

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION

ON

PETER AND **THE FIRST EPISTLE** THAT BEARS HIS NAME

CONVERSATION STUDY PLAN #7 for Thursday –December 11, 2014

TODAY'S TEXT: 1 Peter 2: 11-25

OPENING PASTORAL PRAYER

THE MUTUAL SHARING OF PEACE BY GOD'S PEOPLE

A LOOK AT OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION:

- To quickly review past sessions and make mental note of the continuity in Peter's thought as we move forward to consider today's subject matter;
- To explore some of the "*Imperatives*" of the Christian faith:
 - **look 'outside' toward the world**
 - **have respect for governmental authority**
 - **live as a free governed people**
 - **the Christian's duty as "Servant" in society**

A REVIEW OF PAST TEXTS TO ORIENT US FOR TODAY'S STUDY:

A) The Indicatives of the Christian Faith

1. Believers have a precious Salvation (1:3-12)

- i) giving them hope (1:3-5)
- ii) giving them joy (1:6-9)
- iii) witnessed by OT prophets (1:10-11)
- iv) really, the desire of angels! (1:12)

2. Believers have been given a new way of life (1:13-25)

- i) a way of life that requires the holiness of "*obedient children*" (1:13-16)
- ii) a way of life that requires reverence to the heavenly Father (1:17-21)
- iii) a way of life requiring genuine love toward genuine brothers (1:22-25)

3. Believers are a chosen Priesthood (2:1-10)

- i) who crave the "*Milk of the Word*" (2:1-3)
- ii) who come to Christ in worship & offer spiritual sacrifices (2:4-5)
- iii) a spiritual house based on precious stone previously rejected (2:6-8)
- iv) who are God's own possession (2:9)
- v) to the praise of God's Glory (2:10)

A) The Imperatives of Living the Christian Faith in the World (1 Peter 2:11-25)

1. A turn in focus from looking inward and turning to the world outside (vss.11-12)

{AMP TRANSLATION}:¹¹ **Beloved, I implore you as aliens and strangers and exiles [IN THIS WORLD] to abstain from the sensual urges (THE EVIL DESIRES, THE PASSIONS OF THE FLESH, YOUR LOWER NATURE) that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves properly (HONORABLY, RIGHTEOUSLY) among the Gentiles, so that, although they may slander you as evildoers, [YET] they may by witnessing your good deeds [COME TO] glorify God in the day of inspection [WHEN GOD SHALL LOOK UPON YOU WANDERERS AS A PASTOR OR SHEPHERD LOOKS OVER HIS FLOCK**

(KING JAMES VERSION) ¹¹ Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹² having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

- Compare the Scripture versions above with the following which lacks sexual components:

{THE MESSAGE TRANSLATION} **Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it. Don't indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life among the natives so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.**

FACILITATOR'S NOTES: When people in our culture speak about "sins of the flesh ... sensual urges ... fleshly lusts" we usually mean sexual sin; but in the N.T. the use of the term was much broader. The biblical use of the word "flesh" stands for more than the body and the physical nature of humans; it stands for all of human nature apart from God. St. Paul gives us his list of the sins of the flesh in GALATIANS 5:19-21 –

¹⁹ **The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, ²⁰ idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, ²¹ jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won't inherit God's kingdom. {CEB}**

In Peter's view there are two reasons why the Christian must abstain from these sins:

- 1) because he/she is a "*Stranger and Pilgrim*" The very common Greek words being translated are **PAROIKOS** and **PAREPIDEMOS** – they describe someone who is only temporarily resident in a place and whose home is somewhere else ... someone who is not a citizen of the place in which she/he happens to be at the moment. In the **LXX O.T.** they are used to describe the patriarchs in their wanderings; especially Abraham who went out not knowing where he went and whose search was for the city whose maker and builder is God (Hebrews 11 9, 13)

- 2) The need to live an exemplary life. Notice the word **“Conversation”** in the KJV. The Greek word translated is **ANASTROPHE**, which means *a person’s whole conduct*, not simply his/her words and talk. Moreover, the word translated **“Honest”** is the Greek word: **KALOS**. In Greek there are two words for **“GOOD”**: **AGATHOS** simply means good in quality; **KALOS** means not only good, but also *“lovely, fine, attractive,”* etc. Peter is in effect saying that a Christian must make his/her life so lovely, so attractive that heathen critics/enemies will be demonstrated to be false in their accusations!

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH:

- A. There is a sense in which any Christian is a stranger in this world; and, because he/she is a stranger one cannot fully accept the world’s laws and standards.
- B. As a negative declaration we teach that a Christian is not a permanent resident of earth; therefore, we must abstain from doing anything that would prevent reaching the ultimate goal. (*The hymn: “I’m but a Stranger Here, Heaven is My Home” expresses this viewpoint.*) It is important that we do not take courses of action that would so affect our being, our character, or our personality as to prevent us from reaching faith’s ultimate goal!
- C. Stated positively, every Christian is a vital advertisement for Christianity. The life we live either commends Christianity to others, or it brings criticism and ridicule on our faith. In the early church, this demonstration of the Christian life was absolutely necessary.

FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

- 1) How might Peter’s words serve as a challenge and inspiration to us in 2014?
- 2) Peter’s writing implies that Christians are supposed to act differently. We are to act and behave in such a way that the rest of the world takes notice of us. Is this behavior, as individuals and corporately as a congregation, our true *“modus operandi?”*

2. RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY IN GOVERNMENT (2:13-15)

{AMP TRANSLATION}¹³ **Be submissive to every human institution and authority for the sake of the Lord, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ Or to governors as sent by him to bring vengeance (PUNISHMENT, JUSTICE) to those who do wrong and to encourage those who do good service. ¹⁵ For it is God’s will and intention that by doing right [YOUR GOOD AND HONEST LIVES] should silence (MUZZLE, GAG) the ignorant charges and ill-informed criticisms of foolish persons.**

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE FURTHER INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) Nothing is further from the thought expressed in the N.T. than that of any kind of anarchy. For the teaching of Jesus on this matter, see: **MATTHEW 22:21**. The idea is that life is meant by God to be an ordered business and that the state is divinely appointed to provide and maintain that order.
- B) Peter's reference to emperors and governors show that he is thinking specifically of political authorities. In this assertion he is no different than the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. (see **ROMANS 13:1** and **TITUS 3:1**).
- C) Some people argue that this call for respect of governmental authority is in direct contradiction to an account in **ACTS 4:19** (However, the problem in Acts was that the Sanhedrin was commanding the church no longer to witness to Christ – a clear impossibility for any genuine believer!)
- D) The relationship of Christians to the state has been a problem since earliest days. The commands given by Peter and others came in the context of persecutions and degradation under Nero. Yet, N.T. writers clearly thought that a bad government was better than no government.
- E) The apostle was convinced that the debauchery and foolishness of governmental leaders could best be condemned by moral excellence, rather than by verbal denunciation.

FOR OUR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

- 1) What reason is given for us to obey civil governments? What are the purposes of civil government?
- 2) It has been suggested that there are fundamental differences between “the state” in N.T. times and “the state” as we know and experience it today. In N.T. times the state was authoritarian; its ruler was absolute. We live in a democracy, which demands more than unquestioning subjection and total submission. What are the demands of contemporary citizens? What are the duties of a Christian with regard to government?
- 3) Recent developments in Ferguson, MO and Staten Island, NY, have reignited civil rights protests there; in other American cities; and, worldwide. Should individual Christians be involved? Should the institutional church be involved? Considering Peter's teaching,

what principles should guide us? As Christians, “*where do we draw the line*” in supporting protest movements?

3 LIVE AS A FREE GOVERNED PEOPLE (2:16-17)

{AMP TRANSLATION}¹⁶ [LIVE] **as free people**, [YET] **without employing your freedom as a pretext for wickedness; but** [LIVE AT ALL TIMES] **as servants of God.** ¹⁷ **Show respect for all men** [TREAT THEM HONORABLY]. **Love the brotherhood** (THE CHRISTIAN FRATERNITY OF WHICH CHRIST IS THE HEAD). **Reverence God. Honor the emperor.**

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE FURTHER INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) As citizens of heaven, no earthly power, person, or institution has authority and ultimate power over a Christian; but, this does not mean that a Christian refuses to cooperate or submit to anyone, as vs. 13 (*above*) makes clear.
- B) What it does mean is that we answer to God, not to human authority, and God has set us free in Christ. Christian freedom is always conditioned by responsibility.
- C) There are hints in the N.T. that Christian freedom/liberty was frequently perverted. As example see GALATIANS 5:13 *“You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don’t let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love.”*
- D) The problem is that too many ‘Christians’ have taken the message of freedom as a personal license to do whatever they want.
- E) Central to this discussion is a truth already considered – Christianity is experienced in community; a Christian is not an isolated unit, he/she is a member of a community – which carries with it the obligation to serve.
- F) The only reliable guard against the misuse of “freedom” is to stay in step with the Holy Spirit; then, the commands of vs. 17 can be fulfilled!
 - i) Respect all men
 - ii) Love the brotherhood
 - iii) Fear God
 - iv) Honor the king

FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

- 1) What is the key phrase in the totality of verses 13-17?
- 2) In our ears, the admonition “*respect all men*” may sound like something that hardly needs to be said; what were the differences, if any, in society between then/now?
- 3) How do we in 2014 (sometimes unwittingly) fail to show respect for others?
- 4) As you read Peter’s words, what is the dominant requirement within the church?
- 5) In his epistle, Peter seems convinced that the actions of governmental leaders could best be condemned by moral excellence rather than verbal denunciation. Doesn’t it surprise you that Peter writes “*honor the king*,” when for him, that ruler was Nero? Does this statement provide any further insights and/or dilemmas about how we think/speak/act regarding many of our contemporary political leaders?

4. OUR CHRISTIAN DUTY IN SOCIETY AS SERVANTS (2:18-25)

(AMP VERSION) ¹⁸ [YOU WHO ARE] **household servants, be submissive to your masters with all [PROPER] respect, not only to those who are kind and considerate *and* reasonable, but also to those who are surly (OVERBEARING, UNJUST, AND CROOKED).** ¹⁹ **For one is regarded favorably (IS APPROVED, ACCEPTABLE, AND THANKWORTHY) if, as in the sight of God, he endures the pain of unjust suffering.**

²⁰ [AFTER ALL] **what kind of glory [IS THERE IN IT] if, when you do wrong and are punished for it, you take it patiently? But if you bear patiently with suffering [WHICH RESULTS] when you do right *and* that is undeserved, it is acceptable *and* pleasing to God.** ²¹ **For even to this were you called [IT IS INSEPARABLE FROM YOUR VOCATION]. For Christ also suffered for you, leaving you [HIS PERSONAL] example, so that you should follow in His footsteps.** ²² **He was guilty of no sin, neither was deceit (GUILE) ever found on His lips.**

²³ **When He was reviled *and* insulted, He did not revile *or* offer insult in return; [WHEN] He was abused *and* suffered, He made no threats [OF VENGEANCE]; but he trusted [HIMSELF AND EVERYTHING] to Him Who judges fairly.** ²⁴ **He personally bore our sins in His [OWN] body on the tree [AS ON AN ALTAR AND OFFERED HIMSELF ON IT], that we might die (CEASE TO EXIST) to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.** ²⁵ **For you were going astray like [SO MANY] sheep, but now you have come back to the Shepherd and Guardian (THE BISHOP) of your souls.**

HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE FURTHER INFORM OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH?

- A) The Greek word that Peter uses for “servants” is not **DOULOI**, (which is the most common and widest used term) but **OIKETAI**. The **OIKETAI** were mainly the household and domestic slaves.
- B) Understand that in the Roman Empire there have been estimated to have been 60,000,000 slaves! They were not all relegated to menial tasks. Many were highly educated professionals. (By this time, the Roman attitude was that there was no point in being master of the world and doing one’s own work!)
- C) Slavery could be a life-long situation, or it could sometimes be a temporary time-span served as punishment for a crime.
- D) However, the dominant fact in the life of a slave was that he/she remained “*a thing*” not a person! There were no rights; there was no justice for slaves.
- E) Both freemen and slaves were known to be members of the early Christian Church, which meant that dilemmas in interpersonal relationships frequently arose.
- F) Christianity introduced three **(3) new principles into attitudes about servants and workmen.**
 - i) a new relationship of brotherhood between the Master and the worker (Philemon 1:16 **Not as a slave any longer but as [SOMETHING] more than a slave, as a brother [CHRISTIAN], especially dear to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh [AS A SERVANT] and in the Lord [AS A FELLOW BELIEVER].**)
 - ii) a new attitude toward work – it is the conviction of the N.T. that all work must be done for Jesus Christ. Work is not done to make so much money; not done for personal prestige; work is done for God; the conviction that work must be done well enough to make it and to show it to God without shame! (Reference Colossians 3:17 **And whatever you do [NO MATTER WHAT IT IS] in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and in [DEPENDENCE UPON] His Person, giving praise to God the Father through Him.**)
 - iii) In being “Suffering Servant,” Jesus is used as a familiar metaphor to address those who are mistreated in their work situations. Peter uses a vivid Greek word **HUPOGRAMMOS** (translated as “*example*”) to make his theological point. Children in the ancient world were taught to write by using an outline

sketch, called a **HUPOGRAMMOS**. The learner used this pattern or educational tool to master the subject matter.

- G) Peter's point is that just as people respected how Jesus behaved, is how people ought to respect our behavior. Being a Christian is all about faith. However, faith dictates behavior. A great part of that behavior is how we react during difficult situations.

FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION:

1. In today's western world, society no longer tolerates slavery. The worst we have are abusive bosses, intolerable working conditions, co-workers who insult and bully us. In such situations should we stay or go?
2. Are you willing to share any present-day situations where God is calling you "*to stand there and take it*" rather than to go elsewhere?
3. What is fundamentally different about today's social situation, and the society that Peter addresses in the first century?
4. Does Peter's teaching provide any guidance in today's business scenario for relations between labor and management?
5. One of the main themes of Peter's letter is that if God is calling you to "*stand there and take it*" you possess a secret strength to deal with that pain. What is that secret?

A CLOSING PRAYER

DISMISSAL

NEXT CONVERSATION: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2014 – please read 1 PETER 3