

Introduction to 1 Peter Chapter 2

Living Stones and a Holy Priesthood: Desiring the Word, Submitting in Hope, and Following Christ's Suffering Example

Chapter 2 carries forward the new birth with which chapter 1 closed, moving from the incorruptible word that begets believers to the ordinary, daily craving that word ought to produce, described in the vivid image of a newborn infant's desire for milk. From that intimate picture of appetite and growth, Peter widens the lens dramatically, gathering these scattered, often despised believers into the grandest possible identity: living stones built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, titles drawn directly from Israel's own foundational vocabulary at Sinai and now applied without qualification to this suffering, minority church. The chapter's second half turns that exalted identity toward the most ordinary and exposed arenas of Roman social life, urging believers as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts, to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether emperor or governor, and, in the case of household servants, to endure even unjust suffering at a master's hand with a good conscience.

This movement from doctrine to conduct is not incidental to the chapter's argument but is its very center: the same believers who have been born again by the living and abiding word of God (1:23) are now called to long for that word as their native nourishment, and the same believers who have been named a royal priesthood are called to a citizenship and a household conduct so exemplary that even hostile observers, watching believers do good and suffer for it, might be brought to glorify God in the day of visitation. Peter grounds this entire ethic of submission and endurance not in mere social prudence but in the concrete historical example of Christ himself, who did no sin, who committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, so that by his stripes we were healed.

The chapter's closing unit on servants and suffering (2:18–25) anticipates the household instructions to wives, husbands, and the whole church that will follow in chapter 3, and it supplies the theological center on which all of that later instruction depends: undeserved suffering, received with a good conscience and modeled directly on Christ's own patient suffering, is not a peripheral hardship to be merely endured but is itself, in Peter's own striking phrase, thankworthy before God.

Opening Prayer

Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

We come to you as newborn babes, longing for the sincere milk of your word, that we may grow thereby, having tasted already that you are gracious. Thank you for making us, who were once not a people, now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but have now obtained mercy through the living and precious stone that the builders disallowed, yet which you have made the head of the corner.

Lord, you have called us a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that we should shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Let our conversation among those who do not know you be so honest and so good that even those who speak against us as evildoers might, by witnessing our good works, glorify you in the day of visitation.

And Lord, when we suffer wrongfully, teach us to follow the steps of Christ, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Thank you that by his stripes we were healed, and that we, who were as sheep going astray, are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

1 Peter 2:1–3

Laying Aside Malice: Newborn Babes Desiring the Sincere Milk of the Word

(1) Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

(2) As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

(3) If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The Context

“Wherefore” ties this opening command directly to the new birth just described in 1:22–25: because believers have been born again by the incorruptible word, and have purified their souls in obeying the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, they are now to lay aside, the same verb used elsewhere of stripping off soiled clothing, five specific vices that corrode the very brotherly love chapter 1 has just commanded: malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speakings. These are named as a single cluster because each undermines community from a different angle, malice as ill will toward another’s good, guile as deceit in dealing with another, hypocrisy as pretended rather than genuine affection, envy as resentment of another’s blessing, and evil speaking as the tongue’s destructive expression of all four.

Verse 2’s “as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” extends the new birth metaphor of 1:23 into ordinary, continuing Christian experience: having been born again, believers are now to behave like what they are, infants whose whole appetite is bent toward nourishment. “Sincere,” meaning unadulterated or without deceit, the same root translated “guile” in verse 1, contrasts the pure milk of the word with the guile just laid aside, so that the word’s own purity becomes the antidote to the very vice believers have been told to strip away. “That ye may grow thereby” makes plain that this desire is not an end in itself but the appointed means of spiritual growth, the same living and abiding word of 1:23 now pictured as daily food rather than only as the seed of an initial birth.

Verse 3’s “if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” draws directly on Psalm 34:8, “O taste and see that the LORD is good,” a psalm this letter will draw on again more extensively later in the chapter. The construction assumes rather than doubts the readers’ experience, better rendered “since you have tasted,” grounding the ongoing desire for the word’s milk in an experience of God’s graciousness these believers have already, genuinely known, so that continuing craving for the word is pictured as the natural appetite of those who have already once tasted how good the Lord is.

Plain American English

So get rid of all malice, all deceit, all hypocrisy, all envy, and all slander. Like newborn babies craving milk, crave the pure milk of God’s word so that by it you may grow up into salvation, since you have already tasted that the Lord is good.

Key Observations

“laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings”: This signifies **Five Community-Corroding Vices Named Together Because Each Attacks Brotherly Love From a Different Angle.**

Malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking are stripped off as a single cluster, immediately following chapter 1’s command to love one another fervently, because unchecked they would undo from within the very love the new birth is meant to produce.

“as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”: This signifies **Continuing Growth Pictured as the Natural, Unforced Appetite of Those Already Born Again.**

The infant’s hunger for milk is not manufactured or coerced but is simply what a newborn naturally wants, picturing ongoing desire for Scripture not as a duty imposed from outside but as the fitting appetite of a genuinely new creature.

“if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious”: This signifies **An Echo of Psalm 34 Grounding Present Craving in Already-Verified Experience Rather Than Untested Claim.**

By drawing on David’s own invitation to “taste and see,” Peter roots the ongoing appetite for the word not in abstract obligation but in a graciousness these believers have already, personally experienced, so that continued desire is the fitting response to a taste already known.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Treat Spiritual Vices as a Single Interconnected Cluster Rather Than Isolated

Slips: Because malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking are named together as one bundle to be laid aside, contemporary believers do well to examine how one unchecked attitude, resentment, for instance, quietly feeds deceit or unkind speech, rather than addressing each sin in isolation.

2. Cultivate an Appetite for Scripture Rather Than Merely a Sense of Duty Toward

It: The newborn’s hunger for milk is unforced and instinctive; believers who find Bible

reading feeling more like obligation than desire can honestly ask God to renew in them the appetite Peter assumes is natural to genuine new birth, rather than settling for mere routine compliance.

How This Relates to Today

The command to lay aside evil speaking speaks with particular force into a contemporary environment of rapid, often anonymous public commentary, where malice, envy, and hypocrisy can be broadcast at a scale and speed unavailable to Peter's original readers, making the discipline of laying these things aside no less urgent for being harder to practice consistently.

The image of newborn craving for milk offers a useful diagnostic for any believer whose engagement with Scripture has grown stale: rather than asking merely whether one is reading the Bible, the text invites the further question of whether one still desires it, and if not, whether some unaided malice, envy, or guile may be dulling an appetite meant to remain vigorous throughout the whole of Christian life.

Key Lesson: **This short opening unit ties the new birth of chapter 1 directly to ordinary daily conduct, commanding believers to strip off malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, and to crave the word's pure milk with the same natural, unforced appetite a newborn infant has for its own nourishment, an appetite Peter grounds not in bare duty but in a graciousness of the Lord these believers have already, personally tasted.**

1 Peter 2:4–10

Living Stones and a Royal Priesthood: A Chosen Generation, Once Not a People

(4) To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

(5) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

(6) Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

(7) Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

(8) And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

(9) But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;

(10) Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The Context

Verse 4's "to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" introduces the chapter's central architectural metaphor. "Coming" pictures an ongoing, present approach to Christ rather than a single past event, and "living stone" immediately fuses two categories that do not naturally belong together, stone suggesting fixed, lifeless material, living suggesting the very opposite, a paradox that anticipates the resurrection life already central to chapter 1. Christ is "disallowed indeed of men," rejected in his own earthly ministry and death, yet simultaneously "chosen of God, and precious," so that human rejection and divine election are set in the sharpest possible contrast within a single verse.

Verse 5's "ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" extends the same living-stone identity to believers themselves, who are not merely rescued individuals but building material for a single spiritual house, and simultaneously priests within that house, a striking double image in which believers are both the temple's stones and its officiating priesthood. "Spiritual sacrifices," offered not on an altar of literal stone but through the entire pattern of a believer's life, are acceptable specifically "by Jesus Christ," the sole mediator through whom otherwise unacceptable human offerings are received.

Verses 6 through 8 assemble three Old Testament stone texts, Isaiah 28:16's "behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious," Psalm 118:22's "the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner," already quoted by Jesus himself of his own rejection (Matthew 21:42), and Isaiah 8:14's "a stone of stumbling,

and a rock of offence.” The same single stone produces two entirely opposite outcomes depending solely on the response of those who encounter it: “unto you therefore which believe he is precious,” while to “them which be disobedient” that identical stone becomes an occasion of stumbling. Verse 8’s closing clause, “whereunto also they were appointed,” is among the most debated statements in the letter, best understood not as appointing disobedience itself but as appointing that disobedience toward the stone should, in fact, result in stumbling, God’s ordained consequence attached to a freely chosen unbelief rather than unbelief itself being divinely coerced.

Verse 9’s fourfold title, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,” gathers language directly from Exodus 19:5–6’s covenant charter to Israel at Sinai, “ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation,” and applies it without remainder to this scattered, largely Gentile church. “Peculiar,” in its older sense, means specifically belonging to God as his own possession, not odd or strange in the modern sense of the word. The purpose clause, “that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,” names the entire point of this exalted identity: not private privilege but public praise, declared through a transformed community’s very existence.

Verse 10’s “which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” draws on Hosea 1:6–10 and 2:23, where God renamed Israel’s own rebellious generation “Lo-ammi,” not my people, before promising a future restoration in which they would again be called “my people” and would obtain mercy. Peter applies language originally addressed to unfaithful Israel to Gentile believers now grafted into God’s own covenant people, closing the unit with the same mercy that has run through the whole chapter, from a gracious Lord tasted in verse 3 to a chosen people constituted by mercy alone in verse 10.

Plain American English

Come to Christ, the living stone, rejected by people but chosen and precious to God, and let yourselves also be built, like living stones, into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it is written in Scripture, See, I am laying a chosen and precious cornerstone in Zion, and whoever trusts in him will never be put to shame. So this stone is precious to you who believe, but to those who do not believe, the very stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and also a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall, because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own special possession, so that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his

wonderful light. Once you were not a people at all, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Key Observations

“ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices”: This signifies **Believers Pictured as Simultaneously the Building Material and the Officiating Priesthood of a Single Spiritual Temple.**

Rather than choosing one image or the other, Peter layers stone and priesthood together, so that believers are at once what the house is made of and who serves within it, a double identity that leaves no room for a merely passive membership.

“unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner”: This signifies **A Single Identical Stone Producing Two Entirely Opposite Outcomes Based Solely on the Response of Those Who Encounter It.**

The same Christ who is precious cornerstone to faith becomes stumbling stone to disobedience, so that the stone itself does not change; only the response to it determines whether it becomes a foundation or an offense.

“ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people... which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God”: This signifies **Sinai’s Own Covenant Titles to Israel Applied Without Remainder to a Scattered, Largely Gentile Church.**

By transferring Exodus 19’s kingdom-of-priests language and Hosea’s not-my-people-now-my-people language directly onto these readers, Peter declares that full covenant identity belongs to this suffering, marginal community, not merely to ethnic Israel or to some future privileged group.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Understand Church Membership as Active Priestly Service, Not Passive

Attendance: Because believers are pictured as both stones and priests within a single spiritual house, contemporary Christians can resist reducing church involvement to

occasional attendance, recognizing instead an active priestly calling to offer spiritual sacrifices of praise, obedience, and service.

2. Root Identity in a God-Given Status That No Social Marginalization Can Erase:

Verse 9's fourfold title was given to believers who were, in the eyes of Roman society, a despised and suspect minority, showing that exalted spiritual identity and low social standing can coexist, and inviting believers facing similar marginalization today to find their deepest identity in God's naming rather than in society's.

How This Relates to Today

The picture of the same stone producing opposite outcomes in different people speaks to a persistent contemporary puzzle, why the identical gospel message provokes worship in one hearer and indifference or hostility in another, locating the difference not in the message's clarity or the messenger's skill but in the disposition, believing or disobedient, of the one who receives it.

Verse 9's purpose clause, that believers should "shew forth the praises" of the God who called them, presses against any contemporary tendency to treat Christian identity as a private possession to be enjoyed quietly, insisting instead that a chosen and priestly people exists precisely in order to be visibly, audibly declarative about the God who called them out of darkness.

Key Lesson: **This central unit fuses the image of believers as living stones built into a spiritual house with their identity as a royal priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices, gathers three Old Testament stone prophecies to show how the identical Christ becomes either a precious cornerstone or a stumbling stone depending solely on the response of faith or disobedience, and closes by applying Israel's own Sinai covenant titles to a once-scattered, once-not-a-people church now constituted entirely by mercy.**

1 Peter 2:11–12

Strangers and Pilgrims: Abstain From Fleshly Lusters and Live Honestly Among the Gentiles

(11) Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

(12) Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

The Context

Verse 11's "dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" marks a clear pivot from doctrine to sustained ethical exhortation that will govern the rest of the chapter and into chapter 3. "Strangers and pilgrims" directly echoes verse 1's address to "strangers scattered" and reprises Old Testament language for sojourners with no permanent claim on the land they occupy (compare Genesis 23:4; Psalm 39:12), now applied to describe every believer's settled but temporary relationship to present society. "Fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" pictures internal desire not as neutral appetite but as an active combatant waging war against the very soul verse 9's calling was meant to secure, the same battle imagery Paul uses in Galatians 5:17 and Romans 7:23.

Verse 12's "having your conversation honest among the Gentiles" calls for a whole visible pattern of daily conduct, not merely private virtue, to be recognizably good even to outside observers who do not share the believers' faith. "That, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" anticipates real, ongoing slander, the same social hostility named already in 1:6's manifold trials, while proposing an unusual strategy for meeting it: not defensive argument but consistently observed good conduct, aimed at the possibility, not the guarantee, that hostile observers might themselves eventually glorify God. "The day of visitation" likely refers to a future day of divine reckoning, echoing Old Testament "day of the Lord" language (compare Isaiah 10:3), in which even former accusers might yet turn and glorify the God whose people they once maligned.

Plain American English

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and temporary residents in this world, to abstain from the sinful desires that wage war against your very soul. Live such good lives among the people around you that, even though they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Key Observations

“abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”: This signifies **Internal Desire Pictured as an Active Combatant Rather Than a Neutral, Harmless Appetite.**

By naming fleshly lusts as something that wars against the soul, Peter treats inward desire as genuinely dangerous territory, requiring active resistance rather than passive indulgence or mere management.

“having your conversation honest among the Gentiles... they may by your good works... glorify God in the day of visitation”: This signifies **Visible Good Conduct Proposed as the Strategy for Meeting Slander, Rather Than Defensive Argument.**

Instead of urging believers to answer accusation with counter-accusation, Peter directs their energy toward sustained, observable goodness, trusting that consistent conduct, not rhetorical defense, is what may eventually turn even hostile observers toward God.

“strangers and pilgrims”: This signifies **A Settled Yet Temporary Relationship to Present Society Named as the Believer’s Ordinary Condition.**

Reprising language from verse 1 and from Israel’s own sojourner experience, this phrase frames displacement not as an unfortunate exception but as the expected, normal status of every believer living within a society not fully their own.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Recognize Internal Desire as a Genuine Battlefield Requiring Active Resistance:

Verse 11’s war imagery resists any casual approach to temptation, inviting believers to treat fleshly lusts as a real combatant against the soul rather than as harmless preference, and to engage that battle deliberately rather than by default surrender.

2. Let Consistent Good Conduct, Rather Than Argument, Be the Primary Response to Unfair Criticism: When believers today face misunderstanding or hostility for their convictions, verse 12 commends patient, visible good works over defensive combativeness, trusting that observed conduct carries a persuasive weight that argument alone often cannot achieve.

How This Relates to Today

The identity of strangers and pilgrims speaks to any contemporary believer who feels genuinely at odds with the assumptions of the surrounding culture, offering not a call to withdraw from society but a call to live so well within it that even its harshest critics of the faith are left with only observed goodness to contend with.

Verse 12's hope that hostile observers might one day glorify God resists the temptation to treat every critic as a permanently lost cause, holding open, without guaranteeing, the possibility that patient, visible faithfulness might yet do work that argument and defensiveness cannot.

Key Lesson: **This brief transitional unit calls believers, addressed once more as strangers and pilgrims, to wage active war against fleshly lusts and to maintain such visibly honest conduct among unbelieving neighbors that even present slander might, in the day of visitation, give way to those same accusers glorifying God because of the good works they have themselves observed.**

1 Peter 2:13–17

Submit Yourself to Every Ordinance of Man: Honour All Men, Fear God, Honour the King

(13) Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

(14) Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

(15) For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

(16) As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

(17) Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

The Context

Verse 13's "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme" opens the chapter's most sustained section of practical instruction, addressing believers' relationship to civil government in terms closely parallel to Romans 13:1–7 and Titus 3:1. The decisive phrase is "for the Lord's sake": submission to human authority is not commended as mere pragmatic self-preservation but as an act of obedience rendered ultimately to Christ himself, whose own submissive suffering the chapter will describe in its closing verses. "The king, as supreme" most likely refers to the Roman emperor, whose authority these scattered provincial believers, themselves without full citizenship rights in many cases, are nonetheless instructed to honor.

Verse 14's "or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" extends the same principle to regional Roman officials, describing government's proper function in strikingly positive terms, punishing evil and praising good, even though the empire these believers lived under would, within a generation, become a direct source of severe persecution rather than impartial praise. Verse 15's "for so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" names the specific purpose behind this submission, that consistent good conduct might itself refute slanderous accusation more effectively than any verbal defense, directly continuing verse 12's strategy of answering hostility with observed goodness.

Verse 16's "as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" clarifies that this submission does not contradict the believer's genuine freedom in Christ; rather, true freedom is itself exercised as service to God, never as a cover, the same word used elsewhere of a garment concealing what lies beneath, for malicious or self-serving conduct. Verse 17's closing fourfold command, "honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king," compresses the whole unit into a tightly structured set of four distinct objects and four distinct verbs: universal honor extended to all people regardless of status, particular love reserved for the household of faith, reverent fear belonging to God alone, and honor, the same word applied to all men in general, now specifically directed toward civil authority, carefully distinguished from the fear owed to God alone.

Plain American English

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you

should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's servants. Show proper respect to everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Key Observations

“submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake”: This signifies **Civil Submission Commanded Not as Pragmatic Self-Preservation but as an Act of Obedience Rendered Ultimately to Christ.**

By grounding submission in “for the Lord's sake” rather than in fear of punishment or hope of favor, Peter reframes ordinary civic conduct as an extension of devotion to Christ, even under a government that would soon persecute the very believers being instructed to honor it.

“with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”: This signifies **Consistent Good Conduct Presented as More Persuasive Than Verbal Defense Against Slander.**

This directly continues verse 12's strategy, naming observable good behavior, sustained over time, as God's own appointed means of answering ignorant accusation, rather than relying on argument or appeal to authority alone.

“honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king”: This signifies **Four Distinct Objects Matched to Four Distinct Responses, Carefully Distinguishing Universal Honor From Reverence Owed to God Alone.**

The tight parallel structure prevents any confusion between honoring a human ruler and fearing God, honor and fear kept as two separate categories even while the same verb “honour” is applied to both all people and the king specifically.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Practice Civic Submission as an Act of Obedience to Christ, Even Toward Imperfect or Unfriendly Authority: Because Peter commands submission “for the Lord's sake” under a government that would soon persecute the church, contemporary believers can extend lawful respect to civil authority as an expression of Christian

obedience, without that respect depending on the government's own fairness or favor toward them.

2. Keep Honor and Fear in Their Proper, Separate Categories: Verse 17's careful distinction between honoring the king and fearing God guards against both extremes, treating civil authority with the disrespect due only to false gods, or elevating civil authority to a reverence that belongs to God alone; contemporary believers do well to hold both postures distinctly and simultaneously.

How This Relates to Today

The instruction to submit to civil authority “for the Lord’s sake” speaks pointedly into any contemporary political climate marked by deep partisan suspicion of government, offering a model of principled, Christ-centered civic engagement that neither idolizes the state nor treats lawful authority with reflexive contempt.

Verse 16’s warning against using liberty as “a cloke of maliciousness” challenges any contemporary appeal to personal freedom that in practice conceals selfishness or harm to others, insisting instead that genuine Christian liberty always expresses itself as service to God rather than as license.

Key Lesson: **This unit calls believers to submit to every human authority for the Lord’s sake, from the emperor down to regional governors, naming consistent good conduct as God’s own appointed means of silencing ignorant slander, and closes with a tightly balanced fourfold command that honors all people, loves the household of faith, fears God alone, and honors the earthly king, each object matched precisely to its proper response.**

1 Peter 2:18–25

Christ Our Example in Suffering: By Whose Stripes Ye Were Healed

(18) Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

(19) For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

(20) For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

(21) For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

(22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

(23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

(24) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

(25) For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The Context

Verse 18's "servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" addresses household servants specifically, the Greek term describing domestic slaves rather than hired labor, applying the chapter's submission principle to the most vulnerable and least socially powerful members of the household, those with least ability to change or escape an unjust situation. "The froward," meaning harsh, unreasonable, or perverse, is named explicitly alongside "the good and gentle," refusing to limit the command to easy circumstances alone.

Verses 19 and 20 draw a precise distinction between two very different kinds of patient suffering: "for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully," set against "what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?" Patiently enduring deserved punishment earns no particular commendation; what is "thankworthy," literally grace or favor, in God's sight is patient endurance of suffering one has genuinely not deserved, borne specifically "for conscience toward God," an awareness of God's own presence and approval that transforms unjust suffering from mere victimhood into something "acceptable with God."

Verse 21's "for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" makes the theological turn on which the entire unit depends: undeserved suffering, patiently borne, is not merely tolerated by God

but is itself the very thing believers were “called” to, modeled directly and explicitly on Christ’s own suffering. “Example,” a rare Greek word describing a pattern or copy-book letters that a child would trace in learning to write, pictures Christ’s suffering not as a distant, abstract theological datum but as a pattern meant to be traced, stroke by stroke, in the believer’s own experience.

Verses 22 and 23 describe that pattern in specific, concrete terms, drawing directly on Isaiah 53:9’s “he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth”: “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth... who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Christ’s sinlessness is matched precisely by his refusal to retaliate verbally, either in kind reviling or in threat, choosing instead to entrust his cause entirely to God’s own righteous judgment rather than to self-defense or vengeance.

Verse 24’s “who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” draws directly on Isaiah 53:4–6, applying to Christ’s cross language of substitutionary bearing and healing wounds, “tree” recalling both the literal wooden cross and Deuteronomy 21:23’s curse pronounced on one hanged on a tree. The purpose clause, “that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness,” ties Christ’s suffering not only to forgiveness of sin’s guilt but to a genuine moral transformation in the believer’s own present conduct, echoing the same death-to-sin, alive-to-righteousness pattern Paul develops at length in Romans 6:1–11.

Verse 25’s closing image, “for ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls,” draws on Isaiah 53:6’s “all we like sheep have gone astray,” completing the Isaiah 53 quotation begun in verse 22 and naming Christ with the double title Shepherd and Bishop, overseer or guardian, of souls, closing the chapter’s long argument, from living stones and royal priesthood, through submission to human authority, to servants’ unjust suffering, with the picture of every scattered, wandering believer finally, safely returned to the one Shepherd who watches over their souls.

Plain American English

Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow

in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Key Observations

“if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully... this is acceptable with God”: This signifies **A Precise Distinction Between Patiently Enduring Deserved Punishment and Patiently Enduring Genuinely Unjust Suffering.**

Peter withholds commendation from patience under deserved correction while calling patience under undeserved wrong “thankworthy,” locating the value of endurance not in suffering itself but in its innocence and in the conscious awareness of God that accompanies it.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”: This signifies **Christ’s Suffering Pictured as a Copy-Book Pattern Meant to Be Traced, Not Merely a Distant Doctrine to Be Believed.**

The Greek word for “example” describes the model letters a child traces in learning to write, turning Christ’s suffering from an abstract theological fact into a concrete, imitable pattern for how believers themselves are to respond to unjust treatment.

“who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree... by whose stripes ye were healed”: This signifies **Isaiah 53’s Suffering Servant Directly Applied to Christ’s Cross as Both Substitutionary Bearing of Sin and Source of Healing.**

By weaving Isaiah 53’s language throughout verses 22 through 25, Peter presents Christ’s death as the fulfillment of Israel’s own ancient prophecy of a servant who suffers in the place of others, securing both moral transformation, dead to sin and alive to righteousness, and healing.

What This Means for Us Today

1. Distinguish Carefully Between Suffering Consequences for Wrongdoing and Suffering Unjustly for Doing Right: Verse 20's sharp contrast warns against claiming spiritual credit for merely enduring deserved consequences, while identifying genuine, undeserved hardship, borne for conscience toward God, as the suffering that carries real commendation before him.

2. Trace Christ's Own Pattern of Non-Retaliation Rather Than Defaulting to Self-Defense or Threats: Because Christ, when reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, made no threats, believers facing unjust treatment today can look to his specific, concrete example, entrusting their cause to God's righteous judgment rather than answering hostility with hostility.

How This Relates to Today

This passage speaks with particular weight to any contemporary believer enduring unfair treatment in circumstances they cannot easily leave, workplace, family, or otherwise, offering neither a demand for passive resignation nor license for retaliation, but a specific, Christ-shaped path of patient endurance entrusted to God's own righteous judgment.

The image of sheep who had gone astray but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls offers a fitting close to any contemporary reader's own wandering history, naming present belonging to Christ not as an achievement but as a return, made possible only by the very suffering, described just before it, that this passage has set forth as the believer's own pattern to follow.

Key Lesson: **This closing unit addresses household servants directly but extends its principle to every believer, distinguishing sharply between suffering deserved and suffering wrongful, and grounding the call to patient endurance entirely in Christ's own concrete example, sinless, unretaliating, entrusting himself to righteous judgment, who bore our sins in his own body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, healed by his stripes and returned, like straying sheep, to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.**

Closing Prayer

Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Thank you that we have laid aside malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, and that as newborn babes we may desire the sincere milk of your word, growing thereby, having tasted that you are gracious. Thank you that we, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, and that we, who were not a people, are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but have now obtained mercy.

Lord, as strangers and pilgrims in this world, help us abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, and let our conduct among those who do not know you be so honest that our good works, not our arguments, might in time turn even our accusers to glorify you. Teach us to submit to every ordinance of man for your sake, honouring all men, loving the brotherhood, fearing you alone, and honouring those in authority over us.

And Lord, when we suffer wrongfully, let us remember Christ's own example, who did no sin, who was reviled and reviled not again, who committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and who bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. Thank you that by his stripes we were healed, and that we, who were as sheep going astray, are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

Glory to God Alone