

XXI. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“Christian Suffering and the Sufferings of Christ”
I Peter 2:18–25
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
July 22, 2018 • Morning Sermon

This is our 21st study of I Peter and I want to start by reading the context of what we will be studying for this study. I Peter 2:11–20 says *[11] Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. [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.*

[13] Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, [14] or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. [15] For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. [16] Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. [17] Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

[18] Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. [19] 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.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The summer is a marvelous time when people take family vacations. Growing up the family trips I remember most are the trips we took around Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day, from Charlotte, North Carolina to Augusta, Georgia. This was a trip we would visit my grandparents. It was a two and half hour trip and as we would leave my grandparents, my grandmother would make sure we were ready for the journey home. Now that means we left with three things that were essential for that journey.

The first thing was that she would make all six of us a ham sandwich to eat on the way home and they were packed in the leftover bag that the loaf of beach came in. That was my job to put that in the car. The second thing was a thermos of coffee for my mom and dad to have. The third thing was a mason jar that was half full of water with a small hand towel in it. Some of you probably have no idea what I am talking about here because these days people use what is known as ‘wipees’ to clean your hands. Plus it was used to cool yourself down in case you got hot, for the journey.

The Apostle Peter has received a letter from believers whom he has not met from Asia Minor, who have been saved by the grace of God and they are pilgrims/exiles on a journey. He calls them beloved to let them know that God has sovereignly loved them for all eternity, His electing love has saved you, will keep you, bring you to glory and because He loves you and you love Him Peter is going to tell them about their journey. These people were living in an oppressive empire. Now there were a lot of good things about this empire like an impressive road system and pax romana but particularly for the subjects of that empire it was tyrannical with sexual, familial and marital anarchy as paganism ruled the day. In the midst of all of that they

had become followers of Christ and they wanted to know who they were and where they were going. So Peter calls them elect exiles.

Elect is who you are in Christ. Exiles is what you are as you are living for Christ in this world. To get them ready for this journey Peter will put the essentials in place. What are the essentials for the journey to the celestial city – the new heavens and new earth? He informs them of the Gospel blessings and just piles them up. He gives them in two sections with the first being in I Peter 1:3–12 and then in I Peter 2:4–10. He tells them they have an inheritance they are being kept for and is kept for them. They are justified by the imperishable blood of Jesus. They are regenerated by the imperishable Seed of the Word of God. They are a royal priesthood, a chosen nation and people for His own possession. He keeps telling them who they are as the elect of God in Christ.

Then He gives them five (framing axioms) Gospel commands of what to do for the journey as they live in a pagan world. Realize you don't get saved by grace to live any way you want to but you get saved by grace with Gospel commands. Although they are never given to you until you understand what it means to be saved by grace with Gospel blessings. We have a tendency to think if we do the commands then that's what saves us but that's called legalism. Then there is the other problem of libertinism which thinking you're being saved by grace so it doesn't matter how I live since I've been forgiven of all of my sins. We say 'no' to both of those as the foundation is our Gospel blessings with the exhortation being the Gospel commands that are given to us. We have gone through the first four and are currently on number five.

Increasingly we see a neo-pagan world in our day so how then do we live? The answer is the Gospel at work in you and through you. If it's working through you what does it look like? The first one was a call to a personal pursuit of pervasive holiness in life. You are being holy for your Savior where you are uniquely committed to following Him in every responsibility in every relationship, in all of your conduct. The second command is the call to a sincere and heartfelt love for one another on this journey together. The third command is a call to cultivating an appetite for God's Word and the Word of God preached. Get rid of all appetite suppressants. God's Word is how you are maintained and motivated. Long for the pure 'milky' Word of God which has been preached to you.

The fourth one is a call for us to develop a lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God where we kill sinful desires and keep our conduct excellent among the Gentiles. When God visits in judgment or salvation they will give praise to God for what they now call evil in their life because of the way you lived and spoke before them. Then Peter gives a fifth one which really gets into meddling in our life. The fifth command is a call to subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolish men. By doing this we show our confidence in God and how we silence the foolishness of unbelieving men. On the one hand we stimulate praise when they get converted and on the other hand we silence them by our humble submission to every human institution.

Where do you know how to apply this fifth command to every single life? At this time in life everyone is either a citizen or a subject of the Roman Empire so Peter starts with those who are Christian citizens and subjects. They are to honor the emperor and no adjectives are included here so they are to honor the good ones as well as the bad ones. The current emperor of that day was Nero who supported and acted upon unbelievable immorality. Nero a few years from this time will kill the man writing this letter of I Peter. They are also to honor all governors as well – people like Pontius Pilate, Festus, Felix, etc.

We know there are exceptions to this for we see in the Bible instances dealing with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who honored not only Nebuchadnezzar but five more kings and through two empires after that. When the time came for them to bring false worship they said ‘no, we can’t do that.’ They still submitted to the consequences of not doing false worship and Peter was also an example of this. Peter and John were arrested for preaching the Gospel, released and told they were not allowed to preach the Gospel anymore but they told them if they let them go they will preach the Gospel. They were submissive to the consequences of preaching the Gospel because they told them they must obey God rather than men if men told them to transgress God’s law. Others like Joseph and Paul also followed this principle and had to exercise exception.

After Peter addresses Christian citizens and subjects Peter then makes a second application to Christian slaves and how they are to conduct themselves as a slave. This is person who has been owned by another person through a Biblically forbidden practice called chattel slavery but in this pagan world the whole empire ran of this slavery for over 60 million of the almost 100 million living were slaves and over 50 percent of most cities. They included teachers, servants, field hands etc. for they ran everything in the empire as others owned them and used them as vested property.

The influence of Christianity and the submission of their witness will eventually get rid of slavery by the fourth century but they will get rid of the gladiatorial games and bring marital and family order with some semblance of sexual order. They are not waiting for that though and their objective is not to accomplish that but their objective is to honor Christ in every human institution and they hear the call of the Savior to be in subjection to all masters – good or bad. We will eventually go to a number of other applications but right now we’re dealing with Christian citizen/subjects and Christian slaves.

Because we’re in a fallen world we are going to have evil emperors, governors, unjust masters and in their humble submission they will strike back as they introduce suffering into their life as a believer. When you do what’s right and begin to suffer for it, the believer doesn’t jettison the command. The believer stays the course but they need incentives to stay the course and we began to open them up in the last study.

The first two incentives are that one we do so because it’s a gracious thing and it is done under the eye of God and he says these twice in the text. I Peter 2:19–20 which says [19] *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**.* When you are in humble subjection even with an evil response you are manifesting that God’s grace is not only greater than sin but greater than those who oppose you will do to you. Nothing can stop the believer than their obedience to the Lord, even suffering unto death. At the end of the devotional TableTalk, Sproul has a section called Coram Deo. Coram Deo means living under the eye of God. Mindful of God, the sight of God, the consciousness of God and Peter tells us this two times.

Peter then gives us a third incentive which is amazing that for every true believer nails us. I Peter 2:21a says [21a] *For to this* (referring to patient endurance in unjust suffering) *you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you,...* The third incentive is your suffering for Christ as our calling in Christ. According to Peter here, one of the things that keeps a believer doing what Christ wants them to do is that Christ called them to do it. To fulfill the Great

Commission and the Great Commandment in this world as I am framed by these Gospel commandments, then I will suffer. This is enough for the true believer.

A believer doesn't do this to accomplish a certain thing yet we can certainly pray that way or to get promoted like Daniel or Joseph did. Joseph was in a tyrannical government and was a slave. The wife of the man who had him in slavery came and tried to seduce him. Joseph responded to her in Genesis 39:8–9, *[8] But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. [9] He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"* Then when Joseph goes into prison he submits and ministers to those who are there. He eventually becomes the vice president of the nation through his actions but he didn't submit to become the vice president. He did what he did because the Lord had called him. He would even say 'What you meant for evil God meant for good' (Genesis 50:20) as he submitted himself.

Let's go back to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. God blessed them but that's not why they did what they did. We see the reason they did what they did in their response to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3:16–18 which says *[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. [17] If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. [18] But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."* They basically told him they would not sin against the Lord their God.

Believers often go through things like this and Peter uses these examples to show them that this is what Jesus calls us to. This a believer's occupation, vocation. God has called us to patiently enduring in a broken world what the unbeliever would bring against you in human institutions where you exhibit submission. This begs two questions. One is Peter how do you know this suffering is our calling? We see this in I Peter 5:1 which says *[1] So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.* Now let's look at the text for this study.

I Peter 2:21–25 says *[21] For to this (referring to enduring suffering patiently) you have been called, because **Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.** [22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. [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. [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.** [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

He is telling us that Christ has called us to this purpose and that Christ has accomplished two things for you. He suffered all the way to that cross for two reasons. One is that He suffered as your Mediator Redeemer to pay for your sins. His suffering was a result of the justice of God upon Him when He took your place. His suffering was a vicarious, substitutionary suffering unto an atoning death to remove your sins from you which heals you in your relationship with God. In that, He suffered justly in the court of God when He took your place but in the midst of all that He suffered unjustly in the courts of men (the courts of Caiaphas, Herod, Agrippa, Pontus Pilate, Rome and public opinion). Secondly, Jesus did this as Model and example for us to follow, *in His steps*. This is not a model you follow in your Savior to be saved. This is a model

you follow in your Savior who suffered that you are saved. You had been straying but not you have returned to the Bishop, Overseer and Shepherd of your soul.

You now have a new heart, a new record, a new family, a new life and a new home because He has redemptively suffered in your place and satisfied the justice of God. Peter knows all this because he was an eye witness. He saw when Jesus suffered, when He was misquoted, misrepresented, when false chargers were brought against Him, when they beat Him, and Peter was not only an eye witness but an ear witness. Peter heard Jesus say [33] *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world**"* (John 16:33). Peter heard Him when He said He would be delivered up, killed and in three days rise again. Peter heard Him say blessed are you when men revile you and speak all manner of evil against you. Peter heard Him say if any man follow Me he is to take up his cross and deny himself daily.

In fact, when Jesus was telling all His disciples He was going to the cross Peter says 'God forbid' and one of the reasons he said that was because a cross was such an evil, horrendous thing to go through that a Roman citizen no matter what their crime was could not be put to death on a cross. That kind of death was reserved for capital punishment and only slaves. We see Jesus' response to Peter's rebuke in Matthew 16:22–23 which reads [22] *And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."* [23] *But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

Here are Jesus' very next words from Matthew 16:24–25, [24] *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* In following Him you now take up the slave's death instrument, the cross, daily. Peter was an eye witness to His sufferings and an ear witness to His calling that we have to suffer. Now we are redeemed in Him who bore our sins on that cross. That same redeeming suffering was a model for us as to how we suffer in this world to tell others about it.

So we are to trace out His steps. I used this illustration in the last study and I don't really have a better one. Just like my first grade teacher taught me to write by tracing over her writing on a sheet of paper that was laid over hers that I traced, we are to look at His unjust suffering that we will patiently endure and look how He endured it. When reviled He did not vilify back or when threatened He did not threaten back.

I have often thought about what the angels in the glories must have felt when they saw Jesus being nailed to that cross by vile sinful men who for one time in all of history had God where they could put their hands on Him, and they crucify Him. I can just sense these angels must have been straining at the reigns but Jesus holds the reigns and keeps those angels there saying 'Stay there for I am saving My people from their sins!!' That same Savior is laying down the model that a Stephen will follow when as he was being stoned said 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do' (Acts 7:60). This a model of how we endure unjust emperors, governors and masters. This is how we are to follow Him because He called us to it. He saved us to it with His suffering and then He laid the model for us and we just trace our life on Him.

Then Peter adds something else but telling us that He laid out a path for us to follow His steps. Every Wednesday in March of 1960 it snowed in Charlotte, North Carolina. I remember this for several reasons. One was because we kept missing school and I ended up going to school until June 14th that year to make up all the days we missed during that time. Secondly, I ended up making a lot of money that year from shoveling snow off the sidewalks. That year my

mom made a lot of potato soup and snow cream. By the fourth Wednesday of that month the snow had gotten up to 22 inches. I remember walking out our front door and looking behind me to see my sister try to match her stride to put her feet in my steps so I shortened my stride and that's what Jesus did for you. He shortened the stride so that you could follow the steps, not because that atones for sin for He has already done that at the cross, but so you can tell others of this Savior by the way you live with a lifestyle that evangelizes and discipless others, manifested in patient endurance and suffering.

That leads me to my takeaway for this study which is Peter is unmistakably convinced elect exiles will embrace their calling from Christ to suffer for Him with patient endurance (even in injustice) because His suffering both saved them and set an example for them. In doing that it will bring before others the power of Christ. We will suffer in this world as we share do the Great Commission. Go look at what is happening with the persecuted church and other countries today. It's enough for us that Jesus saved us to it, called us to it and set the example for us how to do it and our confidence is in Him. He bore my sins in His body and sets me free.

I needed Him but didn't want Him. He didn't need me but wanted me. He died a death that I should have died. He on that cross drank to the last drop the cup of the suffering of all of the hell due for all of the sins of all of His people for all of eternity. I am His and He is mine and that Savior has called me. That's enough! Is it enough for you? Will this obligate God to bless me later? Will it get me more money? Will it get me a promotion? Or is it simply enough that He bore your sins and I am His and He is mine?

He shortened His stride by putting it in the Word so that I could follow His steps. He promised to be with me all the way through the valley of the shadow of death and He is. Go read about the martyrs as some embraced a stake to be burned, heads to be decapitated, and their bodies to be torn apart. Read Hebrews 11 where we see all who followed Him and then we read in the very next chapter, Hebrews 12:1–2, *[1]Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

So as Christian citizens or Christian slaves or wherever place we find ourselves and our incentive that this is from Christ and to Christ, He set the example for me and that's enough. Romans 8:31–39 says *[31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."*

[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Him, we are more than conquerors! We not only learn the questions to ask others to open up the Gospel to them but they will ask you questions when they see you humbly submit. I

know what I'd do but why are you like that? I'd like to quote from one of the songs from my era when a person asks you 'why are you like that' here is what you say. This is from a Bob Dylan song;

But it ain't me, babe

No, no, no, it ain't me babe

It ain't me you're lookin' for, babe.

It's Him! I am what I am by the grace of God.

Every fall my parents would take us to the mountains to see the leaves change colors and I remember one year as a little boy we had set out a picnic by this rushing creek and this river was moving rapidly as you could see it rush over the side of these falls. I saw my dad step on the rocks and go to the other side and then he said 'come here son.' I said 'No Dad, I'm not going. I'll fall in and get swept away.' He tried to reassure me that I could do it and I kept saying 'no.' Then he came back across, grabbed my hand and said 'Now, step where I step and I followed his steps as he held my hand. I got to the other side.

Your Savior says 'Follow Me. I have saved you and I'll bring you to the other side. Follow My steps and I'll be with you.' Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Would You please speak to our hearts by Your Spirit? Oh how we rejoice in such a wonderful and glorious Savior who suffered and saved us and then suffered to give us an example of how we live for our Savior in a lost world, submissive to every human institution, even in the midst of injustice. God, we long for all of these injustices to be corrected, we would speak to them and thank You that we live in a society that we can even speak to the policies but our heart is in the transforming power of the Gospel. Help us to live on the journey with the essentials of our salvation – who we are in Christ – setting us free to live for Christ, with a lifestyle that proclaims, Jesus saves! If today you want to pray to follow that Savior who died to set you free I invite you to call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we would love to pray with you personally and confidentially to do this. Oh Lord please leads us forward, in Jesus' Name, persistently and patiently following Christ, I pray in His Name, Amen.

Power Point

ELECT EXILES

GOSPEL BLESSINGS–GOSPEL COMMANDS

1. Personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness in life
2. Sincere and heart-felt love for one another
3. Cultivation of an appetite for God's Word
4. A lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God
5. Subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolishness men

Christian Citizens/Subjects – Christian Slaves

INCENTIVES FOR CHRISTIAN SLAVES

Incentive #1: "A gracious thing" (2X)

Incentive #2: Coram Deo (2X)– eye of God

Incentive #3: Suffering for Christ as our calling in Christ

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Peter is unmistakably convinced Elect Exiles will embrace their calling from Christ to suffer for Him with patient endurance because His suffering both saved them and set an example for them.