that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”** They stumble because they disobey the message— which is also what they were destined for.

But *[Verse 9]* you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once, *[Verse 10]* you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, *[Verse 11]* I urge you, as aliens *[Spooky sounds] [Foreigners]* and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us. 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. Live as free men, *[Verse 16]* but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Slaves, *[Verse 18]* 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 *[Verse 20]* if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?

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But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps.

“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.

He himself [Verse 24] 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. For you [Verse 25] were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Wow! That's pretty self-explanatory. We should just close in prayer. Let's pray.

Father, wow, wow, wow! Thank You so much Lord, for inspiring the Apostle Peter to pen these words. They are so apropos for us now, as they were for our brothers and sisters then. How encouraging. How comforting. Lord, thank You.

Lord, I pray as we work our way through this passage now, the Holy Spirit would, as only You can, Lord, just open the eyes of our understanding so we can see what it is that You want to show us. And our ears, Lord; we want to have ears to hear what it is that You want to speak to us, and then we want to have hearts to receive and take heed to Your Word, especially for those who are really going through it.

Lord, this is why we have this in our Bibles. It's for battle-weary believers. So Lord, encourage and strength our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name, amen and amen. You can be seated. Thank you.

So I want to talk with you today about persecution, being persecuted, and specifically as it relates to who we are in the face of persecution and how to live in response to persecution. And here's why.

When Peter wrote this, the believers at that time were suffering, and this is an understatement, extreme persecution. I won't get into the details; we've talked about it before. But under one Caesar Nero, it was unthinkable what these Christians were going through. I mean, extreme persecution.

So we have this passage of Scripture in this chapter in our Bibles because it's a much-needed reminder for us in our day when we're facing the suffering of persecution, really five reminders of who we are in the face of persecution, who we are in Christ. And then secondly, five ways to live in response to the persecution.

And it's so beautifully and perfectly laid out here. Of course, it's the Word of God; it's perfect. But it's so perfect in the way that Peter is inspired to write this. And it's for those of us who find ourselves like them then experiencing this now, where if you haven't noticed as Christians, we've long overstayed our welcome in this world not our home.

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Have you noticed this? Well, let's start with the first one in verses 4 and 5, and it's that you're chosen by God. What a much-needed reminder because when you're in the heat of the battle, you forget.

Wait a minute, yeah, I'm rejected by men, but I'm chosen by God. Let me try that again. I'm rejected by men, persecuted by men; I'm chosen by God, man. That's a game-changer, right? In fact, you can even take it a step further and say, Yeah, I'm rejected by men because I'm chosen by God.

No, stay with me. This is a verse we don't want to talk about; pastors don't want to preach on. You know which one I'm talking about, right?

“Those who live godly in Christ Jesus will [Oh, I wish it didn't say 'will'] suffer persecution.”

I wish instead it said something along the lines of, those who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus might by chance, there's a pretty good possibility you might encounter, you know, some persecution.

No, you will! In fact, proportionate to the godly life in Christ that you're living the persecution will come. Yeah, you're rejected by men because you're associated with Jesus. You're chosen by God. You're called by His name. Jesus, in fact, said, Hey, don't take it personal. They hate your guts, right?

I love your guts, by the way.

But they hate your guts, right?

Yeah, they hate me.

It's not you, it's Me. They hate you because of Me. They persecute you because of Me. Oh, all you have to do is, and be beware when all men speak well of you, just go with the flow of the world, and no problem, you're good.

But boy as soon as you go against that flow. And all it takes – I was thinking about this, this morning; this is interesting. You gonna know exactly what I'm talking about when I say it. You know how it is, you're in a conversation with somebody, and all you have to do is speak the name of Jesus, the only name given among men whereby we must be saved, and it changed the whole complexion.

Example: Early in my, when I was in my twenties, I was in straight commission sales, and it was really dependent upon people remembering my name and asking for me so I could get credit for the sale.

Well, we have a problem right now because my name is Wahid Faye Farag. They're not going to remember, let alone be able to pronounce that. So I was advised, very good advice by my employer, you should probably come up with like a nickname, maybe. Have you thought about that?

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So I'm a relatively young believer and I thought, you know, I'm going to get a nickname that gives me an opportunity to share Jesus with people. So I came up with JD, Jesus' disciple. And I'm ready, man.

Yeah, no, wait, it gets better. So here I am. I've got a buyer, and they're looking at my card, and it says Wahid, JD in parentheses, Farag.

They're looking at the – they go, How do you get JD? What does JD stand for, Jack Daniel's, ha-ha-ha-ha.

Oh, man, here we go.

[Laughter]

Not ashamed of the gospel. So the look on their face is priceless. No, it doesn't stand for Jack Daniel's. It stands for Jesus' disciple. Oh, oh, oh, oh! And it's usually followed by something like this: Oh, pardon my French. Listen, dude, that's not French. I'm just telling you right now, that's not. All of a sudden it changes everything. Why? Because you've just spoken the name of the Savior of the world. And by the way, now there's – they look at you differently. Oh, you're one of those. Oh, you're not going to thump me with the Bible, are you? No because there's an app for that now. I'd have to use my...

[Laughter]

Sorry.

And you're rejected.

Why?

Because of Jesus. So don't be surprised. Don't think it's some strange thing, as Peter's going to tell us when we get to that part. Don't think it's strange. I mean, why are you surprised? If the world loves you – the world loves its own, right? So if the world loves you, you've got a problem.

James said, If you're friends with the world, you're committing adultery, you adulterers. **"Friends with the world is at enmity with God."** And it works the other way; it's vice versa. You're friends with God, you're at enmity with the world.

Why are you surprised if they're rejecting you? It's a badge of honor. I'm rejected? Oh, thank you so much. Can I get that in writing because I'm chosen by God. It's a good indication.

How about *Matthew 5*? And I can't spend too much time. We've got 10 of these, so we'll have you out of here by 3:00. But Jesus in Matthew's gospel; you know it well. Again, we don't like to talk about the passage, don't like to preach on it.

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“Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness sake.” Oh, and then – I could probably work through that, but then he goes on and says you're even blessed when they insult you and they - I mean, you're blessed. Rejoice when they do that to you.

I'm like, I don't rejoice when they do that to me. I retaliate when they do that to me, and I block them on social media when they do that to me. But that's – I'm getting ahead of myself.

Let's move on to number two. This is a biggie; they're all biggies. But again, this is a reminder of who you are in Christ when you're suffering persecution, when you're rejected, when you're an enemy of the world. You're safe and secure in Christ.

I need to be reminded of this because see, when again, you're in the heat of the battle and it's just coming at you, you need to be reminded that they can't do anything to you. You're safe and you're secure.

And this is – I don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of just this one verse, *verse 6*, concerning Christ as the chief cornerstone.

We'll talk more about that in a moment.

But He's the solid rock of our salvation, the chief cornerstone, and I will not be moved. And I'm not going to fear man because I'm not going to fear those who can kill me. I fear the One who can throw me into hell.

Well, of whom shall I be afraid? What can man do unto me? If I'm in Christ, I'm secure in Christ. Yeah, you can hate on me and insult me and persecute me and reject me and even attack me all you want. I'm secure. I'm safe.

Sometimes we can feel threatened and fearful when this happens. Like, man, what if and what if and what if?

You know, you guys do the what ifs, right? Oh, come on, don't look at me all spiritual. Yes, you do. I'm a pro at it, by the way. I have a Ph.D. in what ifs.

I mean, you manufacture these horrific scenarios. You know, what if – and you know, I'm going to – What if this happens and this happens? Then I start becoming fearful and insecure. I need to be reminded; wait a minute, Jesus is my chief cornerstone. He's the rock upon whom my salvation is built.

And by the way, it's *Matthew 7*, the parable of the builders. You've got two builders. One building on the rock, one building on the sand. And when, not if, the storms of persecution hit, and they hit, if you're on the rock, you're fine. If you're on the sand; not fine. You're going down.

Why?

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Because you're not on the rock. You're not secure. You're not safe. Well, this really ties in to number three in *verses 7 and 8*. And it's that, now, hang in there with me on this, you're connected to Jesus.

Now, I realize in our day the comparison to capstones and building stones is not as understood as it would be in that day, but it's a very powerful principle and truth.

You see, in that day, every stone that was used to build had to first be connected to and measured with the chief capstone or it couldn't be built. And if you tried to build it, it would not stay built. So you had to be connected to that chief cornerstone. Everything had to be in alignment with and connected to the cornerstone. That's Jesus. You're connected to Jesus. And then we're built as living stones, one with another.

So we're secured and connected to, as a building, these building stones to the chief cornerstone. It's the body of Christ with Jesus as the head. It's the building with the stones connected to Jesus, the chief cornerstone.

So let's try to bring it more into modern-day vernacular. You know how it is when sometimes we'll drop names and say, Well, you know, I'm pretty well connected. Oh! Yeah, I've got connections. I know people. Wow! Cool! So am I.

(Chuckling)

In fact, do you know who I know? You want to start dropping names? I'll drop a name. You got connections? You know, I'm pretty well connected. In fact, I'm really connected. I'm connected to Jesus. Now let's talk. Now let's talk. Yeah, I know people in high places. Oh, you do?

(Chuckling)

So do I.

[Laughter]

Let me try this. Just bear with me. I know, pray for me, I know they have clinical terms for this. But you know how we say, I have a direct line. I can call any time. Wow! I'm impressed. I'm not worthy. (Bowing up and down)

Well, so do I. I never get voicemail either. I don't have to go through the secretarial screen. I'm connected. I can any time have unfettered access to God. Now let's talk. Who was that you were connected to again? I don't mean to be snarky. I don't have to mean to be snarky. It comes very naturally. Thank you very much.

But doesn't that encourage you, especially when everyone's against you? And right now, I would venture to say that we live in a day when I mean, it's really bad right now, isn't it? And it's not just the non-Christian, it's within the Christian church. I mean everything; everyone is against everyone else.

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Well, I've got a connection. I'm connected. I know someone in a very high place. In fact, He's the Most High. I talk to Him about it. I, actually, this last week did that. I just – because I have the connection and I know someone in a very high position, I called Him and said, God, ouch! Yeah, I know. Help! I will. I am. Thank you!

Oh, would to God that we would avail ourselves. I think of that hymn of old, classic, timeless.

♪ What a friend we have in Jesus ♪

♪ Oh, what needless pain we bear ♪

♪ All because we do not carry everything to Him in prayer ♪

Oh, we just we rob ourselves, and I think the enemy thwarts us from our unfettered access to Jesus. All we have to do is call upon Him. Who am I going to look to? From where does my help come from? Does it come from the high mountains or the hills?

No, it comes from the Lord. Because I'm connected. I like that. I just like that. I want to say it one more time: I'm connected. I got connections.

Number 4, verse 9. Again, a much-needed reminder. You're a light in darkness. Now, this is interesting for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that we are a chosen people, royal priesthood, and holy nation, and that's not all. As such, we are also God's people. Wait, chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's people? What was your problem again?

[No response]

Yeah, good answer. Wait, so if I'm that, and I am, then I'm also going to declare God's praises by virtue of how He's called me out of darkness into His wonderful light. Now, stay with me on this. When does the light shine the brightest? In the darkest dark. So in other words, my light is going to shine the brightest when I'm suffering the most.

I'm just thinking about this, just real quick. Smyrna, the Church of Smyrna, the persecuted church in *Revelation Chapter 2*. There are seven churches, right? And Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only two of seven churches for whom there was no rebuke from Jesus when He had John write them letters. He's only encouraging them and wanting to strengthen them.

And even says to the Church of Philadelphia, I know you have little strength. Just hold on. I'm coming soon. I'm coming quickly. Just hold on. You've not denied My name. You've kept My word. Just hang in there. To the Church of Smyrna, very, very interesting. And by the way, the name is the nature. Philadelphia, the brotherly love, Philia in the Greek. You've got different words in the Greek for love, philia, brotherly love.

Smyrna: The myrrh is a bitter herb that when crushed releases a magnificent fragrance. You see where I'm going?

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When is the fragrance the most magnificent? When it's crushed, when it's persecuted.

When is my light the brightest? When it's dark.

The brighter the light - the darker the dark, the brighter the light. Think about those little nightlights you have, right? What are they, about 0.00002 watts? And so they have the sensor, right? So I don't know if you do this. I do this; I'm just saying.

Again, I know they have clinical terms for that. I put my finger on the thing, you know, when it's daylight, because I want to see it; I want to see it on, so I cover up the sensor, so it thinks – I trick it. I deceive it actually to think that it's dark, so the light comes on. And I put my finger over the thing...

Why are you looking at me like that? Have you ever done that? Just can you just humor me?

So I put my finger on the thing. It's sunny; it's so bright. It's not going to come on because it's not dark enough yet. So I make it dark, so it'll come on and shine. But it's so bright that you don't really see it much.

Now, 2:00 in the morning when I get up at night to go to the bathroom for the eighth time. Never mind, that's too much information, but it's already on, and it's so bright. It's the same .00002-watt light bulb. But now because it's so dark, it's so bright. That's us suffering persecution. That's when our light shines the brightest.

Hey, listen, that's the best illustration I got. If you got a better one, let me know. Number 5, again, another biggie.

Verse 10, you're the recipient of mercy. If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most overlooked and under-appreciated truths about God, mercy would be it. And I'll explain why. When I fully grasp the mercy that I'm the recipient of from the Lord, it changes everything. It changes how I view persecution. It changes how I view those who are persecuting me.

In other words, before I got saved, I was as merciless as the world towards God's people. But now, as God's people, I'm merciful. I think it's *Luke 7*; I could be wrong. Taken out of context all the time, especially by these guys on TV, which I don't watch anymore, and neither should you, by the way.

They're up there going, yeah, if you'll give, God will give back, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Wow. There's only one problem. He's not talking about money. Jesus is talking about mercy. When you're merciful and give mercy and show mercy, mercy will be shown you, pressed down, packed together. You know how you try to pack it together and then it's kind of spilling over it's so full. That's the measure that will be used for you.

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You know when you pray – I pray this all the time. Be merciful to me O, God. Be merciful to me. Oh, in fact, I even started using them many years ago. You know, the response sometimes like, Oh, my goodness, or, you know...

So I wanted to replace it. So my word was "mercy." That was a really good response. Mercy: Oh, mercy. And I'd pray for mercy.

Now, when I pray for mercy, God's like, well, wait a minute, I want to show you mercy, but I am only going to show you mercy proportionate to the mercy you've shown. So I've got somebody that I want God to be merciful to.

Not – I don't want – no, that's not true. I've got to be careful here because it doesn't come easy, right? Someone's just come to mind right now, as I'm saying this. But you know, I pray for them, God, get them! And then I think, oh, is that what you want God to do with you? No, I want God to be merciful to me. Get them but be merciful to me.

That's not how it works. You just asked Me for mercy, but... I'll be merciful to you, but you need to be merciful to them. I hope that connected because this is huge, by the way. And it disarms, it de-fangs, if I can say it like that, the persecution. Because this is why Jesus said, **"Pray for your enemies and those who despitefully use you."** [persecute you, insult you]

Oh, I'll pray for them all right.

(Chuckling)

Yeah. Okay, good, you guys know exactly what I'm talking about. Oh, man, crush their teeth in their mouth. Let them choke on it, in Jesus' name.

[Laughter]

That's not what David was praying, by the way. That's not what that meant. Nice try. I tried that; I didn't get away with it. But when you start praying, see, this is how it works: If I'm praying for you, my heart is changed toward you because you cannot stay angry or hurt at or by someone for very long when you're praying for them.

Well, I might start off a little bit rough, you know, when you first start praying. God, be mer-r (Struggling) God bl-l-l-ess. It doesn't come very easy.

But you start praying that God will be merciful to them and bless them and then guess what happens? It changes you. All of a sudden now, you've got an investment in that person being blessed and God showing them mercy.

And then not only does it change you, it changes you from the inside out, and now you're the recipient of God's mercy. And I know we casually, even flippantly say, you know, God's grace is us getting what we don't deserve, and God's mercy is us not getting what we do deserve.

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And that's very true. I want both. I want both grace and mercy. But just because I want it, doesn't mean that I'm also showing grace and mercy. Err on the side of grace. Err on the side of mercy.

Hey, that person who's insulting you, and wrongly and falsely accusing you, and attacking you and persecuting you, that was you before you came to Christ. Be merciful to them. And we're going to actually see this here more in a moment.

We're going to now turn a corner beginning in *verses 11 and 12*, and we're going to go from who we are to how we live in response to persecution. So that's a reminder of who we are in Christ in the face of persecution.

Now let's talk about what we do in response and how we live in response to persecution. Here, Peter is exhorting and encouraging us to live such good and godly lives that they're going to look at us and see our good deeds and our godly life, and they're going to glorify God.

You know, let me share this just real quick. I think I've got time; I'll make it short. Famous last words.

Years ago, I was in the sales position. I had a fellow salesman with me, and he knew I was a Christian. And man, I could have sworn that he would wake up in the morning and think of ways to get to me.

No, he did, too. I mean, you know, he would steal my customers and my commission. No, for real. And I prayed for him.

(Growling sounds)

No, I actually did pray for him that God would save him. So this went on for a couple of years. Then he eventually moved to Seattle, and I was like, Thank You, Lord, You answered my prayer. Praise the Lord!

Not so fast. A few more years go by, and we both since left this company, and I had my own business. I'm driving in my car one day, and I'm at a stoplight, and there's this guy in the middle of the road stopping traffic and blocking traffic on the on-ramp to get on the freeway. I'm like, Come on, what's the matter with you?

So I drive around him, you know, in Jesus' name, give him the look, you've got to always give him the look. I drive around and I go on my way, and then all of a sudden, I see this car turning around and following me.

I'm like, What's up with that? I didn't say anything to him. I didn't show him any of my fingers or anything. I mean, I don't know why he's doing this.

Sorry. Okay.

So he starts flashing his light to pull me over. Well, okay. So I pull over. Let's do this - in Jesus' name.

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[Laughter]

So wouldn't you know it? I haven't seen this guy in years. Wouldn't you know it that out of the car walks this guy. I'm like, No, he's back!

So being the godly, you know, Christian and man that I am, I crack the window open a little bit and he looks at me with tears streaming down his face.

And he says to me, I was praying all day before I got on the on-ramp to go back on the freeway to Seattle that I would get a chance to see you. I've been looking all over for you because I wanted to tell you that I gave my life to Jesus.

(Deep sigh)

You did? Why'd you do that? You ruined everything. Really? I didn't respond like that. But now I rolled the whole window down. I'm out of the car; we're hugging each other. So then he said, I'm going to be back in Spokane, this was Spokane at that time, and I would love to, you know, take your wife and you and my wife and I out to dinner.

And so we did; we went to dinner. And you know what he told me at dinner? He said, you know, JD, when we were working together, I used to get up in the morning...

[Laughter]

I knew it! I knew it!

[Laughter]

He said, I was watching you, man. I was trying to get to you because I wanted to see if you were the real deal. I did that deliberately to see how you would respond.

I'm like, How did I respond? Because I know how I was responding in my heart.

He said, No, you – the way you responded to me – I watched you, and you won me over. You won me over. At the time we had, while we worked together, I think we had two, maybe three miscarriages. And he watched me, I mean, just broken, I mean, so broken, but still trusting God.

He said, I watched you in the midst of that, and I saw you remain steadfast. And I said to myself, I want what he's got.

Oh, my goodness. I'm so glad I didn't follow through on some of those things. But this brings us to the second one: How to live in response, *verses 13 and 15*, live right and obediently.

Now here, Peter takes it a step further and exhorts us to be law abiding so that we can silence those who would wrongly accuse and persecute us.

Now, this presupposes that the laws and the authorities are not causing us to be in disobedience to the laws in the Word of God. But we're to be law-abiding people obeying

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the laws of the land. We need to live right and obediently. And then this ties in with *verses 16-18*, live humbly and respectably.

Now I'm thinking it's *Micah 6:8*. **"What does the Lord require of you, O man, but to love mercy, [there it is] do justly, and walk humbly."** Those three.

I think we would better understand these verses in the context of employees being submitted and respectful towards their employers. Because you have to understand, in Rome at this time there were slaves to their masters. But if you were a Christian and you were a slave, you could win over your master. Because, and this is true, by the way, slaves would sell for more in the slave market than the non-Christians, the Christian slaves would.

Why?

Because they were good workers. They were submitted. They were hard workers. They were respectable. They were humble. They loved mercy. They were honest. And the masters wanted to get the Christians.

I wonder, in the context of our modern-day understanding, I wonder, are we like that? The Christians should be the hardest working employee in that company. The Christian should be the one that doesn't – and I'm not talking about literally stealing from their employer, which, God forbid, right? But they should also not steal the employer's time.

Oh, I was witnessing for the Lord.

That does not honor the Lord. You're on company time. You need to be the best, the most honest, the most respectable – and we're going to get into this in a moment. We're going to get to a lot of things in a moment, so we better get to those things. But it's like you should never be one who murmurs about the boss.

Oh, you know what I'm talking about. Complaining about this and that. Man, these working conditions are unacceptable.

No, if you're a Christian, you're respectable. You say, Hey, God knows all about the unfairness of the pay structure. God knows all about the working conditions. And this is where your light shines in the midst of darkness. This is where the crushing releases the fragrance and people get to watch you.

You know, you're different. I mean, they say that anyway.

(Chuckling)

Yeah, you're really different, you know?

Yeah, I know I'm different.

But, no, there's something peculiar about you. You're a peculiar people. You're not like all the other guys. You know, you're not talking like them, and you don't use the words they use. Your speech is wholesome and pure. And your word is good, and you're honest.

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Why?

Oh, I'm so glad you asked. So glad you asked. Well, this is dovetailing into number four in *verses 19-22*, and it's living commendably and exemplary.

Now, let me kind of expound on this. It sort of ties into what Peter writes about in the previous verses concerning our being a good and godly example to others. He's referring to Jesus being the ultimate example because again, people are watching our lives.

The Apostle Paul says we're living epistles, we're letters. People read our Christian lives like a letter. What are they reading? What are they reading? Am I a good example? Because I am a representative of Jesus Christ.

You realize that, right?

I heard one say it like this. At first I was taken back by it because I was kind of – whoa, I never thought of it like that. I think sometimes Christians are bad advertisement for Jesus. Are you taken back by that? I sure was and am still.

Have you ever thought about like that? We're advertisements for Jesus. Am I a good advertisement? Or am I a bad advertisement?

You Christians are all alike.

I, you know, I've shared this before, and I guess I'll share it again. And please hear my heart on this.

But it is sad. I've been in the business world for many years before I got into the pastorate, in the ministry. And sadly, my experience has been that I've actually had better business dealings with non-Christians than I have Christians. That is really sad to me. It's a sad day when the non-Christian can be trusted more than the Christian.

I'll take it a step further, and again, please hear my heart on this. It's been my experience where I have been treated worst by Christians than I have non-Christians. And that's sad. That's really sad.

I won't get into the whole social media thing. I know I bring that up a lot. I think you get it, right? But whenever you post something on social media and those people – and you just got done in your profile, it says, you know, I love Jesus.

You love Jesus? Did you get – is your account, is it hacked? What's this? Bad advertisement. Bad example.

You know, Peter detailed, explains it as, Hey, if you get punished for doing wrong, why are you putting up a fuss? You deserve it. But it's when you are suffering for righteousness, that's different. It's not commendable for you to go through what you're going through because you brought it on yourself.

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But if it's for righteousness sake, then that's commendable. I don't want to be attacked, rightfully so, because I was a bad witness. I want to be attacked – well, be careful what you ask for.

Hey, when I'm attacked, not if, when. When I'm attacked, I want the attack to come because I stood up for righteousness. Because I was a good advertisement for Jesus. And then, in fact, real quick, I was just thinking about this. I think this is the Holy Spirit.

I actually want them to react that way because now I know the Holy Spirit is moving, like with my friend. The ones I have the hard time with are the ones that just kind of shine you on and blow you off.

Yeah, I believe in God.

I can't go anywhere with that. No, let's start an argument. I want you to attack me because then I know something's stirring inside of you. It's called the Holy Spirit, the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Now we can talk.

Anyway, I... last one.

Some of you are going, thank You, Jesus.

Last one, *verses 23-25*. Live justly, and here it is again, mercifully. I love this because we don't compare ourselves to brother and sister so-and-so. Well, I'm not as bad as them. Well, that's a pretty low bar. In fact that's not even a low bar, there's no bar. I mean, come on.

Yeah, well, at least I'm not as bad as brother so-and-so or sister so-and-so.

No, no, no, the plumb line, the litmus test, the bar is Jesus. Oh, no, now I've got a problem. So what happened when Jesus was unjustly, wrongly, falsely accused, even crucified? What was His response when He was beaten to be unrecognizable, by the way, so much so that when they brought Him before Pilate, Pilate was stunned? He had never seen this before.

Oh, he had seen a lot of men before him who had been beaten to a pulp, but not Jesus. When Jesus was brought to him, he said, "Behold the man." I've never seen anything like this. And here He is: He's not defending Himself. He's being spit on and accused and attacked and beaten. Nothing. No retaliation. And no words came out of His mouth in retaliation.

Oh, well, I busted on that one. Because if you insult me – oh, me? What about you? I'm right back at you, man. I mean, it's like, you know, the eye for the eye, the tooth for a tooth? And Jesus - talk about raising the bar.

You know what that means, right? So somebody knocks out my tooth, I want all of their teeth. Come on.

No, it's one tooth for a tooth. Well, somebody knocks out my tooth or takes out my eye, I want both their eyes, man. I don't want to just get even. I want to get back at them.

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Not Jesus. Not Jesus.

Here's where I want to end the Bible study. This speaks to a powerful and profound principle of how oftentimes the best way to respond is no response at all. Don't defend yourself. Let the Lord defend you. He's your defense. I think oftentimes we do err greatly when we try to defend ourselves.

And here's the Lord going, Okay, I was going to defend you, but it looks like you're going to defend yourself. You will never, never be able to defend yourself. Oh, in fact, the more you try, the worse it gets. You know what I'm talking about?

(Chuckle)

It's kind of like you try to, you know, offer a defense. Well, this is wrong; you're falsely accusing me. And you just dig yourself in deeper.

No, let the Lord do it. Oh, man, I know it's tempting. I just – you know I'm very open with you, and sometimes it makes people uncomfortable. But I'm just like you. I know I don't look like you, and you should praise God for that.

But I'm just like you, man. Somebody posts something or – And I mean, it's kind of like magnet to steal, my hands are drawn to the – And there's fire, right? You're just like, (Roar sounds) Oh, yeah!

Or you get an email. Have you done this? Of course you have. You're a sinner just like me. You get that email. You know exactly what email I'm talking about, right? And I mean, you're formulating your reply and I mean, you're quoting Scripture. Quoting Scripture, yeah.

[Laughter]

Once you push send, you can't un-send it. I'm learning the hard way, [learning] the hard way and I have the scars to prove it. Do not react on the impulse of the moment. You will always regret it. So go ahead and do it in a separate file just in case you don't accidentally push text or send. Because you cannot un-send or un-text a text either, by the way.

Have you noticed that? I sent, Ah! (Yelling) Oh, no!

So go into a separate file, Note, Word, whatever, Pages, whatever, and just do a draft. Maybe it'll make you feel better. And then just send it to the Lord. You've got His number; remember, you're connected. You've got His number; text it to Him.

Say, Lord, does this meet with Your approval? I promise you He will text you back right away and say, no.

[Laughter]

Don't send this. Don't send this. I've never regretted anything I didn't send. I've always regretted something I did send. So I'm just telling you what I do.

We're almost done. There's hope.

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I'll do a draft. (Angrily typing) Save, back it up, and go to bed, and wake up in the morning and read it. Oh, thank You, Jesus. Jesus, thank You I didn't send that. Oh, my goodness, this is horrible!

You're in the flesh. You're in the flesh, man. Hey, whenever you want a pound of flesh, you're in the flesh. I know that's deeply profound, but it is true, right?

Don't retaliate. In fact, better yet, don't respond. Let the Lord email him. He will.

Now, how do you know they're not going to come back to you, pull you over on the side of the road, and say, you know... Man, I think about all the responses I could have – I could have sent him emails. Ooh, they would have been doozies.

I'm so glad I didn't. So glad I didn't. The Lord took care of it. The Lord took care of it and made up for it, by the way. Anyway, why don't you stand?

Kapono come on up; we'll close in prayer. Wow, good stuff, yeah? Man! Thank you, Peter. Thank You, Holy Spirit. Thank You, Lord.

[Applause]

I mean, if you're as convicted as I am, and you probably are. If you're not, see me afterwards, I'm happy to... Anyway, let's pray. Father, thank You so much. Oh, Lord.

(Deep sigh)

Lord, thank You for Your Word. It's so practical and applicable and real and raw even. And it just reaches right where we're at because it's a double-edged sword and it just, with precision, cuts surgically, as well it should, and removes whatever it is that has taken up residence in our Christian lives that needs to go.

So Lord, thank You for this. Now Lord, we need the Holy Spirit to take it from here. Otherwise, the time we just had together in Your Word will have been a waste of time, and I would venture to say none of us wants that. So Lord, take it to the next step in our lives, so it can be said of us that we are like this in the face of persecution.

And Lord, thank You. It's an honor to be associated with You and persecuted because of You for Your namesake. Thank You Jesus. We love You so much. In Jesus' name. Amen.