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**Submission to Authorities**

**1 Peter 2:11-17**

We all have been born with an authority problem. We want to be our own authority, to make our own rules, even to extend grace to ourselves as we see fit, while hoping for justice and judgment toward others who hurt us, or don’t cooperate with our own agendas.

We have all been programmed from birth to naturally rebel against parents, teachers, employers, church leaders, government, and any other authority over us. We may not be overt.

In fact, most of the time the only one who knows we’re resisting someone else’s authority over us is ourselves.

We naturally distrust and therefore resent anyone who has authority over us

Peter references this internal battle going on in all of us

1 Peter 2:11-12 *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage 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.*

And again, Peter returns to this identity statement: he calls us sojourners and exiles…and this is central to understanding God’s plan for our redemption.

Last week, Steven had us look at the identity statements that precede what Peter just said.

1 Peter 2:9-10 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

But, us being chosen, royal, holy, possessed, and receivers of mercy, in order to be proclaimers has to be seen in light of our being sojourners, exiles.

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God made a promise to give Abraham’s descendants a homeland. They had it, the Promised Land, and then they lost it, because they lost sight of why they had it.

We long for a real home, a place of security, comfort, and love. We were made for a world without death or loss, a world in which we walked with God and knew him face to face.

The world has been marred by sin and is no longer home, and we are restless exiles since our expulsion from Eden, represented by Adam and Eve getting booted out of the Garden.

This is why it says in Luke 9 that when a guy said he wanted to follow Jesus wherever He went, Jesus said “the Son of God has no place to lay his head”

And this is why Jesus was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem. He took the great exile we deserved so we could be brought into God’s household, into God’s homeland

And someday he will turn the world back into our originally intended home. Until then, this world will feel increasingly foreign to those of us who know and love Jesus.

The gospel for us right now tells us that real peace only comes from knowing that nothing in this world is truly home. So God gives us access to Him in prayer, because in talking with God we get the strength that comes from visiting our future home when we know God’s love and presence.

“Abstaining from the passions of the flesh” sounds like a generality. And it is.

But…Peter is going to get specific, painfully specific, in short order

With the “day of visitation” Peter may have meant the day when someone sees how you live your life, including what they hear you saying, and it moves them to acknowledge Jesus as the Savior

Or it could mean the day when Jesus visits us again in all His glory*.*

Here’s where Peter gets specific about one of the wars we have going on in each of us, a passion of the flesh…our natural rebellion against authority…

1 Peter 2:13-14 *Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good*

Submit = hypo (under) + tasso (to order, place, appoint)

And this had to be hard to hear – because the emperor at the time was none other than Nero. And many times the governors were traitors to nationalist Israel

Submission in not blind. Submission does not mean you cease to think about what is good and right. Submission does not require total obedience, when to do so would require disobedience to a higher authority. Peter said to do what is “honorable”

1 Peter 2:15 *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people*

Our gospel-motivated behavior is intended to put to silence any false charges against us, against the gospel. And, it shows the world who we are ultimately submitted to

1 Peter 2:16 *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God*

We are no longer forced to do wrong, to rebel. We are now free from that, so we can be active in doing good, even if it is reciprocated with evil, only because we are ultimately free, and because we are all called to prevent the gospel from falling into disrepute.

Galatians 5:13 *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another*

Here’s why it’s so hard to obey this command: we don’t want to.

Here’s why: each of us thinks our own situation is unique

 Our situation, our boss, our supervisor, the government cannot be

 trusted to have our best interests in mind

 Some of us have, or even are currently working under someone who is a

tyrant, or a bully, or he doesn’t do his job which makes your job just

 that much harder

 Some of us even have bought into the lie that we should only have to

 work better if we get paid more

Bottom line: it’s really hard to consider serving someone else, let alone someone unworthy of our service, when we continue to be primarily concerned with serving ourselves.

But, our response to the authorities over us is a clear evidence of what we believe about the gospel.

Obedience is the distinctive mark of devotion to Jesus

1 Peter 2:17 *Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor*

All people deserve the same honor and respect as the emperor

We are to honor those in authority over us, even if they themselves are not honorable.

Sometimes we honor the title or role in spite of the person.

But notice what Peter has said here: he is being very careful with his words…

“Honor everyone”

Everyone is made in the image of God.

 We treat everyone else as equals. To do otherwise is to play the role of

 Judge

“Love the brotherhood”

 Love is not an emotion; it is a choice

 We are free to care about the needs of the people we are together with

 in the church . We are fellow citizens of God’s Kingdom

“Fear God”

 Not the emperor. Fear is reserved for the One who should be feared

“Honor the emperor”

 Be a good citizen of this world we are exiled to, because we are also

 chosen, royal ambassadors of a far greater Kingdom

We do this by being counter-cultural. Being different from what everyone else around us is inclined to do…so those same people can see the gospel in its most positive light.

Okay, so how do we actually change our attitude toward those who are in authority over us? The Apostle Paul wrote to young Pastor Timothy about this:

1 Timothy 2:1-4 *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all whoa re in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*

1. Our prayers for those in authority actually affect our freedom and ability to live godly lives. It’s really hard to pray FOR someone you don’t respect. But in praying for them they may never change, but we will!
2. godliness never exists in the absence of contentment. 1 Timothy 6:6 *But*

 *godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Our dissatisfaction, our gossiping, our complaining are rooted in our own

lack of contentment with the situation God has placed us, so really it’s a dissatisfaction with God and how He deals with us.

1. If we are going to follow Jesus, we will be different from the world

around us. And when anyone is different, someone else won’t like that we’re different, and we will experience persecution. We shouldn’t be surprised

2 Timothy 3:12 *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus*

*will be persecuted, while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived*

Suffering has to be expected. Evil people on the outside, even what Paul

Calls “imposters” on the inside of the church will persecute us, not for living in rebellion against God, but for living godly lives for God

But here’s the thing: none of us deserve better treatment that Jesus received.

Jesus even said to his followers Matthew 10:24 *A disciple is not above His teacher, nor a servant above his master*

In other words, don’t be surprised if you find yourself having to honor and follow the directions of an unfair or unwise supervisor or even a government leader

But, there is hope for us!

We do not have to fear those people who have authority over us!

Matthew 10:28 *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

The one to fear, God Himself, is the ultimate authority. So when He tells us to honor those in human authority over us, we can. Because we are safe in Jesus

John 10:28-29 *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.*

We can only, as Peter said, abstain from the passions of the flesh; keep our conduct honorable, or be subject to every human institution, when we know we are safe in the hands of the One who has ultimate authority,

The One who loves us enough to have died in our place so we could find our citizenship, our family adoption, and security, our significance and our hope in Him, and only in Him