1 Peter 2:11-25 Living good lives that point to God

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from
sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 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.

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority:
whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors,
who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend
those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should
silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. 16 Live as free people, but do
not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.
17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear
God, honour the emperor.

18 Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters,
not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who
are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain
of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. 20 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. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you,
leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

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. 24 '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.' 25 For 'you were like sheep going astray,' but now
you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Review

This is part two of our study; *Living good lives that point to God*.

On Sunday we saw:

- How people notice us. Trying to comprehend who we are and what motivates us.
- We thought about being committed to our calling, Knowing what God wants, and not giving up.
- And finally being compassionate, showing the love of Christ to the vulnerable.

Today we look into the detail Peter gives us.

Stand out

What is it that makes people stand out? In society, in the media among friends, what makes people stand out?

It's being different.

- It might be a funny haircut
- an unusual laugh
- an excentric dress sense

They come across as different, and different is noticed.

Our calling is to be different, and if we're different we stand. So what is it that makes us different?

Summary

There are three things Peter highlights in this passage:

- Integrity (v11)
- Submission (v13-18)
- Injustice (v19-23)

These are three items Peter sees as differentiating the Christian in society.

Farmer

At the beginning of the last century on the Great Plains of America, a farmer won a prestigious agricultural reward. They were country folk, never been anywhere. But the award presentation was in Chicago.

They were booked into a swanky hotel. They were overawed. The farmer and his daughter stood in the lobby watching people come and go. They'd never seen anything like it.

They watched an old lady press a button on the wall and two sliding doors opened. She got into what seemed a massive metal box, and the doors closed. Baffling.

A minute later the doors opened again. Out stepped a beautiful young woman. The farmer gasped and turned to his daughter. "Did you see that? What a transformation. Go and get your mother!"

Transformation

Peter is seeking transformed lives that are clearly visible to those around.

War (Integrity)

And so he starts with v11 *abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.*

This is about integrity. There's a war going on, a war being waged against your soul. It's serious. War is horrific. And this war is going on within you.

And the enemy? Sinful desires, the root of hypocrisy. Your head says love God, but your heart says rebel. Sinful desires stop you dead in your tracks. Integrity is undermined, your work and witness are undermined.

Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is the number one accusation the world hurls at the people of God is. We believe one thing - we do another. It's a fair charge.

Unless we live lives of integrity before God, the accusation is valid.

Caught

This more than being caught out. It's about what happens behind closed doors. The war against sinful desires as much in private as in public.

Forgiveness

No one is perfect. So before God we need to evaluate honestly our desires our words our actions. The Psalmist says: *Seach me O God and see if there be any wicked way in me*.

Standing before the searchlight of the Holy Spirit - confess where we are wrong, repent turn and receive forgiveness.

God calls us to live out what we profess. That is integrity.

Turned

Transformed lives look different. Ephesians 4 talks about *putting off the old man and putting on the new man*. It's transformation. And if we are transformed our integrity will be noticed.

Examples (Submission)

Next Peter gives examples of what this transformed life looks like. He starts with submission.

v13 *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, [14] or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. [15] For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people*.

Nero

Take that in. *Submit yourselves to the Emperor*. Who was the emperor? Nero. Nero - head of the world's greatest empire. Nero - the man hell bent on destroying the fledgling church.

Catacombs

I've been to the catacombs in Rome when the Christians fled for their lives. Claustrophobic horrendous places. Walls lined with hundreds of skulls of the martyred saints.

Yet Peter unequivocally says submit yourself to the emperor.

Jesus' example

Why? Because it's what Jesus did.

In front of the Emperor's representative, Pontius Pilate, Jesus submitted.

- he humbled himself to death
- he didn't declare his innocence
- he didn't claim his rights
- he wasn't indignant at injustice

Jesus submitted himself to God's will, and in so doing submitted to the authority of the Emperor.

Isaiah says: *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth*.

It is Christlike to submit to authority.

Criticism

What's the application for us? We don't have leaders like Nero. Even so yet we easily fall into the trap of criticising them. I'm as guilty as anyone.

We live a polarised, vocal and angry society. Do we join in criticising our leaders? Or do we submit to those in authority because it's God's will. We shouldn't bad mouth, we should respect and pray for them too.

Summary

So we're called to live lives of integrity, and be submissive. Yet, Peter says, we must live as those who are free.

Freedom

v16 *Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves*.

- we are a free people
- freed from sin
- freed from selfish desires
- free from Satan's power
- free from the condemnation of the law

Yet with freedom comes responsibility.

- we are not to misuse our freedom
- we are under submission to God himself
- we are his servants

And so we submit to others, not because we are their servants, but because we are God's servants. Not out of compulsion but out of obedience and love for God.

Work

Peter now turns to addressing those in work, whether slaves or employed. Submit to those you work for.

It doesn't depend on whether they are good or bad. The principle is - honour God by our submission.

v18 *Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. [19] For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. [20] 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. [21] To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps*.

Injustice (Injustice)

This is incredibly important:

- how do we respond to injustice?
- how do we respond when treated unfairly?

This is unjust suffering.

World view

The world view would be to fight. Sue, complain, get redress.

Peel B&B

Back in the old days Belinda & I went on a touring holiday of the Outer Hebrides. It was before the internet and Airbnb. The only way to book a Bed & Breakfast was from the AA directory.

It worked well, except when, on our return, we rang a B&B in Peel in the Scottish Borders, and got number unobtainable. We rang directory inquiries, and found that the AA had printed the wrong phone number in their directory.

When we arrived the proprietors welcomed us like long lost family. We were the only guest they'd had all summer.

The directory misprint had meant no bookings. I was indignant for them. I wanted redress for their business which had been ruined.

I have to say they were remarkably calm.

Injustice makes you rage inside.

Peter says:

- bear it
- don't fight it
- don't assert your rights

This is counter intuitive. When we suffer injustice we want to shout it from the roof tops, but this is not Christ's way.

Endure

We are to endure it quietly and patiently, just as Jesus did:

- falsely accused
- unjustly beaten
- wrongly sentenced to death

Yet he said not a word, he entrusted himself to God.

v23 *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.*

Again – Jesus' example

Do you see again the example Jesus is giving us?

He wasn't passive when he turned over the money changers tables in the temple. He wouldn't let God be dishonoured.

But he wouldn't defend himself, rather trusting himself to God.

Peter's readers were going to suffer unjust persecution. How were they to react? Do what Jesus did – is Peter's answer.

Stand out

Lives like this stand out. No one in this world naturally acts like this. When we do we will be noticed.

Summary

So we have seen that:

- integrity ensures victory over sinful desires
- submission to authority is God's way
- and bearing injustice is following Christ's example

All of these go against our natural instincts. But they all reflect the example of Jesus.

He calls us to live the Jesus life, and in so doing we will *12 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.*

Calling

Here is the heart of our calling – living distinctive lives that point to God.