

30.4.23 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. A warm welcome to the service today. It's good to see quite a few visitors with us today as well and you're especially welcome. Some from far away, Australia even as far away as today so it's good for us to come together and to worship God. There's tea and there's coffee at the end of the service. If you're able to stay behind please do so.

The intimations have been on the screen before the service began and just take a second to run through some of them. The Gaelic service is at 6pm tonight. We've got a monthly Gaelic service and that service will be taken by the Reverend Dolan at MacDonald at 6 o'clock. At half past seven we've got the monthly fellowship and Derek Maxwell of Slavic Gospel will speak at that fellowship at half past seven. So please make an effort to come out to that this evening. It's good to see and hear the wee ones. They're going to have a wee service of their own in the front row I think. Community lunch tomorrow, the monthly community lunch tomorrow in the church here at 12 till 2 and please if you're able to come along to that do so. Elders and deacons we have got the training, the last of the training sessions tomorrow night at half past seven on Zoom. Please make an effort to be at that when it's been a really worthwhile course. Plenty of seats over here,

Taney and Russell. Come on over. Good to see you. Various other things, Ladies Fellowship Monday, Little Fishers and Road to Recovery on Tuesday at the normal time. One thing I'll maybe say about Road to Recovery is that we're a wee bit of thunding the ground in terms of those who are able to help and some nights if there's people away we're struggling to get enough help. So if you feel that's a ministry you might want to get involved in, we have a cup of tea and a few biscuits and we have a prayer and a short Bible reading and just a chat to encourage each other.

And so if that's something you feel you might want to either attend or come along and help at, maybe come and speak to me at the end of the service. Addictions can be many things. It can be drink, it can be drugs, it can be shopping, it can be coats, it can be trainers, it can be food. We're all struggling with sin, that's the root.

But it manifests itself in different ways. So it's one meeting that can be of huge encouragement as we as we press on as Christians. Prayer meeting on Wednesday, half past seven, Zoom and in person.

[2 : 5 2] Friday clubs this coming Friday. We've got Jam and Connect end of term celebration. All families and carers are invited to a barbecue on Friday from 4.45 till 6.15pm at the church. Any donations of food are welcome and there's a sign-up sheet at the door. You've got that on the screen. And one date for your diary is the praise and pudding night in the church, Saturday 20th of May at 7pm. It's a way that we can raise money for the Free Church Youth Camps which run through the summer. So maybe put that one in your diary. Services next Sunday at 11 and 6pm will hopefully, God willing, be taken by myself.

And if the church is dirty next Sunday, you'll know it's Marianai's fault as we're in the cleaner. These, I think, are all the notices. I'll maybe say as well that tomorrow for the lunch, it's good to see Michele's parents with us today from Romania. And we tasted some pizzas from Jan in the past.

They're going to be at the lunch tomorrow, 12 till 2. You'd be foolish to miss it. So be encouraged to come along to that. Let us now worship God and let's sing to his praise. We're going to sing from Psalm 8.

Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm. How excellent in all the earth, Lord, our Lord is thy name. And we'll stand to sing the whole of the psalm. Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm.

Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm.

[5 : 25] Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm.

Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm. Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm.

Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm. Psalm 8 and the whole of the psalm. of the psalm. Smyrks the mist in lor, all under speed it slay.

All sheep and oxen, yea, and bees, that in the field do stray.

Vowels of the air, fish of the sea, all that pass through the same.

[7 : 03] Awebs the length in all the earth, Lord our Lord is thy name.

Let's bow our heads, let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray together. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day.

We thank you for your word that we have sang. We thank you that we can take the inspired words of the psalmist and proclaim with our own lips how excellent in all the earth is your name.

And we thank you for your excellence. We thank you that you are the God who is with us. We thank you that you are the God who reveals yourself to us.

And we praise you that in the creation that we are surrounded by, the creation that we are part of, you speak to us through that creation.

[8 : 25] We thank you that you are the God who has put this starry frame into existence. And as we look up on a clear night, we thank you that you speak to us, even through the stars of your glory and of your majesty.

We thank you that you are the God in whom there is life and from whom all life flows. We thank you that you are the God who has made us.

You are the God who holds all things together. You are the God who is glorious, the God who is almighty. You are the God who is holy and pure and all-powerful.

And yet we praise you that you are the God who is gentle and kind and good and gracious and loving towards us.

We thank you that you are the God who is gentle and loving towards us. We thank you that you are the God who is gentle and loving towards us. We thank you that as we open your word, you speak to us of your great love for us. The whole of the Bible is an expression of your loving kindness towards us.

[10 : 07] You didn't have to reveal yourself to us. You did not have to seek and save sinners. We thank you that you are the God who is gentle and loving towards us.

The God who is almighty and yet the God whom we can call our friend, our helper, our saviour. We pray for any who might be here today who don't yet know you.

We pray for any who may be here and who feel far away from you. We ask, Lord, that you would reach out to them and that they would know as they hear the words of Scripture and that they would know as they sense the movement of the Holy Spirit in this place that you are seeking them.

We thank you that when we see our sin and when we see the cross of Jesus, you are choosing to reveal that to us.

You are calling us to come to yourself. And so we pray, Lord, that you would draw us, that there would be none who would walk out the door this morning, having resisted the voice of God.

[11 : 50] We pray that even in this day, there may be someone who comes for the first time to trust in Jesus. So we pray that there may be someone who has been far away for a long time and who comes back to Jesus, knowing that you will never push away those who return to you.

We thank you that you are the God who loves to see the prodigal return. You are the Father who scans the horizon for those who once were close but who drifted far away.

We thank you that the call is a call to return. So, Lord, minister to us, we pray, in our need, and help us to have ears to hear the call of God and the gospel.

We thank you, Lord, that in this country we are still able to hear that call. We thank you that we are able to say freely that the name of Jesus is the name that is above all names. It is the excellent name.

We pray for places where that freedom is not enjoyed. We pray for the persecuted church. We pray for brothers and sisters in places like Pakistan and North Korea, and Eritrea and India.

[13 : 01] We pray for Christians who struggle in places like Turkey today. We will soon open a letter that Peter wrote to believers who were scattered in Turkey.

And we know that still today the gospel message is a message that is despised in that place. We ask, Lord, that you would move in the power of your spirit in this place and this nation and across all nations, that many more would be called to look in faith to Jesus.

And we pray for your ongoing protection over us, that we would still continue to know freedom to meet together as we do. And to that end, Lord, we pray for those that you have placed in authority over us, those who have the power to make these decisions.

We ask, Lord, that you would turn them to yourself. And we think especially this week of King Charles, we pray in advance of the coronation, that you would move in his heart, that the message of the Bible that he's heard over many years would be a message that penetrates the heart and makes a difference in his life and in his soul.

So hear our prayers for our nation. Hear our prayers for ourselves, for each other, for those, Lord, who struggle. We all struggle with different things.

[14 : 24] You know our hearts. You know our anxieties. For those who are anxious, Lord, about the future. For those who may be troubled by the trials of this world.

We pray that you would minister to them. We thank you that when we look ahead at a week and we see things that cause us fear, things that we cannot see how to navigate our way through, we thank you that what's impossible with man is possible with God.

And so we take all our cares and our anxieties and our problems and we bring them to you. We pray for those who are grieving. We ask, Lord, that you would comfort them. We pray for those who are sick.

We pray that your hand of healing or your hand of grace would be upon them. We pray, Lord, that you would be with all those who are struggling in all kinds of ways.

Those who battle with anxiety, with addiction, with depression. Lord, you know our needs and we thank you that you are sufficient for all of our needs.

[15 : 29] So we pray to you and ask that you would help us and all those that come to our minds. That you would minister to them in the power of the Holy Spirit. So hear our prayers, take away our sin and go before us in this service that we would worship you in spirit and in truth.

For we pray these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward, please? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[16 : 26] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Recognise that, what it is. What do you think? It's a sword, Michael, yeah. It's a sword.

And do you know where that sword on the right is just now? Pardon? Pardon? Harris. It's not in Harris. No, it's not in my house.

No, no. No, it's not in my house. It's actually over in Ness. I was reading about this sword. And it was one of my relatives about 120, 30 years ago from Airdell in Ness who found this sword.

So there's one day and he was out at the end of the croft where the peat bogs are. And he saw this wee thing that was kind of sticking up out of the ground. He thought it was just a twig or something.

[17 : 33] And he just gave it a wee kick on the way past. And it was hard. So he thought, he just carried on. So he went out and he did what he was doing.

He was coming back. And he thought, I think I'm going to have a look at that. So he put his hand down on the bit of metal that was sticking up. And he pulled out the sword.

And it's known as one of the Aird swords. So the question I want to ask you, there's all these other bits we're found around about the same, the tank, the same place.

But I want to ask you the question, how old do you think these swords are? What do you think? Have a guess. Come on, speak to me.

Daniel, how old do you think they are? 10 years old? 140 years old. Higher. What do you think?

[18 : 37] John Roddy? 200 years old. Good guess. Higher. Michael? 600 years old. Good guess.

Higher. 1,000. Almost 1,000. 100. No, almost 1,000. You're right. No, just stop talking. You're right. Almost...

1,000. No, no, it's more than that. It's more than that. Keep going. 1,000 years. No, it's much older than that. 2,000.

2,000 years old. Older than that. 3,000. 4,500. Almost 3,000 years old. That sword dates back to...

They think it's about 950 years before Jesus was born. So back in the day in the Old Testament, when you're getting your stories in Sunday school, remember King Hezekiah in the Old Testament?

[19 : 37] They reckon that that sword was around in the days of King Hezekiah. And we don't know the story behind it, but it was found in a peat bog over in Ness.

And when you look at it, it's super old. 3,000 odd years old. But it's still actually quite short. So it's lasted a very long time, and it's been preserved well, and it's still short.

And what I was wanting to say to you as we think about what this means for us is, you know, there's lots of things in this world that last for a long, long time.

And I don't know if we can think of many things that are older than that. But everything in this world, eventually, it passes away.

Apart from one thing. So everything in this world, eventually it passes away. This building we're in, it will eventually pass away.

[20 : 47] These books, mission praise books, this glass, this phone won't last hardly any time. So everything in this world, plugs, wires, heaters, houses, everything eventually passes away.

But there's one thing in this world that never passes away. What do you think it is? Really? The Holy Spirit?

That's one right answer, yeah? But we can't see the Holy Spirit. I'm thinking about something that we could, we could pick up and hold with our hands.

What do you think? Do you want to? Take a guess. Not sure?

Michael? Any guesses? You can hold it with your hands. You can probably open it. The Bible. Pardon?

[21 : 59] The Bible. Jesus said, Matthew 24, verse 35. Jesus said, listen, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

So, yes, the books pass away, but God's word, the Bible, it will never pass away. When this world is finished, when the heavens and the earth are all changed and made new, God's words will never pass away.

They'll be forever and forever and forever. And God's word, the Bible tells us, God's word is like a, it's like a what? It's like a sword.

It says in Hebrews 4, 12, for the word of God is active, alive and active, living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

It penetrates even to dividing the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow. It judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. And so God's word, it's like a sword.

[23 : 07] It gets right into us, but not in a bad way, but in a good way. You know, there are some things that cut us and it's not good, but when a surgeon has a mini sword, scalpel in his hand, then the cut that he makes is a cut that heals us and helps us.

And God's word, it's like a sword that goes into our hearts to heal us. Because in God's word, who do we see?

On every page, who do we see in God's word? We see, who else? We see Jesus. And he is our savior.

So, let's pray and let's thank God for his word and let's thank God for his son, Jesus. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that although everything around us and we ourselves and our bodies, we pass away. We thank you that your word never passes away. We thank you that there's never a time, there's never a place, there's never a generation, there's never a group of people to whom your word does not speak.

[24 : 21] so help us to listen. And we pray that you would open our hearts, that your word would go into our hearts, that we would see and hear and we would believe in Jesus, that our sins would be taken away and Lord, that you would help us to know the life that comes from believing in Jesus.

so we pray all these things in his name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to sing now and we're going to sing from Mission Praise 590, Seek ye first the kingdom of God.

And there's a verse in that hymn that says, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. So let's stand and sing to God's praise.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Man shall not help by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Cause Lord Alleluia Alleluia

[26 : 30] Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia.

Ask and it shall be given unto you. Seek and he shall find.

Knock and the door shall be opened unto you. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Alleluia. Alleluia.

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

[27 : 39] Alleluia. Okay boys and girls, if you head now to Sunday school please. Remember to pray for them as they go.

I don't know how Farrakhar's never had a broken toe with them all passing. If we could turn in our Bibles now please to 1 Peter chapter 2.

1 Peter chapter 2 and we'll read from verse 9 through to the end of the chapter.

This is God's word. But you says Peter to the Christians in modern day Turkey as we know it.

You're a chosen people. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him. Who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

[28 : 58] Once you were not the people but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul.

Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the king as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by him, to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

For it's God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil. Live as servants of God.

Show proper respect to everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers. Fear God. Honor the king. Slaves 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 a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?

[30 : 16] 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 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 tree 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. Amen.

And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing again now to God's praise and we'll sing from Psalm 19, verses 7 and 8 in Gaelic.

[31 : 18] Psalm 19, two stanzas, verses 7 and verse 8 in Gaelic. God's law is perfect and converts the soul. In sin that lies, God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise.

The statutes of the Lord are right and do rejoice the heart. The Lord's command is pure and doth light to the eyes impart. We'll sing these two verses to God's praise.

We'll remain seated to sing in Gaelic. We'll sing these two verses Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 24] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[36 : 06] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[39 : 08] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I mean, why is it that a hundred odd people stood at the side of the football pitch down the road on a freezing cold Friday night?

It's because the team that was supporting Harris, they need encouragement. So you stand at the side, you make a noise because we need encouragement.

And in the Christian life, we need encouragement. That's a huge part of the reason that we're here this morning.

Don't get out of the habit of meeting together, we're told, but encourage each other. So the fact that you're here and not on the end of a screen, you've chosen to be here rather than stay at home.

There are those who have to be at home and we pray for them and we give thanks for the fact that there are those who we can't see who are watching. But the fact that you've come here physically and we're sitting beside each other in this place, that brings huge encouragement.

[40 : 25] And in the time that we're in this place, let's try and encourage each other. Remember, this is Peter.

And Peter knew what it was to need encouragement. Peter fell. Peter failed. Peter was in a state of despair after he denied Jesus.

So he knew what it was to feel down. And he knew the value of the encouragement of God's people.

So let's not pass by these verses this morning without taking encouragement for our souls. For Christian people, we're chosen of God.

Even if you're here this morning and you're not yet a Christian. You're here because God has chosen to put you here. You're here so that he will speak to you.

[41 : 36] He wants us to hear the message of the gospel. For those who have not yet repented of sin, for those who have not yet come to Jesus, he has chosen to put us in this place so that we'll believe, so that we'll be saved.

And for those who are far away, but who are just sitting in these chairs, feeling nothing, God has put us in these chairs to call us to come back close and to receive the encouragement of knowing that God loves us.

He wants us to come to him. So let's take this encouragement and let's look for every opportunity that we have to encourage each other.

When we're in the room, when we leave this room and when we go and get on with our day, rather than sitting down with a phone for an hour, why not take an hour, write a letter, send an email, make a phone call, encourage each other.

There's encouragement for God's people in this letter from Peter. That's the first thing, verses 9 and 10. And secondly, there's exhortation for God's people.

[43 : 01] Peter is telling these believers how we are to live. We've got that from verses 11 onwards. Dear friend, says Peter, Now every coin, we can take a coin in our hand, and every coin has two sides.

It's got two faces. And we could say the coin of Christian identity that Peter is working through in this section. It has two sides. And Peter, as he thinks about this from God's perspective, or God speaks to us through Peter, and he says to us that we are his chosen people.

We are his dear friends. We belong to him. That's our identity. Chosen of God. Belonging to God. Loved by God. There's the encouragement that flows from that.

But then Peter says, As the world looks at God's people, they see aliens and strangers. And as God's people in this world, if we're Christians, we often feel like aliens and strangers.

Increasingly in this country, we're Christians, we feel as if we are not overly welcome.

[44 : 38] We sometimes find ourselves in an environment where we feel we don't belong. We're aliens and strangers, says Peter.

I was watching a film that I hadn't watched in 30 years, just a few weeks back, E.T., the extraterrestrial. And it's a film about an alien.

Most of you have seen it. And he gets left, he, she, I don't know, gets left behind on planet Earth. And you see this strange little creature trying to get his bearings and wandering around, and it ends up in this kind of dysfunctional family for a while.

And whilst E.T. is in that family, E.T. does good within that family. But all the while that he's on planet Earth, in this family, the creature knew they didn't belong there.

And so E.T. keeps on saying, E.T., go home. Want to go home. And that's a picture of us, if we're in Christ.

[45 : 51] We are in this world, but we're not of it. That's what Jesus prayed for us in John 17. And the believers that Peter wrote to, they were aliens.

They had been alienated from their families and their communities. They'd been driven out to all these places scattered in modern-day Turkey. They were alienated socially.

They were alienated from a civil perspective. For Jesus' sake, they were strangers in this world. They belonged to another world. They had a new family, verse 11.

They were beloved as those who were in Christ. And so Peter says to them, and he says to us, live in such a way as to show that. Now, we can be so desperate at times to fit in.

We want people to not see us as different from them. And Peter's saying, it's not the way to live. You are aliens. You are strangers.

[47 : 00] So be true to your identity in Christ. He says in verse 12, seek to live good lives. And these good lives are to be lived not apart from non-believers up on some monastery on some hill.

He says, I want you to live good lives, verse 12, among the pagans. So that through our lives, they might see something of Jesus.

So if you're a Christian here today, your calling and mine is to live good lives. We often underestimate the impact of that.

Hardly a week passes. You can think even of a couple of days ago having a conversation with somebody who says, I'm interested in Christian things. I'm quite interested in coming to church, but I don't want to come.

And I'll tell you why I don't want to come. It's because of the bad lives of Christians that I've experienced in the past. They've done this. They've said that. They've done the next thing. I've had bad experiences.

[48 : 08] I don't want to be in that place. See, our lives matter. And our calling is to live good lives so that people will see something of Jesus in us and be drawn to him and not repelled from him.

So how you live and how I live, it matters. So how can we live good lives?

Well, Peter answers that question by saying three things. The first thing he says is submit to authority. The second thing he says is silence your critics by doing good.

And the third thing he says is show proper respect to everyone. So first of all, says Peter in verses 13 and 14, submit to authority.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the king as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right.

[49 : 21] So how can I show that I'm a good disciple? Well, Peter says you can show that you're a good disciple, you can live a good life by submitting to authority.

And that's that's not what we expect. I don't think if we were trying to guess what comes next in this letter, we would have expected Peter to say that.

I think we would have expected something much more spiritual. Go more to church. Spend more time in prayer meetings. Learn some passages of the Bible.

We would expect that to be the feature, the primary feature of a good life. And that undergirds it all. But Peter says on the outside, as people look at your life, submit to authority.

authority. And we don't expect to hear him say that. We maybe don't like that message that's coming through Peter because we don't really like authority.

[50 : 34] Ever since I was a little boy, I didn't like to be told what to do and where to go and where not to go. We don't like it. We don't like authority.

We don't like authority and sometimes we'll say authority is cruel, authority is corrupt. So we don't like to be under it. But think about these Christians in modern day Turkey.

They knew much more about cruelty and corruption from those who were in authority than we ever will. And still Peter says that's the message.

He says if you want to live good lives, submit to authority. So if we want to take this to the practical level, we can do this every day.

We can do this as we drive. Not at 95, but at 60 miles an hour. We submit to authority. Even on a dry day when the road is straight, the temptation is strong.

[51 : 39] We can respond to this call behind the wheel of a car. We can do this in the classroom as we submit to the teacher.

Even when we don't agree with the teacher and sometimes think we know more than the teacher. We can respond to this call of Peter. We can do this on the football field.

There's a few of the boys on the football team in the room today. We might not agree with the referee. We might not like the referee, but whilst we're under his authority, we've to submit.

I never liked it. It's part of our calling. We can do that in our homes as we submit to our parents.

Even when we think that we've got much more insight into the matter than they have. It's very practical. It's very uncomfortable.

[52 : 38] It's very challenging. We don't have to start a charity. We don't have to go and do six years in theological college.

We don't have to go and be missionaries in another country in order to live good lives. We just have to submit to authority for Jesus' sake. Remembering that all authority ultimately comes under his sovereign power.

So that's the first thing that Peter says. Is there an exception to this? Of course there is. When the authority, when the government asks us to do something that is against God's word, then we submit to God's word and we rebel against authority.

But just like Daniel and just like Esther, just like Joseph, we're not living in that day at this time. So until we are, we submit to authority.

The second thing Peter says in terms of living a good life is he says, silence your critics by doing good. Verses 15 and 16. He says, for it's God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

[53 : 53] Live as free men, Peter says, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil. Live as servants of God. Silence your critics by doing good.

There's a, there's a, there's a kind of gritty reality to this, this second exhortation. Peter's making clear that even when we try to do good, we will have critics.

We're never going to live in a world as Christians where we have the approval of everybody. Even when we do the best thing with the best motivation, there will be those who will criticize us for that.

And Peter is saying to them and he's saying to us, just get used to that. be realistic about the fact that's what's going to happen. So just take it.

There will be those who bark and growl and bite at you and your temptation, says Peter, is to bark and growl and bite back at them. But he says, if you want to silence the ignorant talk of foolish men, don't roar at them, don't snap at them, don't rant and rave, don't butt heads like two angry rams in a field.

[55 : 28] Do good. And when you're criticized, just keep on doing good. And then Peter says this strange thing in verse 16.

He says, live as free servants of God. There's like a paradox in that verse, free servants of God. When we think about freedom, we think about not being servants.

We think we can only be free if we're not servants. But the truth is, we're all servants of something, or we're servants of someone. The question is, who are we serving?

Think about that Dylan song back in the 70s, I think it was. He says, you've got to serve somebody. You have to serve somebody. It might be the devil, it might be the Lord, but you have to serve somebody.

And we see that in this world. I think probably the clearest example would be these phones.

[56 : 35] And there's a generation who are servants of social media. Constantly we're trying to get an approval that either never comes or it never lasts.

we're serving these things. They're cruel masters. There's others who are servants of a particular addiction.

They're chasing the next drink or the next hit or the next purchase. But once they get it, there's no satisfaction. The addiction just demands more and more and more.

It's a cruel master. And there's still others whose master is their work or leisure or some sport or hobby.

And it's constant. We have to have it. And the more we get, the more we need. see, the only good master that we can be under is the Lord.

[57 : 54] That's the point that Peter is making in this verse 16. The only free servants are those who serve the Lord.

So Peter is saying to us, show people as they look in on your life, show people how much of a joy it is to serve Jesus.

Show people by your actions and your reactions and through your words and your attitudes how good and how kind and how gentle a master he is.

are our lives showing that? Do our faces and our lives and our actions and our reactions, do they communicate to the world that looks in on us that we are under the joyful loving servitude of Jesus?

And that's why we're doing good. not for the approval of the people around us but for the approval of the Lord and master whom we love and who loves us more than we love him.

[59 : 20] So Peter, he says, submit to authority, silence your critics by doing good and the final thing he says in verses 17 and 18 is show proper respect to everyone.

Show proper respect, verse 17, to everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers. Fear God. Honor the king. Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

The whole question of slavery is another sermon for another day. I'm going to package that up and put it to the side. If you want to talk about it, we can talk about it afterwards, but I'm not going there today.

Peter is saying here, as he talks about proper respect, he says proper respect is far reaching. It includes your Christian family, he says, and not just the Christian family that we like.

In every family, there are people that we connect readily with, and there are people that just rub us up the wrong way. people that the Christian family is the same.

[60 : 39] There will be people that you connect with, there will be people that you find really easy to love, there will be people who will wind you up to the moon and back. Peter is saying, as God inspires him to write, show proper respect to everyone, the brotherhood of believers, everyone in the fellowship, show proper respect to your king.

Now some people here won't like the king, but the king of our day is probably not as dislikable as the king in that day. And King Nero is just around the corner, the emperor.

And Peter is saying, even when the king is somebody that you abhor, you need to show respect. He says, your employers, even the harsh ones, you have to respect them.

And in the center of this section is the key that unlocks the power to be able to do this. And the key is our fear of God, our respect for God.

That's what enables us to respect everyone who is made in the image of God and who comes under the authority of God. So show proper respect to everyone, says Peter.

[62 : 16] Proper respect. Not just a fake respect. Not just to those you like.

Also to those that really annoy you. Not just to those who treat you fairly. also to those that you're justifiably annoyed at because of their attitudes and their behavior.

And we could say on reflection as we look at all this, this is not very spiritual. Submit to authority, silence your critics by doing good, show proper respect to everyone.

It's not very spiritual, we could say, but spiritual life is worked out in earthy places. Think about Jesus. Jesus didn't just go around talking endlessly like a mystic.

Jesus didn't just go from pulpit to pulpit talking in spiritual riddles. spirits. But wherever Jesus went, whoever he encountered, wherever he was, he always did good.

[63 : 32] and he respected everyone. And he reached out to the untouchables and he humbled himself and he submitted to those that he was far above in terms of his authority.

And yet he submitted to them. And so Peter says to us, don't use all your energy in starting a revolution.

It's not about overthrowing governments. It's not about social media pressure groups. He says silence your critics by long, consistent, humble, good works.

He says live good lives at loving and showing respect to everyone like Jesus did.

So it's the encouragement there's the exhortation. Very briefly there's the example for God's people. And in verses 19 to 21 Peter, he holds up Jesus as the supreme example of every teaching that he's underlined.

[64 : 54] God's people God's people are the Savior. But he's also our example. Yes, we come to him in order to have our sins forgiven, in order to be saved, but having come to Jesus, having received the grace that is freely offered, there are good works that are prepared in advance for us to do.

Our calling is to live lives which are like him. So he's our example. And Peter says in verse 19, it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is 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, he says, 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.

And if you think about this, in every exhortation that Peter gives, Jesus is the supreme example. He's the name that is above all names.

[66 : 19] He's the one to whom all authority is given and yet he submitted to authority in this world. He submitted to authority in his home. He submitted to authority in the joiners workshop.

He submitted to authority in government. Jesus modeled this for us. And Jesus had more critics than anyone who ever walked the earth.

death. And yet he silenced them time after time, not with smart comments and not with sharp put-downs, but by continually, consistently doing good.

And Jesus was, he was always disrespected. You know, from the cradle to the cross. at the birth of Jesus, he can't even get a room in the hotel.

He's disrespected in such a way that he's shoved out into some dirty old bar. And all the way through his life, right to the cross, there's continual disrespect towards Jesus, and yet he showed respect always to everyone.

[67 : 37] And he's an example. So if we want to see what this looks like in the flesh, we just have to track the life and ministry of Jesus.

And as we look at his life, we see him suffer. And he suffered unjustly. He suffered for doing good, and our calling is to be like him.

And we need to hear that. You know, the Christians in AD 60 in Turkey, they didn't need much teaching in this area because they experienced suffering for Jesus' sake daily.

Now, we don't. But when somebody calls us a bad name, or when somebody freezes us out of a conversation, when we don't get an invitation to something that somebody else got an invitation to, and we suspect it's because we're Christians, we get all hot and bothered about that, we stress out about it, we think that we're maybe too extreme, we're too zealous, we're drifting off course, we've been unwise.

And Peter is saying to us, when you suffer for Jesus' sake, don't think that you're doing something wrong. Don't invite suffering, don't be unwise.

[69 : 03] But when we suffer because we are Christians, Peter is saying, you're on course. This is part of your calling.

So when we get the silent treatment, when we get left behind, when we get frozen out, this is our calling. If you and I know nothing of that, that's when we know we're off course.

the example that we are to follow, the steps that we are to walk in are the steps of Jesus.

And then to finish, Peter, he takes us to the cross of Jesus and he reaches out with that evangelistic zeal to those who are reading the letter and who are not yet God's people.

people. And the final thing is there's that entreaty to become one of God's people. And Peter says this in verse 22, look again to Jesus.

[70 : 10] So can I say that just now to those who are drifting off to sleep, to those who have tuned out 15 minutes ago? Will you wake up, will you take a moment, and will you look again to Jesus?

Peter says verse 22, he, Jesus, committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth.

Remember, this is Peter that's saying this. And Peter lived with Jesus. He shadowed Jesus 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for three years.

And he says, I can tell you firsthand, no sin, no deceit ever came from his mouth. He never spoke against somebody behind their back.

He never told a lie to get out of trouble. He was the perfect, sinless, spotless son of God. Look at Jesus, says Peter.

[71 : 21] And he says in verse 23, 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.

And again, think of Peter. This is Peter. And think of that day when Peter, in a state of distress, tears in his eyes, having denied Jesus, he's standing at a distance from the cross.

And he sees Jesus suffer with such grace and such dignity. And on the day that Jesus suffers, as Peter watches at that distance, he cannot understand what's happening.

He can't understand why this has to be. But now he can see. And Peter says, he, Jesus himself, bore our sins in his body on the tree.

the denial, the failures, the bad tempered outbursts, the desertion of Jesus as Peter goes back to fishing.

[72 : 51] All the sin that weighs heavily on Peter as he thinks about the past. and yet Peter is able to say, now I understand.

He, Jesus himself, bore my sin in his body on the cross. And the question I want to ask is, did he bear your sin?

or are you still obeying them? Remember in Pilgrim's Progress, he feels the weight of the sin on his back until he comes to the cross and then that weight is removed.

And that's what Jesus offers. He offers to remove the weight of your sin from you.

But it's an offer. You know, you can continue this morning in your sin. You can continue to bear it.

[74 : 08] and your sin will weigh you down as you journey through time and then at the end of time, your sin, if you continue to bear it, will push you down into hell.

That's the clear teaching of Scripture. You can choose that. You can bear your sin through time into eternity and it will take you to the depths.

or today you can ask Jesus to bear your sin so that you can know the joy and the freedom of salvation and the promise of a place in heaven.

And that's the promise that's given to God's people. Freedom from sin. a place in heaven. Eternal, irreversible salvation.

And Peter finishes this section by saying, will you not live lives in light of that? Christians, will you not live good, righteous lives out of love and thankfulness for Jesus?

[75 : 30] he himself, verse 24, bore our sins in his body on the tree so that, so that we might die to sin 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.

How do you and I know, I'm finishing now, how do you and I know that we are God's people? Some of us wrestle with assurance.

How do we know that we are God's people? Well, we know because day by day and hour by hour we are dying to sin.

we're not playing with it, but we're dying to it. We're not free from it, but we're struggling against it.

[76 : 43] we're living for righteousness. We're pursuing holiness. We know that we are the Lord's people because day by day we are not running from him, closing our Bibles, failing to pray, avoiding church, but we're returning to him and we're remaining in him.

That's the evidence of a healed heart. And these are the lives that God's people are called to live.

So may God enable us to live these lives for his glory. We'll sing to conclude in response, prayerful response to this passage.

Mission praise 1209. My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my pain, who plumbed the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again, who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with his light and wrote his law of righteousness with power upon my heart.

Let's stand to sing to God's praise. My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who bore my pain, who found the depths of my disgrace and gave me life again, who crushed my curse of sinfulness and clothed me with his light and clothed his law of righteousness with power upon my heart.

[79 : 00] My heart is filled with land for nests to him who walks beside, who floods my weaknesses with strength and causes fears to find, whose every promise is enough for every step I take, sustaining me with arms of love, and crowning me with grace.

My heart is filled with thankfulness to him who reigns above, whose wisdom is my perfect peace, whose every thought is love.

For every day I have honoured this given by the King, so I will give my life, my all, to love and follow him.

And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of God, the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.