

# Alton Baptist Church e-Service 25<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## Live as free men

Welcome to our Sunday service.

Today we will continue with our studies in 1 Peter. We will, among other things, be looking at our relationship with government and the law.

Let us begin with songs of praise and worship. It is always good to concentrate our minds on the greatness of our God and our Saviour.

Our first hymn is 109 in Mission Praise.

Crown Him with many Crowns

<https://youtu.be/3YJnVN6wdvI>

Let us pray.

Dear Lord and Father it is with joy we come into your presence. We are reminded of your greatness and it is a huge encouragement for us. We want to thank you for all the provisions that you have made for us. We have things and support for our everyday life but even more important is the salvation you gave us to bring us safely into eternity with Christ Jesus.

We thank you for friends and relatives and for all who care for us.

We thank you for the relationship that we share in Christ.

We pray that you will bless us during the time we are spending in your presence.

Amen

Our second hymn is number 559

Praise Him, praise Him Jesus our blessed redeemer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKjAdtBsisY>

Notices

Give thanks for the offering

Intercessory prayers

Pray for

Our church, including Sherfield and Camberley

Our nation and the persisting problem of covid-19

Friends and relatives

Persecuted Christians

That God will reach out to the persecutor to change them and bring many to Christ

Our third hymn is 94

Come let us sing of a wonderful love,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fJ2hiATs2s>

### **1 Peter 2:13 - 25**

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.

Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

"He committed no sin,  
and no deceit was found in his mouth."

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Fourth hymn 799

All I once held dear

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpPIa-BskY>

To understand our reading we have to realise that the church is just about to enter a new phase in its relationship with the Roman Empire.

The Imperial government still thinks of Christians as a branch of Judaism. This makes it quite legal. This will soon change and the Imperial government will regard it as a new religion which will make it difficult and dangerous for Christians

Under the rules being applied Christians found themselves in a situation which was in many ways similar to ours today. There was a fair amount of opposition, especially from Jews, but the Roman state was fairly tolerant. As we read what Peter wrote we see he encouraged believers to be good members of their society and to be obedient citizens and even obedient slaves. There are many rules that the government imposes. We may not like some we may even think some are silly but this epistle still encourages us to obey them.

Persecuted Christians face something different. They have authorities which have set themselves up against Christ. I am sure that Peter would say obey in all secular matters but there is a higher authority in spiritual matters. He himself had faced this issue very early on in his Christian life.

Soon after the Lord's resurrection he and John were taken before the Jewish leaders and placed on trial. The trial came to nothing but they were ordered to stop telling people about Jesus and severely threatened. We have their response in Acts 4

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

I think that when it comes to disobeying the will of government we must be very careful to distinguish between what we don't like and what is abhorrent to God.

We have a section about how slaves should behave. We, I am sure, strongly disapprove of slavery but it was an important part of first century society. There were many kinds of slaves. Some were little different from domestic servants. Others suffered terribly and, of course, they

had no legal protection. Peter's aim was to help people living under these conditions to remain good Christians. Romans did liberate a significant proportion of their household slaves and farm workers often in their wills. Some did very well.

In his letter to the Corinthians  
1 Cor 7:20- 24

Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

Finally we are encouraged by Christ's example. He did not seek worldly success or power but to do the will of his Father and redeem his people whatever the cost.

I am sure we all find things in God's word which we find hard. Our Last hymn encourages us to trust in the Lord for His help.

Fifth Hymn 263

I am weak but Thou art strong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6Ks49apflE>

Dear Lord there are many things we find hard but you are great in mercy and forgiveness Help us, we pray, to follow where you lead and bring glory to you name.

Let us say the grace together.  
Amen