

Living as Strangers
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1 Peter 2:11-17

Opening question: Think about when someone goes on a foreign mission trip either short-term or long-term. How do the natives react to this foreigner initially? How can what seems like a DISADVANTAGE be turned to an ADVANTAGE if the missionary makes the most of their opportunity among the natives?

Peter is writing to believers in Christ who were “strangers” in a foreign land. Because our real home is Heaven if we are believers in Christ, we TOO are strangers passing through a PAGAN world.

If we could ask Peter: “How can I make the most of my time as a stranger among the unsaved?” These next few verses ARE his answer.

1 Peter 2:11–17 (ESV)

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 they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Submission to Authority

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 servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

- Verse 11: Let’s start with the first word: “Beloved.” What does that word tell us?
- Verse 11 in the KJV says “I beseech you.” What does your translation say “beseech” means?
- Question: If Peter was the first among the apostles, why wouldn’t he just COMMAND these people (and us) “to abstain from the passions of the flesh?”

A.W. Tozer writes:

“There are certain...acts which must be voluntary if they are to be real. Threats and force cannot be used to secure these things.”

Then Tozer uses a great illustration:

Suppose a brutal man comes home from work and dinner is late. And, he gets in his wife’s face and yells asking why his dinner is late. Because she is afraid of him she rushes to get the dinner. He commands, she complies.

However, if the man yelled at her saying, “Love me!” He can’t MAKE her love him.

Tozer said:

“Willingness and inward participation of a voluntary kind are necessary to love...but not necessary for obedience.”

- That’s why Peter says, “I urge you.” That’s why Paul in Romans 12:1 said, “I beseech you...that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice.”
- The kind of living Peter is prescribing (abstaining from the passions that “war against our soul”) has to come from the heart because of love for Christ, not because a man gave us some rules to obey.
- For examples of the “passions or desires” of the flesh. You might jot these references in the margin of your Bible: Gal. 5:19-22; 1 Peter 2:1 (last week).
- Question: Why is it so hard to “abstain from the passions of the flesh?”
- What does Peter say about the passions of the flesh in verse 11? (they wage war)

In Bob Utley’s commentary he writes:

“The battle with evil does not cease at salvation. In many ways it intensifies. The rabbis say that in every human’s heart is a black and a white dog. The one you feed the most becomes the biggest. Believers face the continuing choice of seeking the good, dwelling on righteousness, walking in light, or reactivating the old sin nature!”

James 4:1 (ESV)

4 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

- Though we are believers in Christ, our old sinful desires are at WAR inside of us.
- Question: How do we deal with such a fierce “civil war” going on inside us?

Quoting A.W. Tozer again:

Tozer said...God didn't toss us the Bible saying, "Here's the rule book, goodbye." He goes on to add:

"Always remember, God never tells you anything enabling you to get along without Him. And, if you were to memorize the whole Bible by heart, you would still need the presence of God and the living influence of the Holy Ghost living within you to enable you to live even a tiniest verse of that Bible."

So Peter, how are we to live?

1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)

12 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.

- Above the word “Gentiles” in verse 12 you should write the word “unsaved.”
- Question: Why do the unsaved want to slander Christians?
- There are some Old Testament examples. Why did Cain hate Abel?

- Another thought: Scientists studying animals talk about "natural enmity." Certain creatures instinctively fear other creatures.
- Some people don't necessarily want to "slander" Christians. They may not aggressively criticize us, however, they ARE WATCHING us!
- Question: What do most unbelievers think about Christians?
- Peter says if we will live "honorably" among unbelievers, the bad things they may think or even say will have no credibility.
- He says that kind of life will "glorify God on the day of visitation."
- By the way, scholars are not certain what "day of visitation" means.
- One school of thought: It could mean the "day of judgement"
- Another is, it could mean the day Jesus moves the heart of that unsaved person to salvation. Either way the encouragement to live honorably still applies.

Peter is just telling us something we've all seen played out:

Nothing draws people to Christ like a Christian who tries to live like Christ. Nothing pushes people away from Christ like a Christian who doesn't.

- Not only do we have to live as strangers/sojourners among the pagans. We have to live within a structure under authority.

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.

- This is a TIMELY passage just a little over a month from a major election.
- Verse 13: Why does Peter say we are to "be subject to" or "accept the authority of every human institution?"
- Why would being a good citizen under authority be "for the Lord's sake?"

Romans 13:1 (ESV)

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

John MacArthur sums it up this way:

"Though the Christian's true citizenship is in Heaven, he must still live as an obedient citizen in the world so that God will be honored and glorified. Rebellious conduct by a Christian brings dishonor on Christ."

- Question: Are there any exceptions to this rule? Is there any time we would be free to disobey human authority?

Life Application New Testament Commentary:

Acts 5:29 (NIV) Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!" With this comment Peter stated the primary necessity of obeying God first and foremost. These words are almost identical to his earlier ones in 4:19-20. The New Testament makes it clear that believers are to obey governmental authority (Romans

13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17), but not when the authority requires believers to sin. It would have been sinful for these apostles to obey the leaders' mandate not to speak when they had been clearly commanded by God himself to speak (5:20). God is the highest authority and rules in the highest court anywhere. Our first obedience is always to him. In that case, they had to obey God rather than human authority. — Life Application New Testament Commentary.

- We have a real world example of this happening right now. Several hundred pastors have joined a movement for what they are calling “Pulpit Freedom Sunday.”
- On October 7th, those who have agreed to participate will preach giving specific opinions on how to vote and for whom to vote.
- This is in the face of a 1954 law stating that 501c3 organizations that take political positions publicly can lose their IRS tax exempt status.

Pastor Jim Garlow of Skyline Church in California told the NY Times:
"The freedom of speech and the freedom of religion promised under the First Amendment means pastors have full authority to say what they want to say,"

I don't know if Johnny has officially joined this group, but we've all noticed in recent weeks he has referred to speaking up from the pulpit not matter what the danger is to our tax status.

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/preachers-defend-free-speech-and-religious-freedom-with-pulpit-freedom-sunday-video-82004/>

Bottom line: Christians are to SUBMIT to the authorities God has placed over us...UNLESS they try to make us do what is against *"the law of God explicitly stated in scripture."*(MacArthur).

So, What's The Takeaway?

- Whether we like it or not, Christians are a walking, talking, acting BILLBOARD for the kingdom of God...either attracting people to Christ or pushing them away from Him.
- Just like a foreign missionary who all the natives are drawn to because they are different; Christians are being observed by the “natives” around us.
- That means we have to ABSTAIN DAILY from any “passion of the flesh” that would embarrass our King!
- Beyond that we have to live EXEMPLARY LIVES so non-believers have nothing bad to say about us. And hopefully that conduct will DRAW THEM to Christ.
- Christians also have to be GOOD CITIZENS and voluntarily SUBMIT (fall in line) under the authority of those God has put over us.
- UNLESS, they are asking us to break God's laws as defined in scripture.
- Verses 15-17 sum all this up well:

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 servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.