

The Paradox of Freedom (v.16)

VERSE 16 Act as free men (ὡς [conj.] ἐλεύθεροι [adj.n.m.p., ἐλεύθερος, *eleutheros, free*]), **and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil** (καὶ μὴ [conj. + neg.] ἔχοντες [pres.act.pt.n.p., *echo, have, hold; "use"*] τὴν ἐλευθερίαν [def.art.w/acc.f.s., *eleutheria, freedom*] ὡς ἐπικάλυμμα [conj. + acc.nt.s., *epikalumma, covering; pretext*] τῆς κακίας [def.art.w/gen.f.s., *kakia, evil*]), **but use it as bondslaves of God** [ἀλλ' [conj.] ὡς [conj.] δοῦλοι [n.m.p., *doulos, slave*] θεοῦ [gen.m.s., *theos*]).

Social Obligations (v.17)

VERSE 17 Honor all people (τιμήσατε [aor.act.imper.2.p., *timao, honor*] πάντας [adj.acc.m.p., *pas*]), **love the brotherhood** (ἀγαπάτε [pres.act.imper.2.p., *agapao, love*] τὴν ἀδελφότητα [def.art.w/acc.f.s., *adelphotes, brotherhood; 2X: 1Pet.5:9*]), **fear God** (φοβεῖσθε [pres.mid. or pass.dep.imper.2.p., *phobeo, fear*] τὸν θεὸν [def.art.w/acc.m.s., *theos, God*]), **honor the king** (τιμᾶτε [pres.act.imper.2.p., *timao, honor*] τὸν βασιλέα [def.art.w/acc.m.s., *basileus, king*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 16,17

1. These two verses, with their corresponding imperatives, round out this section dealing with believers' social and civic responsibilities.
2. Peter has in mind not political or social freedom (which for slaves and wives was limited), but spiritual freedom in Christ from the "ignorance" (1:14) of paganism.
3. They were free from all in their past that had bound them spiritually.
4. Truth sets men free (Jn.8:32,36).
5. They were free from enslavement to idolatry, superstition, STA lusts, and legalism.
6. Grace freed them from the curse of the law.
7. Christians in the early church spoke with assurance of their "freedom in Christ" (Gal.2:4).
8. Perhaps Peter interjected this particular injunction sensing a need for balance with the stress on submission to the civil power of pagan rule.
9. "Act as free men" has in the Greek no verb; the nominative adjective "free" stands on its own.
10. But liberty can easily be abused into license.
11. Peter's concern is that they do not use their freedom in Christ as an excuse to retaliate when slandered (cf. 3:9).
12. Their new life in Christ was not to be used as an excuse for antisocial behavior.
13. The "and" (*kai*) introduces a contrast and is equivalent to "and yet".
14. The comparative particle ὡς occurs in three phrases in v.16.
15. It is used to represent freedom, qualified or responsible freedom, and slavery to God, respectively.

16. The expression “covering” could refer either to something before the fact (i.e., an excuse or pretext for evil) or after the fact (i.e., a cover-up).
17. The context supports the former.
18. Peter’s concern is that they do not use their freedom as an excuse to engage in antinomian behavior.
19. They are not to rationalize rebellion against pagan authority.
20. Peter wants his readers to make absolutely certain that no charges of misconduct leveled against them are ever actually true.
21. When freedom becomes the believer’s watchword, there is as much danger of antinomianism in relation to the laws of the state as there is in relation to the laws of God.
22. Paul, who defended the freedom of Gentile Christians from the burden of the Jewish law, warned his readers against the opposite extreme (Gal.5:13; Rom.6:1,15-22).
23. Peter’s fear is that because they are free from the ignorance of their pagan past, they might assume that they are also free of their legitimate obligations to pagan society.
24. True freedom demands responsibility.
25. The blessings of freedom demand restraints.
26. This is the paradox of freedom.
27. We are not free to do anything we want, or we intrude on the freedom of others.
28. The freedom and blessing to drive a car demands that we obey the rules of the road or there would be no orderly transportation system in the country.
29. For Christians, the exploitation of their newfound freedom is in their subjection to God and His laws.
30. Through the work of Christ, believers are set free from the power of the Law, from sin, and from the evil that is in the world.
31. To be set free and to remain free are two different things.
32. The fulfillment of “freedom in Christ” is service to God.
33. Paradoxically, only when we serve God as slaves can we fully appreciate our freedom.
34. All believers are free to serve God and reap the surpassing blessings in time and in Ph3.
35. Those who elect to serve the dictates of the flesh and the lure of the cosmos, while free to do so, are slaves to unrighteousness.
36. In the end, such enslavement brings loss and shame.
37. Either kind of freedom brings with it enslavement (Rom.6:16-20).
38. Enslavement to righteousness brings vindication and eternal reward to those who deny the other kind of freedom.
39. The paradox: freedom’s realization is slavery to BD.
40. So choose your freedom (or slavery); the one brings life, the other death.
41. The four imperatives of v.17 follow closely on the preceding.
42. It is as “bondslaves of God” that believers are to “Honor (show respect for) all people, love the brotherhood, fear (reverence for) God, and honor (show respect for) the king (emperor).”
43. Of the four imperatives, the first (“Honor”) is an aorist imperative, and the other three (“love”, “fear”, and “honor”) are present imperatives.
44. The single aorist imperative at the beginning of the series gives the entire series an unambiguous imperatival quality (by themselves the present imperatives could be read as indicatives).
45. The aorist does not have to be repeated because the single use of it governs the entire series.

46. Peter's concern is to foster deference and respect toward everyone ("all people" is simply the acc.m.p.adj., *pas*).
47. This leaves room for the very group with which Peter is most concerned – the enemies, or accusers, of the Christian community.
48. The first imperative could be translated: "Respect everyone".
49. Even though πάντας τιμήσατε is not a heading for the whole series, it does function as a kind of heading for τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπάτε ("love the brotherhood").
50. "All people" obviously includes the brotherhood (cf. "your brethren in the world," 5:9, the only other use of this noun in the N.T.).
51. Peter is not unaware of Jesus' command to love even one's enemies (cf. Mt.5:44; Lk.6:27,35).
52. His point in using different verbs is to qualify the gospel tradition by setting some priorities for his audience.
53. He avoids telling them in so many words to "love your enemies", emphasizing instead their responsibility to love the Christian brotherhood.
54. Peter distinguishes respect from love, which he seems to define as the cement that binds Christians together into a brotherhood (ἀδελφότης occurs here and in 5:9 in the N.T.).
55. For other concise N.T. expressions of the concurrent duties of a Christian to fellow Christians and to everyone, see 1Thess.5:15 and Gal.6:10.
56. The posture Peter urges toward God is one of reverent fear (cf. 1:17).
57. Such posture fits the present context, where Peter addresses them as God's bondslaves.
58. God is to be feared because He is the Holy One, our Creator and Judge.
59. The civil power is on a different plane and it calls for our loyal respect, hence the words "honor the king".
60. Jesus differentiated between our duties to God and to Caesar (Mt.22:21).
61. Proverbs 24:21 provides an O.T. model for this exhortation.
62. Like Rom.13:1-7, Mt.22:21, 1Tim.2:1-3, and Ti.3:1, this passage (vv.13-17) has had a determining effect upon the Church's teaching about the duties Christians owe the state.
63. The command to "honor the king" is especially illuminating, considering who held the office of "king" when this letter was written.
64. Nero was hated in the capital except by the masses with whom he curried favor.
65. Its supposition was that God established shepherds to watch over the masses under their domain.
66. This command is for both good and bad leaders (many are a combination of both).
67. The most conspicuous feature of this section is its optimism.
68. Christians who are slandered should defer to the state, because the purpose of civil authority is to punish wrongdoers and reward those who do what is right.
69. Under normal circumstances, loyalty to God and loyalty to the state will not come into conflict.
70. As far as Christians are concerned, a danger exists that believers may use their freedom they have in Christ as an excuse for malice or misconduct.
71. The section ends with a series of imperatives targeting their responsibilities to others, to each other, to God, and to the state.

Responsibility of Servants (vv.18-25)

To the Reasonable and the Unreasonable (v.18)

VERSE 18 Servants (Οἱ οἰκέται [*def.art.w/voc.m.p.*, οἰκέτης, *oiketes*, *servant*, *house servant*]), **be submissive to your masters with all respect** (ὑποτασσόμενοι [*pres.pass.pt.{imper.}n.p.*, ὑποτάσσω, *hupotasso*, *be subject*] τοῖς δεσπόταις [*def.art.w/dat.m.p.*, δεσπότης, *despotes*, *master*] ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ [*prep.w/adj.instr.m.s.*, *pas*, + *instr.m.s.*, *phobos*, *fear*]), **not only to those who are good and gentle** (οὐ μόνον [*neg. + adv.*, *only*] τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς [*def.art.w/adj.dat.m.p.*, *agathos*, *good*] καὶ ἐπιεικέσιν [*conj. + adj.dat.m.p.*, ἐπιεικής, *epieikes*, *gentle*]), **but also to those who are unreasonable** (ἀλλὰ [*conj.*] καὶ [*conj.*, *also*] τοῖς σκολιοῖς [*def.art.w/dat.m.p.*, σκολιός, *skolios*, *perverse*, *crooked*; 4X: *Lk.3:5*; *Acts.2:40*; *Phil.2:15*; *1Pet.2:18*]).

Suffering that Wins Favor (vv.19-20)

VERSE 19 For this finds favor (γὰρ [*expan.part.*] τοῦτο [*pro./demon.n.nt.s.*, *houtos*, *this*] χάρις [*n.f.s.*, *charis*, *grace*, *favor*]), **if for the sake of conscience toward God** (εἰ [*part.*, *if*] διὰ συνείδησιν [*prep.w/acc.f.s.*, *suneidesis*, *conscience*] θεοῦ [*gen./objective.m.s.*]) **a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly** (τις [*pro./indef.n.m.s.*; *goes with the particle "ei" = "if a person", anyone*] ὑποφέρει [*pres.act.ind.3.s.*, ὑποφέρω, *hupopero*, *endure*; "bears up under"] λύπας [*acc.f.p.*, *lupe*, *sorrow*] πάσχων [*pres.act.pt.n.m.s.*, πάσχω, *pascho*, *suffer*] ἀδίκως [*adv.*, *unjustly*]).

VERSE 20 For what credit is there if (γὰρ [*conj.*] ποῖον [*pro./interrog./qualitative*, *what*] κλέος [*n.nt.s.*, *honor*; "credit", 1X] εἰ [*part./condit.*]), **when you sin and are harshly treated** (ἁμαρτάνοντες [*pres.act.pt.n.m.p.*, *hamartano*, *sin*] καὶ [*conj.*] κολαφιζόμενοι [*pres.act.pt.n.m.p.*, κολαφίζω, *kolaphizo*, *beat*; *noun*: κολαφος, *fist*; 5X: *Mt.26:67*; *Mk.14:65*; *1Cor.4:11*; *2Cor.12:7*; *1Pet.2:20*; "harshly treated"]), **you endure it with patience** (ὑπομενεῖτε [*fut.act.ind.2.p.*, ὑπομένω, *hupomeno*, *put up with*; "you endure it with patience"])? **But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it** (ἀλλ' εἰ [*conj. + part.*] ἀγαθοποιοῦντες [*pres.act.pt.n.m.p.*, ἀγαθοποιέω, *agathopoieo*, *do good*, *do what is right*] καὶ [*conj.*] πάσχοντες [*pres.act.pt.n.m.p.*, *pascho*, *suffer*] ὑπομενεῖτε [*fut.act.ind.2.p.*, *hupomeno*, *endure*]), **this finds favor with God** (τοῦτο [*pro./demon.n.nt.s.*, *houtos*, *this*] χάρις [*n.f.s.*, *charis*, *favor*, *grace*] παρὰ θεῷ [*prep. + dat.m.s.*, *theos*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 18-20

1. Christian responsibility before the social order continues with guidelines for the conduct of domestic servants (cf. Col.3:22–4:1; Eph.6:5-9).
2. A huge portion of the work force of the Roman world was indentured servants/slaves.
3. This growing and massive population explains one of the reasons for the prosperity of the empire (cheap labor).
4. The household duty code contains a set of guidelines for the behavior of domestic servants.
5. The noun “Servants” is the vocative masc. pl. of οἰκέτης (*oiketēs*), occurring here and in Lk.16:13, Acts.10:7, and Rom.14:4.
6. The exhortation proper (v.18) is supported by appeals to the divine viewpoint (vv.19,20) and to the moral example and sufferings of Jesus (vv.21-25).
7. When Peter reaches the end of this section, it is easy to forget that he is still addressing slaves in relation to their masters.
8. Much of the section is applicable to Christians generally, especially under undeserved suffering, and to household domestics in particular.
9. The basic command “be submissive” is a participle used as an imperative, representing a further specific instance of the verbal imperative of v.13 (*hupotasso*).
10. Christian slaves are enjoined to deference to his or her master, as is the wife to her unbelieving husband.
11. Peter begins to generalize immediately after the exhortation proper with the “if clause” of v.19.
12. Because Peter has just referred to all Christians as “bondslaves” (*douloi*) in v.16, he switches to *oiketai* in order to focus on domestic servants as a particular social group.
13. He chooses δεσπότης (*despotes*) instead of the more common *kurios* to refer to slave masters (cf. 1Tim.6:1; Ti.2:9).
14. The effect of “all” (*pas*) in the phrase “with all respect” is to intensify the reverence of which Peter speaks (as in “with deep reverence”).
15. Although the word order could suggest that the reverence is directed toward slave masters, the clear distinction in v.17 between fear toward God and respect for the emperor demands that here, too, fear means reverence toward God and not human masters.
16. In the admonitions to slaves in Paul’s presentation of the household duty codes, fear is directed toward God or Christ and not human masters (Col.3:22; Eph.6:5).
17. The implication is that they somehow stand in Christ’s place, where reverence is urged toward masters as God’s representatives.
18. Peter makes it clear that obedience is not to be limited to just those “who are good (or just) and gentle”, but to those who are unreasonably cruel as well.
19. He recognizes that some masters treat their slaves fairly, however, and he does not assume that these “good” slave owners are necessarily Christians.
20. Peter does not address Christian slave owners, as he evidently had no information that there were any in the provinces he writes to.
21. They are addressed in Eph.6:9 and Col.4:1.
22. Peter is not classifying slave masters on the basis of their spiritual convictions but on the way they treat their slaves.
23. Peter does not tar all unbelievers with the same brush.
24. Submission is to be rendered to all who are masters regardless of how they conduct themselves within the ECC.

25. This is consistent with the teaching with regard to respect to government leaders and husbands.
26. In v.19 Peter now generalizes what he has just said by imagining a case in which “a man” (literally, “someone”), perhaps a slave or perhaps not, endures unjust suffering.
27. “Favor” (*charis*, grace, favor) refers to that with which God is pleased.
28. Peter’s point is that there is no merit in enduring deserved punishment but there is credit with God reserved for the patient endurance of unjust punishment.
29. God is free to bless those who suffer unjustly with SG3, but not in the case of divine discipline.
30. Believers who suffer under duly-established authority unjustly do so on the basis of the doctrine within, hence the phrase “for the sake of conscience toward God”.
31. The conscience is where the doctrinal norms and standards reside.
32. The good conscience recognizes the value of patient endurance when suffering unjustly.
33. The expression “for the sake of conscience toward God” (διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ) has “God” in the genitive of reference.
34. The conscience that is “of” or “toward God” is a conscience that is programmed with the will of God.
35. Resentment, bitterness, and rebellion occur when men suffer unjustly.
36. The adjusted believer rises above all that and “bears up under sorrows”, knowing that God will vindicate him.
37. The noun “credit” occurs only here in the N.T.
38. It is a cognate of the verb *kaleo*, to call.
39. It is a synonym for honor or praise.
40. There is no honor when we suffer under DD for our sins.
41. While DD is necessary and beneficial, there is no honor attached to those who so suffer.
42. Undeserved suffering under abusive authority brings honor to the one so suffering.
43. This teaching is brought out in the two rhetorical questions of v.20.
44. There is no merit or honor attaching itself to the believer who suffers for disobedience, but there is when the suffering is strictly the result of the abuse of authority.
45. Peter is not saying that we should not endure deserved suffering with patience, he is only saying that no honor/credit/merit attaches itself to the believer so suffering.
46. Of course, we should rebound and ride out our DD, but there is no honor in suffering for sin in the life.
47. Two times in two verses Peter affirms that undeserved suffering “*finds* favor with God”.
48. The believer who Faith-Rests (“patiently endures”) what is noble, and walks in fellowship with what is righteous, will find favor with God in time and Ph3.