

1 Peter 2:11-17

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[0:00] You this morning as your people, we ask Lord that you speak to us in your word. Give us ears to hear. Give us boldness and faith to respond willingly in faith.

May I decrease as you increase this morning. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Please be seated. Amen.

In the early 5th century, early 5th century, this is around the 400 A.D. St. Augustine wrote a book called The City of God.

This book is still widely read today in the church. In it, he gave the church a picture of what St. Peter is asking of us in this section of his letter this morning.

In 1 Peter 2, verse 11 to 17. Which I do encourage you to open your Bible, your Pew Bible and follow along. It's on page 1204 of the Pew Bible.

[1:14] St. Augustine said that Christians live in two cities. An earthly city and the city of God.

These cities are mingled together on this side of eternity. And while the Christian is a resident of the earthly city, paying its taxes, observing its laws, invested in its prosperity, laboring for its good.

Nevertheless, it's not our lasting city. We are only, to use St. Peter's description of the believer, we are only sojourners and exiles.

And both St. Peter and St. Augustine taught that our time as Christians in the earthly city will be filled with conflict. We're going to have to wage war against the prince of this world.

Satan. Satan. We're going to have to wage war against the world itself. And we're going to have to wage war against our own flesh. Because we have different values and practices than that of the world that we live in.

[2:28] And so to live rightly in this world, we will have to do two things. One, our allegiance to God will not exempt us from submitting to lawful earthly authority.

And then secondly, we must maintain our primary identity as God's people and be prepared to stand out like a sore thumb for following Christ without retaliation and without reviling.

Peter, up to now, as we've been going along in this letter, he's up to now told us who we are in Christ.

He said to us that we are people born again. In chapter 1 verse 3. We are people born again to a living hope. And in chapter 1 verse 4, he says that we have an inheritance that cannot be taken away.

He says, as we saw last week, he says to us that we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.

[3:39] And because we have and are all these wonderful things through God's mercy, we cannot be at home in this world. We are merely on pilgrimage to our true lasting home.

And so that's why Peter again reminded us in chapter 2 verse 11 this morning, as he did in the beginning of his letter. He says to us, beloved, I heard you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which war against your soul.

Abstain from the passions of the flesh which war against your soul. America is uniquely a nation with people from various ethnicities making up this mosaic that we call a country.

And even in this melting pot, there are still customs and traditions as any nation would have. And one of the ways we know someone is becoming truly American is when they start to participate in those customs and shared values.

They, for example, have a cookout on the 4th of July. They make turkey for Thanksgiving. And these kinds of assimilation is good and right because the foreigner is becoming less foreign.

[5:12] He starts to speak the language and he participates in the traditions and the customs. But Peter wants to know that when it comes to the citizens of the city of God living in the world, Apostle

Peter does not want us to assimilate.

He keeps calling us for a reason, exiles and sojourners because he means for us to remain so. It's as if he's saying to us, Beloved, do not forget who you are, who you belong to, where your true homeland is.

Stand out. Stand out from the world. Don't fit in so much that it becomes hard to tell you apart.

Abstain from the passions of the flesh which 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.

Now abstain there means withdraw from. Do not participate in the passions of the flesh. And what are those? Are there the carnal indulgences that are opposed to your new life and your new identity in Christ?

[6:42] And of course this includes sexual sins. But it also includes other unchecked human impulses like anger, like hatred, like partiality of vengeance, blood feuds.

Do not participate. abstain from all of them. It also includes the desire to seek acceptance from the world which often leads to compromising our identity in Christ.

So the language that Peter uses there is the language of war. And he uses that language for a purpose. It is the acknowledgement that in all of us, in every single one of us, there is an ongoing conflict to go back to the world.

And so this war for our souls, we are to engage in it daily. It's a daily battle. Distance ourselves from sinful patterns.

Fight against the passions of the flesh. But this doesn't mean total alienation from the world.

[8:00] I don't think that's what Peter has in mind. He says that despite your honorable conduct, even as you abstain and that you conduct yourself in a Christ-like way, despite of this, even because of it, actually, the world will do what?

They will resent and revile you. They will call you evildoers. Do you love your enemies?

As Jesus says to do. Well, the world might call you weak or pushover. Do you believe sexual intimacy should be in the confines of marriage?

You might be called a puritan or prude. Do you believe in the sanctity of life? You might be called by the world a religious zealot.

Do you believe God made us male and female in His own image to glorify Him? Then you must be a hater of mankind. Let's be honest.

[9:12] We fear being called these things by the world. They're considerable fears because oftentimes it comes with real losses. You may lose an opportunity at work.

You may lose friends or family. Being called names and being misunderstood because we didn't join in in the passions of the flesh that the world engages in.

And then there may be the tendency and the temptation to just be quiet or pay lip service to the culture's beliefs even if you don't really agree with it.

A little capitulation here and there doesn't hurt anyone. In fact it could be seen as being nice. Give a little and then the world might say of us they're not so bad.

Some will even have you believe this is strategic evangelism. This is the way to draw people into the church.

[10:17] And they will say to you especially the youth haven't you heard it? The youth will never come to a church that still believes in antiquated things like premarital sex is a sin.

or like marriage is between a man and a woman. You got to put those things in the back burner because the youth will never come.

Perhaps you've heard that. Perhaps you've felt the pressure to do that. But the tragedy is that many Christian churches were left with a legacy of faith by previous generations who boldly and faithfully contended for the faith once delivered to the saints.

But by assimilation by capitulation many many Christians many churches have sold their precious birthright for the world's acclaim.

And what do they have left for it? Many of these churches in this way have become whitewashed tombs like Jesus called them. Like Jesus called the Pharisees.

[11:34] Beautiful and ornate on the outside but full of dead bones on the inside. If that is not to be us or the Trinity we must contend for the faith.

We must abstain from worldly passions and we must stand firm upon the truth no matter what the world calls us.

Eat the words of St. James. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

I pray that we would rather be aliens to the world strangers to the world and not aliens to God.

And Peter says that yes our honorable conduct our good deeds will cost many to speak against us as evildoers others but others there may be some there will be some who will see our good deeds and they will glorify God on the day of visitation.

[12 : 53] First I want you to see that the day of visitation here that Peter talks about is the day of Christ second appearing. That's what we all look forward to.

And if these ones who see our good deeds are glorifying God on that day it means only one thing. It means that our good deeds have caused them to find out more about who we are.

And then they've heard the gospel and they've repented of their sins and they now with us are glorifying God on that day of Christ visitation because they've put their trust in Christ.

Do you see what Peter inspired by the Holy Spirit wants us to know here? Our abstention from the world's sinful passions our unyielding faith our Christ-like behavior will draw the world to us and will draw them to the gospel and to the Christ of the gospel.

We will stand out and some will call us evildoers but it is the same good deeds the same standing out for which we are reviled by the world that God will use to draw others to himself.

[14 : 19] You know many things that the good deeds here that Peter speaks of is feeding the hungry or social justice or creation care. Are these things that Christians should be interested in?

Yes. But that's not what will cause people to glorify God on the day of his visitation. It's not those things. If we're honest these don't really make us stand out in the world.

Many non-believers feed the hungry and give to charity although according to all statistics Christians still lead in these areas.

But I don't think that social justice feeding the hungry creation care I don't think those things set us apart in the way that Peter is speaking of here.

In fact when we do those things the world will celebrate us for doing the good things. They oddly revile us for seeking creation care. I'm not saying that we shouldn't engage in those things but I'm saying that those things do not set us apart.

[15 : 26] What are the things that set us apart? What are the things that makes us strangers to the world and sojourners and exiles to the world around us? It's when we feed the homeless and tell them that they need Jesus at the same time.

It's when we advocate for human life from conception to natural death. It is when we don't just pay lip service to it. It's when we refuse to bow down to the statue of our age to pride flag.

It's when we refuse for example to get drunk with your friends when they abuse alcohol or drugs. You stand out like a sore thumb. It's when you and your boyfriend or your fiancée refuse to live together before marriage.

You stand out. For Peter this life of holiness this is our effective evangelistic strategy.

This is what makes us strangers to the world around us. This is the kind of good deeds that invite questions and testify to the truth of the gospel in us.

[16 : 42] These are the good deeds that bring unbelievers into the Christian community. So Peter goes on. He gives us three specific arenas for how these standing out takes place.

And in chapter 2 verse 13 all the way to chapter 3 verse 7 we will see these different arenas where we are to wage war for our souls in these arenas.

First is the governing authorities. families. And then in the workplace. And then in the family. And we'll look just at the first one this morning. Peter says in verse 13, be subject to every human institution whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to the governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. nation. Yes, we are citizens of God's holy nation. But just because our primary loyalty belongs to him, that doesn't mean we get to live as rebels and revolutionaries in the world.

We are to relate to the kingdoms of this world by being peaceable, by following the way of the cross that our Lord has walked before us.

[18:16] Can you imagine that the Peter who writes these very words is the same Peter in the gospel accounts? That Peter in the gospel accounts was impatient. He was impatient for Jesus to assert his authority and take over every kingdoms of the world.

That Peter was even ready to hate in that revolution that he's calling for. He does not want the way of the cross. He did not want that. He was ready to take out his sword to kill.

I think many Christians have that mindset today as well. We think that we can aid God by bringing a revolution at the tip of a weapon or by employing the methods and the standards of the world in our fight.

Yes, it is true that we live in a godless and perverse age where God's commands are trampled upon, where wickedness is celebrated. This is anew for Christians in the world.

And it is true that we may be tempted to take up our sword as Peter did to aid in bringing about God's justice. But that is not God's will.

[19:47] What does Peter say in verse 15? This is the will of God that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

By doing good good. How will we confound the evil in the world and live a life that stands out? By doing good. And this is not a kind of slavery or forced action.

It is a kind of willingly freely giving ourselves over to God and serving him faithfully in the world.

Following his example. in fact Peter goes on to say that we are to live as people who are free. Not using your freedom as a cover up for evil.

But living as servants of God. And because of that for that very reason we are to honor everyone. Love the brotherhood.

[20:56] Fear God. Honor the emperor. You know the temptation to take up the sword in Christ's name. That temptation will always be there.

In the past when the church called for that kind of action or when people did take up the sword to go to war in Christ's name, it was always wrong.

And it never led to the advancement of the gospel. Jesus does not need a political arm on earth or conventional army.

He has living stones. Each believer, every man, woman, and child of the church which he's building up.

That's his army, the church. And what does he say about that church that he's building? What is his promise concerning that church? He says that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

[22:07] Do you trust Jesus at his word? You know, I often think that when the church resorts to the world's methods of warfare, it's often because we've surrendered to unbelief.

We've stopped trusting Jesus that he is building his church, and he is guarding his church, and he is defending his church. And nothing, nothing in the world will prevail against it.

Think. Think through the past of the church. Peter who writes this will later die at the hands of the very emperor that he calls the Christians to honor.

he will put to death as a martyr at his behest. Many more Christians will go to their death. The greatest power in the world, the Roman Empire, declared war against a group of Christians who had no power or no weapons or no armies except for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Where's the Roman Empire today? Where's the church of Christ going on? Advancing?

[23:35] Do you trust Jesus at his word? And this doesn't mean that we will not face persecution for our faith. This is not a kind of triumphalism that we will always go from victory to victory and there will be no battles and there will be no persecutions there will be no turmoil.

But we are to trust Christ and live as free people even in the midst of the world's persecution. We are free.

That's what Peter tells us. We are free because we are no longer enslaved to the bondage of sin and death. We are free then to serve freely.

we are free to risk our lives and our fortunes and our reputations for the sake of the gospel because we have been set free by God's mercy.

The God who brought us out of darkness into his marvelous light. And we are free then to live as he lived.

[24:40] Loving our enemies, doing good deeds so that they may come to the knowledge of Christ. And in doing this, we are just following the example of our Lord himself.

Friends, I think that this passage calls us to resist two great temptations. And I feel that temptation as much as you do.

The first temptation is to retreat from the world. Because we cannot fit in. We know we cannot fit in if we follow Jesus. We know we will not fit in if we follow Jesus.

And so the temptation is to retreat. Build our own little silos. Do not engage the world. But that's not what Jesus calls us to.

That's not what St. Peter is calling us to here. We must be in the world. We must engage with the world around us in order for our good deeds to be seen.

[25 : 44] And for people to glorify God on behalf of it. We are not to retreat. But the second temptation is this.

We are tempted many times to blend in with the world. Just a little blending in.

But we cannot do that either. we cannot do that either. We must be and we must live as a stark contrast in a sea of darkness.

I leave you with the words of our Lord himself. You are the light of the world. You are a town built on a hill that cannot be hidden.

neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house.

[26 : 54] In the same way let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.