

Hope In The Empire

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[0 : 00] How's everybody doing? Man, I like that. Here, excited, keyed in, energized, love it. Yeah, man, I love this series so far.

This series in 1 Peter has been absolutely amazing. And it's really been eye-opening, really helpful. Trust it's been helpful for you. And just, we're going to be in 1 Peter chapter 2, 13 through 17 are the verses we're really going to be focusing in on.

And up to this point, man, Peter's just been laying this great foundation of who we are, what kind of people we are. And he's saying, man, we're called exiles, and we're these exiles that have a living hope.

We are these sojourners, which is this imagery of a resident alien in a foreign land. So we are people living in a place that we don't necessarily belong to.

We're not true citizens of, but our home isn't a far-off place. It's our home is a place that we are moving towards. We are a pilgrim people. And because of that, we are people that are living toward that hope that Christ has called us to.

[1 : 10] All right? And this changes not only the way we understand who we are and see ourselves right. We have these awesome labels like Bear was talking about last week. We're a royal priesthood. We're a holy nation. We are those things.

So it also has big implications for how we live, right? The gospel, the way it comes to us is it says, man, you are these things because of what God has done, these indicatives, and out of these indicatives come imperatives or these commands of how we then should live.

And that's what's happening in this next section. This next section is this opening up, this kind of practical gospel living, all right? But before we jump into that, into this passage, verses 13 to 17, I want to read this intro.

It's kind of preamble to the next part that we're jumping into. And so we're going to go back a few verses to verse 11 of 1 Peter 2. It says this, 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.

[2 : 24] So it's reminding us, it's saying, hey, remember who you are. We're sojourners. We're this pilgrim nation that belong to God. We are in this world. Like, remember, Jesus said, you're in the world, but you're not of the world.

That's who we are. And because of this, we're given this imperative, keep your conduct honorable. That's who we are. We're Christians. We keep our conduct honorable.

Okay, where? Is that just at church on Sundays? No, right? What does he say? He says, no, it's everywhere. It's among the Gentiles, translated today, basically every part of your life that you live and go into.

It's not just meant to happen on Sundays. What this means is there shouldn't be a version of Jesse that's a church Jesse, and then there's the real Jesse everywhere else, right? That's not supposed to happen.

That's not what we're called to, and we're called to be. And let's be honest, man. We've made a way of life of this in the South, kind of where we live, right?

[3 : 22] Florida, Georgia, Lion, they have that song, This is How We Roll. What does it say? We cuss on them Mondays and pray on them Sundays. Now, I'm not saying that cussing is going to guarantee you a spot in hell.

Don't get me wrong. That's not what I'm saying. But make no mistake, we are called to live different because we're Christians. Now, some of you are getting anxious.

You're looking for a brown bag to breathe into. Just relax. Don't worry. This isn't going to be a sermon about piling on rules upon rules upon rules to force you to look a certain way, to force you to talk a certain way, to force you to act a certain way.

Man, let's be honest. If you grew up in church, I grew up in church, 80s, 90s, and there was too much of that craziness going on. Way too much of it. And you know what it ended up making?

Robots or rebels. Right? Let's be honest. You had the robots that, man, there was a rule that, they invented new rules because they love rules so much, right?

[4 : 25] Man, tell me what I need to do and I'm going to keep all the rules. And then there was the other people that were just like, forget this, I am out of here. These kind of rules were things like, man, you're not allowed to listen to that kind of music, right?

Hell's bells. Who remembers hell's bells? You're not allowed to wear baggy clothes. Now, a lot of you were thinking like, baggy clothes? Yeah, that was the thing in the 90s. We wore like really baggy clothes.

We thought that was cool, right? I don't, really confusing today, right? I don't know if they switched to being like, you're not allowed to wear tight clothes now. You're not allowed to wear makeup. Women shouldn't wear makeup or dye their hair or you're not allowed to watch rated R movies.

Basically, the whole message was, don't have fun, right? That's what really came across. But this message, it's this false gospel of moralism. It's like, hey, the more rules you kept, the more holy you were.

But the more rules you kept, let's be honest, the more rules you kept didn't make you love God more. It didn't make those people love God more. It just gave them this false sense of security that, ooh, I'm able to keep all the rules so I'm better than those who can't.

[5 : 35] But man, we took it and we ran with it. We ran with it so well, we started to make up new rules so we could be even more holy and more set apart and be able to look at other people and disdain them and look down on them.

And maybe you grew up in that. Maybe you grew up in that. But that is not the gospel. That is not the gospel that we see in the Bible. And so we don't behave so that God is going to love us.

And we don't behave so that God is going to bless us. See, when we get the gospel, it reverses everything. It's actually God loved us and because of that, right, he loved us, he took whatever it, he did whatever it took to save us.

And because of that, we live in response. We live in response to that love. We have to remember that. So thinking again about our conduct being honorable, what does the rest of this verse say?

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable. Why? Why? So that. Here comes the motivation. So that. When they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God.

[6 : 46] Say glorify God. Glorify God. On the day of visitation. We live honorable lives to display Jesus to others. Man, we live for God's glory.

We are so changed by him. We sorrow and awe of him and what he's done for us that the only appropriate response is that we live for God's glory above everything else.

And that's the big change that happens when God saves us. We start living toward heaven. We start to remember and see and really believe that we are exiles. We are pilgrims passing through.

We live differently. And here's the amazing thing because we can't do this on our own. It's God's work. Before we get to God's kingdom in heaven, God puts his kingdom into us first.

He puts it into our hearts. And what happens because of this? Our inward desires change. Our motivations are different. They're new. This inward life that happens, this change that happens, it begins to show visible fruit through our conduct.

[7 : 50] And so we're going to jump into verse 13. It says this, Be subject. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. What does honorable conduct look like for a Christian?

Again, this isn't about parting your hair on the right side and wearing dockers to church. That's not what this is about. Right? It's not about wearing long denim jumpers if you're a lady.

And if that's you, hey, no judgment if you do. You don't have to do that. Man, it's actually, it's conduct that flows from a heart posture.

What is that heart posture? We are to live our life in humility and submission. It's really hard to say that without my face turning sour, you know?

Like humility and submission, like, mm. Those words just don't come off the tongue so nice and sweet. Why? Because there's a lot of sin in my heart still. I don't want to be humble.

[8 : 48] I don't want to live in submission. I don't like the sound of that, man. I want to be in charge. I want to be in control. And we can sit here and think, you know, okay, cool.

If we got to do that, fine. Maybe I'll be submitted in church on Sundays. I can handle submission and humility for an hour on Sundays. I can pull that off. But come on, for the rest of the week, are you serious?

No. It's exactly what this means. It's every single part of our lives. It's meant to be the posture of our hearts by which we approach this thing, this every human institution.

Now, that phrase is a little bit cryptic, right? Every human institution. What does that mean? But it gets explained over the next 30 verses. Don't freak out. We're not going to go through the next 30 verses, all right?

But if we did, we'd kind of learn what that means. See, God designed man to be submitted to various institutions that would help govern his life and his conduct for his betterment and his flourishing.

[9 : 48] And this is true for every human being. It's not just for Christians in the church. It's for everyone. And for everyone, our lives all intersect with these institutions. So, man, if you're here and you're not a Christian, man, this is helpful for you to understand as well.

It's going to help make sense of a lot of things. So what are these institutions? They're work, right? We all work. It's marriage or slash family. It's another big institution.

There's the church. And then the one we're going to look at today particularly is government. That's right. You came on a Sunday. We're talking about politics. Aren't you lucky?

So have you ever wondered why these institutions have been existing in every culture throughout history? It's because humans are made in God's image. Let me explain what that means.

So God made Adam and Eve and he said, you know, in Genesis it said, I made them, he made them and he made them in his likeness and in his image. So the things that we do reflect who God is, right?

[10 : 52] They reflect a God who loves order. They reflect a God who loves justice and righteousness. They reflect a God who is good. And even in our sinful state and even in our brokenness, there's this grace that we have as humans that we still show a bit of our image bearing to God by creating these institutions, right?

It's living this reality out. We uphold them. And these institutions are important because they help us prosper. They help humans prosper. But when these institutions are corrupted or abandoned, man, they are a source of a lot of pain and a lot of chaos.

And that's why we as Christians should care about them. And we should think about them and uphold them in our lives. And that means, particularly in thinking about this thing of government, it means more than just going to the voting booth on election day, right?

We should honor and care about the government we live under. 1 Peter 2, 13 to 14 says, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.

Now check this out. 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.

[12 : 13] So we see this thing, man, government is a gift from God sent by him to do what? To punish evildoers, right? Man, punish injustice, deal with evil and to praise what is good.

That's what's meant to happen. Those are good things that government can do. And so, man, when that's happening, it's easy to honor and care about the government. Let's be honest.

It's really easy to submit when your party is in the White House or your party is in the majority in Congress, right? But think about this. Peter talks about being subject or being submitted to the emperor supreme, right?

I wish my family would call me that. Oh, emperor supreme. It's like some real respect, you know? So, we can all wish for things, right?

Right? Peter talks about the supreme emperor and that was the Caesar in his day. That was the Caesar in his day. And guess what?

[13 : 22] They didn't get to vote Caesar into power. Caesar was in power and they had to deal with it. That was it. But Peter is still calling the church to honor and submit to this man.

Let me give you some greater context here. In Peter's day, when he wrote the letter to this church, guess who is Caesar? There's a guy named Nero. Nero. A lot of you have heard of this guy, obviously, by your reaction, right?

We know from history that Nero, like no part of history is anyone saying Nero was a great leader, right? Not from the Christian side and not from those who study history from who aren't Christians, right?

Nero was a bad leader. He was seen as a lunatic. Not only that, but he was, he led one of the greatest martyrdoms and persecution of the church that has ever happened, okay?

So we're not talking about a nice guy here that Peter's calling them to submit to. You think, man, submission to that guy?

[14 : 28] I mean, think about what Peter's writing. I mean, that dude was evil. How do you practice Christian humility and submission to somebody who is evil like that, right? And here's the other thing, man, it's hard for us to do because when we see people and we look at our government and we see like, man, there are things that our government is doing that is evil, even though they're maybe doing some things that are good, how do we keep ourselves from dehumanizing them and demonizing them?

Well, verse 17 kind of points this out of what this looks like. 1 Peter 2.17 says this, man, honor everyone. Honor everyone. And love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor.

Honor everyone and honor the emperor. One of the central truths of our faith, one of the central truths of our faith, I think that makes us unique and helps us to live out this thing of submission and humility in every situation, in every circumstance, no matter what, is that everyone is worthy of honor.

Why? Because every human being is made in God's image. Every human being is an image bearer of God. Every single person has intrinsic value and dignity regardless of how they are living their life.

Regardless even of how they treat us. Now, you may rightfully ask, but hold on, what if that person is abusing me? What if that person is persecuting me?

[16 : 03] Well, then what? Am I just supposed to take it and not do anything about it? Well, it's important that God never demands that we have to be punching bags.

Okay? He says in verse 16, live as people who are free. Okay? There's a sense of even though we have authority over us, we're meant to live as people who are free.

So when we have freedom, when we have this freedom, when we have the ability to do this, we can create healthy boundaries to keep ourselves safe. Right? And we should do that if we have the opportunity to do that.

If you are in an abusive relationship, you have this freedom in Christ. But we can't take our freedom too far. Right? It says right after that, live as people who are free, but, man, don't use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.

We can take our freedom too far. While we can create physically safe boundaries, we're not allowed to hate people, we're not allowed to dehumanize people, and we're not allowed to demonize them.

[17 : 09] That's one of the ways we can take our freedom and use it as a cover-up for evil. Man, we're not free to hate. Christians, we are not free to hate. We are not free to harbor bitterness.

We are not free to revile others. And humility and submission in these difficult circumstances means doing what Jesus told us to do. Matthew 5, 43 to 44, he says this, you shall love your neighbor, you've heard it said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Like, man, Jesus, really? Come on. Are you being serious here? Like, everybody, but you don't know about this person that I know, obviously. but this is the way of following Jesus, guys.

So instead of using our words to curse and to cuss our enemies, he calls us to pray for them, right? If you're like me, you're trying to find some blue pole and you'd be like, well, maybe I can curse and cuss them in my prayers, right?

Aha. No, but the kind of prayer that Jesus is saying that we need to pray for our enemies is stemmed in this mindset and this heart of love and grace and mercy.

[18 : 22] Man, we pray for our enemies. We pray for those persecuting us. Man, we want God to change their hearts. We want God to save them. We want God to rescue them from the destructive path that they're on.

And we care about those things, one, because God has saved us. He revealed our own sin to us. He revealed our own path of destruction to us and said, if you go that way, this is going to happen.

And he saved us out of that, out of his love and grace and mercy. And so even though we were going this way, in repentance we turned and we started walking and following Jesus. And we want that for our enemies.

Why? Because eternity is forever and hell is hot. That's why. Okay? That is the reality. We should never want anybody to go to hell.

Even our greatest enemy. We should hope that, man, God, save them, rescue them. They don't know what they're doing. The prayer that Jesus is calling us to pray isn't a me-focused prayer, it's others-focused prayer.

[19 : 25] It's God-focused prayer. Let's recognize how much of a miracle that is for that to even be a place that we could get to in our hearts. Man, to get our hearts to change that much toward people who may be mistreating us and abusing us this way, man, if somebody was to try to do that on their own, they have a better chance of raising someone from the dead.

God has to intervene. God has to come into our hearts to make that happen and he does. It takes an understanding of his grace and his mercy that we receive through Jesus Christ.

It's the only way we can remain humble and submissive in trying times. And when we think about this in the context of government, which we're looking at today, man, we need that so bad because I think we live in a time we could safely say where it seems like government is losing their minds, right?

And even if our party is not in power, our job isn't to hate them and look at them and say, ah, they're the problem with why everything is going wrong in the world.

Man, we got to pray for them. We got to pray, man, God, help them to do a good job while they're in authority over this nation. God, work in their hearts, help them to do right by you.

[20 : 40] Lead them. So that's one way that we conduct ourselves honorably towards our government. But then, what about when power shifts in our favor, right?

What about when our party is in power? Our preferred guy is in the White House. Our preferred Congress is in the majority. And the danger is a very different one because we have to guard ourselves and make sure our humility and submission doesn't go too far and turn into worship of government.

This is a real danger, guys, because we need to always be submitted to God first. There's this interesting thread that runs through this passage that helps us with this.

The very beginning, verse 16, it says, be subject. Why? For the Lord's sake. For the Lord's sake. Our submission comes from a hope of putting God first.

For the Lord's sake. It's interesting, he doesn't use God or Jesus. He uses a word that refers, it's a title that refers to him being the ruler over all rulers, right?

[21 : 47] So your subjection to the authority of government over you is because God is the ruler over them. And in verse 16, he picks up on this again.

Live as people who are free, but live as servants of God. And then finally in verse 17, he says, fear God. So we see this constant thread of our humility and submission is for the Lord's sake.

It's because we are to live as God's servants first and foremost and we're to fear him above all things. And can I just call out the elephant in the room?

I grew up in church all my life, you know, and 80s and 90s, and basically you had to be Republican. There wasn't freedom to not be Republican.

Now, I want to be charitable here and assume the best of the church leaders in those days, right? It probably started out with really good intentions.

[22 : 51] And again, for the sake of charity, perhaps, perhaps, one party's values seem to be more aligned with Christian values. Now, I'm not saying that's for sure.

Again, I'm really trying to be charitable here. But, here's the thing. What that devolved into was a Christian evangelicalism that united itself too much to and possibly even fully embraced the Republican Party.

Lock, stock, and barrel. No questions asked. And then, what became about it was this mindset, man, if we could just get the right people in power, if we could just get the right people voted in, then things in our country are going to turn around.

What were we really saying? Government became our new living hope for society's renewal. Everything that we saw, all the injustice, all the things that we didn't like, we started to really put our hope in government making that change versus the power of God working through his church.

we began to worship a party. And that is not what Christian humility and submission is meant to look like when it comes to our government. There is not a political system.

[24 : 10] There is not an economic system. There is not a political figure that is worthy of our worship. Jesus didn't come to die for the Republican Party. Jesus didn't come to die for capitalism.

If you are a Christian and you are a Democratic Socialist, you are free in Christ to be that. If you are a Christian and a Republican capitalist, you are free in Christ to be that.

What we aren't free to do is worship at the altar of government and start putting our hope there. Now, can I just step back and give us the benefit of the doubt?

There are good motives behind both sides of the aisle. There are good motives for why we do these things and put our hope in these political parties because we all want the world to get better.

We all want injustice to end. And I think the problem comes is when we feel like, no, our side is the only one that wants the world to get better and justice to end. Those guys are the guys that are standing in the way and that's what we do.

[25 : 15] But when we stop worshipping our particular side of the island wanting to be right, we can see that we have that goal in common. And what's funny is both of those sides reflect something, not fully, but they reflect something of God's redemption plan.

See, one side wants to progress toward a better future. They see what is and they say, okay, things aren't as they should be, let's progress toward a better future, let's work towards that.

And then the other side, they're wanting to reform back to what they see as a better past. And I would argue that actually they're both pointing to God's redemption plan. See, as God's kingdom progresses forward, it's reforming us backward.

Okay? God's kingdom began in a garden, sinless, perfect, everything was going well. And then it was lost, it was destroyed because of sin.

Then Jesus came. And now we're advancing toward his kingdom in heaven. And as we advance toward that day, what is going to happen, it's going to reform back to that original state.

[26 : 27] And so what we see is, man, both sides actually have this desire that's incomplete but can only be fulfilled through the kingdom of God. And that's what needs to be realized.

So in the church, a Democrat and Republican can both have a place. Not only that, but we're called to love one another, we're called to care for one another, we're called to honor each other's positions, even in their differences, right?

And that doesn't mean that our positions are always going to be right, but we should hold those things loosely. We should hold tightly to the values of the kingdom of God and hold really loosely in the political party we love and favor.

There is no perfect politician except for Jesus. That is who we're to be submitted to above all. Remember 1 Peter 3.16, live as servants of God.

Live as servants of God. Jesus, he's not only the perfect politician, he's the perfect example of a submitted, humble servant of God. Jesus lived perfect, humble submission for us and is working it out in us.

[27 : 34] So this has been like a heavy, not so much fun service, right? Hopefully you don't feel like beat up, like, you know, I try to be nice and charitable as possible. I think this is an important thing for us to get, a really important thing for us to get.

But if we walk away thinking like, okay, I've got this, I can do this submission humble thing, boom, don't worry Jesse, I got this, let me at it.

We can walk out just being proud and arrogant and thinking we can do it on our own steam, or we look at that and we just like fall into despair and we're like, oh my goodness, like that sounds really impossible, there's no way I could do this and so, you know what, I'm not even going to try, forget about it.

And the gospel tells us that both of those responses are wrong. We have to realize that Jesus lived in this perfect way of humility and submission.

He lived it in submission to the father and he did it for us because we can never do it. Jesus said in John 5.19, truly, truly, I say to you, the son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the father doing.

[28 : 41] For whatever the father does, that the son does likewise. You read that and you think like, wow, Jesus, you got some real dependency, codependency issues there, buddy. No.

Jesus wasn't insecure. He wasn't afraid of failure. And he lived to glorify God because he loved God. He lived to glorify God so that others would glorify God.

And he did it for us because we couldn't do it for ourselves. But he's still working it out in us. He showed us what it meant to honor the emperor and God.

Remember he said, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God. And Jesus paid his taxes and he paid the temple tax. He paid his tithe.

That's what he did. But when push came to shove, he was going to obey his father above everything else. And this is what brought about the greatest change.

[29 : 40] This is where living hope is because of him. Jesus' radical obedience brought about a radical salvation. It wasn't a salvation from the Romans who were in power at the time.

He didn't come to overthrow earthbound governments. What he came to do was overthrow the greatest tyrants that ruled over us and that's sin and death. And he didn't come through military might.

He didn't come through picketing. He didn't come through forceful power. His way was humble and his way was subversive and his way was through proclamation and demonstration.

That's what he did. And that's the way of Christians. Regardless of who is in power, whether it's Nero or Trump, our hope is in Christ alone.

This humble subversiveness means we don't hold back the truth, right? It doesn't mean that, oh, we're just going to stay quiet. No, no, man, we proclaim where the real living hope is.

[30 : 40] We go and we say, hey, man, what you desire, whether you're on the left side of things or the right side of things or the center of things, man, the true and living hope that you're longing for and wanting is found fully in Jesus Christ and a king on a throne in his kingdom.

Our hope, it isn't based on who is in the White House, it's based on who is on heaven's throne right now. And so we follow his humble, his way of humble submission. So, some ways we can respond to this.

If you're here and not a Christian, man, you can put your hope in politics, but as you study history, as you look at history, what it shows us is that there is no perfect form of government.

There is no perfect economic system that has maintained and stayed in power that has caused people to thrive forever and ever and ever. There is nothing there that you can look to that is going to bring the results that you hope for or desire.

Maybe your hope is in, maybe I'm just going to follow the rules, kind of do all the right things as much as possible. Cross my fingers, maybe I'm going to get into heaven. I just want to say, man, no, don't put your hope in any of those things.

[32 : 01] Your hope is in Jesus Christ. He overthrew sin and death, and he did that by dying on the cross. His kingship, his kingship is the government you really desire.

And he, as a ruler over all rulers, he is loving, he is just, he is faithful, he is good. And man, he's calling you to put your hope in him today.

If you are here and you are a Christian, I want to ask you some questions. How are you doing living a life of humble submission? Particularly, well, not particularly just for government.

Yes, for government, but also just in all of your life. How are you doing living a life of humble submission? What does your social media account reflect about your politics and where you place your hope?

And guys, I just want to say this. Our witness, in this climate that we're in today, our witness is needed more than ever. We live in a political climate that is, it's getting more and more polarized.

[33 : 14] Where people, we're demonizing, the sides are demonizing each other, dehumanizing each other. And that church, we are not called to give our allegiance to one side of an aisle.

Allegiance is to Jesus and to his kingdom above all things. Are we living in a way that is honoring every human being, right?

Honor everyone. Are we living that way? Are we looking at certain people in the way they live and demonizing them and dehumanizing them? Are we seeing them as people worthy of dignity and honor, moving towards them?

By this, our lives glorify God. By this way of living, it puts Jesus on display for others to see. Let's pray.