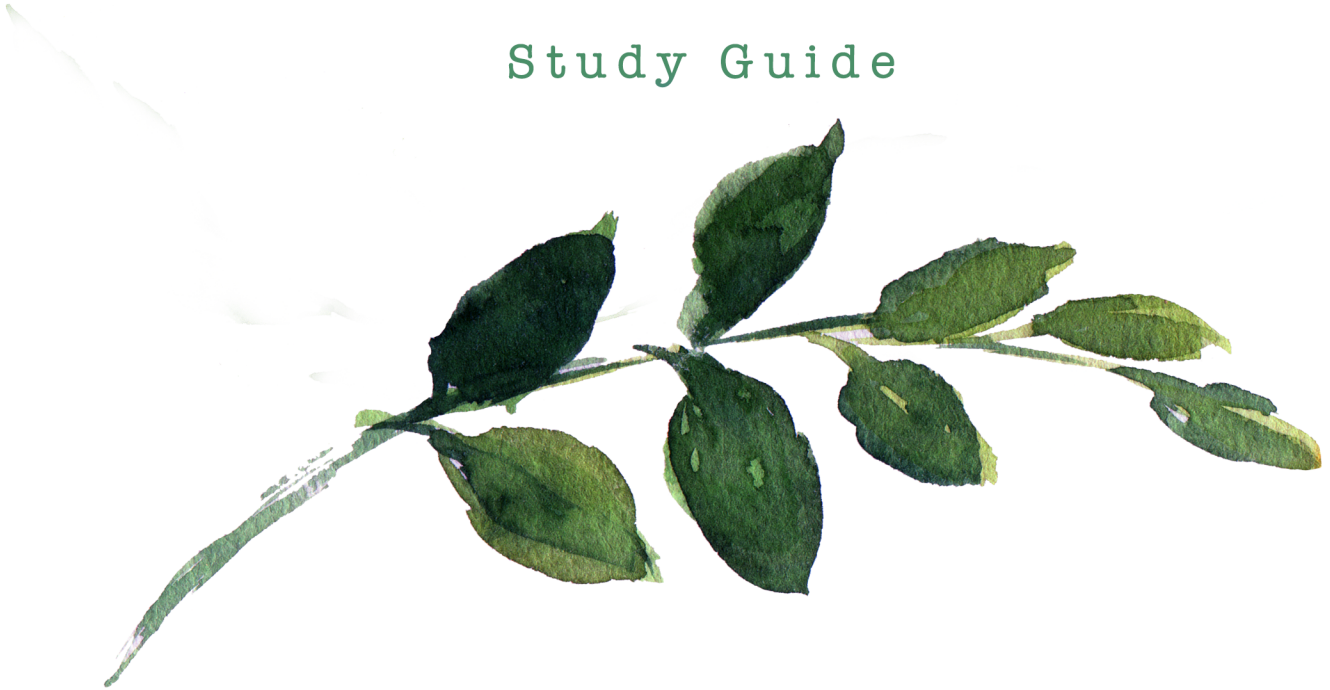


First Peter

Chapter Two

Study Guide



Pray's Mill Baptist Church

First Peter Chapter Two Supplemental Study Guide¹

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¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School

ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

I. Transformed lives put off sin and are nurtured by the Word of God (2:1-3)

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

Much of chapter one's emphasis was on the glorious salvation provided through Christ and the opening framework of Peter's call to understand present suffering with a view to future glory. Now as chapter two begins, we observe that in light of one's glorious salvation in Christ, and in particular the eternal word, which is the good news that was proclaimed and believed (1:23-25), the redeemed are to put off the old man and longingly pursue the purity and soul nurturing truth of God so that they might grow in salvation and in conformity to the Redeemer.

Put Away Sin

Peter begins with the exhortation to put a list of five sins away: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. However, to take the necessary action expressed here one must understand what it means to "put away" such offenses as they are not tangible items to be physically discarded from one's home or life. To "put away" or "put aside" is to intentionally forsake them or any other such matters that are displeasing to God and that unduly incumber one's progress in sanctification.

Further, it needs to be understood that Peter tells believers to put such offenses away because they are potentially present on some level. As with all sin, there are varying degrees of enduring struggle and therefore the continued call to put such things away. This further brings to our attention the realities of an ongoing need for repentance when there is a deficient or failed effort to put such sins away. However, there is also the expectation of living in victory over such offenses by and through the power of the Holy Spirit (he is not calling on believers to do what is not possible).

Sidebar: The Consistent Call to Put Away Sin

Putting away elements of the old self is a clear exhortation for believers in the New Testament:

Romans 13:12, casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light.

Ephesians 4:22-24, putting off the old/corrupted self and putting on the new/sanctified self.

Ephesians 4:25, put away falsehood and speaking truth to one another.

Colossians 3:8-10, putting away elements of the old man (anger, wrath, malice slander, and obscene talk) and putting on the new man (conforming to Christ).

James 1:21, putting away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receiving with meekness the Word of God.

As stated, Peter identified five specific sins. It is reasonable to inquire why these offenses in particular and if there is any relationship among them or to other portions of the letter.

Malice: Acting with wicked motivation - likely with the intent of harming another. Frequently used as a synonym for evil and wickedness – particularly in conjunction with one's prior state of being outside Christ.

Deceit: Hiding truth, distorting truth, or intentionally creating a false premise to mislead someone.

Hypocrisy: Conducting oneself in a deceptive or insincere manner - presenting/speaking/acting one way while truthfully one is something altogether different.

Envy: Morbidly desiring what belongs to another - not being content with what one has or that another has that one does not.

Slander: Making damaging/disparaging statements about someone.

All five of these offenses appear to be proactively/aggressively destructive of others - perhaps conduct that one would do to esteem themselves and crush another. They are also not neutral in the breadth of their offense – they wound their intended victim and all others alike. Therefore, they are in direct contrast to the command for the redeemed to love one another earnestly from a pure heart (1:22).

Another point of connection with the larger text is that a maintaining of relationship with these and like offenses will always obstruct growth and progress which are the next areas of attention for Peter in 2:2-3. Regarding this matter John MacArthur aptly states, "The Christian's new life can't grow unless sins are renounced. When that purging takes place, then the word does its work."²

Finally, regarding this opening exhortation it is important to recognize that a list of five items was never intended be either comprehensive or restrictive. None of the like list of prior sins and matters of continual struggle provided throughout the New Testament are intended to be exhaustive either in and of themselves or all put together. They are identifying precise areas of emphasis and also communicating sweeping principles of sins that will obstruct fellowship with God and other believers, that will diminish one's testimony, and for those whose lives are marked by them, an exclusion from the Kingdom. Also, here the use of *all* is instructive when understood properly.

² The MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV. Word Bibles, 1997. (Hereafter: MacArthur Study Bible), Pg.1941

“So put away **all** malice and **all** deceit and hypocrisy and envy and **all** slander.”

The plain conclusion from the repeated use of “all” here is not that there is an exception for maintaining *some* hypocrisy and *some* envy (as they were not accompanied by “all”), but that Peter is speaking comprehensively: all, all, all... *put away all* that stands in opposition to the good pleasure and dutiful worship of God. This is expressed plainly by the author of Hebrews, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside *every/all* weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us....” Hebrews 12:1 ^{ESV}

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

Long for the pure spiritual milk. This command effectively serves as the second portion of the put off/put on statements - put the aforementioned offenses away and pursue this sanctifying action instead.

Spiritual Nourishment

Because both Paul and the author of Hebrews use like language of consuming milk for spiritual nourishment in a rebuke of their readers’ immaturity³, it is important to recognize that Peter is not using the illustration in a like manner here. Peter was not rebuking the believers’ maturity, but was providing them a vivid picture of what it is like to properly crave and long for something that is of your utmost good and means of nourishment and strength.

The first thing we observe about this image of nourishment here is that it is pure or without defilement or dilution. Second, we observe that it is spiritual, and that Peter is plainly speaking of something that supersedes natural milk. So what would pure spiritual milk be?

The plainest conclusion from the immediate context of the letter and the greater deductions that one would naturally come to when looking at the totality of the Scriptures is that it is the Scriptures themselves. Nothing else could reasonably contend for this qualitative nature of maturing, strengthening, and bringing one to completion in Christ.

³ “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh.” 1 Corinthians 3:2-3 ^{ESV}
“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.” Hebrews 5:12-13 ^{ESV}

Understandably, prayer is certainly imperative as is worship and like expressions of faith and its associated works, but the Scriptures inform all of these... and further it was the Scriptures that Peter uniquely esteems as effective in salvation in 1:22-25.

“...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk *of the word*, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation....” 1 Peter 2:2 ^{NASB}

It is noteworthy that the New American Standard Bible (NASB) appears to see this conclusion clearly enough that it has been incorporated into their translation, which is of the school that translates word for word as much as possible. However, the word “word” is not present in the Greek and it appears to be a translation decision to provide clarity. The word that is present is: “λογικός” or “spiritual,” which is how NASB translates it in its one other New Testament usage in Romans 12:1.⁴ This was not a translation oversight, but a reasonable decision rooted in a skillful appreciation of the original Greek. Even with no training in the languages, one can visually observed that λογικός is very close to λόγος and it has been concluded by some translators that this was an intentional play on words, communicating “spiritual” while also directing attention to the aforementioned use of “λόγος” or “word” in 1:23.⁵ This apparent play on words would thereby be communicating that the Word of God, which was the means of new birth, would also be the means for one’s continued maturity.

The believer is commanded by Peter to long for, to crave, to desire the pure spiritual milk of God’s word. The Apostle was not simply *suggesting* one embrace the clear advantages of a life satisfied in its consistent attention to the Scriptures, but was actually *requiring* that there be a mature fostering of desire for that which is of their superior good. He gives a clear command to long for the life giving and sanctifying sweetness of the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God.

When seeking to understand the command provided here by Peter, it is helpful to recognize that he has included both active and passive verbs in this verse. The first is a call to action, and the second is expressing action received. The action that the believer is called to is, “to long for the pure spiritual milk of the Word,” and the action that is accomplished in the believer is, “you will be grown up in salvation.” In obedience one longs for and pursues the Scriptures, and as a result the Spirit of God matures them and transforms them.

⁴ “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual/λογικὴν service of worship.*” Romans 12:1 ^{NASB}

⁵ The NET Bible, Note 4 – 1 Peter 2:2

Growing Up Into Salvation

By what means does this pure spiritual milk of God's word grow one up into salvation? It is the source of God's self-revelation so that we might know him and how to properly submit in worshipful obedience. Without God's word we are left to our conclusions rooted in general observations and assumptions – insufficient for this great task. The Word of God is a supernatural tool for a supernatural work accomplished by the Spirit of God. Borrowing further from the milk analogy, it is more mysterious and glorious than the breaking down and transforming of natural milk to its precise elements of nourishment that in turn feed other processes and elements to generate natural strength and help. This is a nourishing of the imperishable soul in salvation and it is through his word that God himself produces this growth and maturing. Paul plainly stated as much to the Corinthians, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." 1 Corinthians 3:6 ^{ESV} But, can one grow up into salvation without this pure spiritual milk? That is the wrong question as the Scriptures are God's means for proper progress and strengthening. Yearning, longing, desiring for the pure spiritual milk of the word is the natural and healthy disposition of the true believer.

Finally, what does it even mean to grow up into salvation? This is the ongoing completion of the totality of one's salvation, the work of sanctification, of conforming to Christ. This progress finds its sustenance in the Word of God, demonstrating its necessary preeminent place in the life of the believer. Further, it is important to note that like Paul, Peter is using salvation here to communicate sanctification, just as we plainly observe in Philippians 2:12, where those who have already been identified as believers in Philippians 1:1, "to all the saints in Christ Jesus....," are later told to "work out" their salvation.

Having Tasted the Lord's Goodness

Following the command and its associated benefits comes a qualification in 2:3, "...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good."

This appears to be a direct reference to Psalm 34:8 ^{ESV}, "Oh, taste and see that The LORD is good!" It is fitting that the language of Psalm 34 not only supports the immediate statement in 1 Peter 2, but the larger context of the Psalm also serves as an affirmation to the larger context of 1 Peter as a book as it is making much of The LORD and his care in a context of struggle/affliction.

The growing up into salvation appears contingent on having tasted that the Lord is good. So, what does it mean to have tasted that the Lord is good?

Often the same term translated as “good” here is used for kind or kindness... thereby expressing those who have experienced the Lord’s kindness (clearly in a precise way, such as in salvation).

The author of Hebrews appears to use this “tasting” wording in the same way about the Lord and it appears plainly restricted to those who are in Christ or would credibly appear to be.

Hebrews 6:4 ^{ESV}, “...those who have tasted the heavenly gift....”

Hebrews 6:5 ^{ESV}, “...have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come....”

Other uses of the same word indicate the act of sensory input through the tongue (for food, drink, etc.), but then there are references that appear to apply that extraordinary aspect of life and experience in a palpable, even intimate, experience with something, as though tasting something that naturally is not experienced through taste, such as death.⁶

At salvation all believers experience or taste the Lord’s goodness – having been delivered, redeemed, and reconciled... and all genuinely in Christ do not disassociate that sweetness from their progress in the faith, which is a maturing relationship with their Redeemer and Lord. God’s means of illuminating the unbeliever to salvation is through the Scriptures, and his means of growing them in grace is through the Scriptures. All who have truly tasted remember and maintain an insatiable appetite for God’s goodness.

⁶ “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” Matthew 16:28 ^{ESV}
“And he said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.’” Mark 9:1 ^{ESV}
“But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” Hebrews 2:9 ^{ESV}

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Further Reflection and Application

2:1

Peter directs us to put away a list of sins which, while not comprehensive, are all offenses to the love that believers have been called to exercise toward one another and obstruct personal growth through the Scriptures. Examine each of these: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Are there expressions of these offenses that you are not putting away as you must? Are there like offenses that are undermining your call to love others and/or your maturing in the Scriptures? After some prayerful reflection, write out how you will either put away identified offenses or ways that you will proactively strengthen your love and delight in the Scriptures by proactively blessing others with your words, attitude, prayers, and disposition.

2:2

The command in 2:2 is to long, crave, or desire the Scriptures. This was plainly the sentiment of the longest Psalm and chapter of the Scriptures themselves, Psalm 119. Take time to read through the entirety of Psalm 119 and note the various ways that the psalmist expresses his own longing, craving, and desiring of the Scriptures. How might you also cultivate such an appetite for the Word of God? Write out how you will pray and pursue this appetite (give yourself a reasonable plan and share it with someone that can inquire of your progress: spouse or friend).

2:2

Regarding a longing for the Scriptures John MacArthur states, "Peter's exhortation for believers to grow through the Word strongly implies the necessity of discontent with the present condition of spiritual development. It also recalls what Paul said about his dissatisfaction with the status quo in his life: Philippians 3:7-14. Motivation for genuine spiritual growth arises out of a righteous sense of discontent, coupled with a sincere desire to be satisfied with nothing but the Word of God."⁷

Prayerfully consider how satisfied you are as a student of the Scriptures. Are you tangibly progressing in your understanding, delight, and application of the Bible? Would you evaluate yourself as having progressed over this last year? Or are you content with having a superficial or stagnant understanding of the Scriptures? Identify one to three goals for yourself as a Bible student and then press on to accomplish them within six months (i.e. chapter headings or notes for six to ten books of the Bible, being able to converse about a major point of theology, memorizing a book of the Bible, etc.)

2:3

Those in Christ have indeed tasted and experienced the Lord's goodness... they know of his magnificent redemption and steadfast faithfulness. These matters should be readily recalled, mused upon, inform prayers, encourage perseverance, and fuel the aforementioned longing for more of God. It is reminiscent of the delight the psalmist finds in being The LORD's Temple in Psalm 84, as it was there that they worshipped in the presence of his special presence among his people. Take some time to consider your experiences in the Lord's goodness from salvation proper to the daily grace you experienced this week. Write them out and express thanks to God for providing such a rich variety of experiences of his goodness. If you are struggling with this then read Psalm 84 as an opportunity and write reflections of the psalmist's delight in God and consider how you might learn from them.

⁷ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1Peter; John MacArthur Jr; Moody Publishers, 2004; (Hereafter: MacArthur Commentary), Pgs. 100-101

II. Christ the living, chosen, and precious stone has called and set apart a people to himself that they might worship him and declare his excellencies to all creation (2:4-10)

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:4-5 ^{ESV}

Coming To The Living Stone

As you *come* to him. “The participle’s tense and voice indicate that this coming is a personal, habitual approach. It is an intimate association of communion and fellowship between believers and their Lord.”⁸

In coming to Christ, Peter appears to be expressing that having put their full confidence in the rejected and now esteemed Messiah, they are being set apart from their formal carnality and nurtured on the spiritual milk of the word. They are to be a people bound together in common Spirit controlled and Spirit delighting assembly. As such, they are serving a mediating role of declaring Christ’s excellencies and petitioning men to be reconciled to God, while also yielding to God lives of Spirit filled faithfulness in worshipful obedience.

The Rejected/Esteemed Stone

Further, it must be remembered that the chosen and precious living stone that was first rejected by men was a matter that Jesus spoke about directly during his public ministry, addressing that this was the plan of God – a plan that Peter initially rebuffed and for which Peter, in turn, was severely rebuked. “And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’” Mark 8:31-33 ^{ESV} Peter rightfully received this rebuke, and after the resurrection his perspective and understanding magnificently changed and he went on to

⁸ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament; John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; 1 Peter: Roger M. Raymer; David C Cook, 1983; (Hereafter: Raymer), Pg.844

declare Christ rejected, crucified, and risen. “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” Acts 2:22-24 ^{ESV} That which Peter could not fathom before, a rejected and suffering Messiah, he now rejoices in and centers his understanding of the redeemed people of God upon.

Regarding the esteeming of this rejected stone – the religious leadership during Jesus’ public ministry and those under their care had a deficient means of evaluating the value of this living stone, but God the Father had no such deficiency. “The Father measured Him by the standards of divine perfection and declared, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’ (Matt. 3:17).”⁹ To the one who perfectly and righteously evaluates all things, this living stone was chosen and precious, or intentionally set apart and highly valued/esteemed.

Living Stones Building A Spiritual House

Jesus is identified as a living stone, and the believers in turn are stated to come to him like living stones being built up for spiritual service to God.

Addressing believers being like living stones themselves, Edmund Clowney expresses how their identity is explicitly bound up in Christ’s identity – Christ the living stone provides that believers are now themselves living stones (2:4-5), and Christ the chosen and precious stone provides that believers are now themselves honored, too (2:4,7).¹⁰

The believer’s newborn and spiritual life are wholly bound up in Christ, so coming to the living stone they themselves enter into his life and become like living stones built upon the cornerstone of Christ. “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:3-4 ^{ESV}

⁹ MacArthur Commentary, Pg.105

¹⁰ The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 1 Peter; Edmund Clowney; Inter Varsity Press, 1988; (Hereafter: Clowney), Pg.87

Further, it must be understood that the acting agent here is God as the believers are being built up – they are not building themselves up, this is God’s work.

Matthew 16:18, Jesus stated that he would build his Church.

Acts 7:49, Stephen reminds us that The LORD has already made it plain that man cannot build him a sufficient house to dwell in on earth.

Acts 9:31, the Church was being built up... and so continues to be today.

What Peter appears to be communicating here is the unifying building up of Christ’s people into a worshipful unit where God’s presence uniquely dwells. Prior to the institution of the New Covenant through the Church, it was the *physical* structure of the Temple where one would find the special presence of The LORD among his people (not that he was geographically restricted, but his presence manifested itself among his people and this is where they worshipped him as prescribed in the Law of God). Therefore, the Church is now experiencing the high privilege of New Covenant blessing that the Spirit of God is within his people *individually*, and *corporately* they are being built up in fellowship with God and one another to serve as a *spiritual* house where God is properly esteemed in lives of worship.

Finally, this language was not unique to Peter. Paul also recognized the redeemed as a structure being built up into a dwelling place for the Spirit of God – a structure whose foundations were the truths expressed by God’s prophets and apostles with the precious/esteemed cornerstone of Christ.

“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”
Ephesians 2:18-22 ^{ESV}

A Holy Priesthood

While there are certainly unique challenges that come with the “spiritualized” expressions of physical realities that were pillar elements in the Old Covenant, the discussion becomes uniquely palpable with what would be an apparent change of the priesthood (beyond Jesus’ service in the order of the Melchizedekian Priesthood). The Scriptures are explicitly clear that the priestly line comes through the Levites, the sons of Aaron (Exodus 28, Leviticus 8), through Phinehas (Numbers 25)¹¹, and ultimately through the line of Zadok (Ezekiel 40). Therefore, it must be concluded that what Peter is

¹¹ In Numbers 25:10-13 The LORD makes a covenant with Phinehas and his descendants.

expressing is that of function and not of office, and that the function is not of the same scope or order as that which was prescribed for Temple worship, but is a like *qualitative nature* in its expectation and aim. The qualitative nature is holiness and excellence, which is secured through Christ, and its aim is the magnification of God. The prescribed and controlled office that extends from Aaron to Zadok is presently suspended along with Temple worship as a whole while Israel remains in a state of partial hardening and the Church assumes the witness bearing role in the world and functions as priests yielding up spiritual sacrifices that range from gospel declarations, to lives of obedience, to worshiping through song.

Spiritual Sacrifices

Spiritual plainly references that which is not inherently or primarily material in nature and relating to the things of God (not to infer that God is in conflict or has no direct association with the physical but is superseding it when expressing “spiritual matters” – particularly when a natural element is said to be “spiritual”). Two plain examples of this come from Paul in Romans and 1 Corinthians.

“For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.” Romans 15:27 ^{ESV}

“If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?”
1 Corinthians 9:11 ^{ESV}

“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.” 1 Corinthians 15:44-46 ^{ESV}

In both Romans 15:27 and 1 Corinthians 9:11 you can observe the contrasting of spiritual and physical blessings. Also, in 1 Corinthians 15:44-46 the natural body is in time set aside and the spiritual body is raised/endures.

Perhaps the best resolution to an apparent tension between the natural/physical and the spiritual, and especially as it may work itself out in Peter, would be to consider the spiritual gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 Paul speaks to the spiritual gifts provided to the church and they are spiritual in two regards: uniquely provided by God and spiritual in their inherent nature, authority, and outworking. However, these “spiritual gifts” have a very immediate, tangible, physical outworking. Such would appear to be the nature of a “spiritual house,” a people called out and assembled supernaturally by God but joined in immediate, tangible, and physical fellowships/assemblies. Also, “spiritual sacrifices” express themselves in a myriad of ways that are immediate, tangible, physical (holy lives, pure relationships, exhortations, encouragements, rebukes, prayer, worship, faithfully working, etc.). This is further supported by the fact that someone could be referred to as “a spiritual person,” but they are plainly

still a physical/natural person – it is communicating that they are a redeemed person walking in harmony with the Spirit of God, in joyful and faithful obedience.

“The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.” 1 Corinthians 2:15 ^{ESV}

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.” Galatians 6:1 ^{ESV}

John MacArthur provides some examples of various expressions of spiritual sacrifices for the Church:¹²

One’s whole person yielded in joyful obedience to God. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:1-2 ^{ESV}

Expressing sincere and truth rich praise to God. “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” Hebrews 13:15 ^{ESV}

Doing good to one another and sharing what the Lord has generously provided to you. “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” Hebrews 13:16 ^{ESV} “I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.” Philippians 4:18 ^{ESV}

Participating in the work of gospel evangelism and discipleship – seeing a people come to faith and brought to maturity. “...because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:15-16 ^{ESV}

Demonstrating worshipful confidence in God by petitioning and communing with him in prayer. “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.” Revelation 8:3-4 ^{ESV}

¹² MacArthur Commentary, Pgs.115-117

“For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.” 1 Peter 2:6-8 ^{ESV}

Christ The Cornerstone

Christ, the “chosen and precious living stone” is also the “chosen and precious cornerstone.”

These believers come to Christ like living stones being built up as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood that is set apart to offer spiritual sacrifices because they are being built upon the cornerstone of Christ Jesus in whom they have believed. The esteemed and precious living stone is now identified as the most critical of the stones in the building, both bearing its weight and setting the surety of its precise lines and structure.

Here Isaiah 28:16 is quoted, which develops the theme of Christ the cornerstone. The text then carries over to the citations of both Psalm 118:22-23 and Isaiah 8:14-15, which further continue to develop and strengthen the argument originally put in place by Jesus at the conclusion of his public ministry as expressed in Luke 20:17-18.¹³

“...therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’” Isaiah 28:16 ^{ESV}

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” Psalm 118:22-23 ^{ESV}

“And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.” Isaiah 8:14-15 ^{ESV}

“But he looked directly at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” Luke 20:17-18 ^{ESV}

¹³ Please see **The Appendix (Pgs.73-82)** for a more complete treatment of Jesus’ parable in Luke 20.

For greater contextual and theological clarity, it is important to note that both Isaiah 8:14 and Isaiah 28:16 were also directly referenced in Paul's articulation of the sovereignty of God in salvation, specifically, when explaining corporate/national Israel's unbelief and the magnificent inclusion of the Gentiles into this new body of believers known as the Church; which does not undermine God's covenant fidelity to Israel.

"What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Romans 9:30-33 ^{ESV}

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all." Romans 11:29-32 ^{ESV}

In the larger context, Paul is articulating the sovereignty of God in salvation. Within this, he is explaining God's fidelity to his enduring covenants with Israel while also grafting the believing Gentiles into their New Covenant blessings (which corporate/national Israel is presently not enjoying). Within this context, he calls upon the Church, which consists of believing Jews and Gentiles alike, to yield themselves as holy sacrifices to God in proper spiritual worship. This serves to further bind Peter and Paul's common exhortations in view of a proper understanding of Israel and the Church.¹⁴

Not Ashamed, But Honored

Those who put their full faith in the chosen and precious cornerstone will absolutely never¹⁵ be put to shame. Further, it is not only that these believers will not be shamed, but beyond this they are honored/esteemed.

Thomas Schreiner reasonably argues that the absence of shame in 2:6 and the honor expressed in 2:7 are both with a view to the believer's final vindication and proper esteeming at the Lord's return and the judgment that accompanies that time.¹⁶ This continues the thematic development that Peter has plainly established of present suffering ultimately yielding to future glory. However, here the

¹⁴ Note the above reference to Romans 12:1

¹⁵ οὐ μή is an emphatic negative in the Greek, "whoever believes in him will [absolutely never] be put to shame." 2:6

¹⁶ The New American Commentary: 1,2 Peter, Jude; Thomas R. Schreiner; Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003; (Hereafter: Schreiner), Pg.110

counterpart to the believer is clearly addressed, too. The unbeliever experiences shame, stumbles, and is offended in their disobedience and will ultimately be judged accordingly.

Stumbling and Offended

It is important to understand the context of the stumbling and offense here: Unbelieving and disobedient hearts. In 2:7 it is, “those who do not believe,” and in 2:8 it is, “they disobey the word” – two sides of the same problem/offense though one arguably leads to the other (unbelief leading to disobedience). The problem is not with the object of unbelief and disobedience as he has plainly been identified as chosen by God and precious, but with those who, having beheld his glory, have refused to submit to it... offended that if he is God, then their idols of self-righteousness must fall.

A rock of offense/σκάνδαλον – hearing the transliteration of this Greek term for offense here, “skandalon,” immediately helps our ears make the connection to the severity of the offense the Cornerstone provokes among the unbelieving. You can plainly hear words that would come to our common vernacular from it: scandal and scandalize. There is no neutral engagement with Christ – he demands to be submitted to either as Lord or as Judge. There is no alternative option that accommodates a neutral difference of opinion or varied conclusion. Christ is either honored and esteemed or he is stumbled over as scandalous and is ultimately one’s just judge.

Putting one’s faith in this rejected and majestically esteemed stone results in them not being ashamed, but honored with him. By contrast, those who have rejected and those who continue to reject Christ... for them the same esteemed cornerstone has become a stone of stumbling and rock of offense. They are crushed and finished in judgment.

Destined To Reject

The end of 2:8 is a comfort amidst suffering and in our grappling with the rejection of the chosen and precious cornerstone, but it can also be a challenging statement, too. “They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”¹⁷

¹⁷ “The RSV (with all major Eng. translations) correctly represents this appointment to disobedience as a completed event in the past (*they were destined*), for that is the force of the aorist indicative here. It is impossible exegetically to say that God appointed not *persons* but the *fact* of stumbling as the penalty for disobedience for the verb is plural (*‘they were appointed’*), and the subject must be the *persons* who are disbelieving (v.7) and stumbling and disobeying (v.8). The time of such destining is not specified, but elsewhere in the Scripture related passages about predestination view it as occurring before creation, or ‘before the foundation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4; cf. 2 Pet. 2:3; Jude 4; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29-30; 9:14-24).” Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter; Wayne Grudem; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988; (Hereafter: Grudem), Pg.108

Those who have so rejected the esteemed cornerstone stumble over him in disobedience to the word as they were destined to do. Note the reference again to the Scriptures here. Peter has clearly and consistently esteemed the value and role of the Scriptures in salvation, maturity, understanding and practice of the Church, and here in condemning those who reject Christ in their disobedience to the word. The Scriptures are preeminently esteemed in both the believer's salvation and maturing (1:22-25,2:2), and they are the object of the unbeliever's disobedience (2:8). Further, it is important to note that it was disobeying the word that provoked their stumbling (2:8) - an action synonymous with rejecting the cornerstone (2:7-8).

Peter was addressing the truth that some were destined to stumble over Jesus... to disobey the Scriptures and not believe the Son. This might bring the role of Judas Iscariot to mind, who was destined to betray Jesus and of whom Jesus stated, "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Matthew 26:24 ^{ESV}

Did such persons effectively have a choice in this rejection? That is an important question to wrestle through, and it is equally important to find contentment in its apparent tension. As creatures we have a limited vantage point and ultimately only know that which can be perceived/observed and what has been revealed (ultimately perception/observation is a fruit of what has been revealed, too). Therefore, when the supernatural is perceived/observed or revealed as it was with greater consistency with various prophets, and most notably during Jesus' public ministry, there is a recognition that God both maintains and supersedes the natural order. This tension is commonly accepted. However, when we come across statements that address God's sovereignty and man's culpability, there is a unique tension and temptation. The tension is that we cannot fully resolve this relationship: God has and forever will work all things out according to his desired purposes, and yet man is responsible for his actions – including belief or lack thereof. The temptation is to absolve the tension and give attention exclusively to one side of it. Here Peter has addressed unbelief (2:7), stumbling because of disobedience (2:8), and the destined actions of volitional creatures (unbelieving man) (2:8). Those who in unbelief reject the chosen and precious cornerstone will give an account for their offense, just as they are destined to do. Therein lies both the tension that should provoke gratitude and wonder, as well as the opportunity to put the prospective temptation into submission to that which has been revealed. It would be a shame to make a matter of tension superior to its intended purpose: worshiping God and finding comfort in truth.

*Psalm 118*¹⁸

Peter plainly referenced Psalm 118:22 as did Jesus in Matthew 21, Mark 12, and Luke 20 when providing the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. This parable expressed the radical transition of spiritual leadership from the corrupted/unbelieving Jewish Leadership to the Apostles and later the Pastoral leadership of the Church.

At the culmination of Jesus' personal rejection by the people, it is mockingly affirmed that he was indeed God's chosen one, "...let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"

Luke 23:35 ^{ESV}

Peter also referenced Psalm 118:22 very boldly and with unambiguous clarity in Acts 4:11¹⁹ when the Apostles' authority to preach, teach, and heal was challenged. Jesus is the living stone that was rejected by men (primarily by the spiritual leadership of Israel), yet he was chosen and precious in the sight of God.

Paul also explained Israel's corporate offense of unbelief using this same reference to Psalm 118:22, stating that in pursuing a righteousness of their own works they failed to submit to a righteousness by faith, thereby stumbling over the stumbling stone (Romans 9:30-33²⁰).

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." Psalm 118:22-23 ^{ESV} Those truths which the psalmist declared so long ago, Peter has now testified that God has put on magnificent display.

¹⁸ Please see **The Appendix (Pgs.73-82)** for a more complete treatment of Jesus' parable in Luke 20.

¹⁹ "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone." Acts 4:11 ^{ESV}

²⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Romans 9:30-33 ^{ESV}

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9-10 ^{ESV}

Old Testament Language For New Testament Believers

In contrast to those who stumble over the cornerstone and disobey the Scriptures as they were destined to, are the believers to whom Peter was writing who were referred to in very plain Old Testament Israel language from Exodus 19, Leviticus 20, and Deuteronomy 7: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for God’s own possession.

“...and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” Exodus 19:6 ^{ESV}

“You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.” Leviticus 20:26 ^{ESV}

“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” Deuteronomy 7:6-8 ^{ESV}

Now, it is imperative that one keep the historical context in mind – beyond just 1 Peter, because the primary expression of Christ’s rejection (while continuing into the present some two thousand years later) was first and primarily – in view of the citations from Isaiah and Psalms – by the Jewish people and through their leadership. The Jews were in a different position of rejecting the Messiah as he was their Messiah, and the Gentile world was coming in to the matter from the outside – themselves effectively having at least passively rejected the truths of the OT Scriptures without necessarily rejecting the personal Messiah. This foundational understanding of the context serves to help the process of working through the rejection of Messiah by the Jews now yielding to Jewish language being used for the Church (Jews and Gentiles who have believed and submitted to Messiah).

For some there may be a degree of resolution here to say that Peter was writing to just Jews... but that does not appear to be the case, as addressed in the introduction to the book. Further, even though in 2:12 Peter does state... “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable....” He also stated 2:10, “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people....” The use of “Gentiles” by Peter plainly appears to be used synonymously with unbelievers in general, even while the Church continues to become more and more Gentile and less and less Jewish.

Paul also used the term “Gentiles” in this way, even when plainly writing to a primarily Gentile church:

Gentiles (Ethnic Identity) “For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you *Gentiles*....”
Ephesians 3:1 ^{ESV}

Gentiles (Ethnic Identity) “This mystery is that the *Gentiles* are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” Ephesians 3:6 ^{ESV}

Gentiles (Ethnic Identity) “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ....” Ephesians 3:8 ^{ESV}

Gentiles (Spiritual Identity) “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the *Gentiles* do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.” Ephesians 4:17-18 ^{ESV}

The language and context here lend themselves to at least addressing the discussion of “true/believing Israel” as some persons see the Church as a “new/spiritualized Israel”, and with this find merit in retro applying these and like terms and titles to the Church and/or see the Church as having taken the place of Israel. However, this is not how the New Testament frames this discussion. In addition to 1 Peter 2, both Romans 9 and Galatians 6 are common references in this discussion, and both plainly address Jews (who are among the larger descendants and identified nation of Israel) who personally have submitted to Messiah in genuine faith and thereby are enjoying the blessings of the covenant that was established in and through their nation.

“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.” Romans 9:6-8 ^{ESV}

“For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” Galatians 6:13-16 ^{ESV}

Plain Observations from Romans 9:6-8 and Galatians 6:16.

Paul has already expressed his personal sorrow over the general disposition of unbelief expressed by his kinsmen *according to the flesh*, namely Israelites (9:1-3). There is no ambiguity that Paul is speaking to the historic/national people of Israel with whom God entered into covenant with their Patriarchs and then the nation as a whole. To this historic/national people of Israel Paul says belongs: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises, and the patriarchs (9:4-5). He then makes one final assertion about the historic/national people of Israel, that from their natural lineage (*according to the flesh*) has come the Christ (9:5). Such realities compound Paul's sorrow. His people *according to the flesh* and Christ's people *according to the flesh* are predominately rejecting their Christ. Paul then explains that this unbelief among his and Christ's natural kinsmen (who have received unparalleled blessing and advantages from God) has not undermined the ways of God expressed through the Word of God. He explains that the effectual advantages and covenant blessings do not come through one's natural lineage *according to the flesh*, but through God's electing and, subsequently, the effectual faith of the person. However, the sweep of Paul's argument for the duration of Romans 9,10,11 is that the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises, and the patriarchs (9:4-5) – blessing and distinctions uniquely provided to Israel – is of clear consequence and standing. They were not simply a catalyst to get these blessings to some other entity, but were themselves the first and most natural beneficiaries. However, these blessings were not made effectual simply *according to the flesh* any more than one of Abraham's other children could claim to be his distinguished offspring, but it was the son *according to the flesh*, namely Isaac that the *promise* was made. Therefore, Isaac was both his descendant *according to the flesh* and *according to promise*. It is in the same manner that one is counted as being among the "Israel of God" as expressed in Galatians 6. They are Israel *according to the flesh* and *according to promise*. By contrast, and of no less distinction in the Church, are Gentiles (not descendants *according to the flesh*) who have been grafted into the salvific benefits and blessings of Israel. It is these Gentiles that Paul says in Galatians are new creations who have been crucified to this world. These believing Gentiles are the "them" in Galatians 6:16, which is plainly distinct from another group that he also refers to as "the Israel of God." The Israel of God plainly being those who, like Isaac, are members of the historic/national people of Israel, but believing – so they are both children *according to the flesh* and *according to promise* – distinct from the natural and unbelieving people of Israel. So, Paul is recognizing in both Romans 9,10,11 and in Galatians 6 that even though there is no distinction within the Church as *all* are children of God according to promise, there is also not a dismissal of the historic/national people of Israel to whom belong the adoption, the glory, the

covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises, and the patriarchs and from whom has come the Christ.

This is why Peter's overtly Jewish references applied broadly to the Church requires intentional effort to be understood correctly and not viewed as a casual dismissal to the sweeping history of redemption. My conclusion as to the nature of Peter's language is that it is an expression of the Church serving in a witness bearing capacity, which Israel had been called to and forfeited for this time of their corporate/national unbelief. Therefore, the Church (consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles) is taking up the mantle of God's representative people during this present age, but not to the exclusion of the enduring covenant with Israel that anticipates future satisfaction. To conclude otherwise puts an insurmountable burden of proof on someone to embrace the precise and extraordinary promises of God to Israel and to wholly disregard the judgments that accompanied them, too. Further, consistency would appear to require such persons to identify the Church within a racial and national paradigm as you cannot simply choose in what ways the Church would replace Israel (especially when using 1 Peter 2 as a support as he identifies the Church as a chosen race and holy nation). However, if as argued throughout this study, the Church has taken up the mantle of God's representative people during this present age, then expressing them in a like capacity to Israel's actual capacity is wholly reasonable, particularly when expressing the people as chosen and holy or elect and set apart.

Sidebar: Acts 15 & Romans 15 – Continuity With Distinctions

When addressing the inclusion of the "ethnos" or the "Gentiles" in Acts 15, Peter himself spoke to the matter and no one present or speaking in any way alluded to or concluded that Israel was now being replaced by this new entity of the Church. Rather, it was an inclusion of believing Jews and believing Gentiles who were bound together through justification by faith alone in Christ alone and neither being under the Law. This was the moment that such a "replacement" or "revision of terms" would have been most naturally placed. Note that at the Council, James affirms Peter's testimony of the gospel advancing to the Gentiles, but he refers to Peter as "Simeon" (his Jewish name) while then going on to state that from among the Gentiles God had taken "a people for his name." (Acts 15:14)

These conclusions were taken for granted as Paul came to the end of his letter to the Romans. He was not making two distinct bodies within the church, but he does recognize that there was a unique grace afforded those outside of Israel in being grafted into Israel's salvific blessings and constituting the Church. "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the

Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.” Romans 15:26-27 ^{ESV}

Macedonia and Achaiah: Gentiles

Jerusalem: Jews

The Gentiles were stated to be indebted to the Jews because the Gentiles had come to share in the *spiritual blessings* of this covenant *nation/people*. Israel was a literal and physical nation/people with spiritual blessings. The Gentiles were/are composed of all other nations, and those who have put their faith in Christ (the Jewish Messiah) have come to enjoy the spiritual blessings of Israel. Hence the Jew and Gentile Church is being built up to a spiritual house to offer spiritual sacrifices.

“...the Gentiles have come to *share/participate in their/Jews* spiritual blessings.” Romans 15:27 ^{ESV}

Share, not replace; and spiritual, not physical.

A Royal Priesthood

Already in 2:5 Peter has spoken of believers operating as a holy priesthood (individually) and here he is introducing the priesthood again, but as a royal priesthood (corporately). This priesthood is distinct as it is not of a familial line, but of a national or corporate identity. Further, this title uniquely contributes to the aforementioned role Israel was to execute and now that the Church serves in as a corporate witness bearing people as expressed in Exodus 19.

“...and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” Exodus 19:6 ^{ESV}

This priesthood was not one of overseeing the Temple worship system but of serving as a mediator between God and man – not an agent through which one had to come to access God, but an agent to advance the testimony of God to all men. As a nation, Israel was to undertake the stewardship of God’s blessings and see them appropriated to the nations – an expression of obedient fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant to be a blessing to the nations.

It is also a royal priesthood which is one that is directly in service to the King, but also that executes the mediatorial and witness bearing role in participating with the King’s rule. This role is most completely exercised by the Church in Christ’s Millennial Reign.

“When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!” 1 Corinthians 6:1-3 ^{ESV}

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:10 ^{ESV}

“Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.” Revelation 20:6 ^{ESV}

Called Out Of Darkness

“...the calling described here is effectual. Just as God’s word creates light, so God’s call creates faith. Calling is not a mere invitation but is performative, so that the words God speaks become a reality. The beauty and glory of the new life is conveyed by the image of light in contrast to darkness.”²¹

This language of effectual calling is a common and well-established theme in the New Testament:

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1:9 ^{ESV}

“...God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” 1 Thessalonians 2:12 ^{ESV}

“To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 2:14 ^{ESV}

“...who saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began....” 2 Timothy 1:9 ^{ESV}

“...the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ....” 1 Peter 5:10 ^{ESV}

“...him who called us to his own glory and excellence....” 2 Peter 1:3 ^{ESV}

Another consistent theme in the New Testament is the comparing of the natural, carnal, and overtly rebellious kingdom of darkness over which Satan is the primary administrator to the redemptive, glorious, and good kingdom of light of which Jesus Christ is the Lord:

“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.” John 3:19-20 ^{ESV}

“...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” Acts 26:18 ^{ESV}

“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Romans 13:12 ^{ESV}

²¹ Schreiner, Pg.116

“...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light....”

Ephesians 5:8 ^{ESV}

“...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son....” Colossians 1:12-13 ^{ESV}

“But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.” 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 ^{ESV}

Proclaiming Excellencies

The function of the Church and the proper execution of the multifaceted identities expressed in this passage is plain: to proclaim the excellencies of Christ who called them out of darkness and into his marvelous light. In proclaiming the excellencies of Christ, you cannot separate redemption from the Redeemer. So also, in declaring the excellencies of God, you must also purely delight in the person of God.

“Praise is more than thanksgiving. Praise not only offers the sacrifices of thanksgiving for God’s deliverance; praise adores God the deliverer. From declaring the works of God, the sacrifice of praise moves on to praise the name of God. To commemorate the saving deeds of the Lord is a thrilling task, but the pinnacle of devotion is to rejoice in God himself, the doer of those deeds. The supreme prayer of devotion is ‘Hallowed be thy name.’ When we thank God for who he is and ask him to be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we enter into the high sanctuary of heaven’s praise.”²²

Now You Have Received Mercy

In view of the immediately preceding (being called from darkness to light), it is now observed that these believers, and all in Christ, were once not a people, but now they are God’s people: the distinction being beneficiaries of the mercy of God. Therefore, God’s people are those who experience the redemptive mercy of God as was so magnificently unpacked throughout chapter one and expressed further in the letter, including the end of chapter two.

Mercy is the distinguishing element between those who are and are not God’s people – Jews and Gentiles alike. So, by what means did they receive mercy? Through God’s sovereign election and redemption in Christ.

²² Clowney, Pg.95

Regarding the references to Hosea that are shared by both Peter and Paul, John MacArthur states: “In the OT, the prophet Hosea promised that Israel, though remaining outside of God’s blessings for a long period of time, would eventually come under God’s mercy. God’s dealing with Israel was somewhat of a pattern for his dealing with the believers under the New Covenant, who previously were outside of God’s covenant, but have been brought under the mercy of God by faith in Christ (cf. Eph. 3:4-13).”²³

A Magnificent Transition: Ephesians Two

Former Disposition: Once you were not a people

Present Disposition: But now you are God’s people

Former Disposition: Once you had not received mercy

Present Disposition: But now you have received mercy

In Ephesians 2 Paul expresses this former disposition to the new one in Christ in a very similar way – himself providing a strong contrast of the believer’s former unbelief to their transformation to becoming sons and daughters by the mercy of God. Further, he also addresses the unity of the body of Christ which includes the Gentiles being grafted into the blessings of believing Israel.

Former Position: Rebelliously dead in this world and children of wrath, Ephesians 2:1-3.

Magnificent Transition: God lovingly chose to extend mercy and redeem a people for himself – trophies of his immeasurable riches of his grace, Ephesians 2:4-7.

Affirmation/Response of God’s Redemption: By grace through faith, leaving boasting in Christ alone, Ephesians 2:8-9.

Affirmation/Response of God’s Redemption: Created in Christ Jesus to produce good works, Ephesians 2:10.

Former Position Further Expanded: “Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Ephesians 2:11-12 ^{ESV}

²³ MacArthur Study Bible, Pg. 1942

Note that if they were formerly “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise...” the conclusion would be that they are no longer so alienated and estranged. This is not stating that you have replaced that which was *formerly* the commonwealth of Israel or the recipients of God’s covenants, but that whereas before they were not beneficiaries of such blessings now they are beneficiaries of these blessings. This is explicitly unpacked in Romans 9-11, and when the idea of replacement crept up Paul reminds his readers, “...the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” Romans 11:29 ^{ESV}

Magnificent Transition Further Expanded: Whereas these Gentile believers had previously been outside of the blessings of believing Israel, now they have been brought near and made new by the blood of Christ. This redemptive work that drew these Gentiles near also knit them together with believing Jews making them not one nationality, but one common body known as the Church, Ephesians 2:13-18.

Finally, when speaking to this unified body, Paul speaks in like manner as Peter – expressing this unified body of the church as a holy temple of the Lord that is built on the foundation of the apostles with the rejected and now esteemed rock of Christ as the cornerstone. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22 ^{ESV}

1 Peter 2	Old Testament Support/Cross References	Romans 9
"For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'" 1 Ptr. 2:6 ^{ESV}	"...therefore thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'" Isa. 28:16 ^{ESV}	"...as it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Rom. 9:33 ^{ESV}
"So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,'" 1 Ptr. 2:7 ^{ESV}	"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." Ps. 118:22 ^{ESV}	
"and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do." 1 Ptr. 2:8 ^{ESV}	"And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Isa. 8:14 ^{ESV}	"...as it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Rom. 9:33 ^{ESV}
"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." 1 Ptr. 2:9 ^{ESV}	"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." Ex. 19:5-6 ^{ESV} "You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine." Lev. 20:26 ^{ESV} "But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day." Deut. 4:20 ^{ESV} "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." Deut. 7:6 ^{ESV} "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." Deut. 14:2 ^{ESV}	
"Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." 1 Ptr 2:10 ^{ESV}	"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' it shall be said to them, 'Children of the living God.'" Hos. 1:10 ^{ESV} "Say to your brothers, 'You are my people,' and to your sisters, 'You have received mercy.'" Hos. 2:1 ^{ESV} "...and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'" Hosea 2:23 ^{ESV}	"As indeed he says in Hosea, 'Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.' And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" Rom. 9:25-26 ^{ESV}

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

2:4

Walk through one of the Gospels and consider the elements of Jesus' rejection by men and esteeming by God. Consider details of the dynamics involved and try not to oversimplify your conclusions that the people were just looking for a different kind of Messiah. Many plainly saw Jesus as Messiah and rejected him. Write out some of your observations and note how they help you better understand what Peter experienced firsthand as a witness to Jesus' public ministry.

2:5

Several examples of "spiritual sacrifices" were identified in the study guide material. Being as this is the call and responsibility of the believer, are you diligently yielding spiritual sacrifice to God? What does this look like in your life? Is there a somber intentionality to your "sacrifices," or are you content to have done your necessary duties?

2:6-8

Jesus developed the implications of this prophecy in the parable he taught in Luke 20. If you have not already done so, read the appendix that walks through this parable and record your reflections on how it informs and impacts your understanding of Jesus' public ministry, Israel's forsaken responsibility, and the present stewardship of the Church.

2:9-10

Peter has used very Jewish language in speaking about the Church throughout this section and especially here. After working through the material and laboring in the Scriptures, can you articulate the distinctions and similarities of relationship between Israel and the Church? In particular, can you articulate the role of a "Royal Priesthood" as a mediatorial and witness bearing people? Consider also the fact that Paul quotes the same exact references in Romans 9, which is a portion of an intensive argument (Romans 9-11) about how to properly understand Israel and the Church. It mattered to Paul for more reasons than having a personal affection for his kinsmen; it should matter to you too.

III. There is a continual internal warfare within the redeemed, and steady victories are a consistent expression of gospel testimony to an unbelieving world (2:11-12)

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” 1 Peter 2:11 ^{ESV}

Beloved

At what is a bit of a transition point in the chapter in which Peter has identified the believers in a variety of ways that express their identity in Christ, he now for the first time expresses one of the more intimate identities that they have in Christ, referring to them as beloved. Throughout the Gospels Jesus was the beloved Son, and the term went on to become an endearing reference to believers in the book Acts and then on through the Epistles. Beloved is a fitting term for those who are identified with the beloved Son and who have a common affection one for another.

An Appeal To Sojourners And Exiles

Having now addressed these believers with the affectionate term of beloved, Peter urges, appeals, implores his readers as strangers in this world to abstain from that which would seek to destroy them from within.

First it should be noted that he is urging them with their status or identity in view: sojourners and exiles. Because they are a set apart people, they are charged to act accordingly. They are not sojourners and exiles from the physical realm, but from the ruling authority of this world. Therefore, being a people set apart, they are to conduct themselves accordingly not as “friends of the world” or as “carnal men” but as strangers and exiles. Their being at war with the passions of the flesh is not a critique of the natural/physical world but the natural/sinful world and the redeemed inner man.

How are they both sojourners and exiles? The two terms are functionally synonymous in this context and appear to be used together for emphasis. Sojourners and exiles are a people who are wandering about a land that is not their home... never able to fully settle or assimilate.

An Appeal To Abstain

Peter's urging is to abstain from the passions of the flesh. Peter is exhorting them not to dabble with sin, not to lightly engage it, but rather to have nothing to do with it.

This was address in a like manner in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 by Paul.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness." 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 ^{ESV}

"Abstain from every form of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22 ^{ESV}

How comprehensive is this abstaining and how is it executed properly? The command to abstain is in the present tense and is communicating that this is a present and ongoing expectation for those who have just been identified as beloved exiles and sojourners... it is an element of progress in the faith – a mortifying and setting aside of that which would wage war with our souls. It is not a once for all matter, but a continual and intentional choice of submission in obedience.

What are the passions of the flesh? Is this explicitly a reference to sexual immorality or is it broader/more comprehensive? While sexual immorality would certainly be a matter of significant attention when addressing this matter, it does not necessarily need to be limited in its scope here, and it is likely that Peter had a larger view in mind. Galatians 5 likely captures the sweep of the intended exhortation here.

"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:17-21 ^{ESV}

With this breadth of offenses in view, it must be remembered that these, and like offenses, are not just a variety of things one might encounter in life, but areas of personal assault on one's soul. Peter uses strong language... namely warfare; and it should capture our attention and solicit a proper response to hear and heed his exhortation to abstain. This is not a casual engagement with nominal consequences.

“Wage war is a strong term that generally means to carry out a long-term military campaign. It implies not just antagonism but a relentless, malicious aggression. Since it takes place in the soul, it is a kind of civil war. Joined with the concept of fleshly lusts, the image is of an army of lustful terrorists waging an internal search and destroy mission to conquer the soul of the believer.”²⁴

This conflict within the soul is put on explicit display in Romans 7 where the daily skirmishes of battle wane between victories and defeats.

“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.”
Romans 7:14-21 ^{ESV}

James is the only other person who appears to reference warfare language in like manner of being assaulted by sin (James 4:1²⁵), explaining it is the passions at war within the believer... radical struggles with sin. However, the language of warfare does frame the New Testament mindset:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 ^{ESV}

“This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.” 1 Timothy 1:18-19 ^{ESV}

Finally, it is important to note that Peter has addressed this matter in chapter one (1:14-17) when he was calling his readers, as obedient children, to not be conformed to the passions (same word as here in 2:11) of their former ignorance (old besetting sins), and then they are called upon to pursue holiness and to live in a righteous fear during their time of exile (again referencing this present condition).

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile....” 1 Peter 1:14-17 ^{ESV}

²⁴ MacArthur Commentary, Pg.138

²⁵ “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?” James 4:1 ^{ESV}

“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.” 1 Peter 2:12 ^{ESV}

Good Conduct Before Unbelievers

In contrast to capitulating to that which wages war against one's soul, believers are called upon to take on honorable actions and good deeds. Further, it appears that their conduct is already demonstrating a degree of faithfulness with “keep,” and the exhortation is to continue or persist in like manner – this is a life calling to enduring faithfulness.

The believer's conduct that is being put on display would include all of life and its actions. Peter has already called these believers to a life of holy conduct (1:15), and he spoke to them that they had been ransomed from futile conduct inherited from their forefathers (1:18). Therefore, this is simply a call to persevere in such truths and to persevere before an unbelieving world that is watching.

“...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct....” 1 Peter 1:15 ^{ESV}

“...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold....” 1 Peter 1:18 ^{ESV}

When Peter states that the unbelieving world (Gentiles) will speak against them as evildoers, there is more than the presumption that there is an antagonism being expressed here. This is ultimately to be expected as the valuation of the beloved Son, the living stone that was precious and chosen by God, was himself rejected.

To further round this matter out by way of cultural background, John MacArthur highlights some of the elements that would inform this exhortation here as the early Christians were falsely accused of a number of offenses: atheism (because they would not participate in idol or emperor worship), cannibalism (because of their participation in the Lord's Supper), immorality (because of their expressed love for one another), and general culture harms (because of their commitments to walk as salt and light in the world).²⁶ With these charges alone there is nothing particularly sensational... just the daily lives of those walking through this life as sojourners and exiles.

²⁶ MacArthur Study Bible, Pgs. 1942-1943

Aim of Good Conduct

There is an explicit motive for their good behavior expressed: ultimately to glorify God.

The purpose clause connects good/honorable conduct to even those outside of Christ glorifying God.

So, what is the nature of these good deeds that appear to be publicly observable? A reasonable foundation to consider what these deeds might look like would be from Galatians 5.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23 ^{ESV}

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explicitly rebukes disingenuous acts of public righteousness, but also affirms and calls upon genuine believers of pure heart to put their proper and God honoring conduct on display for the same motivation expressed here: bringing glory to God. Further, it is valuable to observe that this statement in the sermon comes immediately after Jesus had spoken to the blessed condition of being reviled, persecuted, and slandered on his account.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:10-16 ^{ESV}

Day of Visitation

Peter frames the present slandering and the present good deeds with a view to a future event, namely, the day of visitation. It would appear that this is a view to the Lord’s return, but throughout the Scriptures references to days of visitation were a way of describing times that The LORD more overtly/directly engaged his people and other nations. The context of the event would determine if it was a time of reward, deliverance, or judgment.

So, by what means will these Gentile glorify God on the day of visitation? Will it be willingly or under compulsion? Will it be by judgment or joy? Context will determine this too. God will be exalted either through worshipful submission or submission in judgment.

The believers are here putting their two-part priestly ministry on display: they are submitting worshipful/sacrificial lives to the Lord, and they are providing a mediating testimony of God's truth in action to a world consumed in darkness. In their mediating role there is a beckoning to the unbeliever to also submit in faith; and if they refuse, there is a hardening with compounding culpability. Either way they will glorify God on the day of visitation.

Further, there is a good case to argue here that the believer's conduct may prove to be winsome – affirming the testimony of the Scriptures in the life of the unbeliever, resulting in their salvation. The most persuasive argument for this is the relationship expressed in chapter three where Peter plainly addresses the winsome value of a wife's testimony before her unbelieving husband. The same language used there is used here, specifically that of “seeing” and “conduct” – same terms in both verses. This is the believer's hope... like their Lord not desiring that any should perish, but that they might join the company of joyful worshipers of the Redeemer.

“Keep your **conduct/ἀναστροφὴν** among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may **see/ἐποπτεύοντες** your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” 1 Peter 2:12 ^{ESV}

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the **conduct/ἀναστροφῆς** of their wives, when they **see/ἐποπτεύσαντες** your respectful and pure **conduct/ἀναστροφὴν**.” 1 Peter 3:1-2 ^{ESV}

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

2:11

Peter uses strong language and urgency about abstaining from sin. Does your engagement of abstaining from sin reflect the same measure of urgency, or are you indifferent, passive, even tolerant to have that which would seek to murder your soul part of your daily life experiences? What are you doing to keep that which seeks your destruction at bay, and how are you mortifying that which you have failed to abstain from already? Consider your average input of information: internet, radio, television, friends, reading material, etc.

2:12

The gospel is declared with words, but words are heard with greater clarity and impact when they are accompanied by gospel informed lives. Beyond not being an offense to the gospel by failing to represent it well, how are you demonstrating a winsome life?

IV. Providential relationships (expressed: culturally, economically, sociologically, etc.) all provide witness bearing opportunities, particularly through submission (2:13-17)

"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good." 1 Peter 2:13-14 ^{ESV}

Subject To All For The Lord

Peter gives significant attention to submission in the second half of chapter two and the first portion of chapter three. Therefore, it is important to understand what it means to submit or to be subject to someone. Submission is effectively bringing oneself under the authority and/or influence of another who is in some form of leadership or authority. For one who is in a relationship in which they are the one submitting to another, this does not mean that they are inferior, weaker, less intelligent, less gifted, or otherwise deficient. It is a relationship of order designed by God. Further, for those in Christ it is imperative to remember that the contextual framing of this call to submission is the Lord – it is for the Lord's sake that one is to submit to all ruling/governing authorities. So, even with cultural and political applications of submission, the issue is not the nature or quality of those leaders, but the Lord who is honored in this submission from one to another.

Note the earliest recording of Jesus' willful submission to an authority providentially placed over him, "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart." Luke 2:51 ^{ESV} If the Son of Man can willfully submit to parents that he created, regenerated, and who were imperfect in the best of their efforts, then there is no excuse for another not to heed the call to submission, too. Further, as will be addressed later, there is no special exemption when the context shifts from benevolent parents to wicked governing officials.

In submitting even to a pagan or wicked ruler/authority, the Lord affirms for believers they are ultimately submitting to him, as plainly expressed in Romans 13.

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid

God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed."

Romans 13:1-7 ^{ESV}

There is not an explicit qualification of who believers do not have to submit to; Peter's command appears intentionally broad so as to include every human institution.

The word choice and language of the original text helps clarify this matter further. Whereas the ESV, NASB, and NET Bible translate "ἀνθρωπίνη κτίσει" as "human institution" it more literally would be "human creation." Now, the reasons for not being so rigidly literal are clarity in view of context. Peter goes on to reference these "human creations" as "human institutions," but what is helpful to be reminded of is that they are indeed just the structured efforts of creation, which is always subject to the lordship of its Creator. Further, it is for the Lord's sake that the believers are called to submission of human institutions, so it is with a view to the Lord that this command is obeyed, no matter what the authority structure.

Peter then goes on to provide a large sweep of what qualified as a human institution - the supremacy of emperors to dispatched governors.

Submitting To Governmental Authorities

The government is one of three primary institutions ordained by God at this time in Redemptive History (1.The Church, 2.The Family, and 3.The Government). Each of these primary institutions have their own clear authority structure put in place by God. With this being stated, it is understood that the emperor's supremacy is in the context of a restricted economy - he is supreme only in the context that the Lord has placed him and for as long as the Lord permits.

Note that the ESV translates: "βασιλεύς" in this text as "Emperor" but as "King" everywhere else. Translations vary in their word choice here, but it is plain that emperor was chosen by some translations to communicate what the historical context/application would have been for Peter and his readers who recognized the supreme civil authority of their time as the Roman Emperor.

Note also the dual functions of the institution of the government, as expressed by Paul in the previously referenced Romans 13 text and here by Peter: punish those who do evil and praise those who do good.

Suffering and Submission

It is important to keep a larger understanding of the book of 1 Peter in mind while working through its parts. Keeping with this perspective, one can observe that in a book that addresses so much suffering, there is not a special qualification supplied here... it is a call to submission:

Even when the government fails to protect you from unjust suffering.

Even when the government unjustly punishes you.

Such a faithfulness to heed this command was most consistently and profoundly exemplified by Jesus Christ who himself was not dutifully protected by the government, and who was ultimately murdered through the agency of the government. Still the call to honor the Lord in subjecting oneself to the government stands.

Peter calls believers to submission to these leaders, even while recalling what Jesus told his Apostles when dispatching them on a witness bearing mission during his public ministry, "Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles."

Matthew 10:17-18 ^{ESV}

Peter calls believers to submission to these leaders, even while intimately knowing and having observed the wrongful charge and punishment for evildoing by one who could not have been more perfectly innocent, "[The religious leaders] answered [Pilate], 'If [Jesus] were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you.'" John 18:30 ^{ESV}

However, Peter also personally knows the boundaries of submission as observed in Acts 4, 5.

"So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." Acts 4:18-20 ^{ESV}

"And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.' Acts 5:27-29 ^{ESV}

Even with these final two examples, it must be clearly understood that the times that merit righteous disobedience are not always so clear and one needs extraordinary wisdom and good counsel. I am not persuaded that it is even always best to preach in such a way as to get oneself arrested when there are an abundance of other opportunities.²⁷ Note that the Apostles clearly did not feel compelled to act in what would be regarded as overtly obstinate as they were not being repeatedly arrested for like offenses. There are both times to challenge and times to shrewdly exercise and pursue other opportunities. Wisdom would direct one to great lengths of submission and rarely the very careful choice to defy God's providential authorities.

**“For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should
put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.” 1 Peter 2:15 ^{ESV}**

Peter here addresses what so many persons crave to know in life's various circumstances and challenges, the will or expressed desire of God.

Peter offers a purpose statement to the sweeping call to obedient submission that he just gave: the proper and righteous rebuke to the noises of foolish persons. The believer's submission was an expression of the will of God being faithfully executed in their lives – a testimony of conduct that silences the ignorance of foolish people.

This is not an ignorance from a lack of sufficient information, but a rejection of the information.²⁸ This usage of the term is not unlike how it is used in popular vernacular with many today – referring to someone as ignorant when it is determined that they are being obstinate in the face of good data concluded to be facts. However, even obstinate ignorance is silenced by the faithful execution of doing good in a context of submission first to the Lord and then to those whom he has placed over you.

²⁷ One must very carefully consider if the gospel is genuinely being suppressed when one option/door is closed. It may be that a given place/opportunity is restricted, but not necessarily the gospel witness altogether.

²⁸ MacArthur Commentary, Pg.150

It would appear that this “doing good” extends back to no less than what was just spoken to in 2:12 as well as 2:13-14.

2:12, one’s good deeds bringing God glory on the day of visitation.

2:13-14, one’s good deeds, if recognized, bringing due praise from the governing officials.

2:15 one’s good deeds are not just glorifying God and/or receiving praise from leaders, but also a shaming or silencing of foolish people.

“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.” 1 Peter 2:16 ^{ESV}

Servants of God do not use their freedom as a cover-up for evil, as they are in complete submission to their master and a life that is pleasing to him. Therefore, since evil is the very antithesis to that which is pleasing to God, his servants/slaves are not thereby to have anything to do with it. One in Christ recognizes that maximizing one’s freedom is submitting as a servant to God and, by extension, to those providentially over them in any range, relationships, and experiences. Therefore, freedom in Christ does not afford one the opportunity or right to usurp or disobey natural/temporal authorities.

**“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood.
Fear God. Honor the emperor.” 1 Peter 2:17 ^{ESV}**

In a larger dialogue on submission, Peter gives four categorical commands to believers: to honor, to love, to fear, and again, to honor. Each of these commands has an expectation of respective obedience that marks the ordering of the believer’s life.

Honor Everyone

Honoring someone is giving them proper esteem, recognition. Therefore, to honor everyone will vary in its expression as not all are due the same degree of honor. However, all are due a reasonable measure of respect and courtesy.

Love the Brotherhood

Brotherhood is a natural expression of the larger Church family and Peter's command was intentionally broad, so that expressions of self-giving love toward other believers would be, essentially, limitless. A like exhortation was expressed in chapter one.

"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart...." 1 Peter 1:22 ^{ESV}

Fear God

Fearing God is a proper disposition for any who have come to genuinely know him – it is more than a magnificent sense of awe, but of being righteously undone at his glorious majesty. Fearing God provides a proper means by which one can submit to others no matter their rank or strength because it is ultimately to God that they are submitting themselves... not cavalierly, but because they must and in this they take great joy.

It would be wise to remember that while others are to be honored and loved, it is God who is to be feared.

Honor the Emperor

Of the natural/providential relationships, the submission to the Emperor does hold a distinguished role because, for a season, he has been elevated as a chief among men. However, the Emperor is just a man, and while deserving of esteemed respect, he ultimately is honored just the same as everyone else. He is most certainly not worshipped (as many were doing at this time), he does not secure a unique affection as a brother in Christ, and he does not merit the fear due to God, as he is but a temporal vassal to the Sovereign of all creation.

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

2:13-16

Submission to authority is a matter that most everyone struggles with on some level or another – demonstrated from grumbling to physical resistance. However, Peter makes it clear that the believer is called to submit to the full range of authority structures that the Lord has providentially placed over them (home, work, government, etc.). What does submission to authority for the Lord's sake look like in your life? Are you angling for exceptions because leadership is poor or undesirable? How are you choosing to do good in your submission so as to honor the Lord and silence those who obstinately oppose him?

Carefully and prayerfully think through what submission looks like when a government is oppressive or openly antagonistic to the things of God. When does one willfully oppose such governments or leadership without opposing God by choosing to not submit? Think about Joseph and Daniel who were both in levels of leadership in pagan governments and able to effectively submit with only one overt exception for which Daniel willfully took his punishment (Daniel 6). Consider also Peter's context of living under extraordinarily wicked times in Rome, and yet this was his charge to the believers – submit.

2:17

Four commands are succinctly provided – consider how you can demonstrate active obedience with each of them. Write out your conclusions.

**V. Submitting to masters provides a gracious opportunity
when suffering unjustly while mindful of God (2:18-20).**

**“Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect,
not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.” 1 Peter 2:18 ^{ESV}**

Submissive Servants

The term that is commonly translated “servant” here is not the more common New Testament term for slave, but one that communicates one who is of a lower rank, perhaps a house servant, though the concept of servitude is quite plain. Here servants were called upon to be subject to their masters with all respect, which would have been a precise application of everyone being subject to every human institution.

What does it mean for a servant to be subject with all respect? Respect here is translated from: “φόβος” – commonly translated “fear,” which is how it was used in 2:17, “Fear God.” Here “high/weighty respect” appears to be a better translation for this context. However, this does introduce the reasonable question of translating the same word differently within the same passage. The rationale for doing so here is that the context dictates this choice – God is to be feared and an earthly master is to be highly respected.

The word choice does however carry weight behind it and appears to communicate more than just compliant action. Servants are to have a proper regard for their role in submission to their masters. Wayne Grudem expressed this disposition as having, “a healthy desire to avoid their displeasure.”²⁹

Submission Amidst Suffering

There are a variety of masters that servants and slaves will experience, some are good and gentle while others are unjust. Good and gentle appears to be expressing the ideal master, perhaps one who is a believer. Unjust is a striking contrast to good and gentle – this one is corrupt and crooked... godless, himself not walking in the fear of God.

²⁹ Grudem, Pg.125

Presumably a good and gentle master would require what is reasonable and bearable of his servants - fostering a context of their gratitude in serving him. By contrast, the unjust master may not yield fair wages for labor, may be verbally or physically abusive, or may require what is beyond the proper scope of his servants. At the least this master was “crooked” - not a trustworthy or honorable man. However, even to such a master as this, by virtue of his being one’s master, the believer must subject himself to his lordship.

Context does not provide a unique loophole for contemporary application because, while it is true that slavery and a life of servitude was different in this historical context, it still does not mean it was preferred or always upright.³⁰ The range of the servant/slave experience could be from mine workers to doctors, and the treatment could be from physical/sexual abuse to comprehensive education and opportunities. Further, entering into slavery could also come from a range of providential reasons: captured in war, kidnapped, born into slavery, or self-sold to satisfy debts.³¹ So, with this diversity of contexts and experiences also would come diversity of masters and treatment. However, all of these details are subject to the providence of God and are to be governed by the commands of God for his people. Therefore, the call is to be subject to your masters with all respect with a view to your true Master who is righteous, just, and is ready to reward.

Rather than exploring exemptions and exceptions, it would be best to see the high value that a servant properly subjecting themselves to their master yields.

Protecting the integrity of God’s good name and serving other believers:

“Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.” 1 Timothy 6:1-2 ^{ESV}

Adorning the doctrine of God:

“Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.” Titus 2:9-10 ^{ESV}

³⁰ The Western World has a reasonable sensitivity to the word “slave” as it communicates a shameful/wicked experience of recent history in which persons made in the image of God were often relegated to the status of animals. This has caused great distress by many persons too because it would appear that the New Testament speaks more of negotiating this evil in a faithful way without overtly condemning it. What has to be remembered was that the commands provided were framed in the reality in which believers lived (and many continue to live presently). This is what obedience looked like and still should look like. This does not condone the actions of wicked men. Further, the principles that have provided liberation and restoration of the wicked are rooted in the principles and precepts of the Scriptures. No one can fear God and treat his image bearer as an animal. Many will give an account to the righteous Judge for their participation in the wicked actions and culture of slavery. This however does not dismiss the responsibility to submit in a way that honors Christ and has a view to his return.

³¹ Schreiner, Pg.135

“For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 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.” 1 Peter 2:19-20 ^{ESV}

The Grace of Unjust Suffering

As observed in 2:15, “For this is the will of God,” Peter again offers a purpose statement to the call to submission that he just gave to servants (clearly with a view to the challenging and nuanced context in which they operate/live - a context that often includes unjust masters).

Peter states that being subject to your masters with all respect is a gracious thing when mindful of God in a context of unjust suffering, and in stating this there appears to be a unique degree of sweetness to enduring amidst unjust suffering.

What is translated as “a gracious thing” here is a more complete way of expressing the term “grace.” More plainly it could be translated, “For this is grace, when, mindful of God...” It is *grace* to suffer well while enduring sorrows suffered unjustly. This does not intend to endorse unjust treatment or indifference in suffering, but a proper disposition of confidence in God amidst suffering – a subject that will continue to be developed and will culminate in the example of Christ himself.

What is meant by “mindful of God”? The term is more commonly translated “conscience” – one’s internal examination of intent and moral barometer to govern expressed actions. Therefore, Peter is expressing a call to a disposition in which:

One is carrying out their particular conduct with a view of exalting/honoring/fearing God.

One is aware that their Savior suffered, and in this world they will too.

One is aware that the Judge of all the World will judge justly.

By contrast, Thomas Schreiner argues here that “mindful/conscious of God” is expressing a choice to deviate from a master’s command in submission to God, and that this is what introduces enduring sorrows unjustly.³² However, this does not appear to be as cleanly identified with the culminating example of Jesus that is referenced shortly after this in 2:20-23, particularly his entrusting himself to the perfect/just Judge.

³² Schreiner, Pg.139

Enduring Sorrows In Suffering

Sorrows: The fruits or results of unjust suffering.

This unjust suffering appears to be from the very master, “the unjust,” that the believers had just been called to submit themselves to in the preceding verse (2:18).

It is noteworthy that suffering is addressed quite plainly here and specifically as unjust suffering - it is a reality and there is not an overt immediate deliverance or plan for its escape. Rather, God’s good pleasure is that while remaining in it, you endure it well, with a view to him. Further, the suffering here is not natural suffering (failing of the body, accidents, etc.); rather, it is unjust suffering that is producing sorrows... there will be unjust and sorrowful suffering and the aim expressed here is not a way of escape, but faithful endurance.

God appears pleased with the bearing up under, the enduring of his own children – a disposition and experience whereby they are demonstrating his sufficiency amidst sorrow (genuine pain, distress, and grief over the lack of just treatment and conduct by the unbelieving world). Sorrow can have a disabling, even a crippling, effect – particularly if it is the end of the story... however, it is plain that the believer’s sorrow is but temporal, and for this temporal season of sojourning there is the call to endurance and perseverance with a view to sorrow’s abatement and yielding to joy.

The New Testament is well acquainted with various expressions of sorrow:

The profound sorrow of no longer having Jesus’ person immediately with them as the disciples had for the years of his public ministry, John 16:6-7,22.

“...because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” John 16:6-7 ^{ESV}

“So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” John 16:22 ^{ESV}

The depth of pain Paul experienced for unbelieving Israel, Romans 9:1-2.

“I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.” Romans 9:1-2 ^{ESV}

The wounds of grief that accompany pastoral ministry, 2 Corinthians 2:1-11.

“For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant

love that I have for you. Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.” 2 Corinthians 2:1-11 ^{ESV}

The painful burdens that accompany a lifetime of yielding one’s person to ministry and the compounding pain of losing dear friends, Philippians 2:27.

“Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” Philippians 2:27 ^{ESV}

It seems so peculiar to esteem sorrow and suffering, particularly unjust suffering. It is such an offense to our dignity as we would esteem ourselves worthy of just treatment. However, it is enduring the pain of sorrow that comes from unjust suffering that produces a unique grace to us. In this indignity and the pain that accompanies it, we find that we are on the path of discipleship and conformity to Christ. To be riddled by our suffering unjust sorrow is to fail to understand both what Jesus overtly stated and experienced. Further it is a deficient understanding of discipleship, which is a call to follow Jesus and be made like him.

The Son of Man must suffer... be killed... and be raised, Mark 8:31.

“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Mark 8:31 ^{ESV}

The suffering Christ was God’s revealed plan throughout Redemptive History... temporal suffering yielding to future/eternal glory, Luke 24:25-27,44-47, Acts 3:18.

“And he said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:25-27 ^{ESV}

“Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.’” Luke 24:44-47 ^{ESV}

“But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.” Acts 3:18 ^{ESV}

The suffering Christ would have suffering disciples who also would take on temporal suffering with a view of future glory, Matthew 16:24-25.

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’” Matthew 16:24-25 ^{ESV}

Paul further explains that suffering for Christ is not just an incidental consequence, but a blessing provided by God, Philippians 1:29-30.

“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.” Philippians 1:29-30 ^{ESV}

Peter expresses there is the valuation of suffering graciously versus punitively (2:20) and the identification of the believer’s suffering with Christ’s own unjust suffering (2:21-23).

With verse twenty the argument for suffering with gracious endurance continues. Peter states that there is a clear value and/or reward before the Lord when suffering with gracious endurance when doing good – otherwise stated, when doing the will of God, “For this is the will of God, that by doing good....” (2:15).

The credit that Peter speaks of is reward and/or the securing of God’s good pleasure - expressed as being blessed. Further, the matter of credit or lack thereof gives meaning to suffering... those who are suffering for their own offenses have a *reasonable* outcome – punitive consequences. By contrast, those suffering unjustly have a *meaningful* outcome if in their submission they have a view to God – reward. Therefore, unjust suffering only lacks meaning when the meaning is forfeited – failing to suffer well with a view to God.

Peter does speak to punitive suffering, but only to frame the context of worthwhile suffering. There is no special merit to enduring what you deserve to receive by way of punitive treatment (i.e. beaten for sin). Regarding this, R.C. Sproul stated “Enduring cruelty and harshness from fear or cowardice is not necessarily commendable. That kind of submission does not get us a commendation from God. His commendation comes when we do it for conscience’s sake. If we submit because we are trying to honor the lordship of God, then such submission, even in times of harshness and cruelty, is commendable.”³³

³³ St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary: 1-2 Peter; R.C. Sproul; Crossway, 2011; (Hereafter: Sproul), Pg.82

This is the second time within the immediate passage that endurance for unjust suffering is esteemed as a gracious thing in the sight of God and this is an important emphasis that does not need to be overlooked. God is pleased with his redeemed children suffering for doing what is good. In God's sovereignty, he has seen fit to bring to himself maximum glory and our greatest joy in temporal (this natural life) unjust suffering for pursuing righteous obedience.

This magnificently changes our thinking and struggles in prayer.

This completely removes the place of self-vengeance.

Consider the letter to the church in Smyrna. They were told that they would suffer unjust imprisonment and tribulation, and with this in view there was nothing said about special deliverance, but a call to be faithful unto death with a view to future reward. The Lord, who had absolute means of keeping them from such terrible struggles and sorrows, only calls them to endurance with a view to reward, and this was for his glory and their greatest good.

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'" Revelation 2:8-11 ^{ESV}

Enduring unjust suffering to the glory of God is plainly an expression of the will of God and it pleases him. Therefore, unjust suffering is plainly an element of the will of God - not its application, but the response it should produce for those in Christ. Putting on display the sufficiency of Christ while enduring.

Finally, this is further affirmed by the statement that immediately follows... "For to [unjust suffering] you have been called..."

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

2:18-20

Already having worked through the dynamics of submission, here Peter provides a more precise context of servants/slaves and their engagement, primarily, with wicked masters. The call to submission remains the same. So, what of your uniquely challenging context: in the home, at work, at church, as a local and national citizen? Are you prepared to suffer in submission with a view to the calling God has placed upon you?

What might you do to better condition your heart for when like challenges come? How do you protect yourself from making excuses? How do you counsel others in truth when every other voice urges them to hold their head high and walk with respect in defiance to the authority placed over them?

VI. Christ has called a people to himself for redemption and suffering – a suffering that he perfectly modeled for them (2:21-23)

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” 1 Peter 2:21 ^{ESV}

Continuing with his unpacking of suffering unjustly with gracious endurance, Peter unambiguously states that this is what God has called them to in this temporal sojourning. This appears to be a plain medium through which the Church, as a chosen race, as a royal priesthood, as a holy nation, and as a people for God’s own possession proclaim the excellencies of him who called them out of darkness and into his marvelous light (2:9). This also appears to be a plain medium through which they keep their conduct among the Gentiles honorable (2:12).

Further, not only were the aforementioned titles/references originally prescribed to Israel, but also these elements of putting God’s sufficiency and glory on display. The Church’s faithfulness in these areas serve as a profound rebuke to unbelieving Israel and will contribute to their prodding of them unto salvation.³⁴ Israel has been and continues to be a people who so often suffer unjustly, but in unbelief... with nothing to endure properly and well. But by stark contrast stands the Church which also suffers unjustly (and initially at the hands of the Jews), but she endures graciously.

Far from being a people that are being called out for special deliverance *from* temporal suffering, the Church has been called to gracious endurance *amidst* unjust suffering... *because* Christ also suffered. Therefore, there is a perfectly clear reason for the suffering of God’s adopted children. There are no long anxious nights of rolling about the bed in turmoil and confusion about why Christians unjustly suffer and are called upon to graciously endure. It is because Christ also suffered for his people, for the Church. Christ suffered throughout the duration of his public ministry, was rejected by his people, and ultimately unjustly put to death through the medium of a pagan government. Christ’s suffering was intentionally to serve as an example to follow - graciously enduring unjust suffering.

³⁴ “So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.” Romans 11:11-14 ^{ESV}

Throughout Jesus' public ministry he addressed that if he was so maligned and hated, his disciples should fully expect the same for themselves... "It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household." Matthew 10:25 ^{ESV}

An element of the Lord redeeming and transforming these believers was for them to suffer in a manner that pleases God through holy obedience exercised with endurance. It was not punitive or an oversight, but an expression of God working out his purposes through his people just as he worked them out through his beloved Son with whom he was and is well pleased. Believers are selectively set apart to endure the sorrows that accompany unjust suffering, and this is neither cruel nor wrong; it is to God's great glory and their greatest good. Further, its rationale and foundation were the very sufferings of Christ, and all believers are called to follow in his steps.

This high calling to suffer is a robust theme that continues to be richly developed in 1 Peter:

The blessed condition of suffering for righteousness' sake, 3:14.

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed." 1 Peter 3:14 ^{ESV}

God's will is at times expressed through suffering, 3:17.

"For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." 1 Peter 3:17 ^{ESV}

The redemptive work of Christ's suffering, 3:18.

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...." 1 Peter 3:18 ^{ESV}

Suffering serves as a purifying tool in the pursuit of sanctification, 4:1-2.

"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God." 1 Peter 4:1-2 ^{ESV}

The call to those unjustly suffering to fully entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing good, 4:19.

"Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." 1 Peter 4:19 ^{ESV}

Suffering is a temporal experience that will yield eternal dividends, 5:10.

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” 1 Peter 5:10 ^{ESV}

Christ’s suffering was for the benefit of his church, salvifically and by way of enduring example. This example is plainly displayed with Peter’s use of, “so that,” a purpose clause – this is the reason Christ suffered, *so that...* you might follow in his steps.

“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 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. 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.” 1 Peter 2:22-24 ^{ESV}

Outlines for study are intended to provide structural breakdowns by which a passage can be further examined or better understood. In this study 2:22-23 are separated from 2:24 to draw out their distinctive elements. However, 2:22-24 also need to be examined as a unit when considering the complete example of Christ as provided by Peter.

In view of the example provided by Christ in which believers are to walk, consider what he did and did not do and what was done to him.

What Christ did not do....

- 1) He committed no sin (2:22).
- 2) He did not deceive with his words (2:22).
- 3) He did not revile in response to being reviled (2:23).
- 4) He did not threaten when suffering (2:23)

What Christ did do and what was done to him....

- 1) He was reviled (2:23).
- 2) He suffered (2:23).
- 3) He continually entrusted himself to him who judges justly (2:23).
- 4) He bore his people’s sins in his body on the cross (2:24).
- 5) He has healed his people through his wounds (2:24).

Examples provided by Christ that can be followed by his people:

- 1) Walk in righteous obedience (in deed and word) (2:22).
- 2) Endure reviling and suffering to the glory of God (2:23).
- 3) Not reviling in response to being reviled (2:23).
- 4) Not threatening when suffering (2:23).
- 5) Continually entrust themselves to him who judges justly (2:23).

When addressing the example provided by Christ, Peter explicitly speaks to Christ's atoning work on the cross by overtly alluding to and at times quoting from Isaiah 53.

1 Peter 2	Isaiah 53
"...neither was deceit found in his mouth." 1 Ptr. 2:22 ^{ESV}	"...there was no deceit in his mouth." Isa. 53:9 ^{ESV}
"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten...." 1 Ptr. 2:23 ^{ESV}	"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." Isa. 53:7 ^{ESV}
"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." 1 Ptr. 2:24 ^{ESV}	"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace...." Isa. 53:4-5 ^{ESV} "...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isa. 53:6 ^{ESV} "...and he shall bear their iniquities." Isa. 53:11 ^{ESV} "...yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." Isa. 53:12 ^{ESV}
"By his wounds you have been healed." 1 Ptr. 2:24 ^{ESV}	"...with his wounds we are healed." Isa. 53:5 ^{ESV}
For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Ptr. 2:25 ^{ESV}	"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way...." Isa. 53:6 ^{ESV}

"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 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." 1 Peter 2:22-23 ^{ESV}

Peter transitions from stating that Christ provided an example to follow to explicitly providing an articulation of Christ's example:

Christ "did good" as exhorted in 2:15,20:

He committed no sin – actively or passively, commission or omission, presumptuous or ignorant.

Deceit was not found in his mouth – his words were truth rich and, while shrewd, not dishonest.

Not A Sinful Word

Peter stated that Christ committed no sin and that would appear to be a sufficient statement to cover all areas/categories, but he also added that deceit was not found in his mouth. This appears to draw extra attention to the fact that not only did Jesus not sin with his actions, but his words were wholly submitted to God amidst his suffering. There was no impulsive lashing out or whimpers of complaint or anger.

Peter further develops Jesus' submitted speech by addressing the fact that with him there was neither retaliatory reviling or threatening in response to his unjust suffering, thereby demonstrating that gracious endurance bears up under suffering without retaliating, but rather by continually entrusting itself to the just Judge. However, this was not starry-eyed pacifism that had no view to a response, but it was a righteous confidence that God will do what is just, holy, righteous, and best in his time; therefore, one is neither compelled or right to retaliate, but submit, do good, and entrust.

Note also that while Christ was meek in his actions and words, he also answered reviling with truth and with wisdom for the providential moment. There were times that he rebuked, that he corrected, that he engaged in conversation, that he discreetly left, that he stayed silent, or that he allowed an accusation/slander to go unchallenged, but he never sinned in his responses.

Paul strove to mimic this in his own unjust suffering. Even when struck at the wrongful instruction of the High Priest, he withdrew and recognized his improper response when dressing down the one who issued the order as he failed to recognize that it was the High Priest and it was not proper to so speak to/about the High Priest (Acts 23:1-5).

"And looking intently at the council, Paul said, 'Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.' And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, 'God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?' Those who stood by said, 'Would you revile God's high priest?' And Paul said, 'I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"" Acts 23:1-5 ^{ESV}

Entrusting Himself To The Just Judge

Christ's continued entrusting of himself to the righteous Judge was a complete expression of being mindful of God while enduring sorrows for unjust suffering (2:19). Further, he understood the overt contrast between the unjust master (2:18) and the unjust sufferer (2:19) and the one who judges justly (2:23).

What just judging looks like was in part already expressed in 1:17³⁵ - judging impartially according to each one's deeds. Therefore, the deeds that Christ was providing in his own defense was: committing no sin, having no deceit in his mouth, not retaliating, and not threatening. That is what confidence in an impartial and just judge looks like – one has absolute confidence in his evaluation and response, which frees them from becoming a self-righteous vigilante... attempting to improve upon the justice that one does not believe will be sufficiently satisfied.

Paul certainly grasped this call to suffer and it was not only his experience by default but also in ambition to know and make much of Christ, Philippians 3:8-11.

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:8-11 ^{ESV}

³⁵ “And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile....” 1 Peter 1:17 ^{ESV}

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

2:21-22

The language of calling gets used very casually within the church culture at large and often for very subjective matters. However, Peter explicitly states that the believer has been called to suffer. What is your understanding of this calling? Does it strike you as jarring that someone would state God has called his adopted children to suffer? Does the fact that he called his beloved Son to suffer help you work through this challenging matter? Further, if believers are called to suffer, possibly even under corrupt leadership, then how might your conduct be distinct from popular culture?

RC Sproul and Thomas Schreiner made helpful statements here that are worth further consideration. Read the following quotes and consider interacting with their contribution to this discussion.

“When God calls us to a task, it is our duty to obey it. It is commendable when we suffer unjustly and bear the pain in patience because God has called us to that.”³⁶

“Suffering becomes bearable when we understand that we are in that state by the providence of God, and therefore, at that time, it is our vocation.”³⁷

“Suffering, in other words, is not a detour by which believers receive the inheritance to which they were called. It is God’s appointed means for receiving the inheritance.”³⁸

2:23

Because God has dealt perfect justice through his Son, which is how we ourselves are reconciled, we can also have full confidence that he will apply perfect justice to those who do not come to faith and repentance and die in their sin (among them being injustices toward the innocent). How does this inform your understanding of justice? See also Colossians 3:25 and 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

³⁶ Sproul, Pg.83

³⁷ Sproul, Pg.83

³⁸ Schreiner, Pg.141

VII. Christ's suffering was redemptive of his people whom he has restored to the Shepherd and Overseers of the their souls (2:24-25)

“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.” 1 Peter 2:24 ^{ESV}

Peter transitions from the example of Christ to the benefit that the working out of the reality of what his example provided. Christ's example was on the how, that was to be replicated. The focus now is on the what, that could never be replicated.

Peter was again tying the believer's endurance in suffering to the suffering of Christ that has provided their glorious redemption (a pattern that he firmly established in the first chapter). In addition to providing a righteous/perfect example, Christ's suffering provided redemption for his people. Peter concisely speaks to the substitutionary atonement of Christ by providing a thesis-like summary of Isaiah 53, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.... By his wounds you have been healed.”

The reference to “the tree” is synonymous with “the cross” – Peter and Paul use it this way in their preaching in Acts 5, 10, and 13.

“The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.” Acts 5:30 ^{ESV}

“And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree....” Acts 10:39 ^{ESV}

“And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.” Acts 13:29 ^{ESV}

Peter goes on to articulate that Christ's substitutionary death provided the means by which it was even possible for believers to be dead to sin and alive to righteousness.

Paul expressed the believer's identification with the death and resurrection of Christ as a matter of righteous versus unrighteous servitude (being freed through death and resurrection) in Romans 6.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he

died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:3-11 ^{ESV}

Dying to sin and living to righteousness provides the necessary provisions to obey that which has been unpacked throughout the book and specifically in this chapter:

2:1, Putting sin away.

2:2, Longing for the life-giving Scriptures.

2:5, Offering spiritual sacrifices.

2:9, Declaring the excellencies of the Redeemer.

2:11, Abstaining from the war-waging flesh.

2:12, Keeping one's conduct honorable before unbelievers.

2:13-14,18, Being subject to all that the Lord has placed over someone.

2:15-16, Doing good and not abusing liberty in Christ.

2:17, Honoring, loving, and fearing as commanded.

2:20, Being mindful of God while enduring unjust suffering.

Plain observation should again remind one that being dead to sin and alive to righteousness is not a means of avoiding suffering, but a means of suffering with gracious endurance.

Citing Isaiah 53:5 Peter states that by Christ's wounds they have been healed. Peter was again affirming that Jesus yielded up his physical body as a sacrifice and the results of this were the immediate and eternal benefit of the believer's dying to sin and living to righteousness and their being healed. Christ's body was the tangible component of a sacrifice that was both physical and spiritual in its act and efficaciousness. The spiritual restoration was immediate and with ongoing results awaiting a most complete expression when the believer beholds the Lord face to face. The physical restoration awaits future resurrection at which time the temporal will yield to the eternal. Any healing or restoration that occurs until such a time are expressions of the sovereign Creator graciously and temporally reversing the temporal effects of sin. However, to presume that Christ's atonement liberates the believer from all physical ailments is as shortsighted an idea as the believer not being subject to unjust suffering.

Considering the matter of physical healing from the perspective of the Fall might be helpful too. While the term "healed" has a plain and overwhelmingly consistent use for being physically restored, it must be understood here to reference the more severe and even unseen elements of sin. Just as Adam was told in Genesis 2:17 that *the day* that he ate of the fruit of tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die, he did indeed die. Now, separation of the soul from the body (natural death) did not

occur for hundreds of more years, but the inner man died that very day (spiritual death), and he was at once separated from fellowship with God and his chief blessings. The restoration of the inner man (spiritually) is what Peter is primarily addressing and clearly affirming with overt allusions to Isaiah 53. However, as stated, there will also to be a complete physical restoration that will occur at the resurrection that accompanies Christ's return.

Roger Raymer is even more direct in his conclusion: "This does not refer to physical healing for the verb's past tense indicates completed action, the 'healing' is an accomplished fact. The reference is to salvation."³⁹

**"For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned
to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." 1 Peter 2:25 ^{ESV}**

Continuing to expound upon the sufferings of Christ for the redemption of his people, Peter states the prior and present condition of the children of God on account of this redemption.

Christ's redemptive work was necessary because we were straying like sheep.

Christ's redemptive work has accomplished the restoration of the strayed sheep.

Peter closes this section/chapter by speaking to the redemptive work of Christ in very pastoral terms – applied to God as the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls to whom they have been returned. Their Redeemer leads, comforts, nourishes, protects, and sovereignly governs them.

This language beautifully ties together in 1 Peter 5:1-4 where all these elements are united:

The Sufferings of Christ.

Future glory at Christ's return.

Shepherding the flock of God.

Exercising Oversight.

The Chief Shepherd.

Future glory by way of reward.

"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: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." 1 Peter 5:1-4 ^{ESV}

³⁹ Raymer, pg.848

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

2:24

Throughout the last portion of the chapter Peter is alluding to and citing from Isaiah 53 and this becomes especially clear in this final section. Take time to read, meditate, and pray through Isaiah 53 to season your heart and mind to hear Peter's words afresh, and then reread 2:19-25 while dwelling on the suffering Son.

How does the redemptive work of Christ inform what Peter has spoken in the whole of this chapter? Use the division breaks that were drafted for this study or your own and write out how a proper view of the redemptive work of Christ informs each of these areas.

Why is it important to understand that Peter did not have a view to temporal/physical suffering when he states that Christ's wounds have healed his people? How does this understanding impact one's daily life and their view to larger elements of redemption?

2:25

With all the attention to unjust and crooked masters, Peter brings our final attention to the righteous, good, and holy Shepherd and Overseers of our souls. How does this comfort you in view of this time of sojourning in this natural/temporal life?

For another contrast of leadership and shepherds in particular, read what The LORD says to Israel in Ezekiel 34 and write out observations of his expressed character and care of his people. See also John 10:1-18 where Jesus speaks to his service and care as the Good Shepherd.

1 Peter 2 Study Guide

Appendix: Luke 20:9-18

Introduction

The parables of Jesus became a significant element of his public ministry following the rejection of Jesus as Messiah, and therefore the Kingdom, by the religious authorities. With this rejection Jesus' public ministry and teaching demonstrated a significant shift because of the larger context of what was happening within the Gospel narratives. Since about the second year of Jesus' public ministry there had been a decline in Jesus' general popularity, a more intensive focusing on the twelve, and then a final thrust of public ministry as Jesus ultimately advances to Jerusalem one final time.

The context of this parable is at the conclusion of Jesus' pre-resurrection public ministry.

Immediately preceding this parable was the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the second cleansing of the Temple, and then the challenging of his authority in Luke 20:1-8 where Jesus exercises a common rabbinical practice of answering a question with a question that demands that the point of inquiry be further refined... it was a question of his authority posed by those who on some level themselves possessed a measure of authority, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

They specifically asked him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." Luke 20:2 ^{ESV}

This questioning of Jesus' authority undoubtedly was first rooted in Jesus' radical Temple cleansing that had just occurred, his immediate teaching and preaching in the Temple, and his recent triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It also likely included the larger sweep of Jesus' public ministry of teaching, preaching, signs, and wonders.

So, the question was one of authority, and the religious leaders knew of authority and that for each of them it had a clear source: The Chief Priests had their inherited rights through the Aaronic line, the Elders had authority through family status and common esteem, and the Sanhedrin had the support of Rome and functioned as the supreme Jewish authority structure at that time.

So, what was Jesus' authority... particularly as he was effectively opposed by all said groups? Jesus answered this question through a question of his own, a question that ultimately silenced these men – pressing them to an unresolvable tension leading to their forfeiting their own questioning of his authority.

Then from this engagement Jesus began telling a parable to the people – the general populace present and listening with a primary view to the religious leaders.

The setting of the parable was a vineyard. Israel was a land that was conducive to vineyards and it was a common practice at this time for someone of means to own a parcel of land that would be leased out to local farmers who would work his vineyard and be given a high degree of liberty in their work and its returns.

The workers or stewards of the vineyard made payment to the Lord or owner of the vineyard with a portion of its returns – either some of its fiscal returns or some of the harvest at the proper seasons.

Also, a distant landlord was not uncommon, and while there were instances of this relationship producing frustrations and at times rebellious activities, it was a reasonable arrangement in this context and one that generously benefitted all parties.

So, the Lord of the vineyard owned the land and would, as stated in other places, thoroughly prepare the vineyard for success.

He would then turn the vineyards care over to stewards or farmers who had liberty to work and enjoy the vineyard's returns and benefits in the Lord's absence, but would be expected to render proper payment at designated times.

However, if there was no presence or claim of possession of a vineyard for an extended period of time (approximately three years) the tenants could assume rights and ownership of the land.

Now, in this particular parable there are several images and associations as this is a metaphor rich parable. However, you must be very careful in looking for a metaphor in every detail of a parable because most of the details are only to provide context and realism while driving to a central point, and while this particular parable has a number of overt metaphors they are still driving to a central point.

This being said, here is a listing of the metaphors present in the parable:

1. The Lord of the vineyard was God the Father.
2. The vineyard was Israel.
3. The tenants were the religious leaders.
4. The servants were the prophets.
5. The beloved son was Jesus.
6. The replacement tenants were the Apostles.

Now, while being metaphor rich and having several clear pieces developed, the central emphasis was on the rejection of Messiah by the religious leaders and the transition of stewardship from these leaders to the Apostles – this climaxes the parable in verse sixteen.

20:9 (The introduction of scene and characters)

The context indicates that Jesus directed this parable to the general populace - the people. However, it is also plain from the immediate context following the parable (Luke 20:19ff) that the scribes and chief priests were listening/aware of the parable and its substantial rebuke directed to them as they responded to its hearing with a desire to immediately lay hands on Jesus, but fear of the crowds restricted immediate action.

But the leadership should have recalled the rebukes to other failed leaders of Israel and been driven to repentance, but they would have none of this. Ezekiel 34 should have been ablaze in their minds... and here as he stated in Ezekiel 34:23-24, The LORD's servant David would replace the failed and wicked shepherds of his people, but again, they would have nothing of it. God sent his Son and they saw not the Chief Shepherd, but a personal threat who they would pursue to his destruction to keep what they have.

Also, as has been established the Lord of the vineyard entrusted its care to others in his absence.

Here it is important to remember that God the Father was not and is not absent. This image of absence was a common practice of vineyard owners and it provides a natural picture in which we appreciate the concept of stewardship.

It is that matter of stewarding leadership and submission that is important for us to see here.

20:10-12 (The sending and abuse of the servants)

Immediately after establishing a context in which it would be reasonably expected that everyone would dutifully fulfill their respective roles, we observe that the tenants, the stewards of the vineyard, have rebelled from their responsibility to the lord or owner of the vineyard. This began a three-part pattern of the owner sending servants and the tenants expelling them.

However, as we plainly see the tenants' conduct is quite shocking as they are not content to simply send the messengers away empty handed, but they physically assault them too – some more overtly severe than the others.

The first servant was beaten and expelled. The second servant was beaten, shamefully treated, and expelled. The third servant was also wounded and expelled.

Considering again the natural cultural expectation here would be that the owner of the vineyard was to receive what was rightfully his to have - it was not an overbearing expectation or a threat to the stewards' post, place, or welfare, just a reflection of what was rightfully his to have.

Paul references this natural expectation when providing a wholly different point in 1 Corinthians 9, "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?" 1 Corinthians 9:7 ^{ESV}

But we have to remember that this is a parable and it was never designed to have its details dissected – they are meant to provide realism and carry us to the central focus which is not the owner or God the Father receiving his just dues, but *the righteous judgment of the failed and rebellious actions of the tenants or the religious leaders*.

The image of the tenants assaulting and shaming the slaves and refusing the owners' rights is a plain picture of Israel's speckled history of leaders, particularly religious leadership indulging in shameful failures to keep their God ordained charges – to properly lead and care for the people of God and more precisely the picture here is of God sending his prophets to his people and the leadership shamefully abusing and disregarding the prophets.

Further, in this parable we see Jesus demonstrating something quite striking, namely that the choice to not exercise swift and righteous judgment after the first servant or prophet's abuse was a demonstration of merciful patience and it was a merciful patience that was further magnified with the sending and subsequent treatment of other servants or prophets.

So, while a very concise image – these three verses summarize a sweeping description of the abuse of God’s prophets, particularly by the spiritual leadership, and at the time of this parable’s teaching it is approaching the halfway point of Jesus’ final week of his public ministry before his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Matters have reached a climax and one can see an expression of this climax in Jesus’ rebuke of the leadership in Matthew 23.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” Matthew 23:29-39 ^{ESV}

20:13-15a (The sending and abuse of the beloved son)

At this time the parable takes a most striking turn.

The owner of the vineyard sees these offenses by the tenants as a genuine problem - he is sending for what is rightfully his and there has been no acceptable outcome, only mutinous rebellion resulting in servants being abused. Then in view of the predicament (either not having more servants or concluding that sending more will only continue the pattern) he asks a question, “What shall I do?”

This was a most striking question and with this question Jesus was drawing his hearers further into the story, giving them some ownership of its unfolding, and ultimately driving them to the dramatic conclusion to come and its necessary response. However, this was not just skillful storytelling. This was masterful teaching and it cannot be missed that there was a profundity of mercy demonstrated here with Jesus’ question because the whole matter could have been fairly, justly, and reasonably ended at this time with the tenants being expelled and/or brought to justice for their conduct toward the owner of the vineyard, and yet he graciously chooses to send his son, his beloved son.

Again, one should not miss the extraordinary mercy compounded with the continued sending of prophets and then the unparalleled mercy in the sending of the beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus alone is referenced to as the Beloved Son by The Father in various other passages and by Jesus in this parable.

It is without qualification that Jesus is plainly speaking of his own sending by the Father. Notice also how plainly Jesus distinguishes himself from all the prophets who proceeded him - he could have identified the character as the chief servant if he was but a preeminent prophet, but he was and is the Beloved Son of God.

Further, in terms of the story it appears that there was the hopeful expectation that the tenants would respect the vineyard owner's son and presumably afford him the honor of fulfilling his charge to collect what was due his father. But Jesus, as the sent Son, will make plain just how perverse the tenants have become, just how perverse the spiritual leadership had become in rejecting their long-awaited Messiah who stands immediately before them and whom they would seek to destroy if the crowds but would permit them to do so in that moment.

One now observes in verse fourteen the mutinous perversity of the religious leaders being drawn into the light.

20:14

The tenants on some level and in some way recognized the son as the owner's heir - there was not any ambiguity about him being another servant/slave. Then, recognizing that the son/heir was dispatched to them they conspired for the precise action that they took - this was not another beating that was inadvertently too severe and thereby murderous this time, but an intentional choice to kill. The immediate decision was to murder the heir.

Note that the tenants were not just intending to kill the son to evade their charge/responsibility or even because they personally despised him, but because they wanted the vineyard for themselves. This was a real possibility in an actual historical context, but of no possibility in terms of what is being expressed here – the ruling and care of the covenant nation Israel. Yet throughout the gospel narratives you see the “religious leaders” so fearful of losing what they have at present... even while it was clearly inferior and under the Roman rule..., “So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, ‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’” John 11:47-48 ^{ESV}

See here the vulgarity of the religious leader's hearts are plainly revealed: They concluded that murdering Jesus would allow them to maintain what they had - their possession and leadership of the kingdom of God. Here there is no room for excuses or a defense of ignorance... this was an overt rejection. They knew that this was the Beloved Son, it was not as though Jesus was some mysterious outsider - some unknown rabble rouser. You cannot make excuses for these religious leaders and you cannot dismiss their rejection as though they were simply expecting something else from Messiah and that's why they rejected him.

Those who believed with less information stand to condemn these religious leaders:

1. Look at John the Baptist's parents (Zechariah and Elizabeth) regarding the testimony of their son - they received the testimony of the Angel Gabriel and that was sufficient.
2. Look at Jesus' mother, Mary, regarding the testimony of her virgin conception of Messiah - she received the testimony of the Angel Gabriel and that was sufficient.
3. Look at the shepherd's in the field at the time of Jesus' birth an angel of the Lord and the heavenly host testified to the Savior's birth and that was sufficient.
4. Look at Simeon and Anna in the Temple giving worshiping with thanksgiving to behold Messiah, special revelation provided to them was sufficient.

The testimony of angels and the Holy Spirit was sufficient for a proper response to place one's full confidence in the baby who was Messiah and so what an absolute shame to have the Son of Man before your very eyes... to see what has never been done before being done, to hear teaching with an unparalleled authority, to see Lordship of the Sabbath, to see the shaming of demons, and to see the dead raised. To see all of this only to respond with disbelief was a profound and willful rejection.

But not only disbelief, but blasphemous disbelief which resulted in Jesus' intensive public use of parables and as we see here a blasphemous disbelief that was murderous. They knew this was the Beloved Son and, like their forefathers who killed the prophets, so they also would seek to kill the Son.

Examining what comes just before this passage makes it absolutely plain that there was already a desire among the religious leaders to destroy Jesus as recorded in Luke 19, "And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words." Lk. 19:47-48 ^{ESV}

But even while being restricted by their fears of the crowd in verse fifteen, Jesus foretold that these tenants... the religious leaders would ultimately kill the Beloved Son.

Following through with their murderous conspiracy the tenants threw the son out of the vineyard and killed him.

20:15b-16 (Righteous judgment and transitioning of stewardship)

Jesus then breaks from the story - designed to climax with the murdering of the owner's beloved son – and he poses a question on what will be done by the owner now?

What will he do to the tenants?

Before it was the owner in character asking what he should do and concluding that he will send his son, now it is a break from the narrative and a question to the listeners....

What does he do now?

Jesus was now drawing his audience into the experience and pressing them to a response which they felt... they were indignant toward these offenders and are but getting a glimpse of what is happening right before them... with the rejection of Messiah.

Further, it is not just an open-ended general inquiry, but *what does he do to the tenants....*

What does justice look like here?

What does righteousness look like here?

It is not what *should he do*, but *what will he do...* the narrative if permitted, will continue on and actions toward the tenants by the owner is inevitable and all but predictable on some level, which is part of the skill to the setting up of this moment of creating this inevitability.

Jesus is a masterful teacher and he is building to what is coming next.

Verse sixteen, Jesus answers the question and delivers the full weight and blow of the parable. Jesus finishes the narrative: the owner of the vineyard will personally come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

This is what justice looks like - personally destroying the mutinous rebels who abused servants and murdered the son.

This is what righteousness looks like - personally destroying the mutinous rebels who abused servants and murdered the son.

And then the lights come on... the people were engaged in the story... they were listening... they were taking ownership of the narrative with all its drama and then they see its pieces coming together and they could only cry out, "Surely not!"

May it never be! This was a strong statement... and here effectively a spontaneous utterance of fear mingled with passion.... NO!

We see this construct in the Greek New Testament time and time again... here are some examples of its forcefulness:

Romans 3:3-4, nullifying the faithfulness of God... "By no means!" No, no, no...

Romans 3:5-6, accusing God of being unrighteous... "By no means!" No, no, no...

Romans 3:31, overthrowing the law by faith... "By no means!" No, no, no...

This crying out was because they understood what Jesus was driving to in the parable. They plainly understood enough of what was being stated here and its ramifications.

Those listening to Jesus were absolutely taken by this rightful conclusion because they saw, heard, and understood.

At the minimal they knew that they were hearing the voice of a prophet and they were terrified at the forthcoming judgment of their leadership, of their nation, and the untold ramifications... for the kingdom and their unique standing.

"And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.'" Luke 19:41-44 ^{ESV}

The fear expressed in John 11:48 that compelled the religious leaders' murderous plot – losing their place and the nation to the Romans – is exactly what would come to pass in the terrible judgment of 70AD with the Romans demolishing the Jewish uprising and the Temple, and never has their religious hierarchy been reestablished since that time almost two thousand years ago - it was decimated... it was destroyed.

But to whom will the owner give the stewardship? In the parable the question will remain unanswered, but in reality God the Father has given the stewardship to the Apostles.

Now this is where we have to sharpen our focus to the primary point of the parable. It is not so much that the nation was being disciplined and the stewardship of God's redemptive plan transitioned to the Church at this time, so much as the emphasis was on the transition of leadership and care being turned over to the Apostles and genuine disciples of Messiah.

Again, the emphasis of what Jesus was driving to in this parable was the transition of leadership and care being turned over to the Apostles and genuine disciples of Messiah - this in turn inevitably resulted in the transitioning of the stewardship of God's redemptive plan, at this time, from the nation of Israel to the Church, but the first/primary emphasis driven at here is one of leadership.

Jesus was stating that there would be the introduction of a new stewarding leadership... and with them a people under their care.

You see early demonstrations of this transitioned leadership with the authority of Jesus being applied through the Apostles when they are dispatched with authority to teach, authority to preach, authority to perform signs and miracles... even in some instances authority over the demonic opposition. Demonstrations that are intensely magnified with the institution of the Church and the foundations of its establishment and authentication. An authority and stewardship that continues from the Apostles to the present Pastor-Teachers and until such a time that the Lord calls his Church to himself, at which time Israel's stewardship will be returned to them and with renewed hearts they will fulfill their charge faithfully and to the glory of God.

This would be a change of leadership from the corrupted Jewish religious authorities to the Apostles who would serve as the foundational leadership of what would be the forthcoming Church as later stated by Paul, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." Ephesians 2:19-21 ^{ESV}

20:17-18 (The rejected and exalted Cornerstone)

Now the people present did not fully grasp the breadth and depth of what Jesus was expressing here... but they understood imminent loss and judgment and so they cried out.... May it never... surely not... No, No, No.

And Jesus answers them with clear authority and from the Scriptures. "What then is this that was written..."

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."

The Beloved Son in the parable may lay dead but the Beloved Son of God would rise from the grave. And the stone that these religious leaders and those under their influence have rejected will be esteemed as the most valuable element in the foundation. From discarded rubble to glorious esteeming.

This is a citation from Psalm 118:22 and Psalm 118 is sung at the end of the Passover Seder so the content would have been well known, and Jesus now drives it to its chief application as ultimately intended by the psalmist.

The cornerstone was the portion of the foundation, the selected stone, that would provide stability and a proper squaring of the entire structure.

The Chief Cornerstone is the resurrected Jesus - The cornerstone that will be the strength, stability, and chief of the new stewardship of the Church and the future restored stewardship of Israel. Peter plainly admired this truth as he references it in both Acts and in his first epistle.

In articulating the Apostolic ministry of preaching and healing in Jesus' name, Peter cited Psalm 118 in addressing Jesus' rejection by these very religious leaders who are now calling him to account:

"And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'" Acts 4:7-12 ^{ESV}

In his first epistle, Peter, when addressing the call to holy living for those in Christ, again references back to Psalm 118 and the esteeming of this once rejected stone... the cornerstone on which the Church is secured and built up.

"As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.' So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do." 1 Peter 2:4-8 ^{ESV}

However, while the cornerstone is esteemed and rightfully adorned by those under the new stewardship of the Apostles, there was and is another dynamic to this stone... it is also a stone of destructive judgment by those who continue to reject and disbelieve the Beloved Son. Falling on the stone and being broken to pieces is the consequence of unbelief and rejection while being crushed was and is overt and forthcoming judgment. Ultimately those who passively or aggressively reject the Chief Cornerstone will experience the same terrifying end of absolute destruction... being broken... being crushed...

Conclusion

Now by way of conclusion... while we have labored at unpacking this weighty parable we must remember that the central emphasis was on the rejection of Messiah by the religious leaders and the transition of stewardship from these leaders to the Apostles – which immediately provides the rationale for the institution of the Church in Acts and Israel's present state of partial hardening now.

So, how can I say with confidence that the stewardship that has been turned over to the leadership of the Church will be restored to Israel when The Lord has taken the Church to himself.... Because God has made covenant promises to Israel... unbreakable covenant promises to Israel. So, while Matthew's recording of this parable states, "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." Matthew 21:43-44 ^{ESV} The Apostle Paul further develops the matter throughout Romans 9-11 and in Romans 9:30-33 states, "What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Romans 9:30-33 ^{ESV}

Paul then goes on to develop Israel's beautiful restoration, "So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?"

Romans 11:11-15 ^{ESV}

Therefore, the Church does not gloat that Jesus gave a hard parable that severely rebuked the history of failed leadership in Israel resulting in the culminating rejection of the Beloved Son and the transition of stewardship to the revealed mystery of the Church. No, the Church does not gloat, but weeps as Israel's Messiah wept that the witness bearing nation did not know the time of their visitation because they rejected the Beloved Son and have suffered the righteous consequences in the first century under Rome and through the present while in a state of partial hardening.

We pray that their eyes be opened to see and their ears opened to hear and we, as a witness bearing people, seek to be found faithful in our own stewardship until the Lord returns to call us to himself.

