

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

JUNE 19 - 23, 2023

Sermon Series 5.28 - 8.13

# FORGED

## IN THE FURNACE

# MONDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:11-12**

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## Christian Life in Society—Foreigners and Exiles

In today's text Peter urges his readers to live as "*foreigners and exiles*" (1 Peter 2:11). Having spent more than 16 years living outside the U.S.A. and having visited 20 other countries, I can identify with the metaphor of foreigners and exiles. Despite having lived in another country for 16 years and even obtaining permanent resident status, we always were recognized as foreigners. Our accent (despite our best efforts to sound like a local), our clothing, our attitudes, our ways of thinking—nearly everything about us screamed "foreigner" to those among whom we lived.

Peter urges his readers that they should see themselves in the same manner in relation to the society in which they live. But he does so not simply so that they will stand out from the crowd, but specifically that they might "*abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.*" It is instructive that Paul focuses not merely on behavior, but on desires, the root of behavior. He wants believers not only to avoid sinful behavior, but to cut off sinful desires before they lead to wrong behavior. Believers are to be counter-cultural in their recognition of and refusal to yield to sinful desires. "Everyone's doing it" should never be an excuse for a Christian. Rather, our lives should be completely guided by the holiness and goodness of God.

Paul recognizes that refusing to join in sinful behavior will be unpopular and will likely result in misunderstandings and possibly false accusations. But Paul's antidote for such responses from others is to live such good lives that others see our good behavior and glorify God as a result. His inclusion of the encouragement "... *that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us*" (1 Peter 2:12) is a gentle reminder to see those around us not as those deserving God's judgment for their sinful behavior, but as those who, like us, will someday have to give account to God. God's visitation as the Lord and Judge of all the earth is an awesome and terrifying prospect. The way we choose to live before others should lead them toward God and His grace, not away from Him.

## QUESTIONS

What desires wage war against your soul? What steps can you take to abstain from them? To what extent do you consider yourself a foreigner in society today?

## PRAYERS

### For GTi HOPE

GTi HOPE brings hope to the hopeless in South Asia, helps train and equip the indigenous church, and distributes Scripture. Pray for ongoing ministry programs for literacy, empowerment, and training church leaders. Pray for an increase in ministry to bless people and transform lives, families, and communities. [www.gtihope.org](http://www.gtihope.org)

# TUESDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:13-15**

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## **Christian Life in Society—Honoring Authorities**

After urging them to abstain from sinful desires and live good lives, Peter exhorted his readers to submit to “every human authority,” starting with the emperor and his governors. Given the cruelty and evil of many of the Roman emperors in the first century, this is a difficult exhortation. The infamous Nero is reported to have been the immediate cause of death for both the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter, along with thousands of other Christians. How could Peter expect his readers to submit to such tyrants? When we ask such a question, we reveal our democratic worldview and values. In a society in which people are empowered to vote and say, “Enough is enough,” we may be inclined to engage in civil disobedience rather than submit to tyrannical despots.

But democratic processes were not available to the common people of Peter’s day and, significantly, he expresses his command with an important qualifier: “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Peter 2:13). Peter’s concern for his readers is that their behavior in no way maligns the Lord or His gospel message. Choosing to rebel against the civil authorities or shirk one’s civic responsibilities would bring the gospel and the name of the Lord into disrepute, and Peter (like Paul) urges his readers to avoid this. Instead, Peter urged, his readers should focus on doing good, thereby

silencing the ignorant talk of foolish people who were speaking evil of Christians. Insofar as it is within their capacity to do so, Christians should be model citizens, showing the world that they respect and submit to authorities.

Although Peter does not speak in this text about the limitations of civil authorities, we know from his own life that there were times when he drew a line. When he and John were arrested and told by the religious leaders in Jerusalem to stop speaking in Jesus' name, Peter and John refused, arguing it was better to follow God than humans (Acts 4). Similarly, we should not think of his exhortations to his readers as absolute laws that all should always follow. Rather, they are intended to guide believers to behave in such a way that none can find fault with them.

## QUESTIONS

In what ways should we submit to civil authorities whom God has placed in authority over us? How can Christians honor political leaders regardless of which political party they represent?

## PRAYERS

### For GTi HOPE

Glenkirk is helping to transform the Madiya people group through literacy and the message of peace. Church leaders are being trained during year two of this three-year project. Pray for open ears and hearts among the Madiya. Glenkirk has sponsored six People Group Projects. Praise the Lord!

# WEDNESDAY

Read **John 8:31-36; Romans 6:15-23; 1 Peter 2:13-17**

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## Christian Life in Society—Freedom to Love

In the context of honoring political authorities, Peter urged his readers to “*Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves*” (1 Peter 2:16). This exhortation contains an important principle about Christian freedom—that freedom should always be seen within the context of living as God’s slaves. Jesus and Paul expressed similar thoughts in today’s readings.

In John’s Gospel Jesus speaks about the relationship between freedom and truth: one can only be truly free if one knows and *lives* by the truth. The truth of the gospel can set one free from slavery to sin. Similarly, Paul wrote about being set free from being slaves to sin and the resulting status of becoming slaves to righteousness. As Paul explained to his Roman readers, they were either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. Gaining freedom from sin did not mean they were free to do whatever they wanted but that they were free to do what was right.

As Peter urged his readers to live as free people, he also explained what this freedom entailed: “*Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor*” (1 Peter 2:17). We could sum it up by saying that true freedom is expressed through respect, love, reverence, and honor to God and others, as appropriate.

These behaviors reflect the high calling that God places upon us as His followers to be mature, courteous, and respectful in our interactions with and responses to others. There is a term for this derived from Latin: *civility*. To be civil is to show politeness and courtesy in behavior and speech. This is what Peter urged his readers to do so others would have no reason to speak ill of them or the God they represented.

Many have noted the rise of incivility in American culture during recent years. Respect, love, and honor toward others seems difficult to find. Peter calls followers of Jesus to be counter-cultural in this regard, not only to those who share our views, but to “everyone.”

## QUESTIONS

How will you demonstrate freedom from the negative aspects of our culture? How can you use your freedom to demonstrate respect, love, and honor to others? How can you help to overcome hostility and incivility within your community?

## PRAYERS

### For GTi HOPE

Pray for ministry taking place in states which have passed anti-conversion laws. Pray for protection from harassment, oppression, beatings and worse. Pray for boldness and pray that persecutors witness the love of Jesus and are changed. Pray for churches in Manipur where over 120 churches were vandalized or burned in May.

# THURSDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:18-20**

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## Christian Life in Society—Suffering for God

Today's text includes exhortations that often offend modern sensibilities. Peter's exhortation to slaves to "*submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are considerate, but also to those who are harsh*" (1 Peter 2:18), strikes many modern readers as condoning the practice of slavery. Why did Peter not focus on the need for masters to treat their slaves justly or even to free them? Peter is not unaware of the abuses of slavery. In fact, in the next verse he states, "*For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God*" (1 Peter 2:19).

The fact that Peter acknowledges that slaves may suffer unjustly reveals a regard for the full humanity of slaves that was not a given within Roman society. Some philosophers of the day regarded slaves as mere property to be treated and disposed of as the owner wished. Peter's recognition that they might suffer unjustly underscores his view of their full humanity. Peter's exhortation to them to be willing to suffer for doing good seems to reflect his expectation for all believers. If Christ, our Lord, suffered unjustly, how can we, His followers, expect any less? It is not only Christian slaves who should be willing to bear up under unjust suffering, but all followers of Jesus.



Such an exhortation seems foreign to our sensibilities, especially as we have accepted the existence of inalienable human rights. In our view of the world, nobody should have to suffer unjustly. Peter, however, accepts the existence of values that are higher than our own personal safety and comfort. Suffering because one is “conscious of God” (1 Peter 2:19) is such a higher value. Suffering because of one’s calling to love others, suffering in service to God, suffering so that others may hear and accept the gospel are all ways in which one may suffer due to being conscious of God. As believers who were very much in the minority in the Ancient Roman world, Peter urged his readers to be willing to suffer for the sake of God and His gospel.

## QUESTIONS

What are we called to suffer or even to give up so that others may know Christ and His love? What does it mean for us to be God’s slaves?

## PRAYERS

### For GTi HOPE

Praise God for providing an Area Director for GTi HOPE to raise awareness and support in Southeast USA and increase ministry. Pray for Gabriel and his family as they move from California to Tennessee. Pray that the Lord provides connections with churches, businesses, and individuals in Southeastern states for His glory.

# FRIDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:21-25**

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## Christian Life in Society—Jesus, Our Example

In yesterday's reading, Peter focused his exhortation on slaves, urging them to be willing to suffer because they are conscious of God. Today's reading extends this thought to all believers who have been called by Christ who suffered for us and left us an example that we should follow.

Christ's suffering for us was to secure our salvation, which Peter underscores by references to Isaiah 53, the text about God's Suffering Servant that early Christians applied to Jesus. Christ who suffered unjustly because "*He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth*" (1 Peter 2:22). Peter underlines Jesus' non-retaliation when He suffered, choosing to entrust Himself to God rather than call down judgment on His persecutors. But Peter also makes it clear that Jesus did this not only to set an example for us but also that we might "*die to sins and live for righteousness*" (1 Peter 2:24).

The "healing" of which Peter speaks (per Isaiah 53:5) is often taken as a reference to physical healing. I have heard Christians quote this verse when they want to "claim healing" for someone. But stop and consider for a moment. Which is the greater demonstration of God's healing power? Healing our physical bodies which, at best, are temporary until

we die? Or healing (transforming) our inner beings, giving us the ability to die to sin and live for righteousness, with eternal consequences?

Peter recognizes that we all are sheep prone to wander; but Jesus, the Shepherd of our souls, continues calling us to return to Him. Just as He demonstrated a life fully surrendered to the Father such that He was able to suffer without retaliating against others in order to do what was righteous, so we should be so committed to doing what is righteous that we are willing to endure suffering, if need be. The writer of Hebrews expressed a similar thought in this way: *“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood”* (Hebrews 12:4). Jesus set a high bar for suffering unjustly and resisting sin.

## QUESTIONS

How far are we willing to go in our struggle against sin? How can we follow Jesus’ example of entrusting ourselves to God when others wrong us? How might our “righteous suffering” impact others positively for the gospel?

## PRAYERS

### For GTi HOPE

Pray for grant opportunities through foundations, plans for a virtual event in the fall, and a full team for the October 2023 Vision Trip. Pray for the staff of our indigenous partner, especially those who travel throughout India to support ministry programs.



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