

# 1<sup>st</sup> PETER BIBLE STUDY

1 Peter 1:13-18

Lesson #11

## Introduction

Last week we covered verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2. When we began that lesson we made a comment that chapter 1 had been predominately doctrinal, and chapter 2, verses one through 10, were a kind of transition section tying the doctrine to practice. From chapter 2 verse 11, through the end of the epistle, the rest of this study is predominately concerning the life and practices of those who were described as a holy nation and a royal priesthood. Such titles carry with them distinct and solemn responsibilities, and this epistle of Peter clearly lays out the responsibilities that God places on those whom He has called His particular people, His children adopted into His household, His priesthood that serves before Him here on this earth, and a holy nation whose purpose it is to demonstrate, through their own behaviors, the moral and virtuous excellencies of their God and their Redeemer. It is for this very purpose that the Scriptures tell us that God, by His own foreknowledge and free choice, set apart a small remnant of humanity to be His own possession, to offer acceptable worship and to openly display His manifold glory to all creation.

Numerous places in Scripture, like Ezekiel chapter 18, and again in chapter 33, the scriptures tell us that God takes no pleasure in the destruction of the wicked, but would rather that they would turn from their wicked ways and live. But immediately makes it clear that if they do not repent and turn away from their wickedness, then they surely will suffer destruction. And Romans chapter 9 tells us that God also has a predetermined purpose for this rebellious group as well, including their ultimate disposition, in His all encompassing eternal creation plan, in which everything ever created, in one aspect or another, serves as a visible display of God's manifold power and glory.

Very much like an author writes a book in which the characters and the story reflect aspects of his own personality, and an artist paints a portrait in which the style and characteristics are extensions of his own character and feelings; the author signs his name to the book, and the artist puts his signature at the bottom of the painting, and in very similar manner the entire cosmos is God's painting, and all of the complex personalities and figures are representatives of the vast and manifold wisdom and understanding of God.

The entire creation, and every living thing within it, exists because God has put them there by full and predetermined intent, to serve a specific purpose in the revealing and unveiling of the vastness of His power, wisdom, and understanding. Very much like a novelist creates good characters and evil characters to tell his story, and convey his intended message, God has created a vast spectrum of characters and personalities and situations, and it is through these many and diverse characters and situations that God has chosen to display to all mankind and angelic hosts, the magnitude of His power, the sovereignty of His authority, and the moral and virtuous excellencies of His holy nature and character. If you exist, if you are, it is because you are a tiny chosen part of this cosmic revelation of the glory of God. There is no other reason that anything or anyone in the universe exists. I hope you're not too terribly disappointed to find out that the universe doesn't exist for you and your happiness, but rather for the display of the glory of God.

Now I've said all this by way of introduction because unless we understand this principle, and we thoroughly understand why we exist, and what is expected of us during this time of our existence, then any teachings concerning behaviors and responsibilities are interpreted as simply moral principles. Honorable and virtuous perhaps, but pretty much optional choices, which we apply or ignore as seems best to us in our own situations. If we think that all of the commandments and teachings of the Scripture are simply a set of useful guidelines, which are intended to make our own lives more comfortable, or prosperous, then we will also think that it's within our prerogative whether or not to totally and faithfully comply with those commandments. If we ever dare to think that God's Commandments are about our prosperity rather than the visible display of the excellencies of His glory, then the only thing we will be deemed useful for, in His eternal creation plan, is to be an eventual visible display of His righteous wrath and judgment. It is the doers, the practicers, of God's commandments who are justified, and absolutely none else. (Rom 2:13; 1Jn 3:7-8)

Therefore, when the scriptures speak of the behaviors and lifestyles of humanity, they speak with absolute authority, and non-negotiable sovereignty. And especially to those who are the chosen priesthood of God. Obedience to His commandments is the high priestly service of every adopted child of God. Everyone who was chosen by the foreknowledge of God and sanctified by His Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ. Not just suggested obedience, but absolute unwavering obedience, and full agreement with all His teachings. He has declared that His ways are not intuitively our ways, and His thoughts are infinitely higher than our thoughts, so our part is to learn and obey, not to critique and question. Selective obedience is no obedience at all, as it strips God of His glory and transcendence. It brings His glory down to our level of understanding, rather than directing our attention to the transcendence of the excellencies of His virtues and holiness.

Obedience to God also has personal benefits, both for individuals and societies, but our first and highest obligation of obedience isn't because it's to our own benefit, but because it's our designated responsibility and obligation to the God who created us, and sovereignly demands our compliance, and will hold us ultimately accountable. We hear so much discussion today about what is considered acceptable behavior. And it almost always hinges on nothing but our own personal opinions and feelings; what the scriptures say is either ignored outright, or, more commonly, intentionally twisted and obscured. This is to be expected in the secular world, but I'm talking about discussions within congregations that call themselves Christian, and even evangelical churches.

Female pastors, preachers and Sunday school teachers, homosexual pastors and teachers, liberal pastors and teachers, abortions, same sex marriages, everything imaginable seems to be legitimately negotiable and open to diverse opinions and personal feelings and interpretations. Strict and careful obedience to the commandments of God, and their proper and consistent interpretation and application, has become a reproach in most churches, and deemed intolerant and unloving, and inconsistent with church growth and evangelism efforts.

It's entirely understandable that a secular humanity that has rejected God, would also reject His commandments and statutes, His morals and virtues, His perspectives of what is good and what is evil; so that is exactly why God chose Israel in the Old Testament, and gave them His Commandments, so that they would learn to live as a visible demonstration of the excellencies of His virtues. Along with acceptable worship, that was their designated task, their whole reason for existence.

In like fashion, due to their failure of this task and rejection of their Messiah, God has, in this age, appointed the responsibilities of acceptable worship, and visible demonstration of His moral and virtuous excellencies to that chosen remnant which He has called His Church, His personal possession, His royal priesthood, His holy nation. And, like the priesthood of Israel, this priesthood carries with it very solemn and strict responsibilities for those who are appointed to such a high and holy position. It is the highest and most glorious honor attainable by a human being living on this earth to be selected by God and appointed by His authority as a holy priest on His behalf.

But sadly, the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians today, actually believe that it was they themselves who arbitrarily chose God, and they did so entirely, or at least first and foremost, for the perceived benefits to themselves, and then secondarily perhaps as a kind gesture towards God. They offer themselves as voluntary recipients of all His good graces, which they perceive, because that's what they were told, that He so desperately wishes to dispense to whomever is willing to voluntarily receive them, and in return they perceive no obligations whatsoever. It's said to be a free gift of Jesus Christ with absolutely no strings attached.

But such a thought is absurd, and such a gospel does not exist anywhere in the holy scriptures, there was no such offer as this made to the priesthood of the Old Testament, and there is no such priesthood position as this offered by Jesus Christ under His new covenant. The royal priesthood is a solemn call to self denial, not self fulfillment. A call to be willing, in an instant, to surrender every earthly possession, even perhaps our lives, for an invisible future inheritance of eternal life and righteousness. A solemn call to strict and joyful compliance, both to the spirit and the letter of the laws of God, as a faithful display of His own moral and virtuous excellencies. For this elite chosen priesthood, this holy nation, there is no room for debate, or improvisation, but only careful and strict observance of their holy mandates of life and behaviors.

And the scriptures are anything but silent or obscure on what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviors by mankind in the eyes of God. These things are our non-negotiable responsibilities, to both strictly observe ourselves, and openly teach and declare to all humanity, as the designated operating priesthood of God, through Jesus Christ. It is our steadfastness, our unwavering loyalty to His commandments, with full and joyful agreement, not reluctance, that actively displays His transcendent glory, and we must understand that this is our designated role in His plan, if we wish to properly and faithfully carry out our most holy responsibilities, for which He has selected us. And we will answer to Him, and be evaluated by Him, for our faithfulness to this most holy responsibility. (1Co 3:10-15; 2Co 5:10; Heb 4:12)

Now I wanted to end my introduction right here and began with the lesson material, but the thoughts of my mind just won't let me do that. So let me add just a few more comments and I'll do my best to make it as brief as possible. Every human being processes and evaluates the information that he or she receives based upon some existent set of foundational principles which we might call our worldview. Our worldview is that set of unalterable and foundational principles upon which we believe all knowable truth resides. Everything we hear, and all of our decisions and opinions are filtered through this existing worldview. How we evaluate the commandments of Scripture, the weight that we give them in determining our behaviors, and the degree of verity we suppose that they contain, are all resultant effects of an already pre-existing set of values, virtues, and beliefs which are part of our worldview, which is the determinate cause of our decisions, beliefs, and actions.

For this reason, because our existing worldview prejudices and determines everything we hear and read and see, it is therefore essential that any and every person who calls themselves a Christian has as deep and profound an understanding of the holy Scriptures as is humanly possible, because it is here in the scriptures that one's whole worldview is formed and set and cemented. If one's worldview is formed entirely, or even in part, by cultural norms, or popular opinions, or secular psychology, or any of the popular trends of the world, then how we respond to the teachings of the scriptures will be affected by that worldview.

All of the holy Scriptures are written and recorded only for those who believe that they are what they are. That they are truly the inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of the living God. Any other view than this will render them ineffectual. A person's view of the holy Scriptures is one of, if not the most reliable indicator of the authenticity of their faith and belief in God. The Holy Spirit confirms the truth of scriptures in the hearts and minds of those whom God has regenerated and transformed. And it is the holy scriptures, through the operations of the Holy Spirit, which must form the worldview of every person who believes themselves to be a Christian.

No one else will be able to obey the commandments that are contained in the Scriptures, because no one else will **want** to obey those commandments, no one else will cherish and value those commandments in their hearts, and earnestly desire to put them into practice in their own lives as a display of the glory of their God and Redeemer. Unless the holy Scriptures form our worldview, everything else that Peter teaches in the rest of this epistle will simply be to us, as a strange and outdated set of old cultural perspectives and customs which we have long since outgrown and left behind. But for those who are truly His chosen priesthood, His holy nation, these commandments and directives of scripture are the essential tools of our trade, with which we carry out our solemn and holy priestly service. Now I think we're ready to continue on with our lesson material concerning the essential behaviors of God's chosen people.

### ***A Christian's Responsibilities (Pt.2)***

#### ***(2) Honoring Designated Authorities - (Verses 13-17:)***

*13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.*

1 Peter 2:13-17 (NASB)

So now perhaps we see why the long introduction before we started these next verses. It is essential to have the right frame of mind and biblical worldview to be able to accept these verses. I'll be among the first to admit that my own human

nature would not always lead me in the directions that the Scriptures mandate. And for this reason God has given us His inspired word, which is profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, so that those people who are of God's holy nation might be made complete, and become thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2Tim 3:16)

And indeed, why should we be surprised or troubled when we find that God's ways are different than ours, and his thinking is higher than ours? In fact what should surprise us, if not even alarm us, is that if they were not different and higher than ours. Imagine the horror of a God whose thoughts and ways were just like those of fallen mankind. I can think of nothing more terrifying than such a God. It is in the stark contrast between the two that the moral and virtuous excellencies of God, and his utter transcendence is made manifest. This is why we worship him, because he is not like us, he is altogether righteous, he is higher, and holier, and purer than we can even comprehend. And humanity responds in either one or the other of two ways to this difference. Either with animosity, or with profound reverence.

Verse 13 tells us to submit ourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution. It doesn't say to submit ourselves because these human institutions are flawless, or even necessarily righteous, and thus deserving, but rather it says for the Lord's sake. What does it mean for the Lord's sake? How does our submission to governing authorities affect the Lord? And if we recall, His submission to governing authorities didn't appear to end very well. Why didn't He do what He said He could do, and send 12 legions of angels to utterly wipe out the entire Roman Empire, and those hypocritical Pharisees at the same time? Why didn't He do that? Because His first concern was for the sake of his Father, who had sent Him on a specific mission, therefore He endured the pain, despising the shame of it all, so that He might honor His Father by fulfilling His designated task on earth, and then rightfully take His seat on His throne at the right hand of his Father. (Heb 12:1-3)

Even his own disciples in the beginning could not comprehend why someone who possessed the powers and abilities that He possessed would allow himself to be treated as He was by humanity. From a worldly perspective it made no sense at all, and was tragically unfair. It was indeed an all time historical injustice of biblical proportion. But yet it was the will of the Father, from before creation, for this horrific injustice to take place on earth, in its appointed time, to serve a vital purpose in His overall creation plan. And it's exactly the same today in as much as we ask ourselves why does God allow such evil men to gain positions of authority and perpetrate such atrocities as we see going on in the world?

One need only reflect back through the entirety of the Old Testament to see evil men rise up as kings of nations and wage wars and commit atrocities, and yet in every case, when it was done, we see how it served its particular purpose in the unfolding of God's amazing plans. Joseph was betrayed by his own family and sold into bondage to an evil nation, where he was put into prison unjustly because of false accusations. If this is all the Bible told us about Joseph then we would have reason to ask ourselves why God would allow such a thing, but we know the rest of the story don't we, we know that ultimately he was vindicated and rose to a position of great authority and favor with the king whom, he served with honesty and integrity, even though he rejected the king's idolatrous gods and entire worldview.

And likewise, we see the prophet Daniel, who was carried away at a very young age by a hostile and brutal people, and brought up under their teachings. Nevertheless, Daniel did not forsake the God of Israel. Through his reputation of integrity of character, and the use of his God-given abilities, he was promoted to a position of great authority amidst that nation of abominable idolatries. All the activities of his life were a testimony of virtue and integrity to the God whom he served. Neither of these two men worked behind the scenes to try and overthrow their governments. They always spoke the truth and advocated righteousness, but neither of these men led armed rebellions against the ruling authorities, though there were certainly ample reasons why they might have done so.

The Lord raised up Joshua, and David, and many similar men of war and action, and these men faithfully fulfill the roles for which they were called. But he also raised up men like Joseph, and Daniel, who likewise faithfully fulfilled their particular roles in the manifold plan of God. Each of us fulfills the part for which we were called, just as the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the part for which he was commissioned by the Father. As human beings it's very difficult for us to look past the immediate situation and consider the longer view. We make quick snap judgments based entirely on the immediate situation.

Don't we think Joseph asked himself, and perhaps even the Lord, why all these things were happening to him when his brother's rejected him, and then again when he was serving time in prison for something he didn't even do? Where was the justice in that, why would a loving God allow this to happen to him?

As human beings I'm very much aware of our innate tendency to jump to conclusions, because I share that same tendency. We don't see the big picture so clearly so we tend to question every bump that we find along the way. But we have these biblical examples of the prophets, and even more so of Christ Jesus himself, who, for the Lord's sake submitted themselves to earthly authorities even when those authorities were clearly evil and unworthy. This goes against everything that we feel is fair and just and righteous, and in fact these examples we discussed it was exactly that, and yet the Lord God has a long-range plan, and in that plan we are assured that all things will ultimately work out for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose. (Rom 8:28) and these examples of Scripture demonstrate precisely that, so that we might have the faith and perseverance to trust in the long-range plans of God.

Therefore, why do we submit ourselves to governing authorities who are clearly unrighteous and unworthy. We do so because we have confidence that all authorities are set in place by the providential hand of God, and they will serve their predestined purpose in His overall plan. We do not comply with governing authorities simply because they are righteous, we comply with them because they have been set in place by God, and we have been instructed to submit ourselves to them for his own sake. Now so that you don't misunderstand my teaching, there is no biblical mandate to support and encourage the evil behaviors of these administrations, but rather to always speak and act in accordance with godly righteousness, and whenever possible to support and elect godly representatives, but in the end, we are instructed to submit ourselves to the authority of the prevailing governments because God is in control of everything.

We've used the examples of Joseph and Joshua, and of David and Daniel, to contrast the callings of God on the lives of His servants. Some were men of war and some were men of peace. But for most of us, we fall somewhere in between these two groups. Very few will be called to be a Joseph, or a David. For the most part we are just ordinary people, whose names will never be recorded in any history books, nor our faces ever seen on television, but our calling is just as vital in that overall long range plan of God, and our duty to obediently serve the Lord with integrity and righteousness is equally as pressing and important as any other servant in the family of God.

Therefore, in whatever place the Lord has put us, in whatever position that we have been placed in, it is there that we carry out our particular and specific duties of testifying to the moral and virtuous excellencies of the God whom we serve, by way of our own submission to His authority with integrity and righteousness. It is for His sake, that we endure with patience and integrity the situations of life, because we may be absolutely certain that when all has been accomplished everything will have been a display of the manifold glory of God. And this is precisely what the Lord Jesus meant when He told his disciples that they must deny themselves, and take up their cross daily and follow Him, just as He was taking up His cross and following his Father.

Such teaching as this seems as strange to us as some distant foreign land, when viewed from the contemporary perspective of prosperity, self-fulfillment, and immediate gratification, that passes itself off today as the gospel of Jesus Christ. Just as we mentioned earlier, concerning the Scriptures and the ways of God, one's understanding and responses will be influenced and interpreted by their existing worldview. Either one is man-centered or one is God-centered. And these are as far apart as the North Pole is from the South. The man-centered worldview interprets everything based on its effect on our own lives right here and right now, the God-centered worldview is based on a faith that God is providentially in control of all things, and no matter what the immediate effects might appear to be here and now, they will ultimately work out both to the glory of God, and to the benefit of ourselves as well.

Now I realize that we've used a lot of words and examples to discuss just a few verses that seem so simple to understand. And they are simple to understand as far as the meaning of what they say, but understanding the reasoning behind these words, and the implications that they carry with them, and the responsibilities that rest upon them is easy to overlook. How easy would it have been for Jesus to have reasoned in his mind that what he was going through was totally unjust and unfair and taken measures to resist?

And look at Noah, and Job, and the prophets of old who preached their whole lives and seemed to convince none to repent, but nonetheless remained faithful to obey the commandments of God. All of these realized that they were not serving themselves by their lives and ministries, but were serving for the sake of the Lord God and His omnipotent creation plan.

Therefore when we approach verses like these, that tell us to submit ourselves to governing authorities, and yet make no distinction whatsoever as to whether they are righteous or unrighteous, we understand that we are being given the holy responsibility to demonstrate the righteousness of our God, by our own actions, under every kind of earthly situation, just as these men of old that we've already mentioned. Because it is by our own doing what is right and righteous and godly in the midst of an evil society which will ultimately silence the ignorance of foolish men (v.15)

Therefore we are told to act as free men, in other words don't passively follow along like the rest of the community in acts of ungodliness, but rather take a stand for righteousness. But at the same time we must not use our freedom as a cloak, as an excuse to indulge ourselves in that which we know is evil. But rather we must behave, that is conduct ourselves, as though we were bondslaves of God, and under strict compliance to his Commandments. This attitude carries on into the next verses which state:

### **Verses 18-20:**

*18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable . 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.* 1 Peter 2:18-20

If you're anything like me, this just goes directly against everything we've been brought up to believe. Our culture has taught us to resist and overthrow anyone who treats us unfairly, and then do whatever we can to give em a taste of their own medicine. Now I have two things to say about this. First, that just simply isn't what this verse teaches us and we know it, but secondly, there is eventually an accounting coming, where every human being who has rejected God will stand before His great white throne and give an accounting for every single that act he or she has ever performed, and every injustice that was perpetrated upon God's elect. They will certainly get a taste of their own medicine, mixed double strength in the cup of God's wrath, but it will be at the hands of God and not of us. God has said that it is He himself who will exercise this judgment, through His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must defer to His timing and His authority for the final execution of this ultimate vindication of justice. (Though some do occasionally get a small measure in this life)

We are instructed by way of command, to endure His sovereignly decreed injustices upon ourselves, perpetrated by evil men and women, for whatever duration He sees fit, and in whatever manner or severity He deems best, so that in the final analysis, He may display both His power and authority, and His great mercy and compassion, upon vessels that He has formed for His own glory. (Rom 9:21-23) We do not look for immediate justice on this earth and in this age, at the hands of men, but rather, we defer our hopes for ultimate righteousness to be established upon the glorious return of Jesus Christ. Until then, there will be mostly persecutions and injustices, by a fallen mankind, who don't know any better, because they are unknowingly helpless and hopeless bondslaves to sin.

Now please understand that I'm not suggesting that the scriptures instruct us to simply lie down and passively accept evil and unrighteousness. We are instructed to diligently pursue righteousness, both in our own private lives and in our governing authorities, and to promote such by any and all legal and proper pursuits. King Solomon said that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. (Pr 14:34) Therefore any who wish to see their nation exalted by God, and abstain from sin, will take whatever legal and proper actions they have at their disposal to see godly officials elected as their representatives, and not simply sit idly by and let the pagans have all the say in their elections.

These precious truths which we're discussing and studying, must become a crucial part of our resident worldview, so that we rightly understand what's happening all around us everyday, and know how to properly respond from a biblical worldview, to all the diverse situations of life in a manner that is consistent with the teachings of holy scriptures, for a royal priesthood and a holy nation of people.

We obey the Lord for the sake of the Lord, because it is a testimony to His glory, and never so much so as when it's done under duress and even persecution. But, by His great mercy, we aren't always under such situations, sometimes we get to be free and prosperous, and it is precisely at those times that His people have traditionally failed Him so tragically.

We seem to be very susceptible to complacency when we're at ease and reside in safety and prosperity, but all of that will come to an end if we, His people, aren't very diligent to both act in accordance with, and carefully teach, strict observance to His commandments for His people. It is those who practice righteousness who are righteous said the apostle John. And that means those who correctly understand the full intent, and faithfully obey the things that He teaches, which things are very often contrary to our own personal opinions and traditions.

Therefore let us carefully read and consider these verses that we've studied, and several more that are forthcoming, concerning the mindset and the behaviors that God has prescribed for those who serve in His royal priesthood. Let us read these things and allow them to mold, and shape, and fashion our own resident worldview, so that we will know how to interpret His teachings, and how to respond to all situations of life in a manner consistent with those biblical teachings.

As we read earlier, doing this will certainly make us like aliens and strangers on this earth, as we have our worldview shaped and fashioned in accordance to that of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is this reshaping of our thinking into Christlikeness that makes us suitable material for His building, and equips us for our service in His royal priesthood. Let us pray that these teachings will accomplish their intended work, through the operations of the Holy Spirit, to mold and shape us, and our entire worldview, into that holy nation and particular people that God has said He has chosen to be His own possession eternally. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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