

## **Integrity: Verses 11-17**

This next portion of Scripture is all about integrity (the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness). These verses will speak about three areas of our life in which we need to show integrity.

The first one is **temptation**- Peter talks about this in verse 11.

### **Verse 11**

*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

**First**, Peter reminds them of his love for them when calls them *beloved*.

**Second**, he reminds them that their mindset should be one of a pilgrim who is just passing through this world- this is not our final destination.

Because of that, we need to keep away from the **passions** of the flesh. When we see the phrases *passions of the flesh* the first thing we think of is our **sexual sins**; it does include sexual sins but it refers to a lot more- it refers to any sin that separates us from God.

Let me show you how temptation works: **James 1:14-15**

*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

**Desire**- understand God made us with desires, a desire to eat, sleep, work, money, sexual desire within marriage. There is nothing wrong with those desires until they get out of **control** then they become destructive and turn into a runaway train.

**Deception**- James uses a couple of words from the sporting world to describe how Satan hooks us. The words *dragged away* is a **hunting** term and it is referring to being snared in a trap. In other words, Satan knows our weak spots so he tries to lure us into the trap.

The other word used is *enticed*- this is a **fishing** term it is talking about putting bait out to trick the fish into taking the hook.

The next step is **disobedience**- the battle starts in our minds then it moves to action, then there are devastating results.

Let us get back to 1 Peter 2:11

The words *wage war* mean "**a long campaign**". In other words, you never get to a point when you are no longer in this war. As long as we are alive we will battle with our fleshly passions.

## Verse 12

*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

The question that arises is “why do we need to be people of integrity?” Look at verse 12. The word see that is used does not mean a quick glance, it means “a concentrated effort”. In other words, people are making mental notes on you especially if you are a Christian. They are watching to see if your walk matches your talk.

We need to remember that the strongest missionary force in the world is how we live our life. Unbelievers watch us and when we live lives that honor God by our behavior and when they see our good deeds they will give God the glory.

Day of visitation- this is an Old Testament concept of God visiting mankind. This is referring to when Christ comes back.

## Let's jump to Verse 16

*Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

As Christians, we are free, once you have received salvation you cannot lose your salvation. But that does not give you an excuse to sin.

When Jesus comes into our life he changes our “want to’s” - we don’t want to live like we used to anymore we want to live for Christ.

The words *cover-up for evil* explain what Peter is saying and his readers would understand. The word covering means “placing a mask over something evil”. The word evil means “baseness, depravity, wickedness, vice, malice.” Peter is saying to not hide evil as Christian liberty.

This was happening during New Testament times and both Paul and Peter address this problem (Galatian 5:13; 2 Peter 2:19). They, like us, forgot that this freedom is all about serving and living for Christ, not ourselves.

## Yield to authority: Verses 13-15

When we look at these verses we need to remember the historical backdrop when these verses were written. The background is this- Nero was the emperor of the Roman world which is the world that Peter and Paul and other Christians lived in at the time. Nero was a very evil person who was starting to persecute Christians in Rome and would eventually have Peter and Paul executed. Government officials were corrupt and if you got in their way they had no problem with enslaving you or executing you. This is the backdrop in which Peter writes verses 13-15.

## Verses 13-14

*Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*

The word **subject** means to place oneself under or to give way to authority, to yield. It also means "to have an **attitude** that will obey them". Peter is also telling us that this includes not only the emperor but government agencies and lesser government officials.

## Verse 15

*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.*

In verse 15 Peter tells us why we should submit to our governments:

- 1) It is the **will** of God.
- 2) Christians doing **good** will silence the ignorance of foolish men.

There is another principle that needs to be seen; when the state makes laws that **violate** Scripture we must listen to God rather than the state (Acts 4:19; 5:29).

**Verse 17** is a summary of what Peter has been teaching.

*Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

Respect (honor) everyone- We think that is **simple** but this was quite new. Back in the day **humility** was something only slaves practiced with their masters- no one else practiced this- to honor or respect others was a foreign concept. There is something else that Peter was talking about. There were about 60,000,000 slaves in the **Roman Empire**. Slaves were not considered to be a **person** but a thing with no rights. Peter was saying you treat everyone with respect. This was revolutionary in that day- and still is.

Love believers- with believers it goes a little deeper, from respect to **love**. The word for love that Peter uses is the highest word for love. It is a love which means you are more **important than me**. Sometimes we forget that the atmosphere of any church must be love. In other words, the church is the larger family of God and love must be its bond (Psalm 133:1).

Fear God- Fear does not mean terror but rather **awe** and **reverence**. Another way of putting this is the fear of the Lord is wanting a right relationship with God which of course would include awe and reverence (Proverbs 1:7).

Honor the emperor- We have already mentioned the emperor who was ruling when Peter wrote this, Nero. What Peter is saying is even when you have an emperor like Nero, you still **respect them**.

In this next section, Peter talks about two more areas in which we need to show integrity.

Let me give you the backdrop of this passage: we have already mentioned this but in the Roman world there were some 60 million slaves. In fact, most of the work done in Rome, the capital, was done by slaves. Slaves would be doctors, teachers, actors, musicians, and other workers.

Into this situation came Christianity with the message that everyone could be a child of God and in God's eyes there was equality.

It also should be noted that the early church had a lot of slaves who were a part of the church. And some slaves became leaders of the church and their masters were not leaders. Peter could see two dangers that could occur.

First danger- Some slaves might think that because of their new relationship with Christ they might shirk their work. But Peter made it very clear that their new relationship in Christ does not abolish their former relationship as master and slave.

Second danger- The new dignity that Christianity brought would make the slaves rebel and seek to destroy slavery. This move would be a disaster for both Christianity and for the slaves. There had been revolts in the past and the Romans savagely crushed them.

### **Verse 18**

*Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.*

Peter wanted Christian slaves not to be known as rebels but workers who had a new inspiration for their work. Sometimes we forget that Christ came to change hearts, not political situations.

Christianity not only laid down principles between slave and master, but Peter also gave us principles for the workplace- in other words, we are to be people of integrity at work.

- All work must be done for Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes it very clear that all work must be done for Christ (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31). The idea behind this is that we should be able to show our work to God without shame.
  - But what if you have a boss who is a real knucklehead? What should we do-have work slow down? Lawsuit? Call in sick?

## Verses 19-20

*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.*

- What Peter tells us about a boss who is a jerk; we are to continue to work hard for them without **complaining** but work as if we are working for the Lord.

## We should be people of integrity in suffering: Verse 21

*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*

A few verses we need to look at first: (Acts 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; Matthew 16:24)

God is going to allow trials and hard times to come into our lives to purify us, to draw us closer to Him.

Nothing shows our character faster than **problems**, **pain**, and **suffering**. God has a plan for those things that come into our lives. The **key** to what Peter is saying is the word *example*. This word “example” is used only here in the Bible and it refers to children learning their letters. They would put a letter under a piece of paper and the child would trace the letter to learn the letter. It is the same with Jesus; He was the example and we are to copy him.

This idea is backed up by another word found in this verse; **follow**- which means “to pursue, to move in the same direction, to imitate”.

But what are we to imitate?

## Verse 23

*When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

- 1) **Being reviled**- the word in the original language that is used means “abusive, vile language said over and over again”. Many times we only think of the physical wounds Christ suffered and we should, but we should not forget- these people were Christ’s people. He had taken care of them through their history and now he came to provide salvation for them and they abused him verbally (Matthew 23:37).
- 2) **Did not threaten**- There is something else that should be seen. Jesus took this verbal abuse and physical abuse without **striking back**. Jesus suffered- both verbally and physically but never went after any of his abusers. In fact, he asked his Father to **forgive** them (Luke 23:34).
- 3) Jesus did this by **entrusting** - (this word means “to commit or hand over” and it means over and over again)- God his Father to vindicate him.

## Verse 24

*He himself 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.*

There are a couple of very important words that Peter uses that explain what Jesus did.

- 1) **He himself**- these words tell us that Jesus voluntarily, without coercion went to the cross to provide salvation for anyone who would repent and place their faith in Christ.
- 2) **Bore**- this refers to carrying. Jesus carried the heavy weight of our sin (Isaiah 53:4-5; 11).
  - a) Peter, being a Jew and was familiar with the sacrifices at the temple and his Jewish readers would also be familiar with the concept that Peter was referring to.
  - b) When you made a sacrifice at the temple you would bring the animal up to the priest and you laid your hands on the animal and confessed your sin, and your sin was **transferred** to the animal and it bore your sin, and it would be killed. Because the penalty of sin is death.
- 3) **Might die to sin**- the word *die* that Peter uses is only used here in the New Testament and it means "to be away from, depart, or cease existing" what Peter is saying is our sin and its penalty was nailed to the cross as Paul tells us in Colossians 2:12-14. Not only that, we have been freed from the power of sin to **live** lives of righteousness.
- 4) **By his wounds you were healed**- this is not teaching **physical** healing. Peter is talking about healing from sin. Isaiah expresses what Jesus did on the cross in Isaiah 53:5. Both Peter and Isaiah are talking about being healed from **sin**, not physical healing.

## Two great names for our God: Verse 25

*For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

**Shepherd of our souls**- Shepherd is one of the oldest descriptions of God. David talks about God being his shepherd (Psalm 23). Isaiah also writes about God as a shepherd (Isaiah 40:11). This was also the name Jesus took **for himself** (John 10:1-18).

It is hard for us to understand a **shepherd**, unlike the people who knew Judea. People who lived in this area understood that there was only a narrow central pasture area with danger on either side and wild predators who wanted to kill and eat the sheep. The shepherd had to be on watch all the time. If you would meet a shepherd you would see they had not much sleep; weather-beaten face, armed, leaning on his staff looking over his sheep and every one of them on his heart. And he would lay down his life for any one of his sheep. You see why the shepherd was a picture of God in the Bible.

Overseer- The Greek word that Peter used was always a very noble word. It was used to describe the protector of public safety, the guardian of honor and honesty, the overseer of right education and of public morals, the administrator of public law and order.

So when Peter calls God the **overseer** of our souls he is telling us that our God is our guardian, protector, guide, and our director. In other words, Peter is telling us that in Jesus' love he cares for us, in his power he protects us, and in his wisdom, he guides us in the right way.