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EMPOWERING NIGERIAN SOCIETY FOR PEACE AND SECURITY: INPUTS FROM RE-READING 1 PETER 2:13 - 17

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Abstract

The increasing rise of insecurity across many societies in the Nigerian society which usually manifests in terrorism, banditry and communal clashes has seriously undermined governance, adversely affect scholarly activities and eventually impede sustainable development. It normally erodes social cohesion and unity, thereby creating atmosphere where leadership and scholarship are demonstrated without respect for the common good of everyone. As a result, there is urgent need to redesign scholarship and leadership frameworks that will provide for peace building and security among the Nigerian societies. This Paper therefore examines biblical principles as embedded in 1Peter's 2:13-17 that will provide a moral compass for leaders, scholars and societies to build upon. It argues that a decontextualized interpretation demanding passive submission to governing authorities is theologically untenable and pastorally hazardous in a nation grappling with multi-front insecurity. Through an exegetical analysis of the text in its original Neronian context, the study reframes Petrine "submission" not as blind obedience, but as a strategic, voluntary act of witness. This is balanced against broader biblical imperatives for the prophetic denunciation of injustice and the active pursuit of justice. When evaluated against the biblical benchmark of punishing evildoers and praising the good, the Nigerian state's performance often reveals an immerse failure of its God-ordained purpose. Consequently, the study proposes a hermeneutic of "critical collaboration" and "submission as resistance." It concludes that the Nigerian church is called to transcend passive compliance, acting as a vital locus for peace and security by involving in grassroots peace building, promoting interfaith dialogue, and exercising its prophetic mandate to challenge structural injustice, thereby empowering communities where the state has abdicated its responsibilities.

Keywords: Empowering, Nigerian, Society, Peace and Security

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation, is ensnared in what could be described as immerse security crisis. For decades, the country has been grappling with many-sided security crisis that have metamorphized across its geopolitical zones, threatening its corporate existence and national development (Agbiboa, 2013). The universality of violence, perpetrated by a spectrum of state and non-state actors, has greatly subverted law and order, leading to a near-total collapse of the state's capacity to fulfill its main constitutional responsibility: the protection of lives and property (Amnesty International, 2020). The Nigerian state is under serious duress, with its authority and legitimacy challenged by insurgencies, banditry, communal conflicts, and rampant criminality that have become commonplace (Bassey & Asangausung, 2023). This prevalent insecurity is not an accidental occurrence but a direct outcome of deeply entrenched structural and institutional failures. Scholars and analysts have continually pointed to an intense deficit in governance, characterized by systemic corruption, weak institutions, and a glaring lack of political will, as the principal driver of instability (Dambazau, 2011; Oyeyemi, 2019). The state's response, always limited to reactive and heavy-handed military interventions, has proven inadequate and, in many cases, not yielding result. The security apparatus itself has been compromised in gross human rights violations, extra-judicial killings, and arbitrary arrests, transforming a supposed protector into a source of fear and insecurity for many communities (Agbiboa, 2013; Amnesty International, 2020). This reality has shattered the social contract, creating a deep hole of mistrust between the citizenry and the state, thereby promoting a climate where people feel abandoned and unprotected.

An Exegetical and Theological Reading of 1 Peter 2:13–17

[13] Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, [14] or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. [15] For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. [16] Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. [17] Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor. This passage examines how Christians should comport themselves in public life. Looking at 1 Peter 2:13–17 exegetically requires attention to the social location and rhetorical strategy of the letter. The author frames a set of moral injunctions meant to shape how a vulnerable minority presents itself in a plural and frequently hostile society. The immediate unit (2:11-13) combines household-code material with civic instruction so that private domestic duties and public comportment are incorporated into a single programme of witness and social responsibility. (Jobes, 2005; Balch, 1981; Elliott, 1981). Two converging features determine the reading of 2:13–17. First, 1 Peter employs the Greco-Roman household-code (Haustafel) genre: conventional lists of duties (husband/wife, parent/child, master/slave) that were adapted by early Christian writers to shape community attitude and to disable charges that Christians threatened social order (Balch, 1981; Keener, 2021). Second, the letter repeatedly distinguishes its addressees with terms such as *paroikoi* and *parepidēmoi*, usually translated "resident aliens" or "sojourners", a theological self-identification that carries social consequences. The identity of Christians as "exiles" is figurative and theological (citizens of God's eschatological realm) but it also likely reflects a real social posture: communities that lacked full civic protections that practised distinctive worship, and therefore attracted suspicion (Elliott, 1981; Seland, 2009; Jobes, 2005). Read together, the Haustafel form and the "resident-alien" motif show that the letter's moral instructions gear towards both to preserve the internal cohesion of the Christian household

and to provide an apologetic programme for honourable public behavior in order to bear witness to God before non-Christians.

The programmatic command that opens the paragraph, "be subject" (*hupotassō*), must be interpreted with lexical, social and theological sensitivity. In classical Greek the verb carries the sense of "arrange under" or "place in proper order," and in the New Testament it commonly denotes a voluntary positioning under an existing authority rather than blind servility (Michaels, 1988; Jobes, 2005). In the Haustafel frame this language directs Christians how to inhabit hierarchical social structures responsibly: they are to acknowledge civil authorities as part of social order without surrendering Christian moral judgment. Critically, Peter qualifies the injunction: the posture of submission is to be undertaken "for the Lord's sake" (*dia ton kyrion*). That phrase reframes civic deference as an act of religious fidelity and public witness. Submission therefore functions instrumentally, it preserves public order, silences slander, and honours God's name among non-Christian neighbours, and it remains bounded by the higher allegiance to God (Elliott, 1981; Jobes, 2005). In other words, Peter neither idealises human government nor dissolves the difference between God's claim and every political demand; Christians owe respect to institutions as institutions, but that respect is derivative and morally qualified by the prior lordship of Christ. Verse 16 balances the call to submit by insisting that Christians are "free", a freedom rooted in their new identity in Christ , and therefore must not misuse liberty as a pretext for immoral behavior. The rhetorical pairing prevents submission from being read as passive capitulation: Christians may submit to authorities voluntarily because their freedom in Christ means they are not coerced into a false conformity; they can choose to witness by good conduct (Michaels, 1988; Jobes, 2005). Yet that freedom is not libertinism. Peter specifically warns against using freedom as a "cloak" or "pretext" for wrongdoing; instead, freedom is redirected toward service, the language of being "servants" or "bond-servants" (doulos) of God (1 Pet. 2:16). The paradox is formative: Christian liberty frees believers from sin and social defensiveness so they may serve God's purposes of justice, peace and visible integrity in the public square. Morally, civic engagement is not an expression of autonomous self-interest but a vocation. Christians present themselves as law-abiding, honourable neighbours whose lives point to the Lord who claims them. (Jobes, 2005; Seland, 2009; Keener, 2021).

In the context of state fragility and widespread violence, religious communities, particularly the Christian church, are faced with a great theological and practical challenge: how to live faithfully and constructively in a society where the governing authorities have failed. A key biblical text that speaks to the relationship between Christians and the state, 1 Peter 2:13-17, presents an immediate hermeneutical dilemma. The injunction to "be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme" (1 Peter 2:13, English Standard Version) appears, on a surface reading, to advocate for a posture of passive submission that is deeply problematic in the Nigerian context. To command obedience to a state whose security forces are themselves a source of insecurity and human rights violations seems not only impractical but morally and theologically untenable (Agbiboa, 2013). This raises a critical question: is 1 Peter 2:13-17 a resource for empowerment or a tool for subjugation? Historically, such texts have been misappropriated by oppressive regimes to demand quietism and quell dissent, a pattern observed in contexts such as apartheid-era South Africa, where biblical injunctions to submit were used to legitimize an unjust and racist system (Falola & Heaton, 2008). An uncritical, literalist application of this passage in Nigeria could similarly be used to discourage civic engagement, silence prophetic critique, and foster a dangerous passivity in the face of systemic injustice

and governance failure. The central task of this paper, therefore, is to move beyond such a disempowering reading and to critically examine whether the Petrine text, when interpreted with scholarly rigor and contextual sensitivity, can offer a paradigm for agency and empowerment for Nigerian communities.

Insecurity in Contemporary Nigerian Society

The security situation in Nigeria is not a single, uniform crisis but a complex mosaic of distinct yet interconnected conflicts that vary significantly by region (Achumba et al., 2013). This regional diversity is critical to understanding the failure of monolithic, top-down security responses. In the North-East, the nation has been embroiled in a decade-long insurgency waged by Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), which has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of millions (Agbiboa, 2013; Bassey & Asangausung, 2023). This conflict has created a severe humanitarian crisis, devastating the region's social and economic fabric. In the North-West, communities are terrorized by rampant banditry and kidnapping for ransom, which have crippled the agrarian economy and made travel perilous (Achumba et al., 2013). These criminal enterprises operate with impunity, overwhelming the capacity of state security forces (Lar, 2020). The North-Central region has become an epicenter of violent farmer-herder conflicts, driven by competition over land and water resources, but often exacerbated by ethnic and religious undertones (Ajibefun, 2018). In the South (specifically the Niger Delta), long-standing grievances over resource control and environmental degradation from oil exploration fuel militancy, oil bunkering, and cultism. Across the nation, these major conflicts are compounded by a pervasive atmosphere of general criminality, including armed robbery, political assassinations, and inter-communal clashes, creating what Galtung terms "direct violence" on a massive scale (Agbiboa, 2013). The psychological toll of this constant threat is profound, fostering a pervasive sense of fear and uncertainty that erodes social cohesion and fuels mistrust between communities (Lar, 2020).

Governance Deficits and Socio-Economic Despair

The widespread violence plaguing Nigeria is largely a symptom of deeper, systemic failures in governance and socio-economic development. A consensus among scholars and analysts identifies a profound "governance deficit" as the primary incubator of insecurity (Oyeyemi, 2019). This deficit manifests as systemic corruption, which diverts resources meant for development and security; a lack of accountability among the political elite; and the prevalence of weak or non-existent state institutions, particularly at the local level. This failure of leadership to establish inclusive and responsive governance systems has created a deep disconnect between the state and its citizens, fostering a pervasive trust deficit that extremist and criminal groups readily exploit (Dambazau, 2011). This political failure is inextricably linked to dire socio-economic conditions. Widespread poverty, staggering levels of youth unemployment, and gross inequality create a vast reservoir of disillusioned and marginalized individuals who become vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups offering economic incentives or a sense of purpose (Lar, 2020; Rambo, 2016). These conditions constitute a form of "structural violence," where deliberate policies and systemic neglect cause human suffering and create the fertile ground for direct violence to erupt (Agbiboa, 2013). Furthermore, Nigeria's historical trajectory, from the arbitrary colonial amalgamation of diverse ethnic and religious groups without their consent to long periods of military rule, has entrenched deep-seated divisions and weakened the foundations of a unified national identity, making the populace susceptible to manipulation along ethno-religious fault lines

(Falola & Heaton, 2008).

The relationship between these factors is not merely correlational but cyclical and mutually reinforcing. Poor governance and corruption breed socio-economic despair, which in turn fuels insecurity. The state's typical response to this insecurity is a militaristic one, often involving human rights abuses that further alienate the population (Agbiboa, 2013). This alienation deepens the trust deficit and erodes the state's legitimacy, creating a vacuum that non-state actors, from insurgents to community vigilantes, are eager to fill, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence and state fragility (Oyeyemi, 2019). Any attempt to address insecurity without fundamentally tackling these root causes of poor governance and economic injustice is therefore bound to fail.

The Failure of Top-Down Security Paradigms

The Nigerian state's primary response to its myriad security challenges has been overwhelmingly militaristic and centralized, a paradigm that has proven to be both inadequate and often counterproductive (Agbiboa, 2013). The dominant strategy has been the deployment of the military and police in reactive, "incident-driven" operations, a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to address the unique drivers of conflict in different regions (Ordue & Nnam, 2017). This approach is rooted in a narrow, state-centric view of security that prioritizes the monopoly of violence over human security, neglecting the political, economic, and social grievances that are the root causes of unrest (Achumba et al., 2013). Moreover, the state's security forces have frequently become part of the problem. Numerous reports document cases of arbitrary arrests, torture, extra-judicial murders, and other severe human rights violations perpetrated by police and military personnel (Agbiboa, 2013; Amnesty International, 2020). This misconduct not only constitutes a direct source of insecurity for citizens but also catastrophically undermines public trust, making cooperation and intelligence sharing, essential components of effective policing, nearly impossible (Lar, 2020; Ordue & Nnam, 2017). When the state's agents of social control are perceived as corrupt, brutal, and unaccountable, the social contract is effectively broken. This failure of state-led security creates a dangerous vacuum, compelling communities to seek protection from non-state actors, including ethnic militias and vigilante groups, further fragmenting security provision and challenging the state's authority (Oyeyemi, 2019). The clear inadequacy of this top-down, coercive paradigm underscores the urgent need for alternative, community-centered approaches to peace and security.

Verse 14's description of the state as an agent "to punish evildoers and to praise those who do good" supplies the normative framework that makes Christian "doing good" intelligible to civic authorities: if government's legitimate function is to restrain antisocial violence and to protect social order, then a law-abiding, benevolent Christian presence testifies to the social value of the church and weakens accusations of sabotage (Elliott, 2000; Keener, 2021). Scholars who read 1 Peter through sociological and missiological lenses argue that such exemplary conduct was part of a calculated strategy to preserve Christian uniqueness while reducing social friction , a form of "soft" or persuasive resistance that aims at conversion or, at minimum, at removing hostile preconceived ideas (Le Roux, 2019; Akin, 2019). At the same time, the letter's creed is not scholarly or absolutist about human authority. Peter's moral imagination sets a clear boundary: submission is commanded "for the Lord's sake," and all human institutions are understood as derivative, not supreme. When civil power stops to perform its God-ordained role, when a regime continuously punishes the righteous and rewards the wicked, the theological warrant for uncomplicated submission erodes. Many recent studies as a result emphasise that 1 Peter's strategy is

dependent and contextual: the instruction to "do good" and to respect authorities assumes a fundamental functioning of social order; where that order is inverted, ethical witness may need more public, prophetic, and justice-seeking engagement rather than quiet conformity (Elliott, 2000; Le Roux, 2019). In short, Peter offers a politically charged ethic in which exemplary conduct is both the church's apologetic and its first line of civic engagement , a witness that aims to expose ignorance, honour God, and, where possible, evoke the praise of a watching world.

Hermeneutic Explanation for the Nigerian Context

Applying first-century texts about political submission (1 Peter 2:13–17) directly and indiscriminately to twenty-first-century Nigerian society risks reproducing patterns of theological validation that once supported colonial and authoritarian rule. Scholarship in postcolonial biblical studies shows that a range of imperial actors missionary, political and academic have historically read such texts in ways that enforced existing power relations rather than interrogating them (Sugirtharajah, 2002; Segovia & Sugirtharajah, 2007). For African contexts especially, historians and theologians documented how colonial administrations and some church bodies attached to Scripture to normalise European rule and to marginalise indigenous political claims (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Farisani, 2014). As a result of that history, contemporary interpreters in Nigeria must avoid simplistic transfers of ancient social instructions into modern policies without careful contextualization and critique. Hermeneutic explanation therefore joins rigorous historical exegesis with a critical attention to reception: it asks how texts have been used by powerful actors, how such usages have shaped local life, and how the Bible can or should serve communities that continue to live with the legacies of colonial domination (Sugirtharajah, 2002; Segovia & Sugirtharajah, 2007). In practice this means treating the Bible not only as an ancient document to be reconstructed but also as a living resource whose contemporary meanings are agreed upon in relation to social memory, political structures, and struggles for justice in formerly colonized societies (Mojola, 2022).

A post-colonial reading requires a critical comparison between the authority to which Peter's audience was to submit and the authority structures in contemporary Nigeria. The Roman Empire, for all its brutality, maintained its legitimacy through the imposition of the *Pax Romana*, a form of order, however coercive, that provided a degree of stability and predictability. Peter's instruction assumes a government that, at a basic level, fulfills its function of punishing evildoers and maintaining public order (1 Pet. 2:14). This stands in stark contrast to the situation in many parts of Nigeria, where the state has demonstrably failed to perform this most fundamental duty (Agbiboa, 2013; Amnesty International, 2020). The Nigerian society itself is mostly a source of insecurity, and its institutions are plagued by a "governance deficit" that renders them ineffective and untrustworthy. In this situation, the very basis of the state's legitimacy is called into question. The political theory of the social contract, which stresses that citizens willingly submit to a government's authority in exchange for the protection of their rights and security, is broken when the state defaults on its obligations (Oyeyemi, 2019). Applying Peter's call to "honour the emperor" to a state that has lost its moral and functional authority requires a radical re-interpretation. Honour cannot mean uncritical deference; rather, in a democratic (if flawed) context, it must involve holding the *office* of governance to account, demanding that it lives up to its constitutional and God-ordained responsibilities.

"Doing Good" as Proactive Community Peace building

The gap between the Petrine ideal of a justice-maintaining state and the Nigerian reality necessitates a hermeneutical shift in understanding the central command to "do good" ($agathopoieō$). Where the state fails to provide security and punish evil, the mandate for "doing good" cannot be restricted to individual piety or passive law-abidingness. It must expand to encompass the communal and prophetic task of actively creating the conditions for peace and justice that the state has abdicated. This is a move from a theology of quietism to a public theology of reconstruction (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This re-imagined "doing good" becomes a form of constructive, community-based political action. It involves communities taking responsibility for their own security, establishing mechanisms for local justice, and building social cohesion across ethnic and religious lines to resist political manipulation. This interpretation aligns with the core principles of African political theology, which has consistently been concerned with liberation from oppressive structures and the reconstruction of society for the flourishing of all (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Thus, 1 Peter 2:13-17, when read through a post-colonial lens, is transformed from a potential tool of subjugation into a powerful charter for community empowerment and agency in the pursuit of peace and security.

The Political Witness of "Doing Good"

The center of 1 Peter's civic ethic is the injunction to **"do good"** (ἀγαθοποιεῖν): the public, observable practice of moral excellence performs as the community's basic form of witness before a hostile or suspicious society. Peter frames this praxis not simply as private piety but as a intentional apologetic and missional strategy: by persistently doing good, the Christian minority aims to neutralize slander and to expose the ignorance of those who malign them (1 Pet. 2:15). Contemporary commentators and recent social-scientific readings intersect on the point that "good works" in 1 Peter are performative and public, meant to be seen by neighbours so that Gospel confession gains credibility through conduct (Jobes, 2005; Akin, 2019). The four concise commands of verse 17, **"Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor",** articulate the social grammar of that witness. The verbs mark a graduated ethical horizon: universal respect (τίμαν) toward all persons; particular, binding love (ἀγαπᾶτε) within the Christian fellowship; exclusive reverence (φοβεῖσθε) reserved for God; and a measured honour (again τίμαν) toward imperial authority. Interpreters emphasise that Peter's use of the same root verb for "honour" with regard to both the emperor and "everyone" is theologically important: it places the emperor within the realm of human honour and thereby considers imperial divinization. In effect Peter both counsels outward deference to political structures and theologically confines complete allegiance to God alone (Keener, 2021; Jobes, 2005).

Table 1: Juxtaposition of Petrine Ideal and Nigerian Reality of Governance

God-Ordained Function of Government (1 Peter 2:14)	Documented Reality in Nigeria	Hermeneutical Implication
"To punish those who do evil."	Widespread impunity for corrupt officials, terrorists, and bandits; state security forces implicated in extra-judicial killings and human rights abuses (Agbiboa, 2013; Rambo, 2016).	The state frequently acts contrary to its divine mandate, fundamentally eroding the theological basis for unconditional submission.

"To praise those who do good."	Systemic neglect of ordinary citizens; harassment of human rights activists and civil society organizations; failure to provide basic social services and infrastructure (Dambazau, 2011; Oyeyemi, 2019; Lar, 2020).	The community's mandate to "do good" must become self-sustaining and prophetic, creating its own structures of support and justice rather than expecting state affirmation.

Findings

The critical re-reading of 1 Peter 2 provides a robust theological foundation for advocating and participating in bottom-up, community-led security initiatives. The text's criterion for legitimate governance, the punishment of evil and praise of good, implies that when the state systematically fails in this duty, the responsibility for creating order and justice does not simply vanish; it devolves to the community of "servants of God." In this context, the formation of credible, accountable, and rights-respecting community policing forums and local vigilance groups is not an act of rebellion against the state, but a faithful expression of "doing good" (1 Pet. 2:15). Such initiatives represent the community taking responsibility for its own protection, filling the vacuum left by ineffective state security (Oyeyemi, 2019; Ordue & Nnam, 2017). Empowered by this Petrine mandate, Nigerian communities can move beyond being passive victims. The goal is to foster a proactive security posture built on partnership and trust. This involves establishing formal or informal structures for intelligence gathering and sharing with those elements of the state security apparatus that are trustworthy (Ordue & Nnam, 2017). It means creating community watch programs that are rooted in local knowledge and social networks (Lar, 2020). Such efforts, when grounded in the ethical framework of "honoring everyone" (1 Pet. 2:17), can help prevent the abuses that often plague vigilante groups, ensuring they serve as instruments of peace rather than sources of further violence. This is a practical outworking of Christian freedom being channeled into the service of God by securing the well-being of the community.

The Prophetic Role of the Church and Civil Society in Demanding Accountability

In a democratic context, "honoring the emperor" (1 Pet. 2:17) undergoes a significant transformation. It cannot mean sycophantic praise or silent deference to political leaders, especially in the face of corruption and incompetence. Instead, true honor for the *office* of governance is expressed by demanding that officeholders fulfill their duties with integrity and justice. This opens up a vital prophetic role for the church and allied Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria. Their call to "do good" must include the public and often confrontational work of advocacy, monitoring, and demanding accountability (Ibrahim & Adedoyin, 2023; Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). Drawing on their moral authority and extensive grassroots networks, churches are uniquely positioned to act as society's conscience. This involves monitoring government performance, exposing human rights abuses, and advocating for policies that address the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty and corruption (Ibrahim & Adedoyin, 2023). This prophetic advocacy is a contemporary form of "putting to silence the ignorance of foolish people" (1 Pet. 2:15); it exposes the falsehoods of official narratives and challenges the ignorance or indifference of those in power. By acting as watchdogs and advocates, the church and CSOs embody the Petrine call to be responsible, engaged citizens whose ultimate fear is reserved for God alone, freeing them to speak truth to power.

Cultivating a Culture of Active Citizenship: From Passive Submission to Responsible Engagement

Ultimately, the empowerment framework derived from 1 Peter 2:13-17 calls for a fundamental shift in mindset within Nigerian communities: from a culture of passive submission and victimhood to one of active, responsible citizenship. The Petrine model encourages believers to see themselves not simply as Nigerian citizens subject to a failing state, but as members of God's holy nation, living as "exiles" with a divine mission to be agents of transformation within their earthly context (Elliott, 2000; Jobes, 2005). This identity as "servants of God" provides a transcendent purpose that fuels civic engagement even when the state is unresponsive. Promoting this culture requires deliberate action at the community level. It involves promoting civic awareness and education, helping citizens understand their rights and responsibilities and the mechanisms for holding their leaders accountable (Lar, 2020). It means actively building bridges of dialogue and cooperation across the ethnic and religious divides that politicians so often exploit for their own gain (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Ibrahim & Adedoyin, 2023). When a community, inspired by the Petrine vision, begins to "honor everyone" through inter-communal peace initiatives, "love the brotherhood" through mutual support networks, and "fear God" by collectively demanding justice, it becomes a powerful, transformative force. This active, engaged citizenship is the fullest expression of living as "free people" who use their liberty not for selfish ends, but for the service of God and the common good of their nation.

Conclusion

This critical examination has journeyed from the stark reality of Nigeria's security crisis to a deep theological engagement with 1 Peter 2:13-17, seeking a usable past for a troubled present. The initial paradox presented by the text, a call for submission in a context where the state is often an agent of injustice, has been resolved not by dismissing the passage, but by re-reading it through a hermeneutical lens that is both exegetically rigorous and contextually sensitive to the post-colonial Nigerian reality. The analysis has demonstrated that a simplistic, literalist interpretation advocating passive obedience is a distortion of the text's sophisticated theological vision and a disservice to communities grappling with state failure. The argument has shown that the Petrine concepts of submission as conscientious engagement, freedom as liberty for service, and doing good as proactive peace building offer a powerful alternative. When the state inverts its God-ordained role, failing to punish evil and instead perpetrating injustice, the theological basis for simple submission is eroded. In its place, the text provides a mandate for the community of faith, as "servants of God," to become the primary agents in the pursuit of peace and security. This is not a call for anarchy or rebellion, but for a higher form of citizenship rooted in an ultimate allegiance to God's justice. The practical pathways outlined, supporting community-led security, engaging in prophetic advocacy for accountability, and cultivating a culture of active citizenship, are the concrete expressions of this Petrine model. They represent a shift from seeing communities as passive victims to recognizing them as resilient, empowered actors capable of shaping their own destiny. Far from being an ancient text that endorses subjugation, 1 Peter 2:13-17, when critically examined, emerges as a charter for community agency. It provides a robust theological framework that empowers Nigerian communities to navigate the complexities of a fragile state, not with despairing quietism, but with the resilient hope and transformative action born of their identity as a free people in the service of a just God.

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