

Round Top Church Christian Fellowship

Sermon Series in 1 Peter

1 Peter 2:9-25

Challenging Witness

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(All Scripture is from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

Continuing in 1 Peter . . . **[TRANSITION BACK TO BELIEVERS]**

The goal of every sermon is to proclaim God and His sovereign desire for all people to be restored to a right relationship with Him. To accomplish His goal, the Lord sends out His called people to witness His grace, love, faith, forgiveness, and, in summation, His restoration to life as He had planned from the beginning. Therefore, we proclaim His revelations (unveilings) to us to our family, neighbor, coworker and the community-at-large. Our Lord God incarnated himself to set the captives free, so that the blind can see. The Lord did not come and create a whole new set of rules to bind us in guilt, fear, and bondage of the unknown. He came that we shall know (1 John 5:13).

Luke 4:17-18¹⁷ **And the book of the prophet Isaiah (61:6) was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden,**

We proclaim who God is and how He works through us (Believers) and the creation. We are called to be general and specific. But, above-all, our message is not ours; we are just the voice with the call of the Lord reaching out to all people. We are part of an eternal plan driven by the Lord's Holy Spirit that indwells the hearts of every Believer. At times, we point out the stumbling blocks that are preventing God's people from coming together under His name. Paul was challenged by this.

1 Corinthians 1:11-13

¹ For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you.

¹² Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

¹³ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

So, at times, we preach sermons (as we have the last few weeks) pointing out that there are those who teach a different message. They teach what Paul warned against. Has Christ been divided? Have you identified another who has been crucified for you, or have you been baptized in the name of another for other reasons? There should be no 'stopping-off' points on our journey to the Lord. He has created a direct path that no man can legitimately pave. Our mission the last few weeks has been to make aware that many are caught up in a historical deception. The goal is to remove guilt, fear and division. The purity of the Cross accomplishes this without the need of man's efforts. The Cross is payment for the Gospel so you would not have to add one work of your own. The Cross plus nothing. It is finished (John 19:30).

The writer of the Bible book from which we are preaching (1 Peter) is Peter. For the record, and recapping who Peter is and who Peter believed himself to be, we note the following:

Peter received the Gospel commission just like all Believers.
Matthew 16, John 20, Matthew 28

The Keys to Heaven have been given to all Believers, because we are the priesthood. The Keys to Heaven are grace, love, and faith, which open the door to God's forgiveness allowing us to enter His Heaven. (See last two sermons.)

Peter had every opportunity, and God had supreme authority, to clarify who was the cornerstone, the foundational stone, the "rock" that the Isaiah prophecy proclaimed and repeated by Peter himself in the books we call 1st and 2nd Peter. However, God as the author, and Peter used as God's hand, identified Jesus Christ as the cornerstone on which the church is built and the One Isaiah prophesied (1 Peter 2:4 – 8). In addition, at Peter's arrest in Acts 4, he proclaims the truth about Jesus Christ. ¹¹ "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, *but which became the very corner stone.* ¹² "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

Now moving to 1 Peter 2:9 -

⁹ But you are a **chosen race**,
a **royal priesthood**,
a **holy nation**,
a **people for God's own possession**,
that **you** may **proclaim** the excellencies of Him
who has **called** you out of darkness
into His **marvelous** light;

(Verse 9 -10) We should think and present ourselves as a priesthood of Believers. Peter is exalting his audience. In the first part of this letter, Peter has corrective instruction. Now Peter turns to building up the saints. (Key words that Peter uses are in red above) In addition, Peter reminds them of the world from which they came, that being a world of darkness, and that they have been called out of that darkness into not just light but His marvelous light.

Peter exalts Believers to “proclaim” the excellencies of God. This is part of our witness on the Lord’s Day when we come together and at any other opportunity we get.

We can use many words to describe how God reached out to us. The three Keys of Heaven identified are grace, love, and faith from which mercy is extended. God’s mercy is always present in the creation, but only accessible to people of faith, the Believer. God’s mercy is tied to the forgiveness of sin which makes us acceptable to God. The world may understand mercy in terms of a judge letting someone off-the-hook with a light sentence. However, God’s mercy is directed at our eternal destination. What is a key that brought Believers out of the darkness to make them a people of God? Mercy, Peter proclaims!

¹⁰ for you once were not a people,

[Jews before Abram, Includes Gentiles]

but now you are the people of God;

you had not received mercy, [Under the Law]

but now you have received mercy. [Through The Cross – Gospel]

[Paul sums up the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15.]

Verse eleven starts a list Peter aims as foundational to the Believer’s lives and witness in the new land where they find themselves.

1. Abstain from lusts
2. Excellent behavior
3. Glorify God
4. Submit to human institution for they punish evil and praise right
5. Act as free men
6. Honor all men
7. Servants be submissive to your masters

In verses eleven through eighteen, it is evident that Peter identifies the recipients of his letter as **aliens and strangers**. It appears that Peter sees that they might be swept-off their feet and have their minds and emotions taken-over by the new local customs and life-style. This list compared to the list in verse one is different. This list is more of a warning and recommendation than a scolding for addressing on-going behavior.

The intent of this section of Scripture is that the Lord desires Believers to be good witnesses to the Gentiles. People are going to talk badly about Christians, because the fallen world is offended by the Gospel. The Lord simply does not want to give a case for legitimate criticism of Believers.

In addition, being newcomers, Peter does not want them to be viewed as outspoken trouble-makers. We have experienced the new person who shows up from a foreign land and immediately begins to complain. This does not come-off very well. In Peter's time, it could very likely get Believers in trouble, not only with the local customs, but also the legal authorities.

To some degree, it is ironic that Peter writes concerning this issue when he himself preached in the name of Jesus right after Pentecost in defiance of the authorities. The difference is that Peter was in his own land.

CHANGE OF MESSAGE

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to

(1) abstain from fleshly lusts,
which wage war against the soul.

[Story on Mission to Vegas show girls? Really?]

(2) ¹² **Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles,**
so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers,
they may on account of your good deeds,
as they observe *them*,

(3) glorify God in the day of visitation.

Is America's behavior viewed as excellent by Gentiles at home and abroad?

I see that people around the world view America as a decadent place. With American and Western world entertainment displayed through world-wide modern media outlets 24/7, there is no doubt that Satan is alive and well on planet earth. Many of us see America as a Christian nation founded upon the Judeo-Christian morals/values. Unfortunately, the political left, including the last occupant of the oval office, is on record saying that America is no longer a Christian nation. **This may be true for them, but it is not true for us.** This is not true just because a politician declared it so. This may be true of the entertainment-media-elite-Fascist, but it is not true for Believers of the Risen Lord. They desire to be a decadent nation. We do not. We desire America to be that "shining city on a hill" for the rest of the world to see as an example of the light of Christ in the world. We have reviewed previously the intent of men like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin who proposed the Great Seal to congress depicting a "*cloud by day and a fire by night*" to be over America. Just

as the Lord's presence was visible during the Exodus of His chosen people, the Lord shall be seen as visibly present over America. They saw America as the "shining city on a hill" for all the world to take note.

(4) ¹³ **Submit yourselves** for the Lord's sake to every **human institution**, whether to a king as the one in authority,

¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the **punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.**

¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Remember, the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 13:

Romans 13:1

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities.

For there is **no authority except from God**, and those which exist are established by God.

² Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

³ **For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.**

Do you want to have no fear of authority?

Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;

⁴ **for it is a minister of God to you for good.**

But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one **who practices evil.**

After reading Peter and Paul, we see that the temporal authorities are placed by God over us to serve for **good purposes**. Government is intended by God to punish evil doers and praise those who do right. When government stops doing good, as God defines good, then we, as a people, are not under a biblical obligation to go along with an ungodly government. Peter and John in Acts 4:

Acts 4:19-20 ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them, "**Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;** ²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."

Obviously, if you follow God and not man, you may end up in prison and/or persecuted. Following God does not remove persecution.

Therefore, we are free in the Lord. To be clearly understood, to be free in the Lord and act as free people may have its consequences. You are free in the Lord in the sense that your freedom can place you on a cross. You can be righteous and justified by God, but the world condemns you.

American freedoms are directly tied to the European Reformation that by extension, through people who lived their lives as free in the Lord, came to America. Many pilgrims who came to America found out that they still had only the freedoms allowed by local authorities. The list is numerous and too many to account for here, but to name one Englishman who came to America: Roger Williams -

Williams proclaimed that civil magistrates must not punish any sort of breach of the Ten Commandments (such as idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, false worship, and blasphemy). In addition, individuals should be free to follow their own convictions in religious matters. These three principles became central to

Williams' subsequent career: separatism, freedom of religion, and separation of state and church.

(5) ¹⁶ *Act as free men,*
and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil,
but *use it* as bondslaves of God.

The other side of persecution is the persecutor. If you ever find yourself in the position of authority over others, remember there is a balance in fair and just. "Brutality begins where resistance ends."

If we honor all men, then we will see them as creations of God. We will see them as being created in God's image to live life as He has intended. The problem we have witnessed in history is that many who have had authority over others did not honor them as created by God. Slavery all over the world is representation of this. Today, slavery as America experienced up to the Civil War period does not exist. Other forms of Slavery do exist. There is the government plantation created by the Welfare-State that has enslaved minority populations and anyone else who has become engulfed in its debilitating clutches. It is one thing to know you are a slave, but it is another to be the slave-frog in the soon-to-be boiling pot. These, at first, believed they were invited to get a cool swim on a hot day. Then, when the temperature rose, at the hand of their deceiving welfare-masters, they became like the cat on a hot tin roof willing to dance to whatever beat the government cooks dialed. So, they take the temperature down a few degrees, but keep you in the pan by providing basic sustenance such as government tenement housing and food-stamps and now cell phones. The welfare-masters add abortion on demand in the frying pan to facilitate to the strongest human drive, save food and water, sex. This encourages recreational relationship which have no interest in parenting. The end result is that the welfare-masters (Democratic Party) get a limited population that will vote for them to keep their government freebees going generation after generation. The dependent and controlled society. The

American generational welfare system does not honor men. Men become failures as fathers and go along with having their babies killed in the womb. The whole goal is to destroy men, so that they will not be fathers. The government welfare system destroys their hearts and souls. They can procreate, but procreation does not make men fathers. This portion of American society do not act as free men.

Those that do not honor men do not love them, and they do not fear or have reverence for God. In a perfect world, the king who does good is worthy of honor. But to the king or rulers who do bad as defined by God, these have earned the way of King Saul (1 Samuel 31:1-13).

(6) ¹⁷ Honor all men;
love the brotherhood,
fear God, honor the king.

(7) ¹⁸ Servants,
be submissive to your masters with all respect,
not only to those who are good and gentle,
but also to those who are unreasonable.

(Verse 18 - 21) Peter then relates the sufferings of Christ to ours. Peter makes it clear that Believers will undergo mistreatment and hardship. We are called to understand that we are to endure under oppression as Christ is our example. This does not mean that you should seek martyrdom or seek persecution so that you can be like Christ. If you witness Christ, at some point in your life, you will receive pushback from this fallen world.

This is a challenging passage of Scripture. We have the right to defend ourselves and seek fulfillment for our God-given rights and the rights the government affords us. The apostle Paul did this when he appealed his case to Caesar in Rome (**Acts 9:15; 22:25-30; 23:11; 25:9-12**). It is noted that God had a

mission for Paul to go to Rome and fulfill the Gospel commission by witnessing to the household of Caesar (**Philippians 4:22**).

From this example, we should stand for the Lord's commission in our life. We have been called to carry out the Lord's calling. Are there times when we should let a wrong committed against us go without a response? Yes! According to this teaching in 1 Peter, there are such times. Considering the situation-in-life that the Believers found themselves in Peter's day, it is a wise decision not to respond to oppression. Many were not Roman citizens as Paul was and they could not appeal to Caesar. At times, it is better not to respond for the good of the community in order that the bullying authority will not come down on the whole community. So, you take the abuse to protect others. Then there is the old childhood response "sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never harm me." There are many examples of not pursuing a response to a wrong. What if someone takes your Bible? The historical response is "I guess the person who took it needed it more than me." We have the example of civil rights leaders arrested for breaking race laws. America's best example in the twentieth century was the Reverend Martin Luther King. He carried out what he believed to be the right actions and went to jail. He accepted what was going to happen to him.

Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote '**Letter from Birmingham Jail**' after being arrested for peacefully demonstrating against segregation and racial terror in **Birmingham**, Alabama, 1963.

Due to the peaceful efforts of Mr. King, the ruling authorities finally changed the laws. The plan God has for all people to be free was realized. In this case, freedom from oppressive race laws was realized. This was not accomplished without wrongs being committed by an oppressive power. The lessor power took/absorbed the wrong (the persecution) for the whole world to see. Eventually, the lessor power prevailed. This is what happened to the movement called "The Way" (Acts 24:14, 22). Eventually, "The Way" (after about 300 years) was called upon by the Roman Emperor to save the empire. The

beginning of the transformation took place during the reign of Constantine in the 4th century (Edict of Milan 313 AD) right after some of the harshest persecutions under the Roman Emperor Diocletian (beginning in 303 AD).

Continuing in 1 Peter:

¹⁹ For this *finds* favor,
if for the sake of conscience toward God
a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

²⁰ For what credit is there if,
when you sin and are harshly treated,
you endure it with patience?

But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it*
you patiently endure it,
this *finds* favor with God.

²¹ For you have been called for this purpose,
since Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

²² who committed no sin,
nor was any deceit found in His mouth;

²³ and while being reviled,
He did not revile in return;
while suffering,
He uttered no threats,
but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross,
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness;
for by His wounds you were healed.

²⁵ For you were continually straying like sheep,
but now you have returned
to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Verse twenty-five proclaims a comforting truth. The Lord God Christ is the Shepherd who lays us down in green pastures and stands guard over our souls. He is the One who keeps us.

1 Thess. 5:23-24 ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself **sanctify** you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be **preserved complete**, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

AMEN.