

THE LIVING OF THESE DAYS

Peter deals with the question which young people today face: "How should I live and act in these days?" (2 Peter 3:11; 1 Pet 2:16)

See hymn by Harry Emerson Fosdick, "God of Grace And God of Glory", especially 2nd verse, "For the Living of These Days" (Hymn No. 440 in a Book of Worship for US Forces)

Peter's Answer is in two words:

I. FREEDOM

A. "Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil" (1 Pet 2:16)
 B. The essence of their freedom was not a political or social freedom but a SPIRITUAL freedom.

They were free from the power of sin

They were free from the guilt of sin.

Psychiatrists tell us that many people who are mentally ill are ill because they have not been able to accept release from guilt.

They were free from ANXIETY.

C. But Christian liberty is not the same thing as moral license.

1. In 1 Corinthians 6:12, etc, Paul states that all things are lawful for a Christian, but not all things are expedient or helpful.

"Expedient" implies right purposes or the highest good.

And the highest good for Christians is recognition of the lordship of Jesus Christ.

This principle governs both liberty and expediency, and these should be tested in its light.

2. In a series of balanced opposing sentences Paul draws a clear distinction between liberty and license,

between what is lawful and what, in the highest sense of the word, is not expedient.

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Paul puts two limitations on a Christian's freedom:

The first is from the social point of view; is the act helpful to others?

The second is from the individual's own point of view; Will the act make us slaves to passion and thus destroy freedom itself? (See 2 Peter 2:19)

3. One of the earliest heresies against which the apostles had to fight was the pernicious idea that Christian liberty implied license.

But Paul would have none of it.

He saw Christians as God's people who were "called to be saints"

and dedicated to the spirit of Christianity. Such licentious conduct as the apostle condemns in this chapter is utterly inconsistent with this status as saints of God.

His immediate point is that is simply not true or acceptable that anything goes in sexual conduct.

He condemns homosexuality along with other forms of immorality and compares homosexuals with thieves, drunkards, and robbers, none of whom will inherit the kingdom of God if they remain impenitent and unregenerate. God can save and forgive the homosexual, and the prostitute, and those who visit prostitutes, and thieves, and drunkards, and robbers, if they repent and change their way of life and ask God's forgiveness and put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, in fact, "and such WERE some of you. But you were washed from such moral filth, you were sanctified, made morally holy and separated unto God, and you were justified and declared righteous on the basis of your faith in Jesus Christ, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

4. The Christian's body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. And this requires separation from sin, not license to continue in sin.

FAITHFULNESS

II. ALLEGIANCE. This is Peter's second word as to how to live in these days.

A. To whom or to what cause or ideal do you give your allegiance?

This is the all-important question.

Many are looking for persons, causes, or organizations or institutions to which they may give their allegiance.

B. Allegiance to self-interest brings unhappiness.

Allegiance to men or to people can be disappointing.
And causes fade and pass away with changing times.

No human cause or institution is worthy of our TOTAL allegiance.

What is there that can truly claim a person's TOTAL allegiance?

Peter says, "Live as servants of God." 1 Peter 2:16
That is, "Pledge your allegiance to God."

There is nothing higher, and there is nothing greater than God to which you can pledge yourself.

There is no one truer, and there is no one more satisfying to whom you can give yourself.

C. Peter says, "Honor the sovereign", but he does not say, "Give your total allegiance to the earthly sovereign."

D. The same writer, the Apostle Peter, said in another place in the New Testament, in the Book of Acts, "We must obey God rather than men."

A great many times we are able to obey people and God at the same time; there is no conflict in our loyalty.

The trouble comes when people tell us to do one thing and God tells us to do the opposite. What then?

That is what happened in Peter's case. Men said, "Keep still; be quiet!" God said, "Speak out."

Peter could not do both; he had to choose one or the other. He chose to do what God said, regardless of the consequences.

Such a conflict in loyalties is one of the most testing and straining experiences that can come to a person.

E/ One of the things for you to remember when you find yourself caught in a vise of conflicting loyalties is that you are not the first person to be there.

It is the price people pay for their moral nature, and the noblest people have paid the highest price.

Jesus paid the highest price of all.

He loved the land and the people.

The people said, "Be one of us."

God said, "Be my Son."

Jesus obeyed God, not men.

F. A Christian cannot pledge his ultimate allegiance to any human institution, because above the institution is the cross of Christ, and the institution must in the last analysis be judged by the cross of Christ and by the principles for which he died.

The Christian cannot commit himself or herself without reservation to a political party, for the party allegiance always stands second to the Christian allegiance.

Let us pledge our unswerving allegiance to Him in words similar to the hymn:

"Living for Jesus a life that is true,

Striving to please Him in all that I do;

Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,

This is the pathway of blessing for me.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior,

I give myself to Thee,

For Thou, in Thy atonement,

Didst give Thyself for me;

I own no other Master,

My heart shall be Thy throne,

My life I give, henceforth to live,

O Christ, for Thee alone."