

Week Four: 1 Peter 2:10-3:9

¹¹ Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1 Pet. 2:11-12 NKJ)

These verses form a bridge between the preceding sections about Christian identity to the following sections about Christian living. The comprehensive nature of the Christian lifestyle is now in view. It is more than law-keeping. It is a beautiful way of life, writes Peter.

In Peter's day, Christians were accused of cannibalism (because of the Lord's Supper), of hatred against the human race (because they refused to join in worshiping the emperor or local deities), and for professing a "new and impious superstition" (Christianity). Peter suggests that these false charges are inevitable, to be expected, and he reminds them (and us) that followers of Christ stand as a testimony or witness against evildoers by living a life characterized by "beautiful" deeds, a life so attractive that these evil-doing unbelievers will at least glorify God for one day—the Day of Visitation. A good or beautiful life silences accusers.

Next Peter tells us that this Christian lifestyle involves submission. "To Submit" did not have the negative meaning in Peter's time that it has today. In Peter's day it conveyed the idea that someone in authority can give orders that others ought to follow, but it was milder than "to obey." "To submit," then, means to arrange one's life under the authority or guidance of another, and to do so respectfully and voluntarily.

1. According to 1 Pet. 2:13-17, our "duty" as sojourners and pilgrims is to submit ourselves to what authorities? How do you reconcile Peter's exhortations here "to submit" to human institutions with Peter's statement quoted by Luke in Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than men"?

2. In 1 Pet. 2:16-25, Peter introduces the theme of the innocent suffering of God's people. He will return to this theme later. Here he is looking specifically at the suffering of Christian slaves (or bondservants) at the hands of their masters. How does this section relate to the previous sections, especially to the themes of being called or chosen by God, of being holy in your conduct, and of being a "holy priesthood" who offers spiritual sacrifices to God? What does Peter say is the motivation to "endure sorrows while suffering unjustly"?

3. Read 1 Pet. 3:1-7. What biblical principles for marriage can you extract from this section? Do you think this is part of one's witness to the surrounding culture? If so, how does it bear witness?

4. Read 1 Pet. 3:8-9. These two verses summarize, in essence, what Peter has been writing about since 1:13. If you have time, re-visit this entire section from 1:13 to 3:9, and then make 3:8-9 personal by spending some time in prayer or writing out a prayer that focuses on the commands in these verses (3:8-9).