

Take-Home • Session Four

Aliens on Mission: The Suffering Servant • 1 Peter 2:11-25

What We Found

The exile strategy came into focus: conduct so plainly good that slander starves, which is Jesus' own method of letting light shine. Honor has a calibration (honor all, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor) and a limit that Peter himself marked when he told the Sanhedrin that we must obey God rather than men. Then the summit: we read Isaiah 53 aloud and found nearly every phrase of Peter's Passion account already written there, seven centuries early, by the prophet the eyewitness chose over his own words. The man who reviled in the courtyard tells us Christ, reviled, did not revile in return; and by his wounds you have been healed.

Voices of the Church

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St. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165), First Apology 17

Addressing the emperor himself, St. Justin explains that Christians, taught by Christ, pay taxes more readily than anyone and pray for rulers, worshiping God alone but gladly serving the empire in everything else. It is 1 Peter 2:13-17 turned into public policy: maximal cooperation, bounded worship. He sealed the argument with his blood under Marcus Aurelius.

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 107), Letter to the Romans

Traveling under guard to his execution, St. Ignatius begs the Roman Christians not to rescue him: allow me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. His words breathe the same conviction as 1 Peter 2:21: Christ's suffering is not only a payment to admire but a path to walk, and he counted following in those steps the completion of his discipleship.

Voices of the Church

St. Polycarp of Smyrna (d. c. 155), Martyrdom of Polycarp 9-10

Standing before the proconsul, St. Polycarp says Christians are taught to render honor to rulers and authorities appointed by God, so far as it does no harm to the soul, yet he will not swear by the fortune of Caesar or revile Christ. The old bishop states 1 Peter's balance in one breath: honor the emperor, fear God, and know exactly where the line runs.

Live It This Week

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This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 2:21. (2) Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 straight through once, slowly, marveling that this prophecy reads as if an eyewitness of the Passion had written it. (3) Choose one relationship where you have been returning fire, and for seven days answer revilement with silence and a prayer. (This practice is for ordinary friction, not for abuse; if you face abuse, harassment, or danger, setting boundaries, speaking the truth, and seeking help are fully compatible with following Christ.) (4) Do one visibly excellent, uncomplaining piece of work for someone who has been unfair to you.

Scripture Memory

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 3:1-12 before Session Five.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 618; 1899-1900; 2242