

XIX. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“The Sojourner’s Journey—Submission, Part 1”
I Peter 2:13–17
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We are in our 19th study of I Peter. To get us started I’m going to read the text we studied in our last study to prepare us for this one. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the infallible, inerrant truth. I Peter 2:11–12 says *[11] Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. [12] Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when (not if) they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The year was 1974 and I was a senior in college getting ready to graduate. During that year I had been asked to do a student pastorate with a group of 17 people who were starting a church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. It was a wonderful group of people meeting in a house and the preaching was ruining my clothes every week because my pulpit was a television set with a table cloth draped over it but sticking out of the back of it was all these prickly tubes that constantly ruined my polyester suits. That was an experience each week of dodging the tubes as I was preaching.

There was this one young man that was there from one of the families that was there that people had been praying for. He was in utter rebellion against the Lord and one Sunday in late spring he came flying around the corner on his Harley Davidson, as we were getting started. He came in, threw his leather jacket to the side as we had already begun the worship service, took one of the chairs, turned it around backwards and sat down with his hands on top of the back of the chair and just looked at me. Could tell he had not come to bless the Lord but had come with that challenging heart. I know I preached the Gospel that day but I can’t remember the text I used.

After the service my wife and I went home and sat down to lunch and all of sudden I heard that Harley Davidson motorcycle again. I heard that kickstand go down again and the booted footsteps all the way to the door. He hit the door about three times and I told my wife ‘I think I know who is at the door and there is a good possibility I may not be back after I answer the door.’ When I opened the door he was fully red faced but it was no longer the red faced that had been there earlier for he was weeping and said to me ‘I need what you said today, can I become a Christian?’ I had the privilege to lead him to a personal relationship with Christ and met with him the following week.

I told him that now that he was a Christ follower he needed to be disciplined because as a Christ truster you then become a Christ follower. As we talked he said to me ‘I understand I’m a new creation in Christ and have a new heart, a new family, a new record and a new life but I have the old life that I am going back to tomorrow. I have the same family at home, the same college, those same professors, the same classes, the same athletic team, and I was empty in the midst of all of it but now I’ve got to go right back to it. What do I do now?’ In other words, he was a new creation but he had to go back to the old world he had been a part of. I said to him, ‘Brother, you’re right that you are going back to that old world but praise God that old world is

no longer in you.’ So how do you live in that world with that world not living in you? Our Lord leads us in that.

He had a summer job that was near where I lived so I was able to meet with him on a regular basis and began to talk with him about his new life. I basically tried to follow what the Apostles have followed. Peter and Paul are the prime examples of this. With Gospel discipleship they painstakingly, relentlessly and intentionally always tell you who you are in Christ before they tell you what you do for Christ. So they build the foundation of Gospel blessings, privileges and promises that are secured in Christ and then they give you the Gospel commands of how you live for Christ. They never give you Gospel commands until they tell you who you are in Christ.

It is the reason Peter uses the phrase elect exiles because elect is who you are in Christ. Before the foundations of the world God’s electing sovereign grace and love was ordained to come into your life to persuade you to leave sin rationally, emotionally and volitionally to come to Christ as He secured you in Christ. Now you are an exile because of what you do for Christ. Your citizenship has been taken from the Kingdom of darkness and the world and transferred to Kingdom of God and light. Here is what we have already studied in I Peter.

In I Peter 1:3–12 he tells us of our great salvation. Then he gives us three framing commandments in I Peter 1:13–2:3 which I call axioms because axioms were used to solve problems. These commands solve the problem for us of how we live for Christ in this world. The first axiom was to be holy in all that you do, not to be saved. The holiness of Christ saves you but you now pursue holiness for Christ out of love, gratitude and worthiness to Christ. The second command was to love one another while you are pursuing holiness in all your conduct. You have to come to Jesus personally but you don’t live individually for you live together and love one another. Thirdly, is for us to start craving the milky Word, the milk that is full of the Word of God. Get rid of every appetite suppressant – malice, hypocrisy, envy, slander – then nurture an appetite for the Word of God preached in your life.

Then in I Peter 2:4–10 he lays another foundation that gave us 13 identity marks that we have and are in Christ – i.e. a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, etc. After this he starts into another lengthy section of more Gospel commands. In the last study we looked at axiom number 4 and that is that we are a sojourner and an exile. Our new citizenship is in the Kingdom of God but we are to live as a sojourner, a wanderer, a pilgrim in this world. An exile is someone living somewhere where they don’t have their citizenship. We find ourselves in nations but we have been transferred from the kingdom of this world to the Kingdom of Christ and we live that out as the people of the dispersion for Christ in all the nations of this world.

Negatively He wants us to kill sinful desires in our life and positively He wants us to keep our behavior excellent before the Gentiles, the unbelievers. We don’t want to sin and we’ll never be sinless but we want to sin less. James tells us sinful desires come from marrying temptations from the world. Sinful desires married to the temptations of the world produce sin and sin produces death. We don’t want the death of our testimony or the intimacy of our relationship with Christ so we don’t want to embrace sin therefore to get rid of sin you get rid of the parents (sinful desires and temptations of the world). To do this we need to flee temptation, not resist them, and kill sinful desires. Sinful desires are not syndromes to manage, for they are sin and impulses to sin from the fallen man that need to be killed every day (kill the old man daily).

Galatians 2:20 says [20] *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who*

loved me and gave himself for me. When you were saved there were some sins that just left immediately but there are some sins that are entangled and embedded in our life through the way we thought and lived for so long before we were converted. We have to keep going after the roots of those constantly in our lives. Realize that those things do not identify you. The blood of Jesus, the Spirit of God and Jesus as Lord and Savior is what identifies you but you now kill those sinful desires daily. And when God visits unbelievers who have been deriding and mocking you because of what you're doing for Christ, they will then look at what you did and no longer call good evil but will call what you did as glorifying to God. They will begin to glorify God in that day, in the day of visitation. In other words, your life will stimulate their praise to God as you live as a sojourner, killing the old man, and embracing the new man.

Now we come to a fifth axiom which comes from I Peter 2:13–17 which says, [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 evil and to praise those who do good.* [15] *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.* [16] *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servant of God.* [17] *Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

The fifth command is be subject to *every* human institution. This means to submit yourself or be submissive to every human institution. This is an internal act and an external act. To submit means to rank yourself under another. You just go to the last seat. Another translation may say 'every human ordinance' rather than institution. These are institutions sacredly existing by the sovereign hand of God in a fallen world for a purpose. What do Christians do as sojourners with their citizenship in the Kingdom of heaven as they find themselves in the God ordained sacred institutions that exist among humans? We are to be submissive in every single one of them.

Internally it means in the institutions of life – marriage, family, church, work, government – rank yourselves under those in authority over you. You might think 'I'm a joint heir with Christ' and that means He has set you free to rank yourself under those that are over you. We are to embrace this internally with humility of heart. In other words, you do what Jesus did. What did Jesus do?

Luke 2:52 tells us [52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.* Jesus is constantly in formation. Luke 2:51 tells us why Jesus is being formed up instrumentally. Luke 2:52 says [51] *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was **submissive to them*** (his earthly parents, Joseph and Mary). *And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.* This is the Son of God come in the flesh who is submissive to His adopted father and appointed mother. He was submissive to two people He made. A few years from that He will die on a cross to save them from their sins. He is submissive to two people He is upholding and sustaining by the Word of His power. He was submissive in obedience to the Law which says to honor your father and mother.

It is not simply that you will be submissive to Christians but to every institution and everyone who leads you, whether they are Christians or not. You might think 'I'll be submissive if they are more righteous than you or if they earn my submission or all the things we begin to think our way through.' No, feel the full weight of this. I know you are probably thinking are there no qualifiers or any extenuating circumstances or any exceptions? Yes, but the text isn't starting off with exceptions. It's starting off with the full weight of the Gospel command of our Savior in our life to submit to every human institution.

What if I'm in leadership? The text doesn't tell you to make other people submit, you lead. As a leader you rank yourself under those in leadership above you and submit to them in that relationship and/or institution. Internally you do it with humility and externally it is seen with praying for them, obeying them, respecting them and honoring them. That is what it means to be in subjection.

I'm sure you have heard this example of what submission is not but a little boy was giving his mom a hard time and so she told him to go sit in the corner and he kept saying 'no' and then she said 'you go sit in the corner or I'll tell your daddy' and he said 'ok' but when he got to the corner he said to his mom 'mom, I'm sitting on the outside but I'm standing on the inside.' Here Peter is talking about submitting internally as well as externally in every human institution which is what God has called us to do.

When we do this we are exhibiting that God has saved us. When we were in the kingdom of darkness it was all about me, self-absorption, self-reliance, self-exaltation, self-evaluation and I would submit if it was good for me but I wouldn't submit if it wasn't good for me. If I wanted to litter I would litter or if I wanted to speed I would speed but now I'm called to submit. When I get into the Kingdom of God it's all about Jesus and self-denial and not about me. This becomes the evidence that God has set me free and my freedom doesn't become an excuse for evil but my freedom is seen in my ability to submit myself to God by submitting in every human institution.

Notice the two motivations. Motivation number one is that we do this for the Lord's sake as saints of God. This becomes an act of worship for us whereby we are giving God praise by submitting to those. We are honoring the Lord by doing this. When we submit ourselves we are exhibiting our trust in the Lord. If God has ordained the institution and the people in the institution (saved or unsaved) then I am doing this in my trust in the Lord not in the one I'm submitting to. Proverbs 21:1 says *[1] The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.* I am trusting in a sovereign God who is going to use all of these things for His glory. It is also an act of consecration and commitment to the Lord. I do it for the Lord's sake as someone who has been saved by His grace.

The second motivation is that I do this to do the will of God as a servant of God. I do it in obedience to Him. I Peter 2:15 says *[15] For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.* I no longer serve sin, Satan, myself and the world and I die to myself in order to serve Him and He has called me to do this expansively, intensively, extensively to every institution. This is what Christians do in the nations where they find themselves. It doesn't matter what kind of government is there. We do not act in personally autonomy. We act according to the will of God and God has called us to submit ourselves.

Certainly there are qualifications. If someone is in authority over me in a business, a government, a marriage, a family etc. then their authority is delegated by God. If they use that authority for me to transgress the will of God who by His will put me here then they have put me in a position where I must obey God, the One who delegated authority to them, and not them. Those are the clear exceptions we see this in the Bible.

Peter and John were commanded to preach the Gospel. They got arrested but they let them go and told them they couldn't preach in His name anymore so they walked out into the street and preached in His name. Yet they remained submissive to the government. They got arrested and were punished. The Apostle Paul said 'If I am punished for this so be it.' Peter will say 'If I suffer as a Christian so be it.' We see this in the history of the English Reformers. They remained faithful and when bloody Mary brought the penalty upon them they went willingly to

the stake honoring Jesus Christ. They were told not to do the Great Commission but their Savior gave them the Great Commission and they were submissive to Him because He put them there but this law was a law they were morally bound not to obey in their submission to the earthly authority. If that meant they die then they were willing to die but they were going to remain faithful to their Savior.

Another example from the Bible is Daniel who suffers from man stealing where he is put into slavery after he has been kidnapped. In Daniel 6 it's interesting to hear people say that you wouldn't find Daniel doing anything against the king he served under but if you want to trap him you will have to go for what he does for his God. He was so submissive to all the authorities that he rose up over all the counselors to all the kings, went through two empires and five kings and remained in that position through all of it. If one of those kings said he had to worship something else then Daniel would not do it but I will go to the fiery furnace submissively.

So yes there are clear exceptions and qualifications but please don't approach this looking for the exceptions and qualifications. Feel the weight of the text. Be submissive and submit yourself to every human institution for the Lord's sake as one who has been saved and for the will of God as His servant. So how far does this go? What are the applications to this? Here are the applications.

The first application is to do it to emperors and governors so we are to do it to civil government. Peter is likely writing this book in Rome. He is fully aware of the horrendous conduct and character of the emperor when he writes this. His name was Nero and in less than two years he will put Peter and Paul to death yet Peter brings the weight of the Gospel to light and life. So who would be governors? It would be people like Pontius Pilot, Festus, Felix, Phillip, Herod, Agrippa and those would be people who stand by His designated authority. If they give you a command that causes you to disobey God rather than man then you have to disobey man rather than God but even then you're submissive as you willingly step under the government in order to take the punishment for man's law you disobeyed, and you ask the Lord to use that for His glory.

As a side note what is the government supposed to do according to the text? They are to protect its people, punish evil doers and affirm those who do what's right. The government does not redeem and rehabilitate for it can't. Your job is to submit yourself to the government. How about the people who are being governed?

The second application is that as you are submitting yourself to the leaders you honor the rest of the people – you honor all men. It doesn't matter if they are rich, poor, what their skin color is, what language they speak or their ancestry for every man – male or female – is made in the image of God no matter what nation they are in. You submit yourself to them by honoring them with dignity. That is what we are called to do. There is no discrimination or partiality when doing this.

The third application is we are to love the brotherhood. How do you submit yourself to each other in the church? You love each other sacrificially, with a servant family love. You reach into one another's live to up hold each other, to meet needs and to respond to each other. I'm amazed at how you all love one another but there is always room for growth.

The fourth application is we are to fear God. You will need a lot of wisdom to do this. Step one to wisdom according to Proverbs 1:7 is [7] *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.* Proverbs 9:10 says [10] *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.* See God in all of His majesty and that will help you submit yourself in every human institution that this majestic God

has ordained. Then He will give you wisdom from above that begins with the fear of the Lord as you navigate this sojourner's journey in life for Christ.

The fifth application is to honor the Emperor. Calvin makes a big point in his commentary of this I Peter text where Romans would never call the emperor king but everybody else did. In the Gospel of John when Pontius Pilot looked out to the crowd as Jesus was on trial he said 'What shall I do with your King?' The chief priests said 'we have no king but Caesar' so directly here in the I Peter text we are looking at the matter of Nero but going from the first century to our century (the 21st) who is the Emperor that we're supposed to submit ourselves to, honor and pray for? In our context it is a paper emperor, the Constitution (Lex Rex – the law is king) and then that Constitution through an electoral process put out magistrates, governors. So we have a President to execute it. We have a Congress for legislation. We have Supreme Court justices. All these have been appointed by our emperor, the Constitution. Then we have state government, executive, legislative, and judicial. Then we have local government, executive, legislative, and judicial. Through our Constitution, we then honor all those governing magistrate appointments.

So when you go out and the policeman puts up his hand and says 'stop' what do you do? Or what if he is not there but he puts up a stop sign, what do you do? What if a speed limit sign was put up, what do you do? As a Christian you submit. In the old world it's all about me, the sovereign self. In my new Kingdom with my new King, for His sake I submit and I don't toss out the gum wrapper to litter, I put it in my pocket. Those things become very important to me for the Lord's sake and to do the will of the Lord in my life. I want to live a particular kind of life for my Savior.

The expectation is that I do it to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Psalm 14:1a says [1a] *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."* So what are foolish men? They are unbelievers. When you make right choices in life for the glory of Christ it stimulates people to praise God. When you do what is right and submit yourself to every institution it silences those who would speak against your God. I want to stimulate people to praise God and I want anything silenced that would speak against God therefore one of the things I want to do is submit myself to every human institution and that means inside my heart and externally.

There are some who need to quit listening to certain pundits. It's not because they don't have a handle on the issues. Any policy that stands against the glory of God I'll speak to it and oppose it but I will not be mean when I say it or how I say it if God will allow me the grace to bridle my tongue. When you speak of people in governing offices, appointed by our emperor the Constitution, elected by you, you certainly oppose bad policies but we always speak with civility, honor and respect. If you want to see something that would pretty quickly differentiate us is in a world that is focused on devices language is if we spoke with civility it would silence foolish men. There are some who are brilliant but the way they speak of people in authority you need to quit listening to them because we're starting to talk like them and by God's grace we ought not to be.

In our nation we don't call him Obama, we call him President Obama. We don't call him Trump, it's President Trump. While we will clearly get into the arena of ideas and debate them we will treat people in every human institution with no partiality, for we will pray for them, evangelize them, honor them, and we will speak respectfully with dignity to every human institution ordained by God. Then we will trust our God to do His work in and through it so here is my closing takeaway for this study.

The takeaway is elect exiles are sojourners on a Christ-secured life journey that both stimulates praise to God and also silences the ignorance of unbelievers by submission to every human institution. What is assumed here? As you live in this world there is going to be verbal anarchy, abuse and assault. You are in a spiritual warfare and there will be speaking evil of you and what you stand for, calling good evil and evil good and that is what you can expect in this world but we do not return it. On the contrary, when we make choices in life and people are visited by the power of God for salvation they will come back and praise God for what we did. By God's grace we will treat everyone and be submissive in every institution in such a way that we would silence the mocker, the scorner and the verbal abuser. We would silence them by our conduct, respectfulness and our manner of communication where we say what we mean, we mean what we say and we're never mean when, how and why we say it.

Do you see why I chose to study I Peter in helping us in a life style of evangelism and discipleship? When we are walking with the Lord based on His Gospel blessings and living out His Gospel commandments, do you see what it does? You may be thinking 'Pastor, I'm free' and I know you're free but don't use your freedom as a cover up for evil. If you know the Son of God you're free and if you know the Spirit of God you're at liberty. Why did He set you free? He went to the cross and let freedom ring and roll as that cross sets us free from our sin, its power, guilt and shame and now we have a new King and a new Kingdom and it shows up in the way we live our lives for the King.

You might be thinking that you like this sainthood better than this servanthood or sonship better than slaveship and I agree but there is both in the Kingdom of God. Everyone will leave here today as a slave and the question is, who is your master? Is your master the one who will drag you into sin, misery and to the eternal despair and depth of hell or will you come to the Master who will draw you by grace to His glory? His name is Jesus. Come to Him and then live for Him. In every human institution may Jesus be seen Who was submissive. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the privilege to serve You in Your Word. If you are reading this today and you have not yet made that commitment to Jesus so that you can be set free from the dominion and slaveship of sin, and Satan and self to Christ, may invite you to your Savior this day. He can be your Savior, just say 'Jesus I'm a sinner. You're the Savior. I come to You. Your cross declares that I can be forgiven. Your Spirit will keep me and take me to glory. Jesus I come.' Father, for those who know You as Savior, help us who have come, to now go, abstaining from every sinful desire, keep our behavior excellent not for salvation but for our Savior that we may stimulate praise to Him. Help us to motivate glory to God and then Savior, help us to humble ourselves in every human institution, conducting ourselves in such a way that even in the civil government we will muzzle the ignorance of foolish men and Jesus be exalted for I pray this in Your Name, Amen.

Power Point

THE FIFTH (AXIOM) GOSPEL COMMAND

THE EXHORTATION

- Be subject to every human institution

THE MOTIVATION

- For the Lord's sake as saints of God
- To do the will of God as servants of God

THE APPLICATIONS

- To the Emperor and the Governors
- To Honor All Men
- To Love the Brotherhood
- To Fear God
- To Honor the Emperor

THE EXPECTATION

- Silence the ignorance of foolish men

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Elect Exiles are sojourners on a Christ-secured life journey that both stimulates praise to God and also silences the ignorance of unbelievers by submission to every human institution.