

# Crossing the hermeneutical bridge: 1 Peter 2.11-25

Many thanks to Rod Hill for today's TFTD



**Cross the hermeneutical bridge with me, if you will!**

This is one of those passages that is quite easy to read and find support and encouragement for our Christian discipleship, but there's more to it than that.

*Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

Of course, by our lives we witness to our faith. It's obvious isn't it?

*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.<sup>7</sup> Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.*

We are, of course, upright moral citizens who obey the law. Again, it's obvious isn't it?

And if there are periods in our lives when the going gets tough (and aren't there such times for all of us?) then:

<sup>9</sup> *... it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.*

**There's comfort to be found in this passage, but its also disturbing. But that's the way of the gospel – its comfort to the disturbed and disturbing to the**

**comfortable!**

**But** then there are those troublesome verses that we have to skip over because, well, they're difficult.

*6 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.*

Well, of course, that's just about OK, because we understand ourselves as servants of God. But how about v18?

*18 Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.*



Is the Bible really approving of slavery? We know that's wrong don't we?

And how about this?

*20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*

Is the Bible really saying that its Ok if people suffer for their faith, that its commendable to God? Is it really good for people to be punished by barbaric and brutal regimes in other parts of the world because of their Christian faith? Really??

No, the Bible can't be condoning slavery. It can't be condoning brutal suffering for faith can it? But it does, and that's really awkward. These passages simply

can't be airbrushed aside as if they didn't exist. We must face up to the reality that what seems right in the Biblical world views, simply isn't right in our world view. Slavery, torture etc. are not right!

Well, if that's the case then doesn't it also apply to other areas of life? Yes, absolutely! So, the process of hermeneutics is really quite crucial here, and everywhere else when we look at the Bible and other ancient documents. We need to cross the hermeneutical bridge, as my New testament Tutor used to put it.



In other words we have to ask the question “If that was the truth for them then, in their situation, what is the truth for us in our situation?” and often, as in this case, there are no easy answers!

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