

How Followers of Jesus Are Called to Live

This passage highlights two visible marks of Christian living: personal holiness and honorable conduct in public life. Peter urges believers to resist sinful desires and to live so well before others that even criticism may ultimately give way to the glory of God.

1. Abstain from Fleshly Lusts (1 Peter 2:11-12)

Peter's instruction can be understood in four connected ideas:

Live as people who belong elsewhere

Believers are able to turn away from sinful desires when they remember that they are "sojourners and pilgrims." This world is not their final home; their true citizenship is in heaven. That perspective gives strength to resist what the flesh demands.

Recognize the seriousness of sinful desires

Peter describes fleshly lusts as forces that "war against the soul." Christian life, therefore, includes an ongoing struggle against sinful desires. This battle lasts as long as we live in the flesh.

- Sin can damage the body in obvious ways.
- More seriously, Peter reminds us that sin also harms the inner life.
- Even when outward consequences seem avoidable, inward damage to the soul remains real.

Maintain honorable conduct before others

Godly living gives credibility to a believer's witness. Even if unbelievers speak against Christians, they may still be moved to glorify God by observing a life marked by integrity and good works.

In the early church, believers were often slandered with false accusations such as:

- cannibalism at communion,
- sexual immorality at Christian gatherings,
- antisocial behavior because they rejected corrupt entertainment,
- atheism because they refused idol worship.

Yet over time, the consistent character of Christian lives answered those slanders. Their conduct became a powerful defense of the faith.

Look ahead to the day of visitation

“The day of visitation” most likely refers to a person’s ultimate meeting with God. Peter’s point is that the faithful lives of believers may persuade others toward Christ, so that they glorify God when they stand before Him rather than shrink back in judgment.

Some commentators connect this phrase with divine judgment, pointing to Old Testament usage where “visitation” can refer to a time of accountability.

2. Submit Properly to Government (*1 Peter 2:13-17*)

This teaching about government can be organized into five main ideas:

Submit as a matter of Christian witness

Christians are called to be good citizens by showing proper submission to civil authority. This instruction sharply contrasted with the attitude of some in Peter’s day who rejected every ruler except God.

Peter wrote during the Roman Empire—a government that was neither democratic nor especially favorable to Christians—yet he still affirmed its legitimate authority.

Submit for the Lord’s sake

Believers obey governing authorities because God has granted them a real sphere of authority. The exception is when human law directly contradicts God’s law; in such cases, obedience to God must come first.

Peter’s point is that upright, obedient conduct can silence ignorant criticism and show that Christian faith does not produce disorderly citizens.

Recognize the purpose of government

Peter says rulers are “sent” by God for two basic purposes: to punish wrongdoing and to recognize or reward those who do good.

In this sense, government functions as a restraint on human sinfulness. A serious failure of government occurs when it punishes what is good or rewards what is evil through corruption.

Use good conduct to defend the gospel

Peter understood that many people who never read Scripture will still read the lives of Christians. For that reason, doing good becomes a practical way to quiet false accusations and support the truth of the gospel.

Do not misuse Christian liberty

The freedom believers have in Christ must never be used as an excuse for sin. Instead, Christian liberty should express itself in reverence, love, respect, and faithful service to God.

- Honor all people.
- Love the brotherhood.
- Fear God.
- Honor the king.

c. As to those who are sent by him: Peter also insisted that rulers are sent by him; that is, sent by God. Governments are sent by God for the punishment of evildoers and for the recognition of those who do good.

i. God uses governing authorities as a check upon man's sinful desires and tendencies. Governments are a useful tool in resisting the effects of man's fallen nature. Based also on what Paul wrote in Romans 13, we can say that the greatest offense government can make is to fail to punish evildoers, or to reward evildoers through corruption.

d. That by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: Peter knew that our conduct is a way to defend the gospel. He knew that those who never read the Bible will read our lives, so it is by doing good that we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

e. Yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God: We are warned against taking the liberty we have in Jesus as an excuse for sin. Instead we use our liberty in Jesus to show the kind of love and respect that Peter calls for.

3. Submit Properly in Difficult Work Relationships ([1 Peter 2:18-20](#))

This section emphasizes two closely related truths: believers may be called to endure unjust treatment, and patient endurance for doing good is especially pleasing to God.

Submit even when authority is difficult

Peter's instruction is not limited to kind or fair authorities. It also applies when those in authority are harsh. If believers suffer because they are determined to honor God, that endurance is commendable in His sight.

Distinguish between deserved and undeserved suffering

There is no special credit in enduring punishment for one's own wrongdoing. But when a person suffers for doing what is right and bears it patiently, that response is honorable before God.

These comments help explain the historical setting and the spiritual principle involved:

- Some early Christians, especially those in slavery, suffered real abuse because of their faith and refusal to participate in idolatry.
- In such situations, patient endurance could be wiser than reaction, especially when the suffering came for righteousness rather than wrongdoing.

4. Follow the Example of Jesus ([1 Peter 2:21-25](#))

This passage presents both the example and the saving work of Christ. Jesus shows believers how to endure unjust suffering, and He also accomplishes their redemption through His death.

Jesus is the pattern for patient suffering

Jesus suffered without sin, deceit, retaliation, or threats. When He was mistreated, He entrusted Himself to the righteous judgment of the Father. In this way, He became the perfect example of how believers are to respond to unjust suffering.

Peter's words are especially striking because Jesus did not suffer for any wrong of His own. He remained pure in both speech and conduct, yet still endured abuse with meekness and restraint.

Peter's reflection highlights several features of Christ's example:

- He suffered though He had done no evil.
- He bore injustice without returning insult for insult.
- He trusted God to judge rightly.

Jesus' suffering accomplished our salvation

Jesus' suffering is more than an example. He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree," acting as the sin-bearing substitute for His people. Through His wounds, healing is made available.

When Peter speaks of the "tree," he clearly means the cross. The point is both doctrinal and practical: Christ's suffering secured redemption, and it also shows that suffering in God's hands can have holy purpose.

Because He died, believers can live differently

Peter reminds believers that Christ's death changes their lives. In union with Him, they have died to sin so that they may now live for righteousness, much as Paul explains in Romans 6.

This transformation can be understood in at least two ways:

- Our guilt and debt of sin were paid through Christ's sacrifice.
- A new, greater devotion to Jesus now replaces the old rule of sin.

His wounds bring healing and restoration

By quoting Isaiah 53:5, Peter points primarily to spiritual healing, while also leaving room for physical healing in God's redemptive work. The full completion of that healing awaits the resurrection.

In context, this means believers need not be overcome by unjust suffering, because Christ's own suffering brings restoration and hope.

Christ brings wandering sheep home

Peter closes with a tender reminder: apart from Christ, believers were like sheep going astray. But through His patient suffering and saving work, they have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls.

In context we see that Peter's main point is that if a master treats us unjustly, we should not fear whatever harm he causes. We can be healed and restored by Jesus' suffering for us.

For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls: If not for Jesus' patient endurance under the persecution of the ungodly, we would still be going astray. But because of His work for us, we have returned to the Shepherd (pastor) and the Overseer (bishop) of our souls.