

**Autumn Ridge Church Women's Bible Study**  
**Honoring God When You Are Wronged**  
**1 Peter 2:1-25 ~ November 7, 2017**  
**Jann Wright**



Good Morning/Evening and Welcome to Women's Bible Study! We are studying together the book of 1 Peter under our theme of "#When Life Stinks". Our topic for today/tonight is Honoring God When You are Wronged. Last week Juli introduced the book and set the foundation for our study.

In our study of Chapter 2 we will discover multiple layers of meaning in the descriptors used by Peter. He often addresses a current situation in the first century, provides an applicable example from their history, and demonstrates the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. We will study the chapter through the lens of three questions: Who are you? Where are you from? Why are you here?

Three Questions  
Who Are You?

Newborn Baby

Let's begin with the first question: Who are you? Peter begins with two metaphors. The first is a newborn baby. As Christians we are to crave pure spiritual milk. These are the very essentials of the faith described in God's Word, the Bible. That is how we grow in our faith, and are sustained in our journey.

Living Stones

Next, the believers are described as living stones that are being carefully constructed into a spiritual house that spans generations, centuries, and geographic regions. Of course, the ultimate example of a living stone is Jesus, who is the cornerstone of this spiritual house. "The Cornerstone was most often the large stone placed in the foundation at the principal corner of a building but occasionally it was the top or final stone of a building".<sup>1</sup>

*7Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,"<sup>8</sup> and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."*

Chosen People

So in answer to the question, who are you? We are to crave spiritual nourishment as newborn infants and we are living stones that are being fashioned into a great spiritual building. We are also chosen people.

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<sup>1</sup> Achtemeier, Paul J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. *Harper's Bible dictionary* 1985 : n. pag. Print.

### Royal Priesthood

We are a royal priesthood. These ideas of royalty and a priesthood would have been staggering to those First Century Christians. Living in a democracy we don't often think too deeply about the monarchies of the world. But consider the fact that you can't just decide you want to be royalty. You have to be born into it. A few perhaps can marry into royalty, but even then you do not have the same rights, privileges, or even titles as the royal family. To be a royal on par with the ancient Kings, like David and Solomon was an astonishing thought.

In the same way, you could not apply for the job of priest, you had to be part of the priestly line, a descendant of Aaron, or the tribe of Levi. You had a special role and responsibility to mediate between God and his people.

To confer on a person whose social and perhaps economic status had been harmed as a result of their faith, the status and privileges of royalty and the priesthood was amazing. Incredibly, we as Christians share that status as well.

### Where are you from?

The next question, "Where are you from?" addresses questions of heritage and nationality. Verse 9 continues, *you are a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

### A Holy Nation

Israel was chosen by God to be a holy nation. God called Abraham in Genesis 12 and told him he would make him into a great nation, and he did through his descendants, the Israelites. They were eventually given a land of their own and enjoyed prosperous reigns under King David and King Solomon. They were God's special people entrusted to bear witness to him among the nations.

Israel disobeyed God and suffered the consequences of that disobedience, yet they are still God's chosen people. In the first century and now, it is the Church worldwide that is fulfilling this role as God's witness on earth.

### God's Special Possession

We are God's special possession. We have incredible value and worth to him. And just so we don't become too proud of who we are, we should remember that it was not always this way. The wording here is from Hosea and describes the situation with Israel, the First Century Christians and even us. Once we were not a people, because we had rejected God and were enslaved to sin. Once we had not received mercy, but now we have.

### Foreigners

However, all is not rosy with our situation, nor was it with those Early Christians. We are foreigners. I have been to a few foreign countries, not nearly as many as my husband, and not nearly as remote ones as Juli.

I really don't like visiting foreign countries. I consider them an adventure, an educational experience, but never a vacation. It is work being there. I don't understand the

language, even sometimes in England. I don't understand the money. Everything is different. While visiting this lovely tea shop, and after having cake with my children, this is what I found when looking for the bathroom— outside. In case you don't know, WC stands for water closet.

Trying to order food is an adventure. I am never totally sure what I am getting. Purchasing things in a store is a challenge. When I helped Ashley set up her room at University, we had to show identification just to buy a very small paring knife.

Customs drives me crazy because I am always afraid of breaking a rule. When I flew home by myself one time from England, I carefully proceeded through customs and confessed (just in case) to the agent at the last stop before the exit that I did have tea and biscuits (the English word for cookies) with me. He laughed, amused at my unreasonable fear and said, Mrs. Wright, unless you have raw meat, you are fine, Welcome Home!

While I enjoy seeing my daughter and experiencing some of the culture, I still feel a bit uneasy. It is just not home. We are foreigners here. We are from the kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of this world.

### Exiles

Finally, they were exiles. They were dispersed throughout the empire having to flee from persecution. Being exiles wasn't new in Israel's history they had experienced it before.

### Application

Well, half way into the lecture you are probably thinking, this is a nice historical review of Israelite history, and First Century Christianity, but what does this have to do with modern day life and our topic, #When Life Stinks?

Actually it has everything to do with the topic because if we don't understand who we are in Christ and the nature of our citizenship, it is going to be difficult to survive in the culture. I have leaned heavily on two commentaries for the application portion of the lecture: The NIV Application Commentary<sup>2</sup> and The Baker Exegetical Commentary.<sup>3</sup> The lecture notes are footnoted for your reference. Let's look at a few aspects of the culture in which first century Christians lived.

### Polytheistic

The culture of the first century was polytheistic. There were many gods. There were Roman gods, there were Greek gods. So the fact that Christians worshipped another God wasn't a big problem. The problem was they insisted that the Christian God was the one and only true God.<sup>4</sup>

This sounds like a familiar problem. In our culture people are accepting of spirituality and of the worship of many gods. It is when we proclaim, the words of Jesus from John 14:6,

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<sup>2</sup> McKnight, Scot. The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Jobes, Karen H. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Peter. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. Print.

<sup>4</sup>Jobes, page 162.

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." that there are issues.

### Not Fitting into the Culture

Christians didn't always fit into the culture. Commentator Jobes noted that Christians were described in the first century as repudiating pleasures such as the theater, the races, the gladiator combats, breaking home and family ties, ruining businesses, abandoning pagan religion rituals, and avoiding civic duties"<sup>5</sup>

At times they were considered bad citizens. They did not worship the emperor. Their religious views were seen as having a negative impact on the well-being of the Empire. It was believed that their singular worship of the Christian God could easily offend the other gods who would wreak havoc on the country's weather, crops, seas, etc. causing serious economic consequences.

### Persecution

There was a time when Christians had little to fear from the Roman Government. In Acts we find that the Roman magistrates and soldiers saved Paul from the Jews and others. In the early days Romans could not differentiate between Jews and Christians. As long as they didn't cause disruption in the Empire, they considered it a religious squabble. However, the political climate was shifting. Christians were about to face the fury of an angry emperor.

### Why are we here? How should we then live?

The final question is then "Why are we here?" and actually that is answered in Verse 9, that we may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light . The deeper question is one famously asked by Dr. Francis Schaeffer in his book, How should we then live? How are we supposed to live in a culture that is not friendly to the things of God?

### Lay Aside

Chapter 2 begins with a list of attitudes and behaviors that we are to set aside, like stripping off dirty clothes. In a society where the Christians had dispersed throughout the empire to escape persecution and at worst were treated as treasonous and at best regarded as bad citizens, they were to set aside malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. That is quite a list.

In 2007, the Barna Group conducted a research study in which they asked non-Christians why they rejected Christianity. Among the top three reasons was hypocrisy, with 85 percent of the respondents identifying this as an issue. As representatives of Christ in the world, we need to be keenly aware that the world is watching our behavior and evaluating Christianity as a result.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jobes, page 159.

<sup>6</sup> Clark, Mark. The Problem of God: Answering a Skeptic's Challenges to Christianity. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. Print. p. 181.

### To Do List

In the middle of chapter two we encounter a list of things we are to do. We are to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. These presumably are sexual sins. Christians seem to attract a lot of attention when they choose to abstain from sex before marriage, to be faithful to their marriage partners, and to turn away from things like pornography.

### Conduct ourselves honorably

We are to conduct ourselves honorably. Unfortunately at times Christian behavior is so similar to the culture that we aren't very distinctive. The Barna Group looked at the differences in various behaviors between Christians and non-Christians. They examined involvement in gambling, visiting pornographic websites, taking something that didn't belong to them, saying mean things behind someone's back, consulting a medium or a psychic, having a physical fight or abusing someone, using illegal or nonprescription drugs, saying something to someone that's not true, getting back at someone for something they did, and consuming enough alcohol to be considered legally drunk.<sup>7</sup>

There was no statistical difference between Christians and non-Christians on these ten measures. In fact, the only area that was less common for Christians than non-Christians was recycling. We recycle less than non-Christians.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps one explanation for this embarrassing set of facts is that "Christian" is more a cultural title than a descriptor of one's beliefs. Clearly spending time understanding who we are in Christ is vital.

### Display Observable Good Deeds

We are to display observable good deeds. Verse 12 says, *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.*

### Daniel

A great example of this is the prophet Daniel, who was taken as a young teen captive to Babylon. Daniel 6, beginning in verse 3:

*<sup>3</sup>Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. <sup>4</sup>At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. <sup>5</sup>Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."*

### Submit to Human Authority

We now move from general guidelines to specifics. The first is that we are to submit to authority, specifically government authority.

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<sup>7</sup> Clark, page 185.

<sup>8</sup> Clare, page 185.

*<sup>13</sup>Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup>or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.*

### First Century Observations?

So let's begin by making some observations about the changing political climate in the first century. On July 19 A.D. 64 things changed drastically. This was when the Great Roman Fire broke out. Rome had narrow streets and high wooden structures which enabled the fire to spread quickly. It burned for days, was brought under control, but then broke out again with a renewed power.

Roman citizens blamed Emperor Nero who had a passion for building. They believed that he wanted to destroy Rome so that he could be the one to rebuild it. Ancient landmarks were destroyed, including the Shrines to the Gods, like the Temple of Luna and the Temple of Jupiter.

Someone had to be held responsible and Nero turned his intense fury toward the Christians. Nero did horrific things to Christians. "He rolled them in pitch, set light to them, and used them as living torches to light his gardens. He sewed them up in the skins of wild animals and set his hunting dogs upon them, to tear them limb from limb"<sup>10</sup> while alive.

Commentator William Barclay explains, "First Peter was written to meet no theological heresy; it was written to strengthen men and women in jeopardy of their lives."<sup>11</sup> While we are not facing that type of persecution in this country. Many in the world do face horrific torture because they are Christians. It is a great caution to realize that for a while things existed peaceable in Rome and then there was a spark literally in which the culture shifted and Christians were in danger.

In the context of all of that, Peter says, *<sup>16</sup>Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. <sup>17</sup>Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.* While the intense persecution may have broken out after the letter was written, the words written were inspired by God and have application even in those dark times. So let's consider some principles that we can apply to our historical context.

### Principles to Apply to our Historical Context

#### 1. Show proper respect

Politics is a topic that most of us try to avoid at church because it can be very divisive. It is not a pleasant slot when you teach WBS the Wednesday after a Presidential Election because at least half of the audience is very unhappy. When the Democrats hold the White House and or Congress the Republicans are upset and when the Republicans hold

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<sup>9</sup> Barclay, William. The Daily Study Bible Series: the Letters of James and Peter. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976. Print. p. 146-150.

<sup>10</sup> Barclay, page 149.

<sup>11</sup> Barclay, page 150.

the White House and or Congress the Democrats are upset. The Independents are frustrated much of the election cycle.

We have ventured far from showing proper respect. We have lost in our culture the ability to maintain a discourse of civility regarding politics even among Christians. We must recapture that. If we cannot show proper respect for fellow Christians who believe politically different than us, then how can we possibly show proper respect to government authority? We as Christians look very bad when we fail in this area and the cause of Christ does not look appealing to a watching world. If the Christians were expected to do this in the first century, I think we are without excuse.

## 2. Conduct Yourselves within the Law

We live in a democracy, and within that government structure we have a lot of freedom to address things we feel are wrong and need correction. However, we have to do that within the law. For example, with regard to abortion clinics, the law permits you to engage in peaceful protests as well as to provide alternatives for women with unwanted pregnancies. The law of the land and the law of God does not permit the bombing of clinics and the murder of health care providers.

When there is a conflict between the human authority and God's law we must choose God's law. An example of this would be when the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1 were told by the King of Egypt to kill the newborn boys, they did not carry out his orders.

## 3. Remember Jesus' example

Jesus knows what it is like to deal with authorities. Consider how he handled the issue of paying the temple tax in Matthew 17:

*<sup>25</sup> . . . When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?" <sup>26</sup>"From others," Peter answered. "Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him. <sup>27</sup>"But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."*

Consider his response to Pilate and to those who crucified him:

*<sup>21</sup>To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." <sup>23</sup>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. (1 Peter 2:21-22)*

## Slavery

*<sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. <sup>20</sup>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.*

If politics is a difficult topic to address in church, the topic of slavery and race is even more difficult. Let me say at the outset, I am woefully unqualified to teach a historical, political, and contemporary analysis of slavery and race relations, especially in five minutes. I am sure there are whole seminary classes taught on this topic.

Perhaps it would be helpful to define some words. The word used for slave here is *oiketai* which is the term frequently used for "household servant".<sup>12</sup> The word for submit meant "to order oneself under or according to a given relationship".<sup>13</sup> It does not mean total obedience.

Let's begin by making some observations about the first century world in this area.<sup>14</sup> Slavery was a diverse institution in the ancient world, it varied from culture to culture. The Roman and Greek cultures were heavily dependent economically on their work. Estimates are that one-third of the population in urban areas was composed of slaves.

In Roman Culture slavery was not usually a permanent condition. Rather it was a temporary condition that was on a path to freedom. Many ancients volunteered to be servants of a Roman citizen so that once they received their freedom (either because of good behavior or adequate savings) they could become full Roman Citizens. They served in many different roles in the empire, from manual labor servants to even doctors, teachers, writers, accountants, bailiffs, secretaries, and sea captains.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 tells slaves if they can gain their freedom, do so. <sup>21</sup>*Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.* <sup>22</sup>*For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave.* <sup>23</sup>*You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings.*

The American institution of slavery was very different from the context of this passage in 1 Peter. There was no racial component to slavery in the Roman culture. Often it was more of an employer and employee relationship.

Let's consider the example of Joseph as recorded in Genesis 39. Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers. He was taken to Egypt, and one of Pharaoh's officials, Potiphar bought him from the Ishmaelites.

<sup>2</sup>*The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.* <sup>3</sup>*When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did,* <sup>4</sup>*Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.*

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<sup>12</sup>McKnight, page 164

<sup>13</sup>McKnight, page 143.

<sup>14</sup>McKnight, page 164-166.

But then Joseph faced another difficulty, a direct temptation to break God's law by accepting the sexual advances of his master's wife. This was the line for Joseph, he said, "No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9) The master's wife invents a story and Joseph ends up in prison.

### Principles We Can Apply to Our Historical Context.

#### 1. The Workplace

The closest modern day application would be our workplaces and places in which others are in authority over us. This passages encourages us to persevere even in difficult situations where those in authority are neither kind nor perhaps even competent.

#### 2. Do Not Compromise Biblical Principles.

If you are in a work situation that requires or suggests that you compromise biblical principles, stand firm and do not compromise. Leave if you must. I am amazed that Joseph had the fortitude to stand firm in doing what was right, but he went from being a slave to a prisoner. His situation got worse before it got better, but he did rise to a position of prominence and great service to his family and nation.

If you are in a very difficult situation where Biblical Principles are at stake, leave if you can. I realize that is easier said than done especially if you are in situations of abuse. Please find someone that you can confide in, one of the teachers or a pastor, and get help. It seems to me in many recent cases of rescue in the news, the rescue was enabled by an ordinary person simply paying attention when something did not seem right. We must be aware and ready to help others in difficult situations.

#### 3. Work for the Lord.

Regardless of our workplace whether in the corporate world, the educational system, retail, physical labor, in the home, or the many other places of work, we are to work as though we are working for the Lord. We may all be in situations where we are under the authority of another person and we wouldn't necessarily have chosen them for that role.

We honor God when we serve to his glory whether it be in our workplace, Bible Study Group, in our church, or in community committees. This is to be our attitude whether our bosses are kind or harsh, whether they are good or bad.

While that is hard, Jesus knows the difficulties involved. Philippians 3:5-8 says,

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

The major point of 1 Peter is that as Christians we are transformed by the life and death of Jesus and that transformation has implications for how we interact in the culture in which we live regardless of whether we live in the First Century or the Twenty-First Century.

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