

# CHAPTER 2

The general exhortation to holiness is continued, and enforced by several reasons taken from the foundation on which Christians are built, Jesus Christ, and from their spiritual blessings and privileges in him. The means of obtaining it, the word of God, is recommended, and all contrary qualities are condemned (v. 1-12). Particular directions are given how subjects ought to obey the magistrates, and servants their masters, patiently suffering in well doing, in imitation of Christ (v. 13 to the end).

## 1 PETER 2:1-3

### AGAINST MALICE AND HYPOCRISY

The holy apostle has been recommending mutual charity, and setting forth the excellences of the word of God, calling it an *incorruptible seed*, and saying that it *liveth and abideth for ever*. He pursues his discourse, and very properly comes in with this necessary advice, *Wherefore laying aside all malice*, etc. These are such sins as both destroy charity and hinder the efficacy of the word, and consequently they prevent our regeneration.

**I.** His advice is to lay aside or put off what is evil, as one would do an old rotten garment: “Cast it away with indignation, never put it on more.”

**1.** The sins to be put off, or thrown aside, are,

**(1.)** *Malice*, which may be taken more generally for all sorts of wickedness, as ~~302~~James 1:21; ~~418~~1 Corinthians 5:8. But, in a more confined sense, malice is anger resting in the bosom of fools, settled overgrown anger, retained till it inflames a man to design mischief, to do mischief, or delight in any mischief that befalls another.

**(2.)** *Guile*, or deceit in words. So it comprehends flattery, falsehood, and delusion, which is a crafty imposing upon another's ignorance or weakness, to his damage.

(3.) *Hypocrisies*. The word being plural comprehends all sorts of hypocrisies. In matters of religion hypocrisy is counterfeit piety. In civil conversation hypocrisy is counterfeit friendship, which is much practised by those who give high compliments, which they do not believe, make promises which they never intend to perform, or pretend friendship when mischief lies in their hearts.

(4.) *All envies*; every thing that may be called *envy*, which is a grieving at the good and welfare of another, at their abilities, prosperity, fame, or successful labours.

(5.) *Evil speaking*, which is detraction, speaking against another, or defaming him; it is rendered *backbiting*, <sup><472></sup>2 Corinthians 12:20; <sup><473></sup>Romans 1:30.

2. Hence learn,

(1.) The best Christians have need to be cautioned and warned against the worst sins, such as malice, hypocrisy, envy. They are but sanctified in part, and are still liable to temptations.

(2.) Our best services towards God will neither please him nor profit us if we be not conscientious in our duties to men. The sins here mentioned are offences against the second table. These must be laid aside, or else we cannot receive the word of God as we ought to do.

(3.) Whereas it is said *all malice, all guile*, learn, That one sin, not laid aside, will hinder our spiritual profit and everlasting welfare.

(4.) Malice, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, and evil-speaking, generally go together. Evil-speaking is a sign that malice and guile lie in the heart; and all of them combine to hinder our profiting by the word of God.

II. The apostle, like a wise physician, having prescribed the purging out of vicious humours, goes on to direct to wholesome and regular food, that they may grow thereby. The duty exhorted to is a strong and constant desire for the *word of God*, which word is here called *reasonable milk*, only, this phrase not being proper English, our translators rendered it *the milk of the word*, by which we are to understand food proper for the soul, or a reasonable creature, whereby the mind, not the body, is nourished and strengthened. This milk of the word must be *sincere*, not adulterated by the mixtures of men, who often corrupt the word of God, <sup><477></sup>2 Corinthians

2:17. The manner in which they are to desire this sincere milk of the word is stated thus: *As new-born babes*. He puts them in mind of their regeneration. A new life requires suitable food. They, being newly born, must desire the milk of the word. Infants desire common milk, and their desires towards it are fervent and frequent, arising from an impatient sense of hunger, and accompanied with the best endeavours of which the infant is capable. Such must Christians' desires be for the word of God: and that for this end, that they may grow thereby, that we may improve in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, <sup>GRS</sup>2 Peter 3:18. Learn,

**1.** Strong desires and affections to the word of God are a sure evidence of a person's being born again. If they be such desires as the babe has for the milk, they prove that the person is new-born. They are the lowest evidence, but yet they are certain.

**2.** Growth and improvement in wisdom and grace are the design and desire of every Christian; all spiritual means are for edification and improvement. The word of God, rightly used, does not leave a man as it finds him, but improves and makes him better.

**III.** He adds an argument from their own experience: *If so be, or since that, or forasmuch as, you have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, v. 3. The apostle does not express a doubt, but affirms that these good Christians had tasted the goodness of God, and hence argues with them. "You ought to lay aside these vile sins (v. 1); you ought to desire the word of God; you ought to grow thereby, since you cannot deny but that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The next verse assures us that the Lord here spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence learn,

**1.** Our Lord Jesus Christ is very gracious to his people. He is in himself infinitely good; he is very kind, free, and merciful to miserable sinners; he is pitiful and good to the undeserving; he has in him a fulness of grace.

**2.** The graciousness of our Redeemer is best discovered by an experimental taste of it. There must be an immediate application of the object to the organ of taste; we cannot taste at a distance, as we may see, and hear, and smell. To taste the graciousness of Christ experimentally supposes our being united to him by faith, and then we may taste his goodness in all his providences, in all our spiritual concerns, in all our fears and temptations, in his word and worship every day.

3. The best of God's servants have in this life but a taste of the grace of Christ. A taste is but a little; it is not a draught, nor does it satisfy. It is so with the consolations of God in this life.

4. The word of God is the great instrument whereby he discovers and communicates his grace to men. Those who feed upon the sincere milk of the word taste and experience most of his grace. In our converses with his word we should endeavour always to understand and experience more and more of his grace.

## 1 PETER 2:4-12

### THE LIVING STONE

I. The apostle here gives us a description of Jesus Christ as a living stone; and though to a capricious wit, or an infidel, this description may seem rough and harsh, yet to the Jews, who placed much of their religion in their magnificent temple, and who understood the prophetic style, which calls the Messiah *a stone* (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16), it would appear very elegant and proper.

1. In this metaphorical description of Jesus Christ, he is called a stone, to denote his invincible strength and everlasting duration, and to teach his servants that he is their protection and security, the foundation on which they are built, and a rock of offence to all their enemies. He is the living stone, having eternal life in himself, and being the prince of life to all his people. The reputation and respect he has with God and man are very different. He is disallowed of men, reprobated or rejected by his own countrymen the Jews, and by the generality of mankind; but chosen of God, separated and fore-ordained to be the foundation of the church (as 1 Peter 1:20), and precious, a most honourable, choice, worthy person in himself, in the esteem of God, and in the judgment of all who believe on him. To this person so described we are obliged to come: *To whom coming*, not by a local motion, for that is impossible since his exaltation, but by faith, whereby we are united to him at first, and draw nigh to him afterwards. Learn,

(1.) Jesus Christ is the very foundation-stone of all our hopes and happiness. He communicates the true knowledge of God (Matthew

11:27); by him we have access to the Father (<sup>346</sup>John 14:6), and through him are made partakers of all spiritual blessings, <sup>403</sup>Ephesians 1:3.

(2.) Men in general disallow and reject Jesus Christ; they slight him, dislike him, oppose and refuse him, as scripture and experience declare, <sup>258</sup>Isaiah 53:3.

(3.) However Christ may be disallowed by an ungrateful world, yet he is chosen of God, and precious in his account. He is chosen and fixed upon to be the Lord of the universe, the head of the church, the Saviour of his people, and the Judge of the world. He is precious in the excellency of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the gloriousness of his services.

(4.) Those who expect mercy from this gracious Redeemer must come to him, which is our act, though done by God's grace — an act of the soul, not of the body — a real endeavour, not a fruitless wish.

2. Having described Christ as the foundation, the apostle goes on to speak of the superstructure, the materials built upon him: *You also, as living stones, are built up*, v. 6. The apostle is recommending the Christian church and constitution to these dispersed Jews. It was natural for them to object that the Christian church had no such glorious temple, nor such a numerous priesthood; but its dispensation was mean, the services and sacrifices of it having nothing of the pomp and grandeur which the Jewish dispensation had. To this the apostle answers that the Christian church is a much nobler fabric than the Jewish temple; it is a living temple, consisting not of dead materials, but of living parts. Christ, the foundation, is a living stone. Christians are lively stones, and these make a spiritual house, and they are a holy priesthood; and, though they have no bloody sacrifices of beasts to offer, yet they have much better and more acceptable, and they have an altar too on which to present their offerings; for they offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Learn,

(1.) All sincere Christians have in them a principle of spiritual life communicated to them from Christ their head: therefore, as he is called a living stone, so they are called lively, or living stones; not dead in trespasses and sins, but alive to God by regeneration and the working of the divine Spirit.

(2.) The church of God is a spiritual house. The foundation is Christ, <sup>402</sup>Ephesians 2:22. It is a house for its strength, beauty, variety of parts,

and usefulness of the whole. It is spiritual foundation, Christ Jesus, — in the materials of it, spiritual persons, — in its furniture, the graces of the Spirit, — in its connection, being held together by the Spirit of God and by one common faith, — and in its use, which is spiritual work, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. This house is daily built up, every part of it improving, and the whole supplied in every age by the addition of new particular members.

(3.) All good Christians are a holy priesthood. The apostle speaks here of the generality of Christians, and tells them they are a holy priesthood; they are all select persons, sacred to God, serviceable to others, well endowed with heavenly gifts and graces, and well employed.

(4.) This holy priesthood must and will offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. The spiritual sacrifices which Christians are to offer are their bodies, souls, affections, prayers, praises, alms, and other duties.

(5.) The most spiritual sacrifices of the best men are not acceptable to God, but through Jesus Christ; he is the only great high priest, through whom we and our services can be accepted; therefore bring all your oblations to him, and by him present them to God.

**II.** He confirms what he had asserted of Christ being a *living stone*, etc., from <sup>2386</sup>Isaiah 28:16. Observe the manner of the apostle's quoting scripture, not by book, chapter, and verse; for these distinctions were not then made, so no more was said than a reference to Moses, David, or the prophets, except once a particular psalm was named, <sup>4433</sup>Acts 13:33. In their quotations they kept rather to the sense than the words of scripture, as appears from what is recited from the prophet in this place. He does not quote the scripture, neither the Hebrew nor Septuagint, word for word, yet makes a just and true quotation. The true sense of scripture may be justly and fully expressed in other than in scripture-words. *It is contained.* The verb is active, but our translators render it passively, to avoid the difficulty of finding a nominative case for it, which had puzzled so many interpreters before them. The matter of the quotation is this, *Behold, I lay in Zion.* Learn,

**1.** In the weighty matters of religion we must depend entirely upon scripture-proof; Christ and his apostles appealed to Moses, David, and the ancient prophets. The word of God is the only rule God hath given us. It is a perfect and sufficient rule.

**2.** The accounts that God hath given us in scripture concerning his Son Jesus Christ are what require our strictest attention. *Behold, I lay*, etc. John calls for the like attention, ~~and~~ John 1:29. These demands of attention to Christ show us the excellency of the matter, the importance of it, and our stupidity and dulness.

**3.** The constituting of Christ Jesus head of the church is an eminent work of God: *I lay in Zion*. The setting up of the pope for the head of the church is a human contrivance and an arrogant presumption; Christ only is the foundation and head of the church of God.

**4.** Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone that God hath laid in his spiritual building. The corner-stone stays inseparably with the building, supports it, unites it, and adorns it. So does Christ by his holy church, his spiritual house.

**5.** Jesus Christ is the corner-stone for the support and salvation of none but such as are his sincere people: none but Zion, and such as are of Zion; not for Babylon, not for his enemies.

**6.** True faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to prevent a man's utter confusion. Three things put a man into great confusion, and faith prevents them all — disappointment, sin, and judgment. Faith has a remedy for each.

**III.** He deduces an important inference, v. 7. Jesus Christ is said to be the chief corner-stone. Hence the apostle infers with respect to good men, “To you therefore who believe he is precious, or he is an honour. Christ is the crown and honour of a Christian; you who believe will be so far from being ashamed of him that you will boast of him and glory in him for ever.” As to wicked men, the disobedient will go on to disallow and reject Jesus Christ; but God is resolved that he shall be, in despite of all opposition, the head of the corner. Learn,

**1.** Whatever is by just and necessary consequence deduced from scripture may be depended upon with as much certainty as if it were contained in express words of scripture. The apostle draws an inference from the prophet's testimony. The prophet did not expressly say so, but yet he said that from which the consequence was unavoidable. Our Saviour bids them search the scriptures, because they testified of him; and yet no place in those scriptures to which he there refers them said that Jesus of Nazareth

was the Messiah. Yet those scriptures do say that he who should be born of a virgin, before the sceptre departed from Judah, during the second temple, and after Daniel's seventy weeks, was the Messiah; but such was Jesus Christ: to collect this conclusion one must make use of reason, history, eye-sight, experience, and yet it is an infallible scripture-conclusion notwithstanding.

**2.** The business of a faithful minister is to apply general truths to the particular condition and state of his hearers. The apostle quotes a passage (v. 6) out of the prophet, and applies it severally to good and bad. This requires wisdom, courage, and fidelity; but it is very profitable to the hearers.

**3.** Jesus Christ is exceedingly precious to all the faithful. The majesty and grandeur of his person, the dignity of his office, his near relation, his wonderful works, his immense love — every thing engages the faithful to the highest esteem and respect for Jesus Christ.

**4.** Disobedient people have no true faith. By disobedient people understand those that are unpersuadable, incredulous, and impenitent. These may have some right notions, but no solid faith.

**5.** Those that ought to be builders of the church of Christ are often the worst enemies that Christ has in the world. In the Old Testament the false prophets did the most mischief; and in the New Testament the greatest opposition and cruelty that Christ met with were from the scribes, pharisees, chief priests, and those who pretended to build and take care of the church. Still the hierarchy of Rome is the worst enemy in the world to Jesus Christ and his interest.

**6.** God will carry on his own work, and support the interest of Jesus Christ in the world, notwithstanding the falseness of pretended friends and the opposition of his worst enemies.

**IV.** The apostle adds a further description, still preserving the metaphor of a stone, v. 8. The words are taken from ~~2013~~ Isaiah 8:13, 14, *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself — and he shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence*, whence it is plain that Jesus Christ is the Lord of hosts, and consequently the most high God. Observe,

**1.** The builders, the chief-priests, refused him, and the people followed their leaders; and so Christ became to them *a stone of stumbling, and a*



*rock of offence*, at which they stumbled and hurt themselves; and in return he fell upon them as a mighty stone or rock, and punished them with destruction. <sup>4124</sup>Matthew 12:44, *Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder.* Learn,

(1.) All those that are disobedient take offense at the word of God: *They stumble at the word, being disobedient.* They are offended with Christ himself, with his doctrine and the purity of his precepts; but the Jewish doctors more especially stumbled at the meanness of his appearance and the proposal of trusting only to him for their justification before God. They could not be brought to seek justification by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; *for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone,* <sup>4125</sup>Romans 9:32.

(2.) The same blessed Jesus who is the author of salvation to some is to others the occasion of their sin and destruction. *He is set for the rising and fall of many in Israel.* He is not the author of their sin, but only the occasion of it; their own disobedience makes them stumble at him and reject him, which he punishes, as a judge, with destruction. Those who reject him as a Saviour will split upon him as a Rock.

(3.) God himself hath appointed everlasting destruction to all those who *stumble at the word, being disobedient.* All those who go on resolutely in their infidelity and contempt of the gospel are appointed to eternal destruction; and God from eternity knows who they are.

(4.) To see the Jews generally rejecting Christ, and multitudes in all ages slighting him, ought not to discourage us in our love and duty to him; for this had been foretold by the prophets long ago, and is a confirmation of our faith both in the scriptures and in the Messiah.

2. Those who received him were highly privileged, v. 9. The Jews were exceedingly tender of their ancient privileges, of being the only people of God, taken into a special covenant with him, and separated from the rest of the world. “Now,” say they, “if we submit to the gospel-constitution, we shall lose all this, and stand upon the same level with the Gentiles.”

(1.) To this objection the apostle answers, that if they did not submit they were ruined (v. 7, 8), but that if they did submit they should lose no real advantage, but continue still what they desired to be, *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood*, etc. Learn,

[1.] All true Christians *are a chosen generation*; they all make one family, a sort and species of people distinct from the common world, of another spirit, principle, and practice, which they could never be if they were not chosen in Christ to be such, and sanctified by his Spirit.

[2.] All the true servants of Christ are a royal priesthood. They are royal in their relation to God and Christ, in their power with God, and over themselves and all their spiritual enemies; they are princely in the improvements and the excellency of their own spirits, and in their hopes and expectations; they are a royal priesthood, separated from sin and sinners, consecrated to God, and offering to God spiritual services and oblations, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[3.] All Christians, wheresoever they be, compose one holy nation. They are one nation, collected under one head, agreeing in the same manners and customs, and governed by the same laws; and they are a holy nation, because consecrated and devoted to God, renewed and sanctified by his Holy Spirit.

[4.] It is the honour of the servants of Christ that they are God's peculiar people. They are the people of his acquisition, choice, care, and delight. These four dignities of all genuine Christians are not natural to them; for their first state is a state of horrid darkness, but they are effectually called out of darkness into a state of marvellous light, joy, pleasure, and prosperity, with this intent and view, that they should show forth, by words and actions, the virtues and praises of him who hath called them.

(2.) To make this people content, and thankful for the great mercies and dignities brought unto them by the gospel, the apostle advises them to compare their former and their present state. Time was when they were not a people, nor had they obtained mercy, but they were solemnly disclaimed and divorced (<sup>2008</sup>Jeremiah 3:8; <sup>3006</sup>Hosea 1:6, 9); but now they are taken in again to be the people of God, and have obtained mercy. Learn,

[1.] The best people ought frequently to look back upon what they were in time past.

[2.] The people of God are the most valuable people in the world; all the rest are not a people, good for little.

[3.] To be brought into the number of the people of God is a very great mercy, and it may be obtained.

**V.** He warns them to beware of fleshly lusts, v. 11. Even the best of men, *the chosen generation, the people of God*, need an exhortation to abstain from the worst sins, which the apostle here proceeds most earnestly and affectionately to warn them against. Knowing the difficulty, and yet the importance of the duty, he uses his utmost interest in them: *Dearlly beloved, I beseech you*. The duty is to abstain from, and to suppress, the first inclination or rise of fleshly lusts. Many of them proceed from the corruption of nature, and in their exercise depend upon the body, gratifying some sensual appetite or inordinate inclination of the flesh. These Christians ought to avoid, considering,

1. The respect they have with God and good men: They are *dearly beloved*.
2. Their condition in the world: *They are strangers and pilgrims*, and should not impede their passage by giving into the wickedness and lusts of the country through which they pass.
3. The mischief and danger these sins do: “*They war against the soul*; and therefore your souls ought to war against them.” Learn,

(1.) The grand mischief that sin does to man is this, it *wars against the soul*; it destroys the moral liberty of the soul; it weakens and debilitates the soul by impairing its faculties; it robs the soul of its comfort and peace; it debases and destroys the dignity of the soul, hinders its present prosperity, and plunges it into everlasting misery.

(2.) Of all sorts of sin, none are more injurious to the soul than *fleshly lusts*. Carnal appetites, lewdness, and sensuality, are most odious to God, and destructive to man's soul. It is a sore judgment to be given up to them.

**VI.** He exhorts them further to adorn their profession by an honest conversation. Their conversation in every turn, every instance, and every action of their lives, ought to be honest; that is, good, lovely, decent, amiable, and without blame: and that because they lived among the Gentiles, people of another religion, and who were inveterate enemies to them, who did already slander them and constantly spoke evil of them *as of evil-doers*. “A clean, just, good conversation may not only stop their mouths, but may possibly be a means to bring them to glorify God, and turn to you, when they shall see you excel all others in good works. They now call you evil-doers; vindicate yourselves by good works, this is the

way to convince them. There is a day of visitation coming, wherein God may call them by his word and his grace to repentance; and then they will glorify God, and applaud you, for your excellent conversation, ~~106~~ Luke 1:68. When the gospel shall come among them, and take effect, a good conversation will encourage them in their conversion, but an evil one will obstruct it." Note,

1. A Christian profession should be attended with an honest conversation, ~~106~~ Philippians 4:8.
2. It is the common lot of the best Christians to be evil spoken of by wicked men.
3. Those that are under God's gracious visitation immediately change their opinion of good people, glorifying God and commending those whom before they railed at as evil-doers.

## ~~107~~ 1 PETER 2:13-25

### VARIOUS EXHORTATIONS

The general rule of a Christian conversation is this, it must be honest, which it cannot be if there be not a conscientious discharge of all relative duties. The apostle here particularly treats of these distinctly.

**I.** The case of subjects. Christians were not only reputed innovators in religion, but disturbers of the state; it was highly necessary, therefore, that the apostle should settle the rules and measures of obedience to the civil magistrate, which he does here, where,

1. The duty required is submission, which comprises loyalty and reverence to their persons, obedience to their just laws and commands, and subjection to legal penalties.
2. The persons or objects to whom this submission is due are described,  
**(1.)** More generally: *Every ordinance of man*. Magistracy is certainly of divine right; but the particular form of government, the power of the magistrate, and the persons who are to execute this power, are of human institution, and are governed by the laws and constitutions of each

particular country; and this is a general rule, binding in all nations, let the established form of be what it will.

(2.) Particularly: *To the king, as supreme*, first in dignity and most eminent in degree; the king is a legal person, not a tyrant: *or unto governors*, deputies, proconsuls, rulers of provinces, who *are sent by him*, that is, commissioned by him to govern.

3. The reasons to enforce this duty are,

(1.) *For the Lord's sake*, who had ordained magistracy for the good of mankind, who has required obedience and submission (Romans 13), and whose honour is concerned in the dutiful behavior of subjects to their sovereigns.

(2.) From the end and use of the magistrate's office, which are, to punish evil-doers, and to praise and encourage all those that do well. They were appointed for the good of societies; and, where this end is not pursued, the fault is snot not in their institution but their practice.

[1.] True religion is the best support of civil government; it requires submission for the Lord's sake, and for conscience' sake.

[2.] All the punishments, and all the magistrates in the world, cannot hinder but there will be evil-doers in it.

[3.] The best way the magistrate can take to discharge his own duty, and to amend the world, is to punish well and reward well.

(3.) Another reason why Christians should submit to the evil magistrate is because it *is the will of God*, and consequently their duty; and because it is the way to put to silence the malicious slanders of ignorant and foolish men, v. 15. Learn,

[1.] *The will of God is*, to a good man, the strongest reason for any duty.

[2.] Obedience to magistrates is a considerable branch of a Christian's duty: *So is the will of God*.

[3.] A Christian must endeavour, in all relations, to behave himself so as to put to silence the unreasonable reproaches of the most ignorant and foolish men.

[4.] Those who speak against religion and religious people are ignorant and foolish.

(4.) He reminds them of the spiritual nature of Christian liberty. The Jews, from <sup><875></sup>Deuteronomy 17:15, concluded that they were bound to obey no sovereign but one *taken from their own brethren*; and the converted Jews thought they were free from subjection by their relation to Christ. To prevent their mistakes, the apostle tells the Christians that they were free, but from what? Not from duty or obedience to God's law, which requires subjection to the civil magistrate. They were free spiritually from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the ceremonial law; but they must not make their Christian liberty a cloak or covering for any wickedness, or for the neglect of any duty towards God or towards their superiors, but must still remember they were *the servants of God*. Learn,

[1.] All the servants of Christ are free men (<sup><885></sup>John 8:36); they are *free* from Satans' dominion, the law's condemnation, the wrath of God, the uneasiness of duty, and the terrors of death.

[2.] The servants of Jesus Christ ought to be very careful not to abuse their Christian liberty; they must not make it a cover or cloak for any wickedness against God or disobedience to superiors.

4. The apostle concludes his discourse concerning the duty of subjects with four admirable precepts: —

(1.) *Honour all men*. A due respect is to be given to all men; the poor are not to be despised (<sup><895></sup>Proverbs 17:5); the wicked must be honoured, not for their wickedness, but for any other qualities, such as wit, prudence, courage, eminency of employment, or the hoary head. Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, the prophets, and the apostles, never scrupled to give due honour to bad men.

(2.) *Love the brotherhood*. All Christians are a fraternity, united to Christ the head, alike disposed and qualified, nearly related in the same interest, having communion one with another, and going to the same home; they should therefore love one another with an especial affection.

(3.) *Fear God* with the highest reverence, duty, and submission; if this be wanting, none of the other three duties can be performed as they ought.

(4.) *Honour the king* with that highest honour that is peculiarly due to him above other men.

II. The case of servants wanted an apostolical determination as well as that of subjects, for they imagined that their Christian liberty set them free from their unbelieving and cruel masters; to this the apostle answers, *Servants, be subject*, v. 18. By *servants* he means those who were strictly such, whether hired, or bought with money, or taken in the wars, or born in the house, or those who served by contract for a limited time, as apprentices. Observe,

1. He orders them to *be subject*, to do their business faithfully and honestly, to conduct themselves, as inferiors ought, with reverence and affection, and to submit patiently to hardships and inconveniences. This subjection they owe to their masters, who have a right to their service; and that *not only to the good and gentle*, such as use them well and abate somewhat of their right, but even to the crooked and perverse, who are scarcely to be pleased at all. Learn,

(1.) Servants ought to behave themselves to their masters with submission, and fear of displeasing them.

(2.) The sinful misconduct of one relation does not justify the sinful behaviour of the other; the servant is bound to do his duty, though the master be sinfully froward and perverse.

(3.) Good people are meek and gentle to their servants and inferiors. Our holy apostle shows his love and concern for the souls of poor servants, as well as for higher people. Herein he ought to be imitated by all inferior ministers, who should distinctly apply their counsels to the lower, the meaner, the younger, and the poorer sort of their hearers, as well as others.

2. Having charged them to be subject, he condescends to reason with them about it.

(1.) If they were patient under their hardships, while they suffered unjustly, and continued doing their duty to their unbelieving and untoward masters, this would be acceptable to God, and he would reward all that they suffered for conscience towards him; but to be patient when they were justly chastised would deserve no commendation at all; it is only *doing well, and suffering patiently for that, which is acceptable with God*, v. 19, 20. Learn,

[1.] There is no condition so mean but a man may live conscientiously in it, and glorify God in it; the meanest servant may do so.

[2.] The most conscientious persons are very often the greatest sufferers. *For conscience towards God, they suffer wrongfully; they do well, and suffer for it;* but sufferers of this sort are praiseworthy, they do honour to God and to religion, and they are accepted of him; and this is their highest support and satisfaction.

[3.] Deserved sufferings must be endured with patience: *If you are buffeted for your faults, you must take it patiently.* Sufferings in this world are not always pledges of our future happiness; if children or servants be rude and undutiful, and suffer for it, this will neither be acceptable with God nor procure the praise of men.

(2.) More reasons are given to encourage Christian servants to patience under unjust sufferings, v. 21.

[1.] From their Christian calling and profession: *Hereunto were you called.*

[2.] From the example of Christ, who *suffered for us*, and so became our *example, that we should follow his steps*, whence learn, *First*, Good Christians are a sort of people called to be sufferers, and therefore they must expect it; by the terms of Christianity they are bound to deny themselves, and take up the cross; they are called by the commands of Christ, by the dispensations of Providence, and by the preparations of divine grace; and, by the practice of Jesus Christ, they are bound to suffer when thus called to it. *Secondly*, Jesus Christ *suffered for you, or for us*; it was not the Father that suffered, but he whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world, for that end; it was both the body and soul of Christ that suffered, and he suffered for us, in our stead and for our good, v. 24. *Thirdly*, The sufferings of Christ should quiet us under the most unjust and cruel sufferings we meet with in the world. He suffered voluntarily, not for himself, but for us, with the utmost readiness, with perfect patience, from all quarters, and all this though he was God-man; shall not we sinners, who deserve the worst, submit to the light afflictions of this life, which work for us unspeakable advantages afterwards?

3. The example of Christ's subjection and patience is here explained and amplified: *Christ suffered*,



**(1.)** Wrongfully, and without cause; for he *did no sin*, v. 22. *He had done no violence*, no injustice or wrong to any one — he wrought no iniquity of any sort whatever; *neither was guile found in his mouth* (<sup>250B</sup> Isaiah 53:9), his words, as well as his actions, were all sincere, just, and right.

**(2.)** Patiently: *When he was reviled, he reviled not again* (v. 23); when they blasphemed him, mocked him, called him foul names, he was *dumb, and opened not his mouth*; when they went further, to real injuries, beating, buffeting, and crowning him with thorns, *he threatened not; but committed both himself and his cause to God that judgeth righteously*, who would in time clear his innocence, and avenge him on his enemies. Learn,

**[1.]** Our Blessed Redeemer was perfectly holy, and so free from sin that no temptation, no provocation whatsoever, could extort from him so much as the least sinful or indecent word.

**[2.]** Provocations to sin can never justify the commission of it. The rudeness, cruelty, and injustice of enemies, will not justify Christians in reviling and revenge; the reasons for sin can never be so great, but we have always stronger reasons to avoid it.

**[3.]** The judgment of God will determine justly upon every man and every cause; and thither we ought, with patience and resignation, to refer ourselves.

**4.** Lest any should think, from what is said, v. 21-23, that Christ's death was designed merely for an example of patience under sufferings, the apostle here adds a more glorious design and effect of it: *Who his own self*, etc., where note,

**(1.)** The person suffering — Jesus Christ: *His own self* — *in his own body*. The expression *his own self* is emphatic, and necessary to show that he verified all the ancient prophecies, to distinguish him from the Levitical priests (who offered the blood of others, but he by *himself purged our sins*, <sup>300B</sup> Hebrews 1:3), and to exclude all others from participation with him in the work of man's redemption: it is added, *in his body*; not but that he suffered in his soul (<sup>405B</sup> Matthew 26:38), but the sufferings of the soul were inward and concealed, when those of the body were visible and more obvious to the consideration of these suffering servants, for whose sake this example is produced.

(2.) The sufferings he underwent were *stripes*, wounds, and death, *the death of the cross* — servile and ignominious punishments!

(3.) The reason of his sufferings: He *bore our sins*, which teaches,

[1.] That Christ, in his sufferings, stood charged with our sins, as one who had undertaken to put them away by *the sacrifice of himself*, <sup><2516></sup>Isaiah 53:6.

[2.] That he bore the punishment of them, and thereby satisfied divine justice.

[3.] That hereby he takes away our sins, and removes them away from us; as the scape-goat did typically bear the sins of the people on his head, and then carried them quite away, (<sup><1822></sup>Leviticus 16:21, 22), so the Lamb of God does first bear our sins in his own body, and thereby take away the sins of the world, <sup><412></sup>John 1:29.

(4.) The fruits of Christ's sufferings are,

[1.] Our sanctification, consisting of the death, the mortification of sin, and a new holy life of righteousness, for both which we have an example, and powerful motives and abilities also, from the death and resurrection of Christ.

[2.] Our justification. Christ was bruised and crucified as an expiatory sacrifice, and *by his stripes we are healed*. Learn, *First*, Jesus Christ bore the sins of all his people, and expiated them by his *death upon the cross*. *Secondly*, No man can depend safely upon Christ, as having borne his sin and expiated his guilt, till he dies unto sin and lives unto righteousness.

5. The apostle concludes his advice to Christian servants, by putting them in mind of the difference between their former and present condition, v. 25. They *were as sheep going astray*, which represents,

(1.) Man's sin: he goes astray; it is his own act, he is not driven, but does voluntary go astray.

(2.) His misery: he goes astray from the pasture, from the shepherd, and from the flock, and so exposes himself to innumerable dangers.

(3.) Here is the recovery of these by conversion: *But are now returned*. The word is passive, and shows that the return of a sinner is the effect of

divine grace. This return is from all their errors and wanderings, to Christ, who is the true careful shepherd, that loves his sheep, and laid down his life for them, who is the most vigilant pastor, and bishop, or overseer of souls. Learn,

**[1.]** Sinners, before their conversion, are always going astray; their life is a continued error.

**[2.]** Jesus Christ is the supreme shepherd and bishop of souls, who is always resident with his flock, and watchful over them.

**[3.]** Those that expect the love and care of this universal pastor must return to him, must die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.