

# Living as Servants of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] to begin our worship now by singing to God's praise. We're singing in Psalm 1, in the Sing Psalm, Psalm 1a, on page 1 of the Psalm books. We're going to sing the whole of this Psalm together. Psalm 1. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths or sit with those who mock. Instead, he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight. He makes the precepts of the Lord his study day and night. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm, Psalm 1a, to God's praise.

Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk.  
Who does not stand in sinners' paths or sit with those who mock.  
Instead he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight.  
He makes the precepts of the Lord, his study day and night.

[ 1 : 44 ] He prospers ever like a tree that's planted by a stream.

And when Jew season yields its fruit, its leaves are always green.

Not so the wicked, they are like the trap that's blown away.

They will not stand when judgment comes, for with the righteous day, It is the Lord who sees and knows the way the righteous go.

But those who live an evil eye, the Lord will overthrow.

[ 3 : 25 ] We'll join together in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Our Lord, our God, our Father in heaven, we do thank you for this day. We thank you for the beauty of it, the warmth of the sun and the freshness of the day.

We thank you that it is your day that you have made for us. And let us rejoice and be glad in it, that we can come and worship you, that we can do so together as one.

We thank you for these words that we have sung together. They remind us that we are blessed to have your word, that we are blessed to enjoy it together, whether it be in coming to worship you together here, or coming to the Sunday school and creche, or having it at home.

We thank you that we can read about you and your goodness to us, and how you have blessed us abundantly. And we do thank you, Lord, that you are with us, that you remind us of that always, that you are the one who gives us all the food that we have, the clothes we enjoy.

You give us our health and our strength, and you help us in times of need. And so we pray, Lord, that you will bless us and shine upon us today with your goodness and you. And bless the young ones and the teachers and leaders as they go out in a moment to the creche and the Sunday school and the tweenies.

[ 4 : 43 ] We thank you for all who help in that. We thank you for all who come along. We thank you for the news of the holiday club as well, and being able to look forward to that. And thank you for the explorers and the youth club and the youth fellowship and all that goes on for our young people on a regular basis.

And we pray, Lord, that you will bless us and be with us in it all, that we will know your nearness to us in all of these things. So, Lord, go with us now and take care of us throughout this day and the week ahead as well in our schools, Lord, and all that we do.

May you be with us and watch over us, we pray. We ask it all anew, Lord, giving thanks to you for all of these things. In Jesus' name. Amen. It was good to see you all here today.

Was anybody rushing to get here today? Was anybody in a mad dash getting out the door trying to find all your bits and pieces before you came along to church? Or maybe mum and dad or granny and grandpa were rushing around looking for something before they left?

And one thing that people are often looking for when they're heading out is keys. I don't know if you're like me, but often we spend so much time looking for keys and asking, have anybody seen the keys?

[ 6 : 00 ] Of course, we can't get anywhere without the keys. They're so important. So maybe some of you today have been playing hide and seek, trying to find the keys, trying to get ready to get out to church.

And why are keys so important? Well, let me tell you about the keys I have here. There's three keys for three different things on here. They all have something important to do.

There's one, it's a little key, but it's for a storage box. It's for a storage box. I can keep important things in a box, and I keep it locked so that nobody will steal it.

I have to keep an eye on the neighbours and plaster field in case anybody comes along to steal anything that belongs to me. So I keep it under lock and key. So I've got a key to a storage box. I've also got a key to the house. Again, it's important that we have keys to the house. We can lock it if we're going out, and then we can open it when we get back.

[ 6 : 58 ] And one of the most important keys for getting to church is, of course, the car key. The car key is so important because without it, the car's not going to go anywhere. We'd have to walk or run to church instead.

So we've got three very important keys there. And it reminds us that God gives us keys to things as well. God gives us access to things that in many ways are locked for us, but he opens it up for us.

So you think of the little key, the storage key. It's important to be able to get into the storage box to get things out. Well, God says in his word that he's got an abundance store for us.

He's able to give us lots of good things, but that we have to come and trust in him. In the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, in chapter 28 and verse 12, there it says, the Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens.

He says he'll open his good treasury, his storage, if we put our trust in him and look to him. He's able to provide for all of our needs.

[ 8 : 12 ] When you think of the car key, when we think of going on a journey to go to a place without that key, we can't get there. Well, God talks about giving us a key that shows us the way.

Psalm 25 speaks about that. He says, Show me thy ways, O God. Teach me your ways and lead me in them. So God says, I will show you the way.

When we come to him through his word, he shows us the way and directs us in the way to go. And then you think of the house key. And God says, I've got a house.

I've got a house, he says in John 14, that's got many rooms. There's a place for you if you put your trust in me. And he says to us that the way to get into this house, the key to getting in, is through Jesus, who says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

So we've got all these keys that are important for us to have in life. But we've got more important keys, too, that God gives us access to. The stores of his house, the abundance of good things he's able to give us, the direction he's able to show us, and the promise of a great house, a place that we will be forever with him.

[ 9 : 35 ] And he assures us, unlike this world, where things can be stolen from us, that when we trust in him, no one can steal these things from us because they're kept by God for us.

So God gives us keys. And it's important that we look for these keys, that we look to him and trust in him.

So may God bless these thoughts to us. We're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now. Let's say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to sing together in Psalm 25.

[ 10 : 42 ] This is in the Sing Psalms on page 29. Again, the psalm I was referencing there about the Lord directing us in our ways. So we're going to sing Psalm 25, verse 1 to verse 7.

To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. I trust in you continually. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me. We'll sing from verse 1 to 7.

We stand to sing to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

I trust in you continually. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

No one who sets his hope in you will ever suffer such disgrace.

[ 12 : 07 ] But those who act with treachery, humiliating shame will face.

O Lord, reveal to me your ways, and all your paths help me to know.  
Guide me in your truth. Instruct me in the way to go.  
You are my Savior and my God. All day I hope in you alone.  
Remember, Lord, your love and grace, which from past ages you have shown.  
[ 13 : 37 ] Do not recall my sins of youth, or my rebellious evil ways.

Remember me in your great love for you, O Lord, our good always.  
Amen. We'll turn to read in God's word. We're going to read two passages. Our first reading in 1 Timothy, chapter 2.  
We'll read from verse 1 to verse 7. And then we'll turn into 1 Peter, chapter 2. So 1 Timothy, chapter 2. We read from verse 1 to verse 7.  
First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

[ 15 : 00 ] This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.  
For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. I am telling the truth. I am not lying. A teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Then we'll turn to 1 Peter. 1 Peter, chapter 2.

We're taking our study at this time. We'll read from verse 11 down to verse 17. It's a reminder of what we were looking at last week in verse 11.

[ 16 : 05 ] Today we're going to look at verse 13 to 17. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which war against your soul.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.  
Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him, to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.  
For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Dear God, honor the emperor. And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word.

[ 17 : 12 ] We'll again join our hearts together in prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, as we have read in these passages, we are reminded of the importance of prayer for all, especially those who are rulers and leaders over us and over our nations and the nations of the world.

And we do, O Lord, commit them to you. For your word reminds us that we seek that there would be good done for all people, that they would rule over as well and according to your truth.  
And when this is not the case, Lord, it is not to give up in prayer or to turn against them, but to remind ourselves of what your word says, to be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, that we would be witnesses for you in the midst of this world and in all that goes on.  
We do pray, Lord, that your church, your people, would be given the courage and boldness required to live honorably among the people of this world, to live with a conduct that is indeed honorable before all people, but also to be speaking with boldness your truth of the need that we have to turn to you in these days.

Our greatest need is to know Christ Jesus. And we thank you that even as we've read in your word that your desire is that all people would be saved, that you are a God who has such great love for this world that you have made.

[ 18 : 51 ] We marvel at the beauty of it. We marvel at all that we see around us. But, Lord, we pray that we will marvel at you as God and Lord of all, the one who made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.

And we pray today, Lord, that your word will go out with power here and in all places where people gather to worship you, that you will remind us again, O Lord, that your word is truth and that your word is powerful and mighty to save.

And we do pray that you will draw us closer to yourself by it and by your spirit, that you will work in our hearts, not just to come and worship you because that is something we always do, but there will be the great longing in our hearts, the great delight in our hearts, the great joy in our hearts that we can draw near to you as God and Lord through your own Son, Jesus Christ, through his name, the name above every name, the name of the one who gave his life as a ransom for many, the one who showed his great love for us as he bore our sin on the cross, the one who is risen, and that that is our hope, the hope of the resurrection, that all who believe in him would not die but have everlasting life.

And we thank you that the gospel is that wonderful, glorious news, that no matter what this world brings to us, no matter the troubles that come our way, that we can be of good cheer for Jesus our Lord has overcome the world.

And we pray that your people near and far, that your people who may be on the hilltops at this time rejoicing in your goodness, or even those who may be in the valley of the shadow of death, that they will know your goodness and mercy following all the days of their lives.

[ 20 : 52 ] We thank you, Lord, that you give to your people that glorious hope that we have in Jesus Christ. And we pray that in times of great need, in times of sorrow, in times of sadness or ill health, whatever's going on, that we will be able to fix our eyes on Jesus, that we'll be able to look to him.

And so remember your people as we commit them to you, many known to us and others, Lord, unknown. But yet, O Lord, all known by you, all precious in your sight, all those whose name are in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And we thank you, Lord, that you watch over in every time of need. We thank you that you are near, that you are a God of great comfort and mercy, a God of all glory and grace.

And we pray for those, particularly in our thoughts today, we continue to remember Professor Donald McLeod and the family. We commit them to you, Lord, that you will surround them and be near to them.

We remember, even as we've heard earlier, of the passing of Tim Keller, one who maybe we didn't know personally, but one even over these last few weeks in the Hope, in the Prodigal Son course we've been hearing about.

[ 22 : 13 ] And he explained the truth of the gospel to us, Lord, through many of his courses and writings and his ministry far and wide.

And we thank you for all your servants who give their lives to you in that way. And all who serve you in just the little ways as well.

We don't have to be great writers or authors to be servants of the King. We serve you, Lord, with all that we have in the day-to-day ways of life and all that we do. And we know and thank you, Lord, for the many who serve you in the ordinary ways of life, prayerfully and practically.

And we give thanks to you for your body, one body with many parts. And yet, O Lord, all seeking to uphold one another. So bless us and continue to strengthen us in your name and by your grace.

Remember your cause, O Lord, far and wide. Remember us in all that we do for your name and for your sake. Even in the week ahead, Lord, we commit all things to you.

[ 23 : 17 ] We commit our prayer to you. We commit our lives to you. We commit our witness to you. Asking your blessing on work among young and old alike.

Thankful, Lord, for you are the one who is able to open eyes and to bring salvation to many. We look ahead to our communion time in a fortnight.

And we pray, Lord, that you will encourage us and strengthen us for that. That we will come thankful for the Lord Jesus. Thankful for all that he has done. Thankful that we can do this in remembrance of him.

And we pray that you will encourage us in our hearts to profess your name. Be that if we've been at the table maybe over many years. Encourage us and strengthen us for it.

Or be it that we've never sat at the Lord's table but longed to be there. We pray, Lord, that you will give us that courage to take that stand and to profess our faith.

[ 24 : 15 ] We thank you, Lord, for our community as a whole as well. And we pray your blessing over us. Look after us, Lord, in our homes and our families as we commit ourselves into your hands.

Take care of us, Lord, and go before us each and every day. Guide us, Lord, we pray. As we have sung, guide us in your paths and in your ways. Teach us, Lord, to do your will.

Guide us, O Lord, that we would see the house with many rooms. A place prepared for you for all your people. That we will keep our eyes looking to Jesus.

Even as we seek to live as servants for him in this world and all that we do. Bless your word to us throughout this day. Guide us by it, Lord, and bless us, we pray.

Remember Scott as he ministers this evening. Be with him in the service there. Bless your word through him. And bless all your people and hear our prayers. Watch over us and go before us now, pardoning all our sin.

[ 25 : 19 ] As we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. We will sing again to God's praise in Psalm 119 in the Scottish Psalter.

This is on page 410 of the psalm books. Psalm 119. And we're going to sing from verse 123. Psalm 119 at verse 123.

My eyes do fail with looking long for thy salvation. The word of thy pure righteousness while I do wait upon. We'll sing from verse 123 to the end of this section.

Four stanzas to God's praise. Psalm 119. Psalm 119. Psalm 119. Psalm 119. My eyes do fail with looking long for thy salvation.

The word of thy pure righteousness, while I do it upon.

[ 26 : 42 ] In mercy with thy servant yield, thy laws me teach and show.

I am thy servant, wisdom give, that I thy laws may know.

T'is time thy work, Lord, for they have made hoy thy law divine.

Therefore thy precepts, O thy love, than gold, yea, gold most fine.

Concerning all things thy command, all right thy judge therefore.

[ 28 : 08 ] And every false and wicked way, I perfectly abhor.

Well, we can turn back to our reading in 1 Peter chapter 2. We read at verse 16 and 17, although we're looking at this wee section, verse 13 to 17.

We read again at verse 16. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. We continue our study in this letter of 1 Peter, writing to a people who had been scattered and suffering for their faith.

And what we've seen so far in the letter is how Peter has given them great reminders of the blessings and promises that they have in Christ. He reminds them, too, that there is a promise of great hope in Christ Jesus.

[ 29 : 41 ] He reminds them that they are to live holy lives. And he reminds them, as we saw the last time, that they are to keep their conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

They are to live among the people in this way, holy and living honorable lives. And when you think of the setting, the situation that people are living in, it can be quite hard for us to understand just how they could do this.

And how Peter could be saying this. In the midst of being mistreated, in the midst of God's word being trampled upon, they are being told to live holy lives.

Being honorable to everybody. Living among the Gentiles in an honorable way. In verse 13, being subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.

How could they do this? Well, that's what Peter is teaching them here and teaching ourselves as well. When we see the way in the situation that they were living on, when God's word is being trampled upon, and we see the world in which we live in today, we think of the similarities.

[ 31 : 08 ] When there is an anger and a wrath against the things of God. When there is persecution always under the surface in our own nation. But in other nations, it's very much to the fore.

People suffering for their faith. It's a blessing to live in days of peace when God is honored and worshipped by many people and nations.

But what about when that is not the case? How do we conduct ourselves today when we maybe feel dismayed and anxious about the direction our nation or the world is going in?

Well, this is the very subject that Peter is addressing for us here. For the people then and for ourselves today. And we remember that as he was writing to the people then and to ourselves, it's not just a case of living honorable lives merely to survive in this world, but to thrive.

And that the gospel would thrive in our world as well. Last time we were looking at this last section, we were thinking of living honorable lives among the Gentiles.

[ 32 : 24 ] It was a kind of broad view of theological reasons and practical principles for living in this way. He spoke about being a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, all of these things.

But now as we go on, he's going into specific ways in different areas of life where we are to conduct ourselves in this way.

And he begins here with how Christians then and now are to live and behave with those in authority over us.

And it's a great challenge. I'm sure I don't have to say that to you today. It's a great challenge. How we live and conduct ourselves among leaders who seemingly are going so far away from the word of God.

It's one of the most challenging things for us when we see so much of the moral and social agendas today falling far below or even going directly against God's word and God's truth.

[ 33 : 37 ] So what's our response to be? Many people today will go one of two ways when it comes to being subject to authority.

Some will go a way of capitulation. We'll just go along with whatever is said and told for us to do.

Others will go to the other direction and pull away from it all.

Withdraw from everything else. Hide away from it and live in a bubble, as it were. But what Peter is teaching us here and what other passages in the Scripture teaches us as well is that there's another way.

And that is one where we become subject for the Lord's sake under every human institution. Where we respect and honor those in authority over us.

But we also stand courageous and with boldness. We don't capitulate and give in to it all. We don't withdraw away from it.

[ 34 : 45 ] We engage with it. And that's what Peter is teaching here. Kevin de Young in his book, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, he says this.

It sounds really spiritual to say God is interested in a relationship, not in rules. But it's not biblical. From top to bottom, the Bible is full of commands. They aren't meant to stifle a relationship with God, but to protect it, seal it, and define it.

Commands are there for a reason. Not to stifle a relationship with God, but to protect it. And in this we have a command from God in these verses.

In verse 13, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. There is a command here for us.

[ 35 : 45 ] And so I want us to look at this under three headings. Living as servants of God in the midst of a world that is going so far away from God.

How do we do it? Three things. First, our attitude. Secondly, our approach. And then thirdly, our agenda. How should we live faithfully for Jesus Christ in such circumstances as this?

Well, it begins with our attitude. When we look around the world today, there's a number of different types of governments and authorities ruling throughout the world.

We have monarchies. We have parliaments. We have republics and other kinds too around the world. And we'll look around and we maybe have our own thoughts on which is best.

Some we would say are better than others. But what's our attitude towards them? We may not like it. We may criticize.

[ 36 : 56 ] We may even rebel against certain authorities. But is that the right approach? Would we be right if we don't agree with something as Christians to stand with banners saying, Not my king.

Or not my president. Is that what the scriptures teach us? No, because what we see in the scriptures is we are told that all authority is through God.

Romans 13 says in verse 1, But you say, Surely that can't stand today.

Surely that can't be right for today when our governments, our rulers are so far from God and things are heading in a worrying direction. Surely we don't agree with that.

Well, when you look at when Paul was writing to the Romans or when Peter is writing here, you have to look at the context of the days that they were living in.

[ 38 : 06 ] And when we're looking at Peter here in writing to these people that had been scattered far and wide, what was the reason they were scattered? Persecution.

Where did the persecution come from? It came from those who were ruling over them. Persecution arose against Christians. This was during the reign of Nero.

He was the ruler of the day. And if you read and look into Nero, he was one who was cruel, very cruel against Christians.

Persecution arose and verbal slander, social exclusion. Christians were suffering, but it got worse. It started to be widespread persecution.

And this is the context that Peter is writing in. This is when he is saying, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Peter, who was put to death himself during the reign of Nero.

[ 39 : 12 ] And you think, well, how can he be saying this? Well, Peter is showing that the people that authorities and rulers, good or bad, are human institutions put there by God.

And because of that, our attitude should be one of thankfulness. Now you say, have you lost your mind?

How can we be thankful for an emperor such as Nero, who was persecuting the church? How can we be thankful in our day and age when authorities and rulers over us are putting the word of God far, far away from public life?

Well, to see our attitude is to be one like Christ. Peter is here saying, we should be thankful that even in the bad rulers we have over us, that God is above all.

And that we have authorities and rulers over us, who, as we read here, the main purpose is to do good. In verse 14, governors are sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

[ 40 : 29 ] The thing is, when we look around us and we say we don't agree with the people and authority over us, we have to remember it could be so much worse. What if there was no rule, no government, no authorities over us?

What would life be like then? Chaos. You see it in Scripture when God gave people over to do what was right in their own eyes. It descended into chaos.

So even when there's rulers over us who are wicked and evil in our eyes, we can still be thankful that God has people and places that keep even a semblance of control over things, that allow us to live our lives not always the way we would want to live, but even to have freedom to worship God, to have freedom to be witnesses, to show forth, as we were looking at the last time, to show forth, to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us from darkness to light.

Peter was reminding the people here that even under the human institutions, that they still have God on their side.

We can criticize, but how often do we pray for our leaders? How often do we pray for those locally, nationally, internationally, who are ruling over us or others throughout this world, praying that they would see God and know him?

[ 42 : 11 ] He says, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. But he also goes on to say, in verse 15, for this is the will of God.

This is the will of God, that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Even in the midst of wicked rulers, the Christian is a servant of God, of Christ, our King, that we put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

So does our attitude to authority need to change? Do we have that honor for the emperor, as he says here?

Do we honor those in authority over us? Do we become subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution? It's hard, but it's a command of God.

And as we go on, secondly, we see the approach in the midst of this. We think of the approach to authority as servants of God.

[ 43 : 30 ] He says here, be subject to human institutions. What's he saying? He's saying, be good citizens. And remember, this is all connected to verse 12, when it says, keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

Keep it honorable. Be good citizens. I'm not saying here we bow down in weakness to those who are in authority over us, who we see going against the word of God.

But we show our strength of faith in all of this. We are to hold fast to the word of God. Be good citizens.

You see it through the Old Testament. You see it in the New Testament. People, God's people, living under wicked rulerships in very morally corrupt societies.

And yet, what was their approach? It was to honor God above everything else. To honor God. We are to keep earthly laws that do not require us to break the law of God.

[ 44 : 40 ] And you see in verse 15, what the purpose and the approach of this is. For this is the will of God, that by doing good, you should be to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

And he gives a warning in this as well, though. In verse 16, live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

What is he saying here? Well, it goes back to things that he was saying earlier in chapter 1, where he was speaking to the people and writing to them. And it would be so easy for us to come to the wrong conclusion when we see wickedness going on around us, we can say, well, I'm free in Christ. I don't have to listen to what authorities and rulers over me say. You see, I am free through him. I am a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. He speaks of them as to those who are elect, exiles of the dispersion in verse 1 of chapter 1.

He's reminded them their citizenship is in heaven. But what he says here in verse 16 is, that is not an excuse to a cover-up for evil.

[ 46 : 01 ] It's to keep our conduct honorable and to do good and to live as good citizens in this world. We could say, this is not my home.

We're just passing through. I'm now free. But that's not what he wants from us. He wants us to engage and to live as good Christians in this world among those who are foolish and ignorant to the things of God.

How thankful we should be for the Word of God. What a blessing it is that it teaches us. But what a blessing too when it rebukes us, when it brings us back on track, when we are going the wrong way. So he says, do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but live as servants of God. What does this mean?

One writer puts it like this. He's saying, don't back off from society and don't accommodate society. Be a better citizen than anybody else because Christ has set you free indeed.

[ 47 : 21 ] Cherish your freedom and cherish the Christ who secured your freedom by refusing to abuse that freedom. We are to live as servants of God.

Look in the Old Testament and we're all familiar with the story of Daniel, I'm sure. And we often say that phrase, dare to be a Daniel. And we see Daniel as one who stood up in the midst and against a people who were going against the things of God.

But how did he do it? He didn't dishonor Nebuchadnezzar as king. He didn't turn away from rules and authorities in the world.

He kept his focus on honoring God. He prayed to God. He gave all honor and glory to God. And that is what made the difference.

People saw the God of Daniel. They saw the God that he was worshiping. The same with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. As they were put into the fiery furnace.

[ 48 : 35 ] They saw their God. They saw who was with them in the fiery furnace. And they came to worship God. And again, when we think of the world we live in today, dare we be a Daniel, what does it mean?

It means not to dishonor those who rule over us. Not to speak wickedly or unkindly against them. But to honor God.

And to give all glory to God. Is that our approach? To put God first. Showing honor to God.

And then showing honor to those who are ruling over us. It's so important for us. Not to withdraw from society. But to be in society.

To be salt and light in the places that we are. And to pray that those who we often see, especially maybe in politics today, we say, how can they stay in their position there in politics when it's so morally corrupt?

[ 49 : 43 ] We should thank God that there are those who will stand for the cause of God. And pray for them. Prayer in public life used to be so common.

But even that is being pushed away now. It causes offense. So we take it away. And we should long for days when prayer in public is more and more common.

There was a man called Peter Marshall. He was a Scottish-born pastor. And he went to America. And he actually became the Senate chaplain in the United States.

Such an important role. And part of his role was that he would pray before their meetings. This was during the 1940s. Just after the Second World War.

And one of his prayers is recorded. Well, many of his prayers are recorded. But one of them said this. Lord Jesus, thou who art the way, the truth, and the life. Hear us as we pray for the truth that

shall make all free.

[ 50 : 51 ] Teach us that liberty is not only to be loved, but also to be lived. Liberty is too precious a thing to be buried in books. It costs too much to be hoarded.

Help us to see that our liberty is not the right to do as we please, but the opportunity to please to do what is right.

That was how they went into their meeting. Freedom not to do as we please, but the opportunity to please to do what is right. The fools that Peter speaks of here, those who are foolish, are the ones who need God.

But we as servants of God, as it says in verse 15, that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Again, it goes back to verse 12 as well. Those that we are to live honorable lives before, even when they speak against you as evildoers, that they may see your good deeds and glorify God in the day of visitation.

[ 52 : 08 ] Our approach is to honor God by being subject for the Lord's sake in these things. The final thing I want us to see is, what's our agenda in all of this?

Can you imagine today going up to the king? Well, a prime minister and saying, look, you fool, Christ is king, and you are a subject.

Can you imagine doing that? Well, in the year 1596, James VI was king of Scotland. And a minister called Andrew Melville was able to meet with him.

He met with him amid concerns of the direction Scotland was going in. Royal policy was undermining the gains of the gospel that had come about as a result of the Reformation.

And eventually, Andrew Melville met with the king, but he lost patience with the king. And he called him God's silly vassal, God's silly subject, called him a fool.

[ 53 : 24 ] And then he went on to say, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is Christ Jesus the king and his kingdom, the church, whose subject King James VI is.

And of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but a member. He put the king in his place. But what was his agenda?

Melville and others saw in passages like here in Peter and Romans chapter 13, he saw that we have the resources. We have a God who is able to equip a nation to be a blessing to the people. And he saw the need for respect and honor on the one hand, but also the need for courage and boldness on the other.

Can we have a conversation with those in power over us? Or how would we even write a letter to someone who's an authority and power over us? What would be our approach?

[ 54 : 28 ] Would it be to condemn? Or would it be to encourage, to remember that there is one king and Lord over all, and that that is Christ?

By living as servants of God and doing good, by pointing foolish people to the king of kings and the Lord of lords, there we can be Daniels, we can be Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Old Testament, we can be the Paul and Peter and others in the church of the New Testament who didn't shy away, who didn't capitulate with all that was going on, but who were in their place in that time, a salt and light for the glory and the gospel.

Their agenda was not one to dishonor the rulers of the day, but to honor God and in so doing point to a better way, a greater way, a way that our nation would know blessing again with the peace of God.

In verse 17 here it says, honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor.

You see it starts and fear, starts and finishes with honor. Honor everyone and honor the emperor. There's no distinction.

[ 56 : 02 ] Live honorable lives before all that they may see your good deeds and glorify God. And when you look at this section, they're all interconnected.

In verse 13, we are to take this stance of being subject for the Lord's sake. And we are to do it in verse 15 because it is the will of God.

We are to do it in verse 16, as servants of God. And we are to do it in verse 17, fearing God. Fear God, it says.

Worship Him and live as subjects of those in authority over us. with what agenda that they might see our good deeds and glorify God.

If we as a church here in Stornway were taken away and these doors were closed and nobody noticed and nobody missed our input into this town or into our society, then something would be seriously wrong.

[ 57 : 20 ] We haven't been fulfilling our duties. And that is what Peter is reminding the people here in ourselves. That even as we live as exiles, even as we live as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we live in the midst of this world and among the people and authorities of this world.

And it doesn't mean backing off. It doesn't mean capitulating. It means mission. It means engagement.

bearing witness to a different life, a different way, a different world that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Because that is our hope and that is what we believe is able to bless a town, a nation and this world.

So may God help us to live as his servants. being subject to those in authority over us, but above all by being servants of God.

[ 58 : 42 ] Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, give us both courage and boldness to be a people who will be your servants wherever you place us and whatever we do.

Help us, O Lord, to uphold those in authority over us prayerfully, seeking to honour them, O Lord, that they would see even our good deeds and glorify you.

Help us, Lord, that we would continue to long for and desire for the goodness of God to be known throughout our island here, throughout our nation and throughout the world, that you would come in a day of your power, that you would use us, O Lord, as your servants for your glory and for your sake.

Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 77 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 77. We'll sing from verse 14, two stanzas. Thou art the God that wanders dust by thy right hand most strong.

[ 59 : 52 ] Thy mighty power thou hast declared the nations among. To thine own people with thine arm thou didst redemption bring to Jacob's sons and to the tribes of Joseph that do spring.

We'll sing these two verses to God's praise. Amen. Thou art the God that wanders by thy right hand by thy right hand most strong.

Thy mighty power thou hast declared the nations among.

The nations among to thine own people with thine arm own people with thine arm thou didst redemption bring to Jacob's sons sons and to the tribes of Joseph that do spring.

After the benediction I'll go to the main door. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with us all now and forevermore.

[ 61 : 37 ] Amen.