

Lesson 4 (1 Peter 2:11-25)

¹⁾ ¹¹ Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹² Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

- a) Peter has just told his readers about their incredible privileges as Christians. He now tells them about the responsibilities that come with those privileges, and he tells them what they need to do if they are to live a Godly life in an ungodly and hostile world. Believers must live exemplary lives with the kinds of good deeds that will make unbelievers take notice.

- b) When we think of "fleshly lusts" we typically think only of sexual sins, but in the New Testament the meaning of that phrase is much broader.
 - i) Peter had a much broader view in mind in the first verse of this very chapter, where he included "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings."

 - ii) Paul had a broader view in mind in Galatians 5:19-21 where he included idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.

- c) Peter gives us two reasons to abstain or distance ourselves from these fleshly lusts and desires:
 - i) First, we must abstain from fleshly lusts because we are strangers and pilgrims.
 - (1) We are strangers in this world, and because of that we cannot accept the world's customs and ways and standards.

 - (2) We are pilgrims, and as pilgrims we must never become so entangled in this world that we cannot escape from it, and we must never let ourselves become so soiled by this world that we are unfit to enter that land to which we are heading. Our lives must always fit the place we are headed to rather than our temporary lodging here on earth.

 - ii) Second, we must abstain from fleshly lusts because we are under fire.

- (1)** The early church was particularly beset by this problem. Slanderous charges were continually being made against the early Christians.
 - (a)** The early church was seen as a Jewish sect, and so all of the slanders heaped against the Jews were also thrown against the church.
 - (b)** But the church also had its own slanders. Early Christians were accused of cannibalism, immorality, incest, hatred of mankind, and disloyalty to Caesar. They were accused of damaging family relationships and of turning slaves against their masters. Tacitus said that Christians were "loathed because of their abominations." Suetonius described Christians as "a class of people animated by a novel and mischievous superstition."
 - (c)** It was often the very abstaining from fleshly lusts that caused the pagans to despise Christians, and the same is true today. People who wallow in sin like to believe that everyone is just like them, and they are the first to shout "Hypocrite!" when they meet someone who appears different. This type of slander is based on the guilt of the slanderer. It is described as the ignorance of foolish men in verse 15. (The word "fool" in the Bible is used to describe a person who does not know God or his ways.)
- (2)** Peter says that the only way to refute such lies is to live lives so holy that the slanderous charges will be seen as obviously untrue.
 - (a)** When Plato was told that a certain man was making slanderous charges against him, his answer was: "I will live in such a way that no one will believe what he says." And that was Peter's solution as well.
 - (b)** The word translated "conversation" in verse 12 means a person's whole conduct rather than simply what he says. The Greek word translated "honest" or "good" means not just "good" but also "lovely." This term is one of Peter's favorite words for expressing the new life of believers.
- (3)** The church today is under fire as well, and the attacks are increasing.
 - (a)** It is not uncommon at all to see press reports likening so-called "fundamentalist Christians" with fundamentalist Muslim terrorists! It is okay to be a Christian, we are told, as long as we

are not fanatics and as long as we don't make any claim to having the one truth or the one way to God. The press also delights in reporting about any type of public moral failing by one professing to be a Christian, with the subtle message being that secretly we are all just the same sort of hypocrite.

(b) Peter's solution should be our solution as well --- the best way to silence such criticism is to make it self-evidently false.

(c) Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

(d) For this plan to work, however, we must scrupulous in our morality. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:3, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."

(4) "Here is timeless truth. Whether we like it or not, every Christian is an advertisement for Christianity; by his life he either commends it to others or makes them think less of it. The strongest missionary force in the world is a Christian life."

(5) The attacks against the early church continued, but the attacks began to change. In the early third century, for example, Celsus published a famous and systematic attack upon all Christians. He accused them of ignorance and foolishness and superstition and all kinds of things -- but he never accused them of immorality! He knew that would never be believed!

iii) Peter also says that we are at war with these fleshly lusts.

(1) This language of warfare implies that our struggles with these sins will be no easy matter. These desires must be resisted and conquered. "The Christian life is certainly not depicted as passive in which believers simply 'let go and let God.'"

d) Peter says in verse 12 that the slanderers of the church would glorify God in the "day of visitation." What is that day?

i) It could mean the day of conversion for those slanderers who repented and obeyed the gospel after they observed the Godly lives of the early Christians.

ii) But in the Old Testament God's "visits" typically involve judgment. Jeremiah and Isaiah, for example, frequently use the term that way. See, for example, Jeremiah 8:12 and Isaiah 10:3.

iii) I, along with most commentators, favor the latter interpretation, but the former view is supported to some extent by the description that these observers will glorify God on that day because of the good works they have seen. On the other hand, we know that all people will one day confess that Jesus is Lord and glorify God. (Phil. 2:10-11; Ps. 86:9)

2) ¹³ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; ¹⁴ Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. ¹⁵ For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

a) Peter is about to look at the duty of Christians within different spheres of their lives, and he begins with their duty as citizens of the countries in which they live. Since we are children of God and citizens of Heaven and since we have an exalted and privileged position as Christians, does that mean we can just ignore human government? Peter answers that question with a resounding "No."

i) This whole section is the direct opposite of what we see today, where every person and every group demands its rights, and where liberty is seen as freedom from responsibility.

ii) Peter, by contrast, describes our freedom in terms of service -- service to God, service to the church, and service to the world. Peter describes Christian living in terms of submission, and that is not a term that we moderns like to hear! But the central theme of this entire section of the letter is found in that single word --- submit.

(1) Some translators define "submit" in terms of deference or respect. But it is impossible to wash the concept of obedience out of the word "submit."

(a) 1 Peter 3:5-6 treats obedience and submission as synonyms. The same Greek term for "submission" is used in Luke 2:51 to describe Jesus' submission to his parents. It is used in Ephesians 5:24 to describe the church's submission to Christ. Without obedience, there is no submission.

iii) Verse 13 literally says "Be subject to every human creature." Most translations give a different meaning to "creature" and translate it as ordinance or institution. But the term is never used that way elsewhere

in the Bible. God created the world and all of the creatures in the world, and it is in this sense that the Greek word found here is used 17 other times in the New Testament. What then does it mean to be subject to every human creature?

- (1)** These Christians may have thought that they were not required to be subject in any way to non-Christians. Peter tells them that the opposite is true, and he specifically mentions some examples of people they should be subject to: Caesar, Governors, Masters, and Husbands.
 - (2)** The most likely explanation for the use of the phrase "human creature" is that the king to which Peter is referring saw himself quite differently -- by this time emperor worship was the norm in Rome, and the emperors saw themselves as divine. Peter may be saying that while we must never worship the king as a god, we nevertheless must give him the honor that is his due. The king is merely a human creature, created by God and living and reigning under God's authority. Jesus told Pilate in John 19:11 that Pilate had been given his power from above.
- b)** With regard to our submission to government, we should first note that there is absolutely no hint of any sort of anarchy in the New Testament, and in fact just the opposite is true.
- i)** The instruction of the New Testament is that a Christian must be a good and useful citizen of the country in which he lives.
 - (1)** Matthew 22:21 Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.
 - (2)** Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.
 - (3)** Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 that we should pray and give thanks for those in authority "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."
 - ii)** A Christian cannot accept the privileges that the state provides without also accepting the responsibilities and duties that it demands. To do otherwise hinders the work of the church.
- c)** The church is a kingdom, but it is a spiritual kingdom. Unlike the kingdoms of this world, the church is eternal and it was not created by the

hand of man. The Jews found out the hard way what happens when you seek an earthly kingdom.

i) During the first century, the Zealots fought as guerrillas against the Romans. (Recall that one of Jesus' apostles was a Zealot.) A revolt by the Zealots led to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the end of the Jewish system, which was a judgment of God against the Jews for their rejection of the Messiah (Matthew 24). Following the command of Jesus, the Jerusalem church fled from the city rather than take part in that war.

ii) Many wanted Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom, and many today still do. The teaching of Jesus, however, cut across revolutionary political expectations. He refused to claim political kingship and lead a revolt against the Romans. His kingdom was not an earthly kingdom.

(1) John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

iii) Peter himself was the first (but far from the last) to take up arms for Jesus Christ.

(1) John 18:10-11 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

(2) Matthew 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

d) Peter tells us in verse 13 that we are to submit to government authority "for the Lord's sake."

i) Caesar was to be obeyed, not because Caesar was Lord, but because God is Lord. We obey human government because such obedience is God's will. The supreme authority is not the human king, but is instead God.

(1) Clearly we cannot obey human government "for the Lord's sake" if that human government is commanding us to do something contradictory to God's word. Sometimes we must disobey the government if we are to obey God.

- (a) In Hebrews 11:23, we see that Moses' parents "were not afraid of the king's commandment."
 - (b) In Acts 4:18-20, we see Peter and John refusing to obey a command not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.
 - (c) The early church refused to offer a pinch of incense to Caesar even though that decision often kept them out of the trade guilds and caused them to suffer severe economic hardships.
- e) But someone might argue (correctly) that there is a big difference between the governments of Peter's day and the governments of our day. But that difference increases rather than decreases our responsibilities.
- i) Peter describes the function of government in verse 14 -- the restraint of crime and the encouragement of civic responsibility. And as bad as Rome was, it for the most part fulfilled those two functions. Even the most oppressive governments generally hold evil in check to some extent and seek to avoid chaos. Jeremiah, for example, told the exiles not to resist Babylon. (Jeremiah 27:17)
 - ii) In New Testament times, the state was authoritarian. The only duty of its citizens was to live in subjection to the state. With a democracy, we must also live in subjection to the laws of the land, but we have a further responsibility. We are not just the governed; we are also the government. We have a responsibility that the early Christians did not have -- we must, as much as we can, seek to make our government fulfill the God-given responsibilities in verse 14. Is a Christian obligated to vote? Absolutely, if by that vote the proper, God-ordained functions for human government can be advanced.
 - iii) It was Peter himself in Acts 5:29 who said "We ought to obey God rather than men," and that principle is an important one. When there is a conflict between the laws of men and the law of God, our duty is clear. But I think we also have a responsibility to try to change the laws of men to remove those conflicts if we can.
- f) Peter's commands to submit to authorities are directed to us just as much as to his original readers.
- i) Can we as Christians choose which laws to obey and which laws to disregard? What about the tax laws? What about the traffic laws? What about the copyright laws?
 - ii) How many times have you nearly been run off the road by someone who has a "Christian" fish sticker or an "Oasis of Love" sticker on the

back of their car? If we really want to be radically different in the city of Houston, why don't we start by obeying the traffic laws?

3) ¹⁶ As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

- a) One can hear the next objection: Isn't all of this submission to human rules a contradiction of our freedom in Christ?
- b) Christian freedom is always conditioned by Christian responsibility. Christian responsibility is always conditioned by Christian love. Christian love is always the reflection of God's love. Thus, Christian liberty can be summed up in Augustine's memorable phrase: "Love God, and do what you like." Our freedom is exercised under God's authority.
- c) What does it mean to be free in Jesus Christ?
 - i) In John 8:32, Jesus said that the truth will set us free, but free from what? Verse 34 gives us the answer --- we are set free from sin. But when most people think of freedom, they think of being set free to sin.
 - ii) Those who use freedom as a license for evil reveal that they are not free at all. A life of wickedness is the very definition of slavery. Our freedom is not a release from bondage to a state of autonomy, but a release from bondage to become a slave of God. The Bible is very clear that every person on earth is in bondage (Romans 6:22); the only question is to whom.

4) ¹⁷ Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

- a) Honor all men.
 - i) Those who say the New Testament is neutral on the issue of slavery or even condones slavery have apparently failed to grasp the dramatic and revolutionary meaning of these three words in verse 17 – honor all men.
 - ii) At the time of this letter, there were 60 million slaves in the Roman empire. These slaves had no honor; they were treated merely as things. Christians must treat every person with dignity and respect because every person is created in the image of God.
- b) Love the brotherhood.

- i) Within the church, honor and respect turns to something warmer and closer; it turns to love. The dominant atmosphere in the church must always be love.
 - ii) Peter uses the term "brotherhood" to refer to the church. That word is only found in First Peter, and it occurs only here and in 1 Peter 5:9.
- c) Fear God.
- i) Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.
- d) Honor the king.
- i) The king is to be honored, but Peter did not say to fear the king. Only God is to be feared.
 - ii) Does this command to honor the king apply to us today?
 - (1) Does it apply to Presidents? Do we have to honor Democrats? or Republicans? What if the President turns out to be immoral? Do we still have to honor him? Maybe Peter was referring only to the good Roman emperors. And which Roman emperor would that be? There were no good Roman emperors!
 - (2) This is the most amazing of the four injunctions in verse 17 because when Peter wrote this letter the king in question was none other than Nero and one of his governors was none other than Pilate! If Peter could honor Nero as King and Pilate as Governor, then surely we can honor anyone (yes, anyone) as President!
 - (3) Exodus 22:28 (which Paul quoted in Acts 23:5) says that we should not speak evil of a ruler of the people.
 - (4) Jude 1:8-9 is particularly instructive on this point. He tells us we should not speak evil of dignities, and incredibly he uses Satan himself as an example of such a dignity! He points out that not even Michael the archangel was willing to bring a railing accusation against Satan, but left that to the Lord!
- e) A final important point is that while Rome was certainly evil and was certainly sentenced and judged in the book of Revelation, Rome was part of God's plan for the early church.

- i) The book of Daniel was written many centuries before Rome and yet it describes Rome as the earthly kingdom that would be in power when the eternal kingdom was established.
- ii) Roman rule permitted the freedom of travel that was needed to spread the gospel, and Paul often used his Roman citizenship to further his work in the kingdom of God.
- iii) Thus, one reason that Christians were to honor the king was that God was using that king to further his own plans for the church. That evil king would one day be judged along with his evil kingdom, but it would be God and not man who did the judging. The book of Revelation has much to say about the judgment of Rome, but the people of God are always pictured as bystanders in that book. They watch from heaven while God judges Rome. We are not God. We are not in the place of God.

5) ¹⁸ Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. ¹⁹ For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

- a) Servants and slaves made up by far the greatest part of the early church. As we have said, there were as many as 60 million slaves in the Roman empire at that time. In the Greek and Roman worlds, slavery anchored the entire economic system. In some urban areas as much as one third of the population lived in slavery.
 - i) People became slaves by being captured in wars, kidnapped, or born to other slaves. Those facing economic troubles sometimes sold themselves into slavery in order to survive. But slavery in the Greco-Roman world was not based on race, and slavery was not always a permanent condition. Some people became slaves voluntarily so that they could become Roman citizens after later gaining their freedom.
 - ii) The unusual thing about this section of the letter is that Peter addresses slaves at all. The Jewish and Stoic moral codes placed no moral demands on slaves, but placed demands only on their masters. To society, slaves were not full persons and thus did not have moral responsibility. But to the church, slaves were full and equal persons, and they were addressed as such. There must be no social distinctions in the church of Christ. (James 2:1-9) When Paul sent the runaway slave Onesimus back to Philemon, he said that Philemon should receive Onesimus not as a servant but as a brother. (Phil. 16)

- b)** The word that Peter uses for slave is not the word that is ordinarily used in the Bible, but is instead the word for household and domestic slaves.
- i)** Peter may have wanted to reserve the use of the ordinary word for "slave" to describe our service to the Lord, and that is precisely the term he used back in verse 16 to describe us as servants of God.
 - ii)** Whatever was behind Peter's choice of terms, it would be wrong to conclude that only menial tasks were performed by slaves. It would not have been unusual for a slave to have been better educated than his master. Doctors, teachers, musicians, actors, and secretaries were slaves. In fact, all work in Rome was done by slaves. Rome's attitude was that there was no point in being the master of the world and doing one's own work.
 - iii)** Slaves were the property of their owner, and while many slaves were loved and trusted members of the family, under Roman law a slave was not a person but a thing. Slaves had absolutely no legal rights at all. For a slave the only law was his master's will.
- c)** It was into this situation that Christianity came with its message that every person is precious in the sight of God. Far from being merely a thing, Christianity saw slaves as people for whom the Son of God died. The result, of course, was that social barriers were broken down.
- d)** Peter saw two dangers in this new and revolutionary situation.
- i)** The first danger was that a slave might presume upon his new relationship and make it an excuse for no longer working for his master.
 - (1)** Peter's answer to this possibility is that the slave under the new relationship must work even harder because he is working for God now. (Colossians 3:17)
 - (2)** Plus, when Christian slaves became better workers following their conversion, their masters would hardly have reason to complain when other slaves wanted to become Christians.
 - ii)** The second danger was that a slave might rebel against his master and seek to abolish slavery altogether.
 - (1)** Some people are puzzled about why the New Testament never pleads for the abolition of slavery or never even says in so many words that slavery is wrong. The reason is simple: To have encouraged a revolt by 60 million slaves in the Roman empire

would have led to a speedy disaster for the early church. There had been revolts before and they had always been speedily and savagely crushed. It was important to the survival and growth of the church that converted slaves be good slaves.

- (2) Nowhere does the Bible commend slavery as a social structure. It nowhere roots it in the created order, as if slavery were an institution ordained by God. The contrast with marriage is striking. God ordained the institution of marriage, but slavery was invented by man.
- (3) Also, the apostles knew something that we today would be wise to understand – the best way to transform a culture is by focusing on each individual's relationship with God. The best way to end slavery was to do what they did – allow the leaven of Christianity to work.

- e) Also, Peter says that the submission of the slaves is not determined by the actions of the master. They should submit to the gentle and kind, and they should submit to the froward. The Greek word for froward is "skolios," from which we get scoliosis, meaning these evil masters were bent or perverted.
- f) Verse 20 hints at where Peter is going next with his argument. The term translated "buffeted" in verse 20 is the same term that Mark used in Mark 14:65 to describe the beating suffered by Jesus at the hands of the servants of the high priest. (Mark's gospel, you recall, is most likely based on the preaching of Peter.) We are about to see that Peter's commands are not just pragmatic advice, but instead are anchored in the cross of Christ.

6) ²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³ Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: ²⁴ Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. ²⁵ For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

- a) But what if a Christian slave is mistreated by a cruel and unjust master? Peter's answer is that this is exactly what happened to Jesus.
 - i) Verses 21-25 are from Isaiah 53, which shows us the Suffering Servant.

- (1) Jesus was without sin and he came to serve rather than be served, and yet he was insulted and he suffered and he was killed.
 - (2) Peter never forgot that his Lord had washed his feet, and yet Peter had once been very slow to see Jesus as the Suffering Servant. In Mark 8:32 Peter actually rebuked Jesus for talking about his future sufferings. Peter now understands the meaning of the cross.
- b) Notice that verse 21 says that "to this you were called."
- i) We have been called to suffering, to unjust abuse, and to patient endurance. A life of suffering is our calling, not our fate. It is our calling because we are the people of God. It is our calling because we are the church of Christ. It is our calling because we daily take up the cross of the Suffering Servant and follow him.
- c) Jesus, Peter says in verse 21, is our example, and the word he uses for "example" is very vivid.
- i) He uses the word "hupogrammos," which is a word that describes the way that children learned to write in the ancient world. They would trace a pattern to learn their letters, and Jesus left us just such a pattern to follow.
 - ii) Two themes are woven together in this section of Peter's letter. One is the theme of the example of Christ's suffering, and the other is the theme of the saving purpose of Christ's suffering.
 - iii) Christ's suffering is our model because it is our salvation. It is the root of our motivation to follow him on that path of suffering. Isaiah foresaw it; Peter witnessed it. If we remove the atonement from this passage then its entire point would be lost.
 - iv) And Peter understood his need for atonement. He knew that the sacrifices of bulls and goats could not remove his sin. After witnessing the miracle of the fishes in Luke 5, Peter in verse 8 "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."
 - v) Peter started this section by speaking to servants, but now he is using the first person plural. Christ suffered for us; he left us an example.
- d) Verse 21 also says that we are to follow in the steps of Christ as we follow his example.
- i) 1 John 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

- ii) Peter had literally followed in his Master's footsteps along the narrow paths of the hill country in Galilee. The phrase "in his footsteps" appears only here in the New Testament. The thought is that we should be like a child placing foot after foot into the prints of his father in the snow.

- e) Modern readers of the New Testament sometimes wonder why God didn't just set all of the slaves free. But of course that is exactly what Jesus came to do. He died to set slaves free, but not from human bondage. He set us all free from the bondage of sin and death, which is infinitely worse than any slavery imposed by mankind.

- f) And how did Jesus set us free? Isaiah 53 tells us that Jesus gave himself as a willing sacrifice on our behalf.
 - i) Isaiah 53:12 "because he hath poured out his soul unto death"

 - ii) Hebrews 9:26 "but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

 - iii) A song that we sing quite often (The Lamb of God) misses this point completely. It says that the Romans sacrificed the Lamb of God. That is not true at all. The Romans and the Jewish leaders murdered the Lamb of God. (Acts 5:30; 10:39) Jesus sacrificed himself.

 - iv) John 10:17-18 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

 - v) Some might say this is a minor point. First, I disagree that it is a minor point. Second, even if it were a minor point, how unscriptural does a song have to be before we will stop singing it? What is our cut off point? (Do we have one?)

- g) We can learn much from Christ's example in the face of injustice.
 - i) We might think we have suffered some injustice, but no one has ever suffered or come remotely close to suffering the injustice that Christ, the sinless one, suffered at the hands of the Jewish mob.

 - ii) And what was his response? When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

iii) Jesus' silence in suffering reveals his confidence in God's vindication, and yet is there any part of Christ's example that is more difficult for us to follow? Don't we usually answer abuse with more abuse, and don't we usually respond to threats with more threats?

(1) Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

(2) 1 Thessalonians 5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

h) Verse 25 gives us two beautiful names for Jesus.

i) Jesus is our Shepherd.

(1) We are very familiar with the descriptions in the Old Testament of the Lord as our shepherd. (Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:11, Ezekiel 34:23)

(2) Jesus described himself as the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

(3) And Peter knew that as an apostle and an elder he had a responsibility for those sheep. Jesus gave him that charge:

(4) John 21:15-17 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

(5) In *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* Sir George Adam Smith describes the shepherd of Judaea. "With us, sheep are often left to themselves; but I do not remember ever to have seen in the East a flock of sheep without a shepherd. In such a landscape as Judaea, where a day's pasture is thinly scattered over an unfenced track of country, covered with delusive paths, still frequented by wild beasts, and rolling off into the desert, the man and his character are indispensable. On some high moor, across which at

night the hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning upon his staff, and looking out over his scattered sheep, everyone of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judaea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to their king, and made him the symbol of providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice."

ii) Jesus is our Bishop.

- (1)** The Greek word used here is episkopos, and the English translation "bishop" is an inadequate translation of that word.
- (2)** Episkopos is a word with a great history. In Homer's Iliad, Hector, the great champion of the Trojans, is called the episkopos who guarded the city of Troy. Under Athenian law, the episkopos was sent out to subject states to see that law and order and loyalty were observed.
- (3)** The term is many-sided. It means the protector of public safety, the guardian of honor and honesty, the overseer of right education and public morals, and the administrator of public law and order.
- (4)** To call Jesus our episkopos, is to call him our Guardian, our Protector, our Guide, and our Director.

iii) The emperor is not our Shepherd and Bishop, and neither is the slave master. Jesus is our Shepherd and our Bishop. In his love he cares for us; in his power he protects us; and in his wisdom he guides us.

- (1)** Zechariah brought together the figures of the Sufferer and the Shepherd.
 - (a)** Zechariah 13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.
 - (b)** And Peter could well remember this passage. He had heard Jesus quote it as he led the disciples from the last supper to the garden of Gethsamane. And what was Peter's response?
 - (c)** Mark 14:27-29 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28 But after

that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

- (d)** And yet Peter forsook Jesus and fled. Later he swore that he did not even know Jesus. What a joy it must have been for Peter to return to Jesus and receive forgiveness. Peter knew what it was like to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of his soul.