

“Living Hope: Alien Citizens”
1 Peter 2:11-17
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May 23, 2010

Main Idea: Willing subjection to earthly authorities reveals Jesus Christ, our ultimate authority.

Introduction (verses 11-12)

1. Verses 11-12 act as a “hinge” in Peter’s letter: between our great salvation, our identity in Christ and our identity as God’s people (1 Peter 1 – 2:10) and the ethical implications of these truths. These verses act as an introduction to the content of the rest of the letter.
2. Peter is exhorting his readers (and us) to abstain from passions of the flesh which war against the soul. Instead of indulging our earthly passions, we are to adorn the gospel with good deeds, specifically with honorable conduct. In other words, as citizens of heaven we are to take the principles and ethics of the kingdom of God and allow them to shape our current living as citizens on earth.
3. Peter makes the claim that our lives will either witness to the power of the gospel or will bring reproach on the gospel.

We will reveal Jesus Christ when we ... LIVE SUBMITTED (verses 13-14).

1. The first “*passion of the flesh*” from which we are to abstain is the anti-authority tendency. This tendency can be traced back to the garden where Adam and Eve decided for themselves what was right and wrong rather than submit to God’s authority. Ever since, authority has been like shackles that chafe our wrists and ankles rather than bring comfort and blessing.
2. As those who are sojourners and exiles, we are to live submitted to “*every human institution.*” In these particular verses, we are to live submitted to our government—submitted to those civil authorities (from the President to the police, and everyone in between) who are called to “*punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*”
3. Application considerations:
 - a. Does this mean I should disobey God when the law of the land commands me to sin or to stop doing God’s will when the law forbids it?
 - i. No. In situations where a law would require us to sin or disobey God, civil disobedience is not only permissible but a mandated by Scripture. For example, when the apostles were told not to preach the gospel by the Jewish authorities, they civilly disobeyed and continued to preach Christ. When Daniel was commanded to bow to a false god, he civilly disobeyed and worshipped God alone. Thankfully, this is not the current situation in our country.

- b. What about unjust laws in our country?
 - i. Peter and his first-century readers lived under the tyranny and wickedness of the Roman Emperor Nero. So Peter's teaching is clear: we are to be subject to the governing authorities even if they are wicked.
 - ii. Our form of government affords us the privilege and responsibility of seeking to change unjust laws while still being subject to them, provided we do not violate God's Word in the process.
 - c. Should I pay taxes if my taxes might help fund an abortion?
 - i. Yes. Both Paul in Romans 13:1-7 and Jesus in Matthew 22:21 taught that we should pay our taxes. Remember, the government to which Jesus commanded that taxes be paid committed the greatest atrocity in human history: the crucifixion of the Son of God.
4. Our submission to the civil authorities is "*for the Lord's sake.*" It is out of consideration for our Lord that we consider the human authorities. No authority exists except that which the Lord instituted (see Romans 13:1-7). And when we submit to these authorities, we reveal our trust in God's sovereign oversight of the world. For Christians, submission to the government is an act of worship.

We will reveal Jesus Christ when we ... LIVE FREE (verse 16).

1. True freedom according to Scripture is not freedom to do whatever we want. True freedom is freedom from the tyranny and the dominion of sin, freedom to obey God, freedom to serve others through love, and freedom to live as his servants. (See Roman. 6:18; Gal. 5:13)
2. We are also free from the demands of the law. The law no longer condemns us because Christ bore the curse of the law on our behalf on at Calvary. Therefore, it is inappropriate that we should use our freedom from sin and freedom from living under the law as opportunities to cover up evil—in this case, the evil of rebelling against governmental authorities.
3. When we obey the governing authorities, we are living in freedom from our rebellious nature. This is a powerful witness to an unbelieving world of the transforming work of Christ in our lives.

We will reveal Jesus Christ when we ... LIVE FOR OTHERS (verses 15, 17).

1. Four imperative statements are found in verse 17:
 - a. Honor everyone. We owe all men and women the respect that image-bearers of God deserve. Though this image has been perverted by sin, it still exists. Therefore, we ought to honor everyone.
 - b. Love the brotherhood. Because they are fellow members of God's family, we have a greater responsibility to love other Christians.

- c. Fear God. This imperative references a reverential awe for the One who made all things—a kind of fear that is reserved for God. We honor and love others, but we fear God alone.
 - d. Honor the Emperor. Our reverence for God leads us to honor and respect all those in authority—in our case, the President of our nation. John Calvin wrote, *“The honor paid to kings proceeds from the fear of God and the love of man.”*
2. In verse 15, we learn that *“the will of God”* is *“that by doing good”*—being subject to authority, honoring all men, honoring the emperor—*“you ... put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.”* In doing good, we may see foolish, ignorant people come to know Jesus Christ and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Fellowship Starters:

1. Braden shared that our submission and conduct toward civil authorities will either bear witness to the power of the gospel or bring reproach on the gospel. What message is your life communicating?
2. Is it difficult for you to submit to and honor some civil authorities? Which ones? What might this reveal about your trust in God and the possible idols of your heart?
3. Peter teaches that our submission to “every human institution” is “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Peter 2:13). How can your submission to the governing authorities bring glory to God? How is your submission to civil authorities an act of worship to the Lord?
4. 1 Peter 2:17 commands us to “honor everyone.” Whom do you find it difficult to honor? (Braden shared some examples: the homosexual, the criminal, the abortion doctor, the business achiever, the artsy liberal, etc.).
5. How can your honor and obedience to the governing authorities draw unbelievers to Jesus Christ?
6. Where has the Lord brought conviction concerning disobedience or dishonor to governing authorities? What would repentance look like?
7. As a care group, take time to pray—to repent, as necessary, and to pray for the leaders in our national, state and local governments.