

a. The Slave as the Paradigm for Believers (2:18–25)

Peter points to the slave, who was most vulnerable in Greco-Roman society, as a paradigm for the Christian believer who follows Jesus Christ. Because of their Christian commitment, Peter's readers may have been facing a loss of status and empowerment in their society. The slave had a low social status and little personal power and so is a fitting role model for this situation. Moreover, regardless of their standing in society, as Christians they are to live as slaves to God, obeying him in every aspect of life (2:16). Peter recognizes that Jesus Christ, God's very Son, was the Suffering Servant (i.e., slave) of Isa. 53, who submitted to unjust suffering in order to serve God's plan of redemption. His suffering provides the example that all Christians are to follow. Therefore, Peter begins to address the issue of commendable behavior in society's most basic unit, the household, by first addressing, in ascending order of empowerment, the Christian household slave before turning to the Christian wife and finally to the Christian husband as head of the household.

- i. The role of "household codes" in Greco-Roman culture
- ii. Christ dignifies the lowly (2:18–20)
- iii. Peter's Christology and the Christian's calling to unjust suffering (2:21–25)

Exegesis and Exposition

¹⁸Servants, submit with all respect to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹For this brings God's favor if, because of a consciousness of God, someone bears the grief of suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is it if, having sinned, you are beaten and endure it? Rather, if you endure suffering because of doing good, this brings favor with God. ²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you an example in order that you might follow in the footsteps of him

²²who did not commit sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth;

²³who when verbally abused did not retaliate, when he suffered he did not make threats, but instead trusted the One who judges justly;

²⁴who himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree so that, having no involvement with sins, we might live in righteousness; by whose wounds you are healed.

²⁵For you were like wandering sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

i. The Role of "Household Codes" in Greco-Roman Culture

In this passage the heart of Peter's Christology provides the foundational principle for living rightly in society's most common and mundane structure, the household. The juxtaposition of these two seemingly disparate topics is better understood when the importance of household relationships within Greco-Roman society is appreciated. Therefore, the exegetical commentary on these verses must be prefaced by some essential cultural background information that is largely foreign to readers today.

For centuries the Greek moral philosophers wrote about proper relationships within the household, slaves to masters, wives to husbands, and children to parents. Instructions with important points of contact with the NT; "household codes" can be found in *Republic* by Plato (384–370 BC), *Oeconomicus* by Xenophon (ca. 430–355 BC), *Oeconomica* by Aristotle (384–322 BC), *Advice to Bride and Groom* by Plutarch (AD ca. 46–120), *Moral Epistles* by Seneca (ca. 4 BC?–AD 65), and *On Household Management* by Dio Chrysostom (AD 40–ca. 112). (For a comparison of these Greek writers to 1 Peter, see Balch 1981.) Although these writers had different views on slaves and women, all shared a common belief that order in the household, which they believed to be divinely ordained, was the constituent basis for a strong, orderly, and prosperous society. In the Roman world, the authority of the *pater familias* (father of the household) was a defining principle for keeping good order in society. The term *familia*, from which the English word *family* derives, was not limited to the nuclear family known in modern society but extended to the household as a socioeconomic unit that included extended family members, slaves, clients, and other workers. "Family" was defined more by these relationships of subordination than by blood relationship" (Keener 2021: 168), and so was construed differently than the American nuclear family of our times. Of paramount importance was for each member of the unit to know and function well in his or her place for the common social good.

Modern scholarship has held differing views of the origin and purpose of the NT household codes (Balch, *ABD* 3:318–20; Fitzgerald, *ABD* 3:80–81). Household codes do not appear in the OT or in Jewish writings until Judaism engages the Greek worldview (e.g., Philo and Josephus). The copious writings concerning household management and their prominent place in the Greco-Roman culture suggest that no religion or philosophy entering that moral world could ignore addressing the same topic. Peter and Paul, whose theology and ethics are deeply rooted in the tradition of the OT, nevertheless include household codes in their letters to audiences whose worldview probably would have been influenced by the Greek moral writings. Even though both apostles address the topic of order in the household, neither simply affirms Greco-Roman expectations.

The function of the household codes in the NT ethical instruction is also debated (Balch, *ABD* 3:318–20; Fitzgerald, *ABD* 3:80–81). Some argue that they represent a legalistic response to social unrest in the church caused by

egalitarian movements among women and slaves (Crouch 1972). J. H. Elliott (2000) argues that the household code functions to bring to the church a cohesive identity that would be consistent with its missionary goals. Balch (1981) contends that the codes function apologetically in response to social criticism of the effect of Christianity on the household and therefore on the social order. These various views are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Moreover, Peter and Paul may not have had precisely the same reason in mind for including the household code in their writings. Both apostles do teach that new life in Christ is to be lived out within existing social structures, as troubling as that may be in the case of slavery. However, the function of the code in Col. 3:18–4:1 seems directed to correcting false teaching. Peter's use of the code functions apologetically in its immediate context (see 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:15). It was "to show that Christians were good members of society, not seeking to radically overturn Roman social structures. . . . While recognizing the wrongness of unjust systems, believers must sometimes work within the constraints of a hostile system because it remains the best available option. Still, these codes adapt moral instruction in a specifically Christian direction . . . introducing a fairly distinctive form of mutuality" (Keener 2021: 169).

While addressing the topic of household management and using a form similar to the Greek moral writers, Peter puts household relationships on an entirely new footing that subverts the moral code as it had been previously taught by the Greek philosophers.

In reference to the precepts given to parents, children, and brothers in Greco-Roman thought, Seneca (*Ep.* 95), a Roman contemporary with Peter, writes, "No one will do his duty as he ought, unless he has some principle to which he may refer his conduct. We must set before our eyes the goal of the Supreme Good, towards which we may strive and to which all our acts and words may have reference—just as sailors must guide their course according to a certain star" (Gummere 1943: 87). Seneca further observes that humankind cannot make progress until it "has conceived a right idea of God." First Peter agrees that there is a right idea of God, which must guide all of life, but goes further by claiming that the right idea of God is to be found in Jesus Christ (1:3). It is not the philosophy of great thinkers but the new birth through Christ's resurrection (1:3) that is needed as the basis of ethics. The "certain star" to which all our acts and words as Christians must have reference is not the Supreme Good of Greek philosophy but the Supreme God revealed in Jesus Christ. Thus, Christian slaves, wives, and husbands are to conduct themselves within the social expectations of their day *but* as transformed by Peter's instructions because of their new relationship to God in Christ.

Because of the pervasive and sustained interest in proper household relationships as foundational to the empire's well-being, it is not surprising that when both great apostles, Peter and Paul, write to destinations holding a Greco-Roman worldview, they give instructions on how Christians who have realigned their sociopolitical loyalties with the kingdom of God are nevertheless to live responsibly in society. The same slave-master, wife-husband,

child-parent pairs found in the NT *Haustafeln*,¹ or “household codes,” are found throughout the Greek philosophers, but with significant differences between the NT and the Greek writers. The similarity in form indicates that the NT writers are deliberately engaging this aspect of Greco-Roman culture. The differences between the NT and the Greek philosophers on this topic demonstrate that the apostles’ view has been formed by the religious convictions of the OT and not by the Greek thought they are engaging, even though they use the Greco-Roman form.

The very name “household codes” obscures the original function of the teaching as instructions on how to fulfill one’s sociopolitical duty within greater society as a slave, a wife, or a husband. Plato taught that each person in the household has a place under the man’s authority. The child, the woman, and the slave are each to submit *in different ways* to the man’s authority and are not to aspire to the roles of another (*Resp.* 4.433A, C–D). The acceptance of one’s station is fundamental to right household management, which “demands in the first place familiarity with the sphere of one’s actions”—in other words, behaving in the manner appropriate to one’s own role (Aristotle, *Oec.* 2.1.1; Armstrong 1936: 345). Goppelt’s (1993: 162–79) suggestion that these be understood as “station codes” is more accurate to their function, since Greek moral philosophy understood each person’s position in life to be divinely mandated, and the wise person faithfully performed the duties of his or her station.

Because of the importance of household relationships for social stability, religions introduced into the empire by foreigners were judged in large part by whether or not they complied with the expectations for household relationships. One of the apologetic tasks for a religious group was to show compliance with the important elements of social order, as Josephus does for Judaism (*Ag. Ap.* 2.158, 193, 220, 225, 235, 293). In contrast to Judaism, the Egyptian Isis cult was viewed as a threat to the Roman way of life because it permitted a woman authority over her husband (Balch 1988: 29). Therefore, the household codes of the NT had important apologetic value as the newly formed religion of Christianity took root in Greco-Roman society. This no doubt was a concern of the apostle Paul, since he teaches on proper roles for men and women in church order in the city of Ephesus, also in Asia Minor (1 Tim. 2:1–3:13).

The household code has been “misused, misinterpreted, and misappropriated in order to underwrite power hierarchies between husbands and wives, masters and slaves, and state and citizens. Unfortunately, such readings often stray far from what the letter is actually asserting, ratifying the hierarchies and inequities specified in the letter as the work of flawed human institutions, not the prophetic and revelatory work of Christ” (S. Smith 2016: 70–71).

1. This German word has come to be an almost technical term for referring to this form of teaching. It apparently became associated with Eph. 5:21–6:9 and Col. 3:18–4:1 during Luther’s time, perhaps under the influence of his writings.

Since slavery is not an accepted part of Western society today (though it still is prevalent in various forms), modern preaching of 1 Pet. 2:18–3:7 (as well as Eph. 5:21–6:9 and Col. 3:18–4:1) has primarily focused on the instructions addressed to wives and husbands as a type of marriage manual, obscuring its original sociopolitical message and function. Even more distorting is the disproportional attention usually lavished on the instructions to wives. The modern concept of the privatization of whatever goes on within the home further distorts our understanding of this passage as well, for in the first century, behavior within the home was perceived very much as society's business. As Balch (1981: 26) observes, "The household relationship which we normally consider private, individual matters are here [in Greek thought] part of a social-political philosophic ethic." The latent sociopolitical function of household relationships within the teaching of 1 Peter must be retrieved if the apostle's teaching is to be more fully understood and appreciated.

Peter's emphatic opening description of Christians as those who have been born again into a new life with new allegiances and the further description of Christians as a people set apart as God's own possession and as a kingdom of priests make it necessary for Peter to explain how the new life in Christ is to operate within the most basic social unit, the household. The apostle Peter informs Christians of their duties in a way that affirms part of the Greco-Roman social order while subtly rejecting those premises that are not compatible with the gospel. Peter is concerned that his readers not use their moral freedom in Christ in a way that brings condemnation on the infant church for subverting social order. At the same time, the moral freedom that Christians have been given in Christ transforms their understanding of themselves in ways unparalleled in the Greek moral philosophy of their time.

Slaves (2:18) and wives (3:1) are both exhorted using forms of the same verb, *υποτάσσω* (*hypotassō*, be subject to). Slaves and wives also shared some common social expectations in first-century Greco-Roman culture in distinction from those placed on the male head of household. Therefore, some discussion of the historical background common to both is necessary in order to understand 2:18–25 and 3:1–6 in their original historical setting.

The either/or polarity sometimes implied by the debates of NT scholarship about whether the NT writers were more influenced by Jewish backgrounds or by the Greco-Roman is misleading because both backgrounds are important in virtually every book. In explaining the significance of Jesus Christ, Peter and other writers of the NT are drawing from the wellspring of Judaism, especially Diaspora Judaism, and its religious heritage. The very Jewish nature of Peter's epistle demonstrates that its author's thought is steeped in the traditions and writings of the OT. However, the audiences to whom 1 Peter and other NT writings are addressed, whether they were primarily Jewish Christian or Gentile Christian, lived in societies that were shaped by the Greco-Roman worldview. Therefore, it is particularly fitting, when the apostles instruct their readers on how to live as Christians within such a society, that they engage the thought-world of the Greco-Roman writers whose ideas shaped the values

and expectations of that society. This is not to say that the NT writers were unduly influenced by pagan thought or to blur the distinction between the Judeo-Christian worldview and that of Roman society. Those who feel compelled to defend exclusively or primarily a Jewish background and reject the part that Greco-Roman backgrounds play in the household codes miss the nuanced sensitivities of the NT writers.

There is some debate whether the form of the Greek words for "slaves" (οἱ οἰκέται, *hoi oiketai*) in 2:18 and "wives" (γυναῖκες, *gynaikes*) in 3:1 should be taken as vocative (the case of direct address) or as nominative. Nominative forms are found most frequently in the Greek moral philosophers to refer to slaves and wives as classes of people, but in general they do not directly address them. The context and structure of the 1 Peter passage suggest that here these articular nominatives function as vocatives (cf. Mark 5:8; Luke 8:54; John 19:3; 20:28; Eph. 5:22; Wallace 1996: 58). Unlike the Greek writers, Peter directly addresses both slaves and wives, assuming that both are morally responsible for their own behavior, which should exceed social expectations of that day. The slave might have no choice about living in a pagan household under a harsh master, but the slave does have the power to choose good or evil because of their "newfound 'consciousness of God' (1 Pet 2:19)" (S. Smith 2016: 73). The Christian wife of an unbelieving husband may have few options in that society, but she nevertheless has command over her own demeanor and disposition toward her husband.

Although instructions are often given about master-slave relationships in the Greek writings, slaves were not directly addressed as free moral agents as we find in the NT (Balch 1988: 33). Aristotle (*Oec.* 1.5.1–2; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 47), for instance, describes slaves as human chattel of two kinds: those in positions of trust and brute laborers. While wives do not have the full social and legal status of their husbands, they are not thought of as human chattel (contra popular modern belief) in Greek moral philosophy. In fact, within the walls of the home, wives enjoyed a large degree of authority over slaves, children, and property. In *Advice* 142.33, Plutarch (AD 46?–120) explains that a man ought to exercise control over a woman "not as the owner has control of a piece of property, but, as the soul controls the body, by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through goodwill. . . . It is possible to govern a wife, and at the same time to delight and gratify her" (Babbitt 1971: 323).²

In the Greek writings, wives, like slaves, receive instruction through their husbands because both slave and wife are thought to be deficient, though not in the same way.³ Aristotle understands the slave to be incapable of deliberative thinking, while the wife has the capability but not the commensurate authority

2. However, in an argument against adultery, Epictetus (*Diatr.* 2.4.1–8) does refer to women as property: "What then, you say: are not women common property? I agree, and the little pig is the common property of the invited guests; but when portions have been assigned . . . it is wrong to take another man's portion" (Oldfather 1926: 235–37).

3. See Xenophon, *Oecon.* 7–10: when Socrates is concerned about a woman's views, he questions her husband about how he has instructed his wife.

(Balch 1981: 34–35). Thus, it was considered proper to direct all instruction through the man, who has both the capability and authority to reason fully. Moreover, the instruction of the wife should be the object of the husband's unstinting care (Aristotle, *Oec.* 3.2). While some modern interpreters consider the NT household codes to be hopelessly chauvinistic, they fail to read the codes against their contemporary literature, which shows that the NT writers actually subverted cultural expectations by elevating the slave and the wife with unparalleled dignity.

Slaves made up a significant percentage of the population of the Roman Empire. It is estimated that about twelve million people were enslaved, about 16–20 percent of the empire's population, so their role was significant to socioeconomic stability (Bartchy 2013: 169). Every well-to-do Roman family had slaves, in some cases in large numbers (Oborn 1939: 135), and sometimes slaves even owned other slaves. One senatorial household owned more than four hundred slaves. "Slaves were owned not only by individuals and families but also by various corporations, such as religious temples, voluntary associations, communities and municipalities, and even the state" (Bartchy 2013: 169–70). Roman slavery was not based on skin color or ethnic/national identity, and slaves functioned in roles at many levels of society from field workers to managers of large farms to teachers and doctors, and apparently did not view themselves as one social class.

Modern sensibilities are offended by the NT's apparent acceptance of slavery without outright condemnation of the practice, though it must be noted that writers such as the apostles Paul and Peter plant the moral seeds that, when in full fruit, would abolish slavery as a legitimate practice (cf. 1 Cor. 7:21; Volf 1994: 23). While the institution of slavery in any of its various forms throughout history (and today) is morally reprehensible, in Greco-Roman society "slavery became not only economically indispensable and elaborately regulated by law but also morally justified and regarded as normal" (Bartchy 2013: 169). "Ancient authors showed little interest in discussing slavery as a social institution" (Bartchy 2013: 170), and the NT writers are no exception. Slavery is that type of systemic evil so ingrained in the social fabric of human history that only the return of Christ at the end of the age can bring its practice completely to an end. Which is not to say that it should not be rejected and fought against now everywhere it's found.

Another distinctive difference between Greek writings and Peter's instructions to Christian slaves and wives is that he rejects the cultural expectation that a slave must worship his or her master's god and a wife must worship her husband's. The slave's loyalty to the master's gods ensured economic and social stability. In particular, any religion that advocated equality of any kind between slaves and masters would be met with swift and certain opposition.

Wives were similarly expected to follow the husband's religion. In *Advice* 140.19, Plutarch instructs: "A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to

know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions" (Babbitt 1971: 311).

If Plutarch's view represents that of first-century Greco-Roman society, a pagan woman who becomes a Christian could appear rebellious for not worshipping her husband's gods as well as for making friends in the Christian community who were not her husband's friends. First-century social expectations of the wife were quite different from those of our own society, where both husband and wife may have friendships apart from the other and be of different religions without provoking accusations of perverting the social order. This large difference in social expectations suggests that we must be thoughtful about how these biblical instructions are to be observed by Christians today.

Furthermore, the expectation that a wife would worship her husband's gods also raised a problem for the first-century husband who had converted to Christianity. He may have faced the problem of a wife who, though formally expected to follow his new faith, in reality resented being socially demeaned by her husband's association with this strange, new religion. Her rebellion against Christianity might in turn diminish her husband's status in society's eyes because the man was responsible for order in his own household regardless of his religion. What was a man in such a position to do so that he could fulfill his duty as the head of the household while respecting the reality in which he lived? Peter saves his final household instructions for married men (3:7).

In the first century, any religion that did not uphold the proper order between men and their slaves and between husbands and their wives was severely criticized. In fact, foreigners were evaluated and welcomed into society to the extent to which their household patterns were compatible with those of the Greek moral philosophers (Balch 1981). Christianity was not the only religion to come under such scrutiny, but its worldview was certainly suspect. In these verses, Peter affirms the sociopolitical order, on the one hand, while reworking it on Christian principles, on the other, so that Christian households become a direct expression of eschatological self-understanding lived out in society (Goppelt 1993: 173). As Volf (1994: 22) observes, "The household codes in 1 Peter are in fact an example of differentiated acceptance and rejection of the surrounding culture." Balch (1988: 36) refers to them as "selective acculturation." S. Smith (2016: 79) observes, "The effect [of Peter's instruction] is that 1 Peter flattens the patriarchal power structure in the Christian household," the exact opposite of how the passage has often been used by interpreters to assert the husband's control over the wife. The basis for Peter's reworking of social expectations is the example of Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant of God, in whose footsteps all Christians—including slaves, wives, and husbands—are to follow.

ii. Christ Dignifies the Lowly (2:18-20)

Peter's readers may have been feeling a loss of empowerment and status because of their Christian convictions and the various social misperceptions of what

2:18

those convictions meant for the social order. As Christians who are to “submit to the authority of every human institution because of the Lord” (2:13), slaves and wives are to be subject to their masters and husbands, respectively. Slaves are to submit to even unjust masters, and therefore, they are here paradigmatic for the status of all Christians (as also Achtemeier 1993: 177; Achtemeier 1996: 195; B. Campbell 1998: 143; J. H. Elliott 1981: 207; Schreiner 2020: 159). Regardless of one's social status, Christians are to consider themselves to be slaves to God, and so the actual slave who is loyal and obedient to his master exemplifies that role for the entire Christian community.

But this is not the only reason Peter addresses slaves, and addresses them first at that. Peter here makes the point that God sent his Son as one who would seemingly have so little sociopolitical power that he would end up dying a slave's death by crucifixion. In this passage, Peter identifies Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53, providing us the only NT passage that does so this explicitly and extensively. Peter bases his instructions for *all* Christian members of society on the example of Christ's lowly position in human society, but he first addresses the least empowered—the slave, who by definition is being treated unjustly. The role of the slave in Roman society images the role of Jesus Christ, who was a suffering slave obedient to God but treated unjustly in the world. Therefore, Peter addresses slaves first for the purpose of motivating ethical behavior by Christology, not because they are particularly numerous in the church (though that may well have been true). This intent also explains why he does not address their powerful masters at all. Peter also does not address the parent-child relationship because he is primarily interested in instructing the least powerful adults of society on how they should conduct themselves as Christians. The unique nature of Peter's purpose also explains why his sequence and content are different from similar passages in Eph. 5:21–33 and Col. 3:18–22 and calls into question whether the *Haustafeln* provide relevant evidence for literary dependence between Peter and Paul.

The apostle Peter elevates the dignity and self-understanding of the least empowered people of that time, the slave first and then the wife. The Son of God has dignified even the lowliest in society by becoming like them in his incarnation. Wives, being next to slaves in the hierarchy of social power and status, are addressed next. Christian husbands, whose social status and power have probably also been compromised in some way because of the gospel, are addressed not only last but also with the fewest words. Peter points to Jesus Christ as the true model for how to live a significant, dignified life of freedom even in the midst of the most oppressive situation. This dignity flows from the inner strength and freedom to respond to circumstances in a way that glorifies God.

Peter addresses household slaves by using the more specific word οἰκέται (*oiketai*, household servants) rather than the more general δοῦλοι (*douloi*, slaves) simply because he is concerned specifically with the household unit. Even though household servants fared better than field slaves, both were the property of others and subject to harsh treatment at their master's whims. In

2:16 Peter has just referred to all Christians as slaves (*douloi*) of God, introducing this concept as a way Christians are to understand themselves. The word also connects to Peter's Christology, for Isa. 53:11 OG refers to the suffering of the servant (*παῖς, pais*, 52:13 OG) by using a participle of the cognate verb *δουλεύω (douleuō, serve as a slave)*. The indirect nature of the associations between Isa. 53 and the passion of Jesus in Mark's Gospel is what might be expected if mediated by Peter, the only NT writer who explicitly identifies Jesus with the Suffering Servant (see Michaels 2004; Watts 1998).

Christian slaves may have wondered, or perhaps even wishfully hoped, that their new birth into a living hope would relieve them from the oppressive social expectations of their station. Peter affirms that they are now indeed free people but also that this freedom does not entitle them to rebel against their masters, whether those masters be good and considerate or harsh. Apparently harsh treatment of slaves was socially acceptable and perhaps even expected by the Romans. Seneca, a Roman Stoic philosopher writing about the same time the books of the NT were being composed, criticizes those in power for being "excessively haughty, cruel, and insulting" toward their slaves, whom they should instead view as fully human and to be treated as friends (*Ep.* 47.11; Gummere 1934: 306-7).

The participle *ὑποτασσόμενοι (hypotassomenoi, submit)* in 1 Pet. 2:18 and 3:1 are conventionally understood and translated as imperatival, for they are in the nominative case and not syntactically subordinated to a finite verb in the sentence. Rhetorically, these participles relate to and resume the context of 2:13, where the same lexeme, *ὑποτάσσω (hypotassō)*, commands the submission of all Christians to the authority of human institutions. This can be read as an adverbial pleonastic participle that rhetorically, if not syntactically, resumes the thought of *hypotasso* in 2:13, by giving in 2:18 and 3:1 two specific examples of *ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει (anthrōpine ktisei, institutions of human authority)*, the submission of the slave and the submission of the wife. Its imperatival sense comes from the imperative mood of *hypotassō* in 2:13. As A. T. Robertson, citing J. H. Moulton, says of Paul's irregular use of participles, "All this is more a matter of style than of grammar.' It is rhetoric" (Robertson 1934: 1136). The same can perhaps be said of Peter in this case. (See additional note on 2:18.)

The command to submit is qualified by the adverbial prepositional phrase "in all fear" (*ἐν παντί φόβῳ, en panti phobō*, 2:18), which is repeated in the instructions to both wives (3:1) and husbands (3:7) by the adverb *ὁμοίως (homoios, in the same way)*. This reference to fear, or reverence, echoes the exhortation of 1:17 that fear of God is to be the Christian's motivation. Peter therefore understands all Christian members of the household, regardless of their station, to be joined by the common motivation based on their relationship with God.

Aristotle (*Oec.* 3.3; Armstrong 1936: 411) defines a distinction between the two kinds of fear connoted by the Greek word *φόβος (phobos)*: "The fear which virtuous and honorable sons feel towards their fathers, and loyal citizens

towards right-minded rulers, has for its companions reverence and modesty; but the other kind, felt by slaves for masters and by subjects for despots who treat them with injustice and wrong, is associated with hostility and hatred.” This distinction was also known to Hellenistic Judaism (Daube 1956: 130). The Greek word *phobos* is used frequently in the LXX/OG to refer to a reverent stance toward God that motivates right behavior (e.g., Gen. 31:42, 53; Exod. 20:20; Neh. 5:9; Prov. 1:7, 29; 8:13; 9:10; 19:23; 23:17). Proverbs 1:29 is particularly instructive because it refers to the “fear of the LORD” as something that may be chosen rather than an emotion that is simply evoked: “Since they hated knowledge and did not *choose* to fear the LORD . . .” (emphasis added).

Although both slaves and wives may indeed be terrified of what their master and husband, respectively, might do to them, the sense of “reverence” is intended here (also applied to the instructions to husbands through the adverb *homoios*, “in the same way,” 1 Pet. 3:7). Husbands are to live well with their wives because of the husband’s reverence for God. Rather than cowering in terror before harsh masters and tyrannical husbands, Christian slaves and wives are to conduct themselves “with all godly reverence” (Achtmeier 1996: 189), “with all due reverence [to God]” (Davids 1990: 105), “with all reverence” (J. H. Elliott 2000: 511), “with deep reverence” (Michaels 1988: 133). They are to choose to fear God by behaving in their relationships in a manner that expresses obedience to him.

However, the other side of the reverence in view is to recognize that the God they revere is also the God who judges impartially (1:17). The station code expounds on 1:17 by setting out how the fear of God’s impartial judgment motivates one’s demeanor in life’s most basic relationships. To submit “in all fear” (2:18, a literal reading of the Greek) means that one’s reverence for God translates into “respect” for both good and harsh masters and, in 3:2, respect for unbelieving husbands, while recognizing that God will judge the behavior of the harsh master and unbelieving husband (Sylva 1983: 147). But God will also judge the Christian’s disobedience. In 3:7 married men are to live with their women “in the same way” that slaves and wives are to submit, with fear of the One who judges them. Therefore, Christian slaves, wives, and husbands are to conduct themselves respectfully within the social expectations of their day—as modified by Peter’s instructions—because of the reverence for God their new life in Christ demands.

The direct transformation of society’s structures, even those that are patently unjust, does not seem to be the goal of the NT writers. However, it is also notable that the NT nowhere commands or commends the institution of slavery. Though we may wish Peter more forcefully took on the sociopolitical powers of his day, the early church had no resources or “real systemic power in the governing systems around them” (S. Smith 2016: 169). “It [Peter’s strategic maneuvering] precipitates a different kind of liberation ethic—one that may make modern interpreters of the letter, especially those of us committed to social activism and aggressive acts of social transformation, cringe” (S. Smith 2016: 168). But the apostle Peter’s wisdom sees that the infant Christian

communities must stay alive for the sake of the gospel. "It is a time to survive the system despite the system," to live to fight another day (S. Smith 2016: 169).

Rather than a direct attack on Greco-Roman social norms, Peter's message is that it is the transformation of the believer *regardless of one's situation* that is the primary concern. This allows the letter to speak into every sociopolitical situation the Christian church will encounter until the Lord returns.

In fact, Peter seems intent on making sure that Christians do not directly confront the status quo even while he subverts it. The implied assumptions of Peter's teaching (e.g., directly addressing slaves and wives as heirs of the grace of God in Christ who have moral authority over their own lives equal to that of free men), if followed to their logical extent by a society committed to such teaching, will indeed restructure that society.

Even in such a harsh situation as slavery, the Christian slave is to submit to the master's authority and to bear up under unjust treatment because of a consciousness of God. The fact that Peter describes such suffering as "unjust" (ἀδίκως, *adikōs*, 2:19) also implies an unprecedented status for the slave, to whom, according to Aristotle, no true injustice can be done (Balch 1984: 164; Volf 1994: 23).

2:19-
20

Because the slave functions rhetorically as the paradigm for all believers, this specific exhortation to bear unjust treatment moves Peter's argument to its most controversial level as he addresses the heart of the problem faced by his readers. The issue of accepting unjust suffering would trigger a range of responses, as even classroom discussion of this passage demonstrates today. Peter both accommodates and subverts the existing social structures. Neither he nor any other NT writer mounts a frontal attack on the social structures of the time, such as slavery. But as Volf (1994: 23) observes, "The call to follow the crucified Messiah was, in the long run, much more effective in changing the unjust political, economic, and familial structures than direct exhortations to revolutionize them would ever have been. For an allegiance to the crucified Messiah—indeed, worship of a crucified God—is an eminently political act that subverts a politics of dominion at its very core." As Christians live out their calling in obedience to God even within unjust social structures, they are subverting the status quo and opening a new way of thinking.

Peter's instruction is consistent with the Hellenistic concept that it is morally better to suffer as not guilty than as guilty. One of the ideals of Christianity is to right injustice, which seems to argue against the Christian community simply accepting unjust treatment of its members. However, when facing the enormity of the first-century Greco-Roman slave economy, none of the NT writers hold out much hope for changing the ways of the world. Instead, they exhort the transformation of Christ's people, making the holy nation a colony in this fallen world. Because Peter's readers presumably want God in Christ to be glorified, they are asked to submit even to unjust suffering because, as Christ himself has demonstrated, this is the way to break the world's ways and perhaps one day bring unbelievers to praise and glorify God themselves.

But Peter is not optimistic about reforming the world. In fact, he assumes that injustice will reign until the Lord's return and that to bear up under unjust suffering without sinning is in fact the calling of every believer regardless of social status. Peter is clear that he is not speaking of suffering caused by one's own misbehavior (2:20; 4:15). But when Christians suffer unjustly and do not sin in response, this is *χάρις* (*charis*, grace, 2:19) before God. Many commentators understand the phrase that mentions *charis* in 2:19–20 to mean that God looks with favor (grace) upon a righteous response to unjust suffering (Achtmeier 1996: 189; Davids 1990: 105; J. H. Elliott 2000: 511). The NIV translates the phrase as “is commendable before God” (2:20). The word *charis* was widely used in secular Greek literature to refer to “the bounty or benefit granted a person or community by a benefactor, whether the benefactor is human or divine” (G. Green 2019: 334). It became a technical theological term in Paul for “God's bestowal of himself through Jesus' work of redemption, the bestowal that bears and shapes the destiny of the person who gives himself or herself over to it” (Goppelt 1993: 200). While it may not be assumed that one NT writer uses a term in exactly the same sense as another, Peter does use the word *charis* in 5:12 to sum up the entire content of the letter: “This is the true grace of God.” Goppelt (1993: 200) explains, “The author wants to assure the readers that the existence into which they have been placed through Christ is truly grace. Even proper conduct in one's station in this world and especially the suffering connected with it are, indeed, grace.” Responding righteously to unjust suffering is commendable in God's sight, but *charis* in this context also implies that God's special favor rests upon the righteous sufferer of injustice, further enabling that one to behave in a manner that is commendable by God. Peter makes this point more explicitly in 4:14: “If you are vilified because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

iii. Peter's Christology and the Christian's Calling to Unjust Suffering (2:21–25)

1- The presence of a passage about Christ's suffering in 2:21–25 is unexpected in the middle of a discussion about slaves, wives, and husbands. The topic of suffering does not appear in otherwise similar pagan household codes and is unique to Peter's purposes (Thompson 1966: 73). Peter claims that slaves, and by extension all Christians (3:9), are called both to suffer unjustly and to continue to do right as they follow the example of Jesus Christ in his passion. Although this call is embedded in instructions addressed to slaves, Peter has previously referred to all Christians as slaves of God (2:16) and restates the principle explicitly for all his readers in 3:9. First Peter 2:21–25 forms the heart of 1 Peter's Christology, joining ethics to theology in a profoundly compelling way. Ironically, the suffering of Christ has become central to the Christology of the apostle who most strongly objected to Jesus' prediction of his death (Matt. 16:21–23; Mark 8:31–33).

The suffering to which slaves, and by extension all Christians, are called is not suffering caused by the human condition, such as illness, aging, and death. Nor is it suffering that is the consequence of one's own sin and poor judgment, though the same response of trusting in the Lord is appropriate in all such life situations (cf. 2:23). Peter's call is to suffer unjustly, to suffer even though one has done nothing to provoke or deserve it, simply because one is living faithfully by Christian values. The challenge of the call does not stop there; Peter further exhorts the Christian to keep on doing good even when unjust suffering continues to be the result.

The identity of Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant poignantly yet enigmatically portrayed in Isa. 53 is well known in Christian tradition. (The Isaiah passage actually runs from 52:13 to 53:12 but for convenience will here be referred to simply as Isa. 53.) What may be more surprising is that the church owes this insight to the apostle Peter alone, for it is only here in the NT that Christ's passion is discussed in terms of Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant. There are six direct quotations of Isa. 53 in the NT (Matt. 8:17; Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Acts 8:32-33; Rom. 10:16; 15:21), but surprisingly only two of them are used in reference to Jesus. Other than 1 Peter 2:21-25, the closest christological use of Isa. 53 is found in Acts 8:35, where the eunuch is reading from Isaiah's prophecy and Philip begins with that passage to tell the eunuch the good news about Jesus, but there is no actual exposition there of the specific elements of Isa. 53 as they relate to Jesus. We are thus indebted to the apostle Peter alone for his distinctive christological use of the Suffering Servant passage to interpret the significance of the suffering and death of Jesus. The Suffering Servant Christology may have even originated with Peter, possibly based on Jesus' teaching. Of the five NT verses referring to Jesus as the servant (παῖς, *pais*) of God, two occur in a speech attributed to Peter (Acts 3:13, 26) and two in a prayer of the early Jerusalem church when Peter is in leadership (Acts 4:27, 30). (The fifth passage is Matt. 12:18, which quotes Isa. 42:1-4 in reference to the healings Jesus performed.)

Luke's passing reference to the identification of Jesus and the Suffering Servant in Acts 8:35 suggests that the identification was already well established in Christian tradition by the time Luke is writing, perhaps as early as AD 60-62. Therefore, if 1 Peter is the source of this tradition, the epistle would have to be dated in the 50s or earlier. It is debated whether Jesus himself used the Suffering Servant passage of Isa. 53 to explain his ministry (Hooker 1998). But even those who deny that Jesus saw himself in these terms admit that the identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah must have emerged in the very early church (e.g., Hillyer 1969a: 144).

On the other hand, if 1 Peter is drawing on a preexisting Christ-hymn that would have also been available to Luke, the absence of this material in its hymnic form in the earlier writings of the NT is somewhat surprising. Most interpreters today have backed away from the claim that this passage was a preexisting hymn that Peter adapted for his purposes. That was the prevailing opinion until the 1980s, when the work of Best (1971), Osborne

(1983), and Michaels (1988) offered better explanations. Three observations on 1 Pet. 2:21–25 were once offered to show that it was from a preexisting hymn: (1) the shift from second person to third person and back, (2) the repeated use of the relative pronoun ὅς (*hos*, who), and (3) the shift from addressing slaves to christological material relevant to all readers. As Achtemeier (1993: 178) counters, (1) the shift in person would be expected from the use of any source, including a direct use of Isa. 53 OG; (2) the relative pronoun *hos* is used repeatedly throughout the epistle in places that are clearly not hymnic; and (3) even the material explicitly addressed to slaves is in fact implicitly addressed to the entire community, because the slave, as the least empowered member of society, was to be the metaphorical paradigm for all believers. The direct use of Isa. 53 OG provides sufficient explanation of the source material.

Because it is the heart of 1 Peter's Christology, 2:21–25 is worth lingering over. In a notably creative use of OT material, elements of Christ's passion as documented in the Gospels are interwoven with phrases and allusions from Isa. 53 OG that interpret aspects of his trial and suffering. As M. Hooker (1998: 93) notes, Peter does not use Isa. 53 as a proof text, but his use of this material has moved beyond a "simple appeal to 'what is written' to the explanation of its *significance*" (emphasis original). This translation of 1 Pet. 2:21–25 highlights the extensive and creative use of Isa. 53 OG by showing quotations of it in boldface and allusions to it in italics:

-
- | | |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2:20b | Rather, if you endure suffering because of doing good, this brings favor with God. |
| 2:21 | For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you an example in order that you might follow in the footsteps of him. |
| 2:22 | who did not commit sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth [Isa. 53:9]; |
| 2:23 | who when verbally abused <i>did not retaliate</i> , when he suffered <i>he did not make threats</i> [Isa. 53:7c–d], but instead <i>trusted</i> [Isa. 53:6c, 12] <i>the One who judges justly</i> [Isa. 53:8a]; |
| 2:24 | who himself bore our sins [Isa. 53:4a, 12] in his body upon the tree so that, having no involvement with sins, we might live for righteousness; by whose wounds you are healed [Isa. 53:5d]. |
| 2:25 | For you were like wandering sheep [Isa. 53:6a], but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. |
-

Citing Hooker, Moyise points out that this "mixture of quotations and allusions make it the most 'elaborate reorganization or rewriting of Is. 53' in the New Testament" (Moyise 2005: 183). Peter makes three preachable points: (1) Jesus was innocent and did not retaliate; (2) Jesus accomplished redemption for sin; (3) before coming in faith to Jesus Christ the reader was in a life-threatening situation, like a sheep without a shepherd (Moyise 2005: 183).

As Achtemeier (1993: 180) observes, Peter uses the language of Isa. 53 but not its sequence. Instead, the order of 1 Pet. 2:22–25 follows the sequence of events in the passion of Jesus, with 2:22 and 2:23 alluding to the trial, and

2:24 to the crucifixion. Goppelt (1993: 211) also points out that this passage reflects three fundamental aspects of the passion narrative as described in Mark's Gospel:

1. Verbal abuse refers to slander by the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:65), ridicule by the Roman guards (Mark 15:12–20), and derision by the crucified thief (Mark 15:29–32).
2. Jesus accepts injustice without retaliating; in fact, he accepts it in silence (Mark 14:61; 15:5). His silence can be compared with the loud threats made by previous Jewish martyrs in 2 Macc. 7:17, 19, 31, 35, and 4 Macc. 10:1–3.
3. Jesus trusted judgment to God, thereby leaving the preservation of justice to God the Father alone (Mark 14:62). Most interpreters understand this to mean Jesus entrusted himself and his cause to God (cf. 1 Pet. 4:19; G. Green 2019: 352; J. Green 2007: 81; Keener 2021, 177; Schreiner 2020, 150). But Michaels (2004: 392) asks whom or what Jesus entrusted to God's judgment and makes the case that it was his persecutors that Jesus expected God to one day judge. Because there is no explicit object in the Greek, it might be best to understand Jesus to entrust the entire situation that included his own vindication and his persecutors' judgment to God.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not only a historical event but also a hermeneutical event that allowed new understandings of the OT. Reciprocally, the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection is interpreted through the OT, possibly with the aid of insight imparted to Peter by Jesus before his death. Peter does not start with Isa. 53; rather, he begins with the fact of Jesus' suffering and death and searches the OT to understand its significance (cf. Luke 24:25–27, 44–48). First Peter 2:21–25 is a remembrance of Jesus' suffering, explained and interpreted by the prophecy provided by Isaiah that allowed Peter to make sense of the sufferings of the Christ. But Jesus' suffering also allowed the apostle to make new sense of Isa. 53. As Peter has already explained in 1:10–12, it was the Spirit of Christ who revealed to Isaiah and other prophets the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow, and this was done as a ministry for the generations who would look back on the Messiah's death and need an explanation of its meaning. Because Jesus suffered a death reserved for slaves under Roman law, his identity as Isaiah's Suffering Servant (slave) is corroborated. Furthermore, this mode of death, which the Romans reserved for slaves and others lacking Roman citizenship, strengthens the identification between the plight of the "servants" Peter addresses in 2:18 and the Suffering Servant.

Peter presents the unjust suffering of slaves as the calling of all Christians because Jesus was called to suffer unjustly, he "who suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his footsteps" (2:21). This is powerful imagery. The Greek word translated "example" (ὑπογραμμόν, *hypogrammon*) was used to refer to a pattern of letters of the alphabet over which children learning to write would trace (Achtemeier 1996: 199). It suggests the closest of copies. English words such as "example," "model," or "pattern" are too

weak, for Jesus' suffering is not simply *an* example or pattern or model, as if one of many; he is *the* paradigm by which Christians write large the letters of his gospel in their lives. If Christians are to live as servants of God (2:16), the essence of that identity is a willingness to suffer unjustly as Jesus did, exemplifying in suffering the same attitude and behavior he did. Jesus Christ left us this pattern over which we are to trace out our lives in order that we might follow in his footsteps. This is a strong image associating the Christian's life with the life of Christ. For one cannot step into the footsteps of Jesus and head off in any other direction than the direction he took, and his footsteps lead to the cross, through the grave, and onward to glory.

Here Peter is making a christological point as a basis for further ecclesiological ramifications. This is done by setting the quotation and its christological interpretation within an ecclesiological argument that begins and ends the unit. Christ is an example (ὑπογραμμός) for the church and the church follows in his footsteps (2:21). Furthermore, the unit is placed within the servants' section of the household code (2:18–25). The address to servants works metaleptically to address the entire church. This trope likens Christ as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and the church as the plural servants of Isaiah 54–66, a concept inaugurated in 2:16 where the church was described as “servants of God.” The strategy of 1 Pet 2:21–25 involves the christological interpretation of Isaiah 53 as the foundation for an ecclesiological argument employing the language of example. (Egan 2016: 218)

The christological paraenesis that follows therefore presumes unjust suffering in the life of the Christian and outlines with what attitude and behavior the Christian is to suffer, thereby following in the footsteps of Jesus. Peter later writes that the destination of Jesus' footsteps “brings you to God” (3:18). This imagery of footsteps has likely contributed to the adoption of the Greek verb ἀκολουθέω (*akolouthēō*, follow) to refer to Christian discipleship (e.g., Matt. 4:20; 8:23; 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 5:27; 9:23; John 1:43; 8:12; 10:27; 12:26). Jesus himself used *akolouthēō* frequently to summon and lead his earliest disciples, including Peter.

Peter's Christology is here at the same time paraenetic and pastoral. As Matera (1999: 184) describes it, “The Christology of 1 Peter is a Christology of suffering. . . . By focusing on the sufferings of Christ, 1 Peter shows the intimate relationship between Christology and the Christian life: the *past* suffering of Christ is the *present* condition of believers, while the *present* glory of Christ is the *future* glory of those who follow in the steps of the suffering Christ. While the Christology of 1 Peter may not be the most developed of the New Testament, it is among the most pastorally sensitive” (emphasis original).

What would it have meant specifically for Peter's first-century readers to follow in Christ's footsteps within their sociopolitical situation? The four relative clauses of 2:21–25 portraying Christ's suffering present the model:

1. Christ, who did not commit sin . . . ;
2. Christ, who did not retaliate . . . ;

3. Christ, who bore our sins . . . ;
4. Christ, by whose wounds you are healed.

First, Jesus Christ “did not commit sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.” Since this is a direct quote from the OT, Hebrew parallelism may suggest that the second phrase is a more specific restatement of the first, indicating that Jesus did not sin by lies and deception. Second, when Christ was reviled he “did not retaliate, when he suffered he did not make threats, but instead trusted the One who judges justly.”

Many different statements are made in Isa. 53 about the Suffering Servant, but Peter emphasizes the *verbal* aspect of the Servant's behavior as lived out by Jesus. Jesus' speech was not deceptive; he did not revile (speak abusively), and he did not threaten. Peter's readers were on the receiving end of abusive speech, ignorant talk, and the like (2:15; 3:9, 16; 4:14). Perhaps Peter begins to describe the Suffering Servant as a model for Christian behavior with these particular phrases because, when people are treated unjustly, it is most tempting to respond by stretching the truth, putting our opponents in a bad light, speaking abusively of others, or making threats. Following in Jesus' footsteps through this trying situation means not responding in kind to the accusers or using deceit, slander, or threats. Peter says as much in 3:9: “Do not repay . . . insult for insult.” He advises that in some situations, silence is the best response, as any other response will be turned against them. It is, however, the silence not of passive resignation but of patient confidence (Hill 1982: 55).

After giving the example of what Jesus did not do, Peter reminds his readers of what Jesus did do. Instead of sinning under the pressure of unjust suffering, Jesus continued to trust God. (See additional note on 2:23.) Peter later exhorts his readers to do likewise in 4:19: “So then, let even those who suffer according to the will of God entrust themselves to the faithful Creator by doing good.” This is ironic because Christians are to keep on doing good even though the conflict they suffer is being generated because society questions whether a life motivated by faith in Christ is “good.” But rather than yield to their adversaries' judgment, Peter's readers are to trust God, who judges justly.

The idea that misfortune indicates divine displeasure was perhaps more prevalent in the ancient world than it is today. Peter reminds his readers that Jesus' unjust suffering did not mean that God had abandoned him; to the contrary, unjust suffering was God's mysterious way to accomplish the redemption of humanity. Jesus' trust was well placed, despite the circumstances that ended in his death. Peter encourages his readers to recognize that their unjust suffering does not mean that the gospel is untrue or that God is displeased with them. To suffer for following Christ is to share the nature of Jesus' suffering in that it is undeserved. It is caused by the world's hostility to Christian allegiance to God, but it will nevertheless accomplish God's purposes.

In 2:24 Peter continues to explain the significance of Jesus' undeserved capital punishment by conflating a phrase from Isa. 53:12 OG, “He himself bore” (αὐτὸς . . . ἀνήνεγκεν, *autos . . . anēnenken*), with a phrase from 53:4

OG, "our sins" (τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, *tas hamartias hēmōn*). Peter personalizes the quotation for the Christian community by taking "our sins" from 53:4 in place of "the sins of many" in 53:12. Thus, Peter speaks to his readers as those for whom Isaiah's Suffering Servant bore sin. And just so there will be no misunderstanding about specifically how Jesus Christ has borne our sins, Peter adds two prepositional phrases, "in his body" and "upon the tree," an explicit reference to the death of Jesus by crucifixion. The latter phrase may be an allusion to Deut. 21:23, where God's curse is invoked on the one who is hung on a tree (probably, in the historical context of Deuteronomy, a reference to being impaled for display, not crucified; cf. 2 Sam. 21:9). In the context of Roman practices, the reference to crucifixion is a reminder that Jesus was executed unjustly as a criminal; Peter's readers might be similarly accused. The purpose of Christ's vicarious bearing of the judgment for sin has ethical implications for their lives: "so that having no involvement with sins, we might live in righteousness" (2:24). Peter's understanding of Christian ethics is thoroughly grounded in the Christology of suffering.

In the fourth relative clause in this passage, Peter writes, "You are healed" (2:24), where both the OG and the Hebrew have "We are healed" (Isa. 53:5). The use of the second-person plural pronoun, "you," is characteristic of the style of 1 Peter, occurring 83 times, with the first plural, "we/our/us," used only 4 times (1:3 [2x]; 2:24; 4:17). This disproportionate use of the second-person plural pronoun can be compared with 2 Peter, where the first-person plural occurs 15 times and the second-person plural 21 times. In the epistles that bear Paul's name, the first-person plural occurs 400 times and the second-person plural 713 times. As a matter of style, Peter seems deliberately to change the pronouns from the wording of Isa. 53:5 OG, which he otherwise follows. If his readers are primarily Gentiles, perhaps he is underscoring their inclusion in the people of God by excluding himself as a Jew. In other words, Peter is saying, "The Suffering Servant died not just for *us* Jews, but also for *you* Gentiles." On the other hand, in this occurrence Peter may simply revert back to the second-person plural pronoun to signal his return to the household code, since the second person is used throughout 2:20–3:7 (cf. Joseph 2012: 111). The fatal, physical wounds of the Suffering Servant that heal fatal, spiritual wounds become the transition back to the present perspective of Peter's readers.

The thought in Isa. 53:5 that the wounds of the Suffering Servant heal is followed in 53:6 by the statement "We all have wandered like sheep." Peter picks up the same imagery in the same sequence, but again changes the first-person plural pronoun to second-person plural: "For you were like sheep going astray." However, those wandering sheep have now returned to the Shepherd (ποιμήν, *poimēn*) and Overseer (ἐπίσκοπος, *episkopos*) of their souls. A reference to the Shepherd also occurs in Isa. 40:10–11 OG, where the Shepherd is none other than the Lord himself:

See, the Lord comes with strength,
and his arm with authority;

see, his reward is with him,
and his work before him.
He will tend his flock like a shepherd,
and gather lambs with his arm,
and comfort those that are with young. (NETS)

The joining of shepherding and overseeing in the context of Diaspora is also found in Ezek. 34:11-13 OG, where God promises: "I will search for my sheep and watch over [ἐπισκεψομαι, *episkepsomai*] them. Just as the shepherd seeks his flock by day, when there is thick darkness and cloud, . . . so will I seek my sheep, and I will bring them back from every place where they were scattered [διεσπάρησαν, *diesparēsan*]. . . . And I will bring them out from the Gentiles" (NETS alt.). Elements of this passage from Ezekiel correlate so well with elements of 1 Peter that it is tempting to conclude that Peter deliberately alludes to Ezekiel here and elsewhere in his letter. The exact language of shepherding and overseeing is again picked up in 1 Pet. 5:2 to describe the ministry of elders (see comments on 5:1-4). The motif of scattered Christians (1:1), converted from the Gentiles (1:2), who were sought after by the Shepherd and who have returned to the *episkopos* of their souls (2:25), aptly echoes Ezekiel's prophecy. This is probably a further example of how Peter understands the purpose of prophecy given by the Spirit of Christ in relation to the Christian church (see 1:10-12).

The imagery of sheep following after the shepherd, following in his footsteps so to speak, forms a conceptual inclusio with 2:21, framing the entire christological exposition with the image that walking in Jesus' footsteps, even through unjust suffering, is nevertheless the Shepherd's path of safety, protection, and deliverance.⁴

Peter's insight that unjust suffering is to be expected by the Christian community also finds grounding in Isaiah's prophecy. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah has often been interpreted not as one individual but collectively as the people of Israel.⁵ In fact, Isa. 41:8-11 OG identifies the nation of Israel as Yahweh's Suffering Servant:

But you, Israel, my servant,
Iakob, *whom I have chosen*,
the offspring of Abraam, whom I have loved,
you whom I took hold of from the ends of the earth,
and I called you from its mountain peaks,
and I said to you, "You are my servant [*pais*];
I have chosen you and not forsaken you";

4. Compare the similarity of this image to Matthew's image of true disciples following Jesus into the boat and directly into a life-threatening storm (Matt. 8:18-27).

5. Palestinian Judaism may have had heightened messianic expectations in the first century, while Hellenistic Judaism of the Diaspora did not (Hess and Carroll 2003; Evans and Flint 1997; Harl, Dorival, and Munnich 1994: 220; Thompson 1966: 75). If this distinction is true, the messianic tradition that allowed Isa. 53 to be identified with Jesus may support a Palestinian origin for the author of the letter.

A. Commendable Social Behavior as God's People

do not fear, for I am with you;
do not wander off, for I am your God
who has strengthened you,
and I have helped you,
and I have made you secure
with my righteous right hand.

See, all who oppose you
shall be ashamed and disgraced,
for they shall be as though they were not,
and all your adversaries shall perish. (NETS, emphasis added)

The fluid image of Isaiah's Suffering Servant allows its different elements to be identified with both the nation and an individual (Isa. 52:13–53:12). This is congenial to Peter's insight into the nature of unjust Christian suffering as that of a kind with Christ's suffering. Peter identifies the Christian community as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (2:9)—phrases used in the OT to refer to the nation of Israel in Isaiah. Both the obedient Servant and the holy nation that follows him suffer.

Once Peter has realized that Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Isa. 53, he finds in the corporate elements of Isaiah's prophecy the justification that allows him also to identify the Christians to whom he writes as members of the corporate Suffering Servant of Isa. 41. Interpreters have long puzzled over whether Peter's original readers were Gentiles or Jews who had become Christians. Although most today believe the original readers were predominantly Gentile, Peter speaks to his readers as if they are Jews. Because Peter sees the Christians of Asia Minor to be part of the suffering nation of God, he addresses them throughout without differentiating their background or origin. If Peter is indifferent to whether his readers are Jewish or Gentile converts, it is a consequence of his understanding that it was the Spirit of Christ who mediated the prophetic revelation of the OT (1 Pet. 1:11). Therefore, the language used to describe Israel served as a proleptic description of the Christian church. As Achtemeier (1993: 187) points out, Peter's "total appropriation of the language of Israel" for Christians is quite a different use of the OT than the prefiguration of Hebrews, the typological events found in Paul, or specific examples of the life of Christ fulfilling prophecies as found in Matthew.

Peter uses Isaiah's words to explain that suffering unjustly because of faithfulness to Christ is actually evidence that, like the Messiah, his readers have been chosen of God. If Isaiah's words can be interpreted as speaking directly to Christians, God says to Peter's readers through the words of Isa. 41:9–10 OG,

"You are my servant;
I have chosen you and not forsaken you";
do not fear, for I am with you;
do not wander off, for I am your God
who has strengthened you,

and I have helped you,
and I have made you secure
with my righteous right hand. (NETS)

What words of exhortation and encouragement for the Asian Christians facing threat from a world that would grow increasingly hostile to Christianity! Peter lets Isaiah speak directly to their situation. Don't be afraid of the unjust suffering you are experiencing. It is not evidence that God has forsaken you; to the contrary, it is evidence that God has chosen you. Do not wander off from Christ, for God will strengthen you to face life as a Christian. God has made you secure because Jesus has suffered the ultimate injustice and yet he lives. You have been born again into that living hope.

Additional Notes

2:18. In the debate over the existence of the imperatival (or commanding) participle, examples from 1 Peter are often cited as evidence. The imperatival participle is one that stands in the nominative case, is not syntactically subordinate to a finite verb in the immediate context, and cannot be considered part of an elided periphrastic phrase. It stands in an independent clause where one would expect a finite verb. Moulton (1985: 180) argues from constructions found in the papyri that this independent use of the participle to command was a development of the Greek language in the Hellenistic period. D. Daube (in Selwyn 1958: 467-88) argues, in a lengthy appendix to Selwyn's commentary, that Moulton has misconstrued the data from the papyri and that the imperatival participle is a Semitism that originates from Tannaitic Hebrew. Edwin Mayser (cited in Thurén 1990: 20) argues that we need look no further than the fact that the author of 1 Peter was simply using very poor Greek. A more recent study of the development of the imperatival participle was done by T. Williams (2011: 69-72), who argues for its use as an independent imperatival form. From studies done by Moulton, Daube, H. G. Meecham, M. Zerwick, and D. L. Turner, Thurén observes that there are only six participles in 1 Peter that everyone agrees are imperatival (2:18; 3:1; 3:7ab; 3:9ab), and there is no consensus on which other participles in 1 Peter are imperatival. Snyder's (1995) more recent reexamination of the issue concurs with this list.

However, not all recent scholars are convinced. Achtemeier (1996: 194) argues that the participles in 2:18; 3:1; and 3:7a are in fact syntactically subordinate to the imperatives of 2:17, specifying the manner in which those general commands are to be accomplished within society's most basic unit, the household (also T. Martin 1992a: 205). Boyer (1984: 174) agrees in principle but subordinates them to the imperative of 2:13, ὑποτάγητε (*hypotagēte*, submit). B. Campbell (1998: 124) regards the participles of 2:18-3:12 to be circumstantial, attending to all of 1 Pet. 2:11-17 rhetorically, and to ἀπέχεσθαι (*apechesthai*, to abstain) in 2:11 grammatically. A previous edition of this study (Jobes 2005: 201) raises the question of whether the participles in 2:18 and 3:1 (nominative plurals in the middle voice) could not be understood as periphrastic expressions where the imperative of the verb *eimi* has been elided: "be subject." Alternatively, because the same lexeme is found in 2:13, 2:18, and 3:1, they function rhetorically (if not syntactically) as a type of pleonastic participle of identical action that links 2:13 and 2:18 back to 2:13 (Robertson 1934: 1135). T. Williams (2011: 77) argues these participles "carry essentially the same semantic force as that of finite imperatives." Regardless of how these participles are labeled, their immediate context makes clear the imperatival sense they carry.

2:19. The noun συνείδησις (*syneidēsis*) can refer either to conscious awareness of something (as the NIV, NLT, NRSV translate) or to the inward, moral conscience (as the KJV, NKJV, NASB translate). The variant readings of this phrase in early manuscripts might suggest that the

A. Commendable Social Behavior as God's People

ambiguity in sense is very long-standing. In 3:16 *syneidēsín* occurs with the adjective ἀγαθήν (*agathēn*, good), where it more clearly carries the sense of "a good conscience," and that instance may have motivated the insertion of the adjective in 2:19, creating the variant readings attested. The two senses of the noun are closely related in 2:19, and one can be derived from the other. For, a "consciousness of God" means not merely the awareness that God exists but also "sensitivity to the divine will concerning conduct" (J. H. Elliott 2000: 519), the violation of which would wound the conscience. Therefore, bearing the pain of unjust suffering because one is conscious of God's will is similar in meaning to doing so for the sake of a conscience toward God (NASB).

2:21. There are variant readings for one verb, the choices being ἔπαθεν (*epathen*, suffered) and ἀπέθανεν (*apethanen*, died), variants that also occur in 3:18. While not denying that Christ's suffering terminated in death, Peter uses the *suffering* of Christ as a paradigm for his readers. This underscores the commonality of the readers' suffering with Christ's (J. Green 2007: 87). *Epathen* (suffered) is strongly attested in early manuscripts and is most likely the original reading. The variant *apethanen* (died), so similar in spelling, is more easily understood as either a scribal misreading of the verb or a deliberate change because of veneration for the death of Christ, especially under the influence of the same confusion in 3:18.

2:23. The verb παραδίδομι (*paradidōmi*, entrust, hand over) often takes a direct object in the accusative case specifying what was handed over and an indirect object in the dative case specifying to whom it was handed over. In this verse there is no explicit direct object, so interpreters have proposed three options: (1) Jesus handed over his enemies to God; (2) Jesus handed his cause over to God (NLT); (3) Jesus handed himself over to God (NASB, NIV, ESV, NRSV, NKJV). The third option is likely correct, based on the parallel with 4:19 and corroborated by Isa. 53:6, 12 OG, where the Lord is said to give over the Suffering Servant. The act of Jesus handing himself over to God in 2:23 implies trust in God's judgment.