

**Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery
Ordeal Among You**
An Expository Journey Through **1Peter**
1Peter 2:11-25
25- How to Live as Aliens and Strangers- Part 7
Submission to Earthly Authority- Part 4

July 8, 2018

1 Peter 2:11-25

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

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

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

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

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

17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

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

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

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

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

22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

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

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

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

To the Glory of God

Now we are continuing in this mini-series to examine how we are to live as "Aliens and Strangers" in the earth. And so, we are very *narrowly* examining what the Apostle Peter meant when he said:

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

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

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

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

17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

And, so far, we have found out that, as God's people, we are *obligated* to obey all Laws, Rules, and Commands that come forth from all "Human Institutions", *unless and until* those Laws, Rules, and Commands *require* us to *disobey* the clear Commands of God as recorded in Scripture. The Bible teaches that all Human Institutions have some "limited authority" over believers for the purpose of creating and maintaining Order in a society. And this Order is a manifestation of the "Common Grace and Love" that God displays to all of Mankind, even those He will not save.

But when that Government commands *disobedience* to God and His Word, Scripture gives us license to publicly, knowingly, and

blatantly *disobey* the Laws, Rules, and Commands of the Human Institution. And the reason for this is because unlike the various Human Institutions, God's Authority is *absolute*.

You see, all Human Institutions are made up of people, who are flawed and tainted with sin, whereas God is perfect and pure. And that means that the authority that God has given to the various different Human Institutions is a "*limited* authority". Therefore, the submission or the subjection that believers have to that Human Institution should always carry with it a caveat, an exception. And so, our subjection to the Government is *never* absolute, it is *always* limited. And so, a genuine believer always has this dynamic in place:

- ✓ God *over* Government
- ✓ Christ *over* Country
- ✓ The Gospel *over* the "limited authority" of Human Institutions

Yet, this "separation" must never spill over into apathy about our nation or the people in it. Being smug and unconcerned about the direction our country is going and the lost isn't being spiritual, it is simply being smug and unconcerned. And so, even in our refusal to obey, we should disobey *in such a way so as not to undermine the overall authority that God has given to that Human Institution, and the overall Command that we have to submit to it*. And, because God knew full well that believers would have to periodically disobey Human Institutions, He included some very specific examples in the *body* of Scripture so we would be able to determine what that disobedience looks like. And so, today, I want to *complete* this mini-series by finishing our examination of those examples.

Last week, we saw two examples, from the **Book of Daniel**, where the Government tried to *force* believers to sin against God. And in the first case, we saw that God moved and the believers were able to *negotiate* their way out of disobedience toward God, and were allowed to *disobey* the Government without penalty to themselves.

But, in the second example, we saw that obedience to God resulted in the believers being *punished* by the Government. And, in this case, the believers were cast into a fiery furnace because they refused to worship an idol that the wicked king, Nebuchadnezzar, had set up.

But, even though the believers were perfectly willing to suffer and to die rather than disobey what God had commanded, God chose to sovereignly *intervene* and temporarily *suspend* the normal operation of fire and heat and burning, and perform a miracle so that the children of God could *endure* the suffering and escape unharmed. And I told you that based on God doing this, many in the modern church have developed a "three-part doctrine" that goes something like this:

1. Find out what God says.
2. Obey it- no matter how hard- even if it means *disobeying* the Government- and even if it means being punished.
3. Receive the Reward.

And, on the surface, the third example that we'll look at, of God's people disobeying the Government so they could remain faithful to God, seems to *confirm* this Teaching. So, let's look at the third example:

3. Disobedience Over Prayer

Daniel 6:1-9

1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom,

2 and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.

3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or *evidence of* corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be* found in him.

5 Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him with regard to the law of his God."

6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever!

7 "All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition

to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den.

8 "Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

9 Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

Now a "satrap" was a provincial Governor in the ancient Persian Empire. And Darius was a Mede who had risen to be the King of Babylon in between Belshazzar and Cyrus the Great. So, Darius appointed 120 of these provincial Governors who handled the "day-to-day" affairs. And over the 120 satraps were three Commissioners who reported directly to Darius.

Now, because God had given Daniel an "excellent spirit", he rose to great prominence in the Babylonian Empire and was one of those Commissioners. And so, even though the fundamental operation of the entire Empire was completely pagan, Daniel had been "put in charge", and this produced jealousy among the satraps who then manipulated Darius to sign a decree that anyone who prayed to any deity other than Darius was to be thrown into a den of lions.

Now, as we discovered last week, these politicians couldn't care less about the pagan religion of Babylon, or even Darius, for that matter. On their part, satan had stirred up jealousy and their lust for more political power that was already in their hearts. And that effort resulted in a Decree being signed into law by the King, where the Government was officially and formally forbidding anyone to pray to the one, true, and living God. So, what was Daniel's response when he found out what had happened?

Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

So, Daniel simply *continued* to do what he had *always* been doing; He knelt down on his knees three times a day and cried out to God in prayer. And it is important to notice that Daniel didn't start doing

anything other than what he had already been doing. The action by the Government didn't "make" Daniel do anything out of the ordinary. Daniel was a genuine believer, and, as a believer, he understood the importance of the gift of Prayer. And so, his normal routine was to spend a great deal of time in prayer, and to face the city of Jerusalem as he called on the Name of the Lord. But now, his faithfulness in prayer landed Daniel in hot water.

Daniel 6:11-13

11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

12 Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

13 Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

... so, the satraps conspired to report to the King what Daniel was doing, so they could have him killed, so one of them could, no doubt, take Daniel's political position.

Now, interestingly, God was dealing with this wicked King. And, even though the law of the Medes and Persians was unalterable and had to be obeyed, the King *himself* was with Daniel. And so, *reluctantly*, the King ordered that the law be obeyed and Daniel was thrown into the lion's den so those hungry, vicious animals could tear him to shreds. And as the man of God was being thrown into the den of lions, the King cried out to Daniel:

Daniel 6:16b

... "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."

... then the Word of God says:

Daniel 6:18

Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

... so, evidently, it was customary for the King to eat and be entertained during the night. But he was so distraught over Daniel that he would not be comforted, and he spent the night fasting. In the morning, the King was pleased to find out that God had sovereignly intervened:

Daniel 6:19-23

19 Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den.

20 When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!

22 "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

23 Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

... so, once again, the logic seems to hold and God moved to supernaturally protect Daniel. So, Daniel trusted in God and was punished for remaining faithful to God. He knowingly and publicly *disobeyed* the law of the Government and was punished for doing so. But, then, God moved to sovereignly "keep" Daniel and *sustain* him *in* his suffering.

Now God *could* have moved to keep his servant from suffering at all. But God chose to passively "step aside" and *allow* evil men to bring suffering to His Own follower. But then God chose to sovereignly and actively *intervene* to shut the mouth of the lions so that Daniel would not be killed.

Now, so far, we have seen that, as God's people remain faithful to God when the Government commands them to sin, three things happen:

1. God moves to allow *some* of God's people to disobey Government without any punishment at all.
2. God moves to allow others, who are equally saved and have strong and abiding faith, to be punished when they disobey the command of Government to sin.
3. God moves to sovereignly *sustain* His people in their suffering when they are punished for disobeying the Government.

... but, now let's look at a fourth example:

4. Disobedience Over Preaching

The Acts 4:1-18

1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them,

2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.

4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;

6 and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

7 When they had placed them in the center, they *began to* inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,

9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health.

11 "He is the *STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED* by you, *THE BUILDERS*, *but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone*.

12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply.

15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they *began* to confer with one another,

16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

17 "But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name."

18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Now, the phrase "in the Name of" has to do with Authority and Purpose. So, the Authority by which the Apostles preached that Salvation was by and through Jesus Christ alone was the Authority of Jesus *Himself*, in His Own, Personal, pristine, Perfection. So, the Testimony or the Reputation of Jesus, in His sinlessness as God Almighty in human flesh, gave these men all the Authority they needed.

Now just before He bodily and literally and supernaturally ascended into Heaven, Jesus told His followers:

Matthew 28:18b-20

18 ... "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

... and the Apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 2:6-11

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus *EVERY KNEE WILL BOW*, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

... and Dr. Luke quoted Peter in **The Acts 3**, when he wrote:

The Acts 3:12b-26

12 ... "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"

13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, *the one* whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

15 but put to death the Prince of life, *the one* whom God raised from the dead, *a fact* to which we are witnesses.

16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is the name of Jesus* which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,

21 whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

22 "Moses said, '***THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED*** to everything He says to you.

23 'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

24 "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days.

25 "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, '***AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.***'

26 "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways."

Everything that is done in Christianity is carried out "in the Name of" Jesus Christ, and for His Glory. No mere human has the Right or Authority to do things on behalf of God and for His Glory in his own "name", or predicated on some perceived Right or Authority based on his title or position. We pray and preach and sing and obey and evangelize and love God only because we do so as authorized and empowered by God, based on the sterling Reputation of Jesus Christ, and to His Glory. Other than that, God is not honored.

So, for any Human Institution to suggest that we may pray all we want to, but we cannot pray "in the Name of Jesus", is to take away the only Authority and Purpose that we have. God does not hear or honor petitions that are given unless they are given based on Jesus Christ and His finished Work.

And the Apostles knew this. And so, they never hesitated when commanded by the Government not to preach "in the Name of Jesus". And so, both Peter and John responded to the official law of the Government by saying:

The Acts 4:19b&20

19 ..."Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

... so what did these believers do, after they were threatened?

The Acts 4:23-32

23 When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

24 And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who **MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM,**

25 who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, '**WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?**

26 '**THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'**

27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

... so, the believers knowingly and publicly *disobeyed* the Government when the Government attempted to force them to sin against God. Now keep in mind that the Apostles were never forbidden to preach. They could preach all they wanted to. All that the Government commanded them not to do was to preach "in the Name of Jesus".

And it would have been real easy for the Apostle to rationalize, as so many in the modern church do, and say to themselves, "*You know, it is better to preach than not to preach at all. So, we will just preach and leave off the Foundation and Authority behind our preaching*". But they didn't do that. It was all or nothing with these men. To compromise and proclaim Salvation to the lost, but to leave off the

Name by which that preaching has Authority was to completely undermine everything they were doing and teaching.

So, knowing that it was against the law to preach in the Name of or in the Authority of Jesus Christ, what did they do? Did they engage in a letter writing campaign, petitioning the Roman Governor to issue a decree allowing them to preach? No. Did they reach out to the Senate to ask permission from them to preach? No. Did they boycott Roman stores? No. Did they march down the street holding placards and chanting? No. What did they do?

The Acts 4:23&24a

23 When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

24 And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord...

Once they were released by the Governmental officials, they went to the Church and they prayed. So, what did they pray? Did they ask God to cause the pagans to change their minds? No. Did they ask God to protect them from suffering? No. Did they tell God they were really sorry, but they weren't going to be able to preach anymore because the Government had threatened them with punishment if they did, and since they knew it was God's Will that the believers all have nice, safe, and secure lives, they simply would not be able anymore to preach the Gospel? No, they didn't pray like that at all. So, how did they pray?

The Acts 4:29

And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

Now this isn't complicated, but it is profound. No excuses, no hesitation, no complaining, and no confusion. King Jesus had already told every single genuinely saved person to go into all the earth and preach the Gospel to every creature. And the Government said they could preach all they wanted to, but they just couldn't preach "in the Name of Jesus" (which was the same thing as telling them not to preach at all).

So, these men are *not* seeking and do not need *permission* from the Government to obey God. Jesus has already *authorized* those who

are saved to “go and preach and baptize and disciple”. And all of that is to be done “in the Name of” Jesus and to His Glory alone. And so, to be silent or to ignore or eliminate the Authority by which they preach is sinful compromise, and undermines the Purpose behind everything we do and teach and believe. And so, the primary concern of these believers is to be faithful to what Jesus has already said, *not* to be safe and secure in this fallen world.

So, they pray for boldness, not permission. They pray for strength to obey, not that they will escape suffering for that obedience. But what happened as result of their obedience to God and their disobedience to the Government?

Acts 12:1-3

1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.

2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.

3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also...

Now here we see that God passively “stepped aside” and sovereignly *allowed* the evil Government to punish the believers because they disobeyed the Government in their effort to obey God. But this time, we’re going to see a difference in the way that God moves toward those who suffer.

In our *previous* examples, we saw that the believers were faithful, and in their faithfulness they disobeyed the Government. And in the first example, God moved to sovereignly keep His people from suffering at all. And in the second and third examples, we saw that God’s people were faithful, but God passively allowed evil men to carry out some of the wickedness that was in their hearts against God’s people, and the believers were punished for their faithfulness.

But, in His Mercy, God chose to sovereignly *preserve* His people as they suffered. And even though God *could* have caused that His people never suffered at all, He chose to allow them to hurt, but then sovereignly “kept” them as they suffered.

But now, in our fourth example, God empowers His people to remain faithful, and then He steps aside and allows evil men to inflict suffering on His people. But this time, God chooses to allow the Apostle James to be killed, and *not* be kept or delivered at all. And then, when

Herod sees that killing James pleased the Jews, he went after Peter as well thinking that he was going to kill Peter, too.

But, as the rest of **The Acts 12** tells us, God moved sovereignly and miraculously, even using angels, to allow Peter to escape and continue to live. So, even though James was killed, Peter was spared. And yet, sometime around AD 64, by the hand of the very Emperor Nero who initiated the persecution that is the background of this entire Epistle, Peter was eventually captured and not delivered. And according to history, Peter was crucified upside down. So, we see four examples:

- ✓ The four Hebrews remained faithful in keeping the dietary portion of the Old Covenant, and they *disobeyed* the Government. And God moved and they didn't suffer at all.
- ✓ Three believers *disobeyed* the Government about Worship and remained faithful to God, and God allowed the Government to punish them. But God chose to sovereignly *sustain* them in their suffering, and miraculously deliver them after they suffered for a while.
- ✓ Daniel obeyed God and disobeyed the Government about Prayer, and once again the Government punished him, and once again God sovereignly preserved him in his suffering, and then God miraculously delivered him.
- ✓ The Apostles disobeyed the Government by remaining faithful to Jesus, and God allowed the Government to persecute them. But this time, James was killed and Peter was delivered for a season, and then later killed.

So, in all four of our examples, genuine believers *disobeyed* the Government as the Government overstepped their "limited authority" and had commanded them to sin. And in the first three examples, God performed miracles and Acts of Providence to either keep them from suffering at all, or in delivering them after they suffered for a while. But, in the fourth example, a genuine believer was martyred for obeying God and disobeying the Government.

So, the question is: "*Why did God move differently? Why did God deliver some, but not all? Why did God keep some from suffering at all, but then allowed others to die? Why did the Apostle Peter say this:*

1 Peter 2:19&20

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

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

... because, based on what Peter says here, we are to *obey* God even if that means *disobeying* the Government. But then, Peter goes on to say that if we are punished by that Government for obeying God, we are to suffer without complaint. Why?

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

So, Peter is saying here that there will be times when God's people will suffer, *even when we do what is right*. And when that happens, the Apostle Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to say that we are to do two things:

1. Patiently *endure* the Suffering.
2. Know that our Suffering "finds Favor" with God.

Now Peter is not talking here about *earning* Favor with God by and through our suffering. He is talking about "*finding* Favor". So, Peter is encouraging the scattered Aliens and Strangers of his day, and ours, that when believers suffer for "doing what is right", God is glorified in, by, and through them patiently *enduring* what is unjust and unfair.

And that tells us that, even though this does not meet up with the way our carnal and natural mind operates, God's people, suffering patiently for "doing what is right", brings great Glory and Honor to the Lord, Who saved us. And that means that suffering like this is *not* a defeat, it is *not* an embarrassment, it is *not* due to a "lack of faith" on our part, and it is *not* a sign of God's Displeasure. When we suffer unjustly, but we suffer with patience, without murmuring or complaining, we prove the doctrine that says:

The common feature of the Faith that *escapes* suffering and the Faith that *endures* suffering is this: both of them involve believing that God Himself is *better* than what life can give to you *now*, and *better* than what death can take from you *later*.

... which could only be true if Jesus has become the Treasure of the Universe. So, those who suffer patiently, even when they have “done what is right”, especially when they have done what is right, are those who have been so radically transformed by the miracle of the New Birth that they see Jesus as being better than anything that this world can give to them or take away from them.

And to get an even deeper understanding of this; please go with me to read **Hebrews 11** and look at two different groups of people:

Hebrews 11:29-35a

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

35 Women received *back* their dead by resurrection...

Here the writer of **Hebrews** gives us a thrilling account of many Old Testament saints, whom God used in miracles and various Acts of Providence. And the writer is careful to tell us that they did all of this “**through faith**”. And from that we may develop a doctrine that says:

Through Faith, God can and He absolutely does work powerful “Miracles” and “Acts of Providence” to bring practical earthly help and deliverance to His people.

... but then, beginning at the end of verse 35, we see another group of people:

Hebrews 11:35b-38

35 ... and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

38 (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

Here we see a group of people, who did *not* receive miracles and who did *not* receive Acts of Providence. We see a collection of people whom God allowed to hurt and to suffer, and who were *not* delivered. And from that portion of Divine Truth, we may develop a doctrine that says:

God does *not* always work Miracles and Acts of Providence for our deliverance from suffering, and sometimes, by this very *same* Faith, God sustains his people *through* their sufferings.

But, even though that is plain to see, we still need to ask the question: "*Why?*" *Why* did the first group receive Divine Protection and Deliverance from God, while the second group did not? And many in the modern Church have developed three responses that say something like this:

1. They didn't have enough faith.
2. They had unconfessed sin in their lives.
3. They had unforgiveness in their heart.

... and I would suggest that the overwhelming majority would say that it was because they didn't have enough faith. But, then we read the first part of verse 39 that says:

Hebrews 11:39a

And all these, having gained approval through their faith...

So, the writer of **Hebrews** takes away the single biggest response that dominates the thinking of the people of the modern Church about why *some* saved people suffer, while *others* are delivered, by saying that both the people who suffered and the people who were delivered had very strong and vibrant faith that had gained God's Approval. And, from that Truth, we can develop another doctrine that says:

“Having faith” or “not having faith” is *not* the ultimate determining factor in whether you suffer or you are delivered. God's Sovereign Will *always* takes precedent over our faith.

And then, when we carefully read what the writer wrote in verse 38:

(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

... which *seems* to tell us that, even though we are quick to look at the people who received the miracles and the Acts of Providence as the people we admire and want to emulate, that actually, it is the people who are *not* delivered and who suffered the *most* who demonstrate the most faith and are the ones who bring *more* Glory to God than the ones who are delivered. And from that Truth, we can develop yet another doctrine about Suffering that says:

Those who love God more than life and who suffer willingly, awaiting something *better* than what this earth can offer, are not “embarrassments” or “failures”, they are God's great gifts to the world.

As humans, we are attracted to powerful, earthshaking “Open Shows of Glory”. We like the explosion of God's Power and the dramatic demonstrations of God moving for His people. We are impressed with miracles, and we stand amazed as God sovereignly delivers His people.

But, in reality, those demonstrations are very rare and they are few and far between. And so, we must know that the Glory of God rests on those who quietly suffer, without complaint, knowing in Whom they have believed.

So, "Yes!", we need to always remain faithful to God. And, "Yes!", sometimes that requires us to *disobey* the Government. And, "Yes!", God is well able to deliver us. And it may be God's Will to do so, even powerfully and dramatically. But, if it isn't, if it is God's Will that we suffer, then we must not think that God *not* delivering us is a sign of God's Displeasure, or an indication of a failure on our part, or a lack of faith. Peter is telling us here that during those times, when it *is* God's Will that we suffer and are *not* delivered, may we hope fully in the Promises of God and know that those who love God more than life, and who suffer willingly, awaiting something *better* than what this earth can offer, are *not* "embarrassments" or "failures", they are God's great gifts to the world. Peter said:

1 Peter 2:19&20

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

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.