



Parkway Fellowship

RIGHT-HAND MAN • LIVING GODLY IN AN UNGODLY WORLD • 1 PETER 2:11-16 •
6/28/2020

MAIN POINT

The way I live points to Who I follow.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are some ways that you observe Christianity being scrutinized in our culture today?

What models come to mind when you think of living “beyond reproach”? What characteristics or habits do those living beyond reproach demonstrate?

Peter reminded a group of churches in modern-day Turkey to live in accordance with their Christian confession. They were to seek to live in practical ways, act as good citizens, and eliminate the opportunity for adversaries to slander them. As the Holy Spirit changed them inwardly, their behavior was to reflect that change outwardly and would then point others to God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 2:11-12.

How often do you get the sense, as you walk through the surrounding community, that you somehow don't belong here? Where do you most often get such a sense?

In what way does seeing ourselves as temporary residents of this world help us avoid temptation?

Peter referred to the believers as “strangers and exiles.” These terms described their relationship with the world around them in light of their new identity as a holy nation. The believers no doubt resonated with the description, given their severe ostracism and persecution in a land they once viewed as home. Now, however, as God’s people filled with the Holy Spirit, their greatest sense of citizenship was no longer in this world.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 PETER 2:13-15.

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

What reasons does this text give for obeying and respecting authority? Refer to Romans 13:3-5 for additional reasons.

First Peter 2:14 implies that a biblical show of respect for authorities includes proactively participating in civil affairs. In order for Christians to be praised for doing good (v. 14), they must be actively participating in civil life as the Lord wills.

How might a faithful track record of submitting to authority “silence the ignorance of foolish people”?

In your own words, what is verse 15 instructing us to do?

Why do you think Peter didn’t instruct his audience on how to speak up in this particular instance?

Who is someone you know whose lifestyle of godly behavior has “spoken” more loudly than the words of foolish people?

Reread verse 11. What strikes you about the reality that living like the world is not your home makes you better at sharing Jesus with those who do live in the world as their home? Why is this the case?

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.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What do you need to change about your life to make Jesus less blurry for other people to see?

What laws do you need to obey so that you can honor God?

How might living in this way give opportunities to share the hope of the gospel with others?

Who can you ask to help you see areas of your life that need to change?

PRAYER

Thank God for the character checks provided to you in Scripture. Thank the Spirit for His power and presence to help you carry out the God's instructions. Ask Him to help you live with integrity by resisting temptation, doing good, respecting authorities, and seeking God in suffering.

COMMENTARY

| 1 PETER 2:11-16

Peter wrote this letter to several congregations in what is now Turkey. These believers were undergoing persecution. This persecution probably did not come from the authorities but from their neighbors who misunderstood the nature of the Christian faith.

2:11-12. Many false rumors circulated about Christians. They sometimes were accused of weakening families. After all, family stresses did arise when one family member trusted Jesus as Savior and others did not. This stress was particularly acute when a wife trusted Christ and not her husband. Christians in some places were accused of cannibalism. Did they not meet weekly to eat the flesh of a man (misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper)? And others claimed Christians participated in immoral and even incestuous activities (misunderstanding of the "love feast" or fellowship meal that often accompanied the Lord's Supper).

Peter reminded these believers they were called to live as those set apart to God's service. Their lives were to exhibit a total transformation from the pagan lifestyle they had known prior to meeting Jesus Christ. If they simply lived so as to reflect the holiness of their Savior and God, they would put all such slanders to rest.

2:13-14. The verb "submit" also can be translated "be subject to" or "rank yourselves under," and normally includes the idea of obedience. Believers are commanded to submit to government at all levels. Christians are not permitted the freedom to choose the regulations or officials to which they will submit. Believers are to respect human authorities even if they don't agree with them. Of

course, such submission does not include obeying commands that are sinful or contrary to Scripture. The king to whom Peter referred was most likely Nero (A.D. 54-68), the degenerate emperor who cruelly persecuted Christians. In stating that Christians should submit to the king, Peter was focusing on the authority of the office rather than on the character of the officeholder.

2:15-20. Peter first offers an evangelistic reason to respect authorities. Unbelievers are always watching believers to see whether their behaviors match what they profess. Thus, when Christians are “caught” doing good, the government may commend them. When Christians live as good citizens, their actions will counter false accusations made against them. Such behavior may result in unbelievers being more receptive to the gospel.

But if Christians are mandated to submit to the governing authorities, in what sense have they been “set free” by the gospel? Peter says that Christian liberty is always a responsible freedom—the freedom to choose what is right and good. Believers are to live as free persons, delivered from bondage to sin. Christian liberty is never to be used as a cover-up for evil. Therefore, there is a sense in which Christians are not free at all. They always live as servants of God. The word translated “servants” means “bondslaves,” those owned by a master. Here is one of the great paradoxes of Christianity: Only those who have become God’s slaves enjoy true freedom. Christian liberty does not mean being free to do only what we want; it means being free to do what we ought to do.