

I P E T E R II. 1 - 25.

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,
At 61, Upton Lane, Forest Gate.
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All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is ever profitable. It is refreshing to find, moreover, all Scripture has manifold applications to suit various circumstances, and sometimes a passage which is brought up because of a difficulty in one experience, is made thereby to come across many other experiences powerfully and helpfully, and many believers can praise God together for the difficulty suggested by one, - or rather for God's solution of the difficulty as we compare Scripture with Scripture and seek in humility of mind, and judging our own opinions, to be led by the Holy Spirit along the pathway which will not terminate until we reach all the truth.

I want, beloved friends, that we should go back in our thoughts, and seek to enter into the position of those dear children of God to whom the Scriptures at which we have looked were first written (1 Pet. 2, Rom. 13). The elect strangers scattered throughout different parts of Asia Minor to whom Peter addressed both epistles, were, I suppose we agree, of Jewish birth, but in mercy they had been born again; they had been delivered from a position in Judaism, from a position which at this period was one of solemn separation from God, since the Lord Jesus had years before said, "Your house is left unto you a wilderness". And the apostle knew the condition of heart of those who had been delivered from the gaudy wilderness of Judaism, he knew their sufferings; - sufferings at the hands of Gentiles, sufferings in connection with the Jews whom they had now left. Hence this epistle is full of sympathetic and happy teaching as to present sufferings in view of assured glory. Assuming that they had FASTED that the Lord was gracious, the apostle reminded believing readers that they were living stones built up a spiritual house. To Israel of old, God said, "IF ye will

obey My voice, ye shall be a kingdom of priests", but to these, because the work of salvation had been accomplished, without any "if" it was said, "YE ARE A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD". The only "if" was, Are you those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious? If you have proved this, you are already a spiritual house, a royal priesthood. The spiritual house; for there was a deliverance from the forms and ceremonies of Judaism. Christ was the Chief Corner Stone, as well as the Foundation of this house, and those who were in it were not only living stones but persons; hence the apostle looks back to another portion of the earlier Scriptures. Hosea had called Israel "Lo-ammi" - "Not my people", and "Lo-ruhamah" - "Not mercied". Taking up the words Peter says, You were (equally with Gentiles) "Lo-ammi" - not a people; but now are God's people. You were not mercied, but now are mercied. You have received that mercy which God so freely gives. Hence these dear children of God were separated from Gentiles and Jews alike. They had reached the position antitypically which Israel had set before them conditionally at Sinai, "a kingdom of priests". They had reached the position of being the people of God which Israel had set before them prophetically in Hosea 1, as a still future blessing for the gathered nation; for those who are in Christ now, anticipate the glories of the new covenant upon Israel when the Lord Jesus shall reign. Thus the apostle would draw them away from their problems, or rather draw them away from dwelling on their problems, to realise their privileges; and when he had laid stress upon these, he suddenly said, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims". You are neither Jews nor Gentiles. You are therefore to be distinct from all nations as you go through this world. You are to have your conversation honest among the nations, but you are dwelling alone, apart from them. You are strangers, and the word signifies "as away from a house"; albeit a spiritual house, but as those away from an earthly house. This is not your resting place. "Abstain" he said, "from fleshly desires which war; - against the soul". Do not let yours be the attitude of earthly strife and agitation. Fleshly desires war.

You feel inclined to stand up for your rights. "I will not be trampled upon" says one. "I cannot allow everybody to crush me down" is the way in which another puts it. Beloved friends, stand up for your rights in heaven's law court. THERE you have a position. Come boldly to the throne of grace. But what position have you on earth where your Lord was crucified? The position of a stranger and a pilgrim. The world has been judged. And so the apostle said to these dear Christians, "Abstain from fleshly desires". It will be natural for you to assert yourselves. It is your privilege to deny yourselves. But you are nevertheless to still live on earth, though you are a heavenly people. How then shall you live? Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that in the very thing in which they speak against you AS EVILDOERS they may by reason of your good works glorify God in the day of visitation, - They may be compelled in a future day to give a witness to the fact that you did what was right. Every tongue is to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, including things under the earth, and those of the synagogue of Satan are to be brought to confess the Lord's love to His Philadelphians. They will be compelled to acknowledge your good manner of life, though now they are speaking evil of you AS evildoers. The word "AS" is frequently brought before us in this passage. It often suggests how you ought to be, or how other persons ought to act. It does not always imply that you necessarily DO act like this. AS strangers and pilgrims. Believers do not always thus live. But they should thus please God. "AS evildoers" is not a Divine description. You are to be the reverse of this. Undoubtedly the child of God will be spoken against as an evildoer, if he seeks to please the Lord. The unselfishness of those in Peter's day because they were occupied with their heavenly calling, doubtless seemed selfishness to some, that they would not busy themselves with the affairs of this world. They were occupied with something far more important. They could not spend their time in dealing with trivial things when there were eternal issues. They would not be merely washing the soiled hand of a

man while he was dying from hemorrhage, and they would not be concerned with the mere social schemes that deal with washing a fraction of the outside while sinners were dying with the dread disease of sin. Eternal issues were and are far more important, and the believer must be occupied with Christ, the will of Christ and the Gospel of Christ. The next verse is actually more comprehensive than our English translation. Peter said to these Christians, "Submit yourself to the whole human creation". The word "ordinance" is not employed here. Our translators thought that creation signified that which a man creates or makes - an ordinance. I do not, and would not, deny the possibility of such a rendering, but it is NOT the primary rendering. "Submit yourself to the whole human creation". And then we have samples of the human creation. "Whether it be to the king... or unto governors", and next we have froward masters. Submit yourselves to the whole human creation because of the Lord. That was the message given to the Christians in the days of Peter. Can you not enter into their difficulty? They were those who belonged to the privileged nation which had once had a Divine kingdom on earth, and a Jew always naturally resented a Gentile supremacy. How could these submit themselves to Gentile kings? Ah, they were no longer Jews against Gentiles, they were Christians, and they acknowledged God's providences. But the apostle would not simply say to them, Submit yourselves to kings; he would say, Submit yourselves to the whole human creation. He Who was in the form of God thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. Oh how wonderfully our beloved Lord humbled Himself. He appeared with such humiliation. God's servant Paul illustrated something of his Lord's humility, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all" "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake". "Submit yourselves to the whole human creation because of the Lord" was Peter's message to these dear children of God, because of what the Lord did, and because of what the Lord

expects from such. You have no rights in earth; if you belong to those who are redeemed you are redeemed FROM the earth. The apostle rebuked the Corinthians; - You walk as men, but you ought not to take that position as men. If you are brought into the family of God, you are "strangers". The world is crucified to you, and you to the world. You regard the world as under a curse, and the world looks upon you as the offscouring, and if the world is crucified to you how can you take any share in its politics and arrangements? You are crucified to it, you are set apart, the line of demarcation is drawn, and so the apostle put this startling command, Seek to serve every one because of the Lord. Do not say, I cannot yield to this, or cannot yield to that, in the sense of looking after your comforts and dignity. Your Lord gave up His dignity, do not stand on yours. He laid aside His garments more than once. Do not seek to array yourself to rule before the time. And the apostle having thus explained the will of God generally, refers to the king as having a position over, and governors as unto those that are sent by him. The word "AS" may be suggestive here. This is the purport of government. Rulers are in authority, and officers are sent for the vengeance punishment of evildoers, as in Rom. 13 we see governmental vengeance; and for the praise of them that do well. That is the object. "For so is the will of God that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men", - that you may make manifest your position as serving God, that men may be compelled to acknowledge it is only for His sake, and for His glory that you seek to live as free, an echo of 1 Cor. 9; and not using freedom for a cloke of maliciousness, a cloke of badness. Here is the word which we have already had. They speak against you "as evildoers"; "the punishment of evildoers"; "not using your freedom for a cloke of evildoing, but as the servants of God". Though you are set free you are not to take advantage of this, and say, Well I can please myself now. You are ~~not~~ to be God's servants and you are to submit to the whole human creation and to manifest the utter humility which glorifies God. But if you submit to the whole human creation, you honour all men as well

as honour the king. You recognise that they are all to be honoured though they are not all honourable. Their actions may be dishonourable, but you are to honour all men because you are to submit yourself to the whole human creation. I need hardly say that this passage is one of the most startling in the pages of Scripture. It is all to be for the Lord's sake and to be linked with bondservice to God. But while you honour all men, you are to love the brotherhood. Here is a closer relationship. You are to fear God. Not to honour them with a cringing or an obedience to that which is against God. The apostle thus encouraged those dear believers to recognise the king, and not to be occupied with visionary dreams of a Jewish state, or to anticipate before the time the coming of the Lord Jesus as King. Thus was their position marked out. They were to have no part with the whole human creation, for they were to be underneath it all. They were marked off from the human creation. They were to have no share in government or its arrangements. They were to emphasize their strangerhood and they were limited to GOOD-doing. In their subjection to others they were not to do evil, - "For this is the will of God that with WELL DOING" - here was the limitation. You are not subject to men, says the apostle, to do what they tell you unless it is well doing. Here then was the guidance for those Christians scattered throughout that portion of the Roman empire. Another example was given from business life. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward". Subject to masters. The same aspect. Subject to the whole human creation. Do not answer again, and stand up for your rights in business, "For this is grace". You are to manifest grace, says the apostle, in your business life, as well as grace in your attitude to earth's government. "This is grace, if a man because of a conscience belonging to God endure griefs suffering wrongfully". "This is grace." Here then is a very precious thought. You are to be DOING well, but you are also to be suffering. The context speaks of both. You do

well, but if you are commanded to do that which is not well, says the apostle, you must suffer wrongfully. Doing and suffering, BOTH are mentioned. Why should you suffer? Because of a conscience THAT BELONGS TO GOD. You cannot give away your conscience. It is not simply a conscience toward God, but literally, a conscience belonging to God. You cannot, to take the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 22, you cannot render unto Caesar your conscience. It is a conscience that belongs to God, and therefore if need be you must suffer wrongfully, and that is grace. Grace. You are to manifest grace. You submit yourselves to the governor who is sent for the vengeance punishment, but you have no share in vengeance. You are to display grace. "This is grace" says the apostle in verse 20. "For even hereunto were ye called" - called to suffer; "Called out of darkness into His marvellous light", but also called to suffer. The same chapter contains both statements. "Because Christ also suffered", not only manifested love, but suffered, "Leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps, Who did no sin", - here is His doing, He DID no sin, "Neither was guile found in His mouth; Who when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him That judgeth righteously". He suffered unrighteously, but He did not acknowledge the jurisdiction of that court as final, He committed Himself to Him That judgeth righteously, and the sentence was reversed. "Ye slew, Whom God hath raised up" is the testimony in the Acts. God ^{has} ~~will~~ reversed the sentence; a higher court has decided against those who decided against the Lord of Glory. But He did not revile when reviled, and the apostle puts the same thought in chapter 3. 9, for the encouragement of those dear Christians who felt rather awkwardly placed. "Not giving evil for evil" - ~~that~~ is the principle of the natural man, that is the principle of a measure of judgment. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth", - "Not giving evil for evil" is grace, "nor railing for railing, but contrariwise (here is the description of the believer - contrariwise) keeping on blessing, knowing that hereunto ye were called; - "called to keep on blessing" whatever people do to you: to "speak well" as the word "bless" signifies; "speak well, keep on blessing" - we were called, that ye should

inherit a blessing. Here is the position marked out for children of God. Shall we find any parallel testimony in other epistles? Here was God's instructions to those dear Jewish believers. How about believers from among the Gentiles? in a Gentile state, in Rome itself? Could not they, as they were Gentiles by birth, take a little share in the arrangements in that city? The proverb of man has often been uttered that In Rome one must do as Rome does. But ware the believers at Rome so to act? No. Look at chapter 12 of the epistle, and you find the position. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service". You present your bodies unto God: "You are not your own you are bought with a price, become not servants of men". Now that is the key to the whole of the 12th chapter. Your bodies are presented to God a living sacrifice. You are raised up from the dead. You are those who are in Christ Jesus. I do not mean the body is raised up, but you have been raised up from the death of sin, and therefore you are to present your bodies, rightly anticipating that glorious day. And therefore you have the same message to the Roman Christians. Verse 17 "Recompense to no man evil for evil". "Recompense to no man". Oh how striking is this thought. "To no one"; but might there not have been some one at Rome who said, But I have a certain judicial function, and therefore I must recompense to men evil for evil. No, you must resign your judicial function, for the command is absolute. "Recompense to no one evil for evil". But may there not have been those who were linked with the legions of Rome to whom this message came? It would have its searching power to them with absolute prohibition. Recompense to no one evil for evil. It is well, beloved friends, that we should take our minds back to those Christians in Rome, and just hear what the apostle said to them, and to see what THEY were to do, and see

what the Lord's arrangement was for them. Recompense to no one evil for evil. You are to show grace. And then the verse continues "Provide things honest". It is almost a pity we have the limited word "honest" in English here. The Divine word is the opposite of the word "evil", and it denotes literally - "Provide things good, beautiful". It is the same as the word for "evil" with the middle letter altered. Provide things good in the sight of all men, not only absolutely good, but manifestly good. "If it be possible, as much as comes out from you, live peaceably with all men". Oh how that verse has been perverted! The theory of man is "Peace if possible", and many will take this attitude, - "Well I want to live peaceably with others, but sometimes they do cause a measure of provoking, and I cannot live peaceably". "If it be possible" is taken by some to mean an excuse for a few quarrels. Nothing of the kind. "If it be possible as to that which comes out from you" is the expression, "As much as lieth in you live peaceably". You cannot guarantee that others will live peaceably as to what comes out from them. They may be against you, but "as to what comes out from you" you are to live peaceably. What? If they go against you? Yes. If they say evil things of you? Yes. As to that which comes out from you - only peaceably. What a need for the watch set before the mouth! We can well understand that these dear Christians at Rome must have felt they were hardly Romans. How could Rome have existed a year on such a principle? Come back in your mind to the history of that wondrous Roman empire. How could it have existed a year? How could it have taken any national position at all? As to that which came out from them to live peaceably whatever aggression there was on the other side! Ah, beloved friends, it was not possible for the Roman state, but these were not members of the Roman state. They were in a heavenly state, - A heavenly position. If it be possible then,

says the apostle, as much as cometh out from you, live peaceably with all men. To make it clear he added, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves". We have just seen in Peter that vengeance belonged to the governor. And the 13th chapter (of Romans) goes on with the same testimony. "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath"- THE wrath, i.e. God's wrath. God will manifest vengeance in the right time. "For it has been written, 'Vengeance belongs to Me, I WILL repay', saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him", - and the word "feed" here suggests, "Get the food quite ready, and spread it out for him". Do not simply throw him a crust, with a measure of scorn, but prepare the food as daintily as possible, FOR he is YOUR ENEMY. This was the encouragement that was given to those Roman believers. Doubtless some of them had held a position, in past years, with much suffering under the besieging of some army, and they had known that the besiegers did not act on this principle; perhaps they had shared in besieging, and they had not acted on this principle. How could they, when in such arrangements? But they heard these words that delivered them and emancipated them, and so these Roman Christians who lived so many years ago, but who are our brethren, were brought OUT from earthly arrangements. "For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good". "Be of good cheer" said the Lord, "I have overcome the world". And how did He overcome? In the path that looked to men like being overcome. Imagine the Romans by birth who had taken position in Rome's politics, hearing this verse, "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good", - as if to say, "If you stand up for your rights, you get the worst of it. If you look after yourself everything goes wrong"! "Overcome by being overcome", as men would say. "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, - NAY in all THESE things we are MORE THAN CONQUERORS". Thus the believer has a new language, and that

language is not understood upon earth, nor can it be grasped amid earth's arrangements! But this position made a strange state of affairs for the dear Christians at Rome. Were they to compel others to act on these principles? Were they to go to the world and say, Now you are to carry out Romans 12? No, Chapter 13 comes in to correct such an idea. Were they to say, We will have a new Christian state worked on these principles? Not in the least. They they had only one solution. They were to come out of earthly entanglements. That was the attitude marked out for them. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers", recognise that the powers exist, in a DIFFERENT sphere altogether, even the governmental sphere which God allowed in His providential arrangement, and allows still, until He shall come Whose right it is to reign from sea to sea. "For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment". Here then was their instruction as they went up and down the world. As Christians these dear Roman believers were not to take a share in earth's arrangements, but they were not to fight against those who had earth's arrangements; they were to leave them in their sphere, and acknowledge them in that sphere, for God has appointed His people not to take the kingdom yet, but to be strangers and pilgrims. Hence they were to honour those in authority, they were not to resist them, and if a command was given to them which was against the will of God, they were not even then to resist or stand up against them, but they were to fall. They were to bear the weight of suffering, as the passage in Peter has already shown. No resistance, because that would have been to resist the ordinance of God. The apostle goes on to clear up the difficulty in verse 5. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience. A conscience that belongs to God will

recognize the powers that are ordained of God, and will never speak against them, with that effrontery which is so common to-day. The child of God must recognise authorities, and must also pay tribute. Why? For conscience sake. He pays his taxes as a SPIRITUAL action BECAUSE they Lord has appointed this. "For this cause pay ye tribute, for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues (that which is a debt, that which you owe to give). Tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe (the same word as "due"), owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law". "Love worketh no ill" says verse 10, "to his neighbour". This reads on from verse 17 of the previous chapter, "Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law". One can well imagine that the Christians at Rome did not quite understand what they were to do. They said, We are brought out from these things, and yet we are to be subject to the authorities. How ~~are~~ are we to be subject? You are not to RESIST when they command. You are to pay taxes. Yes, they needed a Divine arrangement to know just what to do. But suppose they tell you to serve an idol, what then? Suppose the emperor demands that he should be worshipped. Scripture puts it definitely here, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour". You are not to do ANYTHING that is evil; you are limited; you are to pay taxes BECAUSE the Lord has appointed, but not to work anything evil. You are to be those who do not avenge yourselves, and do not stand up for your rights. But suppose these Roman Christians had been told by the authority of men that they were not to bless those that persecuted them, but they were to curse them. The Scripture said, Bless and curse not; they were not rendering a due in breaking that which was God's appointment.. If they had been commanded by those in authority to break the arrangements of

chapter 12, they would have known that they would have been working ill to have broken those arrangements. And so the apostle make it quite clear for these dear Roman Christians what they were to do, and encouraged them by adding, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand". The problems will soon be over, "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. . Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh". You know we also saw the fleshly lusts in 1 Pet. 2. How solemn is this thought.

Come next to Titus 3. Did the apostle change his position at the end of his painful life? No, beloved friends, there was no change of position. After special arrangements with respect to servants, (just as we have in 1 Pet. 2), he added, Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready for every good work. Here is another definite command. "To be subject". The word "to obey magistrates" I suppose, signifies to be obedient to that which is a ruling power, any form of magistracy; but to be ready to every good work, not to any bad work. Here is the limitation. In every context after speaking of obedience, we have a limitation to good doing, for a believer could not fall down and worship an idol if a magistrate said so; but he is willing to give up comforts and to make manifest his submission, and the laying aside of all self-defence, and looking after his own natural inclinations. The passage adds, "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle". The word "no brawler" is an interesting one. It is made up of two. The one signifying "not" and the other is the word for a battle, and thus gives a certain bearing on the added word, "To be no brawlers "not battlers", but gentle". Here we have brought before us the attitude of a believer. He is not to be battling for his rights and to be looking after himself, but to be

gentle showing ALL meekness unto ALL men. Did you notice in Romans 12 how this attitude is not only to those in authority? To all men. 1 Pet 2 "To the whole human creation". So here. "Showing ~~all~~ meekness to ALL men", not simply to those who are kind, but to the froward. We had the strongest illustration of it in Romans 12. "If thine ENEMY hunger feed him" - "Showing ALL meekness unto ALL men", not affected by natural tendencies and natural wishes or racial distinctions, but manifesting grace. That was the principle which Paul brought before Titus, to be emphasized in Crete, and Crete had a bad reputation, but the Christians there were thus encouraged. They were naturally ready to speak evil, but grace had brought them into a new sphere, and the apostle gives a reason "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures". In every passage you have the thought of lusts and pleasures. The argument is this. Meekness is the opposite of lusts and pleasures. James 4 illustrates this message. Those there mentioned were quarrelling and arguing among themselves in a company of professing Christians, and the apostle wrote to them (I do not say they were real Christians), he said, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members. Ye lust and have not. The same argument is found in all passages. And the child of God was ever told to be just a contrast with these fleshly desires that war, against the soul. There was to be the laying low of that which was natural, and there was to be the manifestation of that which was gracious. Beloved friends, we have sought to consider what the Lord commanded believers in those times, we have sought to enter into the position of the Roman Christians and the Jewish Christians, Gentiles by birth, and Israel by birth, who had been born again. The first century has long since passed, but the Scriptures have not passed away. God remains, and the Holy Spirit still applies

to our hearts this wondrous message. If we are those who are in Christ Jesus our position is to be unqualified meekness. We are not by our manner to be self-exalting, or looking after our own dignity and position. Rather are we to enter into that precious bea\title, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth", and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how that He said, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" - the rest of meekness. May this be ours, in the might of the Holy Spirit.
