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Honoring Human Institutions

1 Peter 2:13-17

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Introduction:

- There's a lot of instability in our world today.
 - There's economic uncertainty.
 - Job insecurity.
 - Conflict in marriage.
 - Tension in families.
 - Many are caring for aging parents.
 - Parents are concerned for growing children.
 - On top of this, there's also war, division, famine, violence, disasters, and corruption.
 - And many people are living without hope.
- Which raises the question:
 - Is there anything we can do?
- Well, we see the answer right here in our passage today.
 - The Bible shows how we can help people see the hope of Christ, when we live the gospel out.
- The gospel brings joy, and peace, and hope, and love.
 - And when we live with confidence in Jesus Christ.
 - When we obey God's word.
 - We can shine the light of Christ.
 - And even bring stability to our world.



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- Imagine two family members fighting with each other.
 - They're not listening to each other.
 - Anger is growing.
 - But then someone steps in.
 - And this person speaks with kindness.
 - This person has a calming effect.
 - And helps them listen to each other.
- This is a picture of what can happen when the gospel bears fruit in our lives.
 - It can bring peace and hope to a broken world.
- And this morning, we'll see how God calls us to live the gospel out, so that it can give hope, and peace, and even stability to our broken world.

Point 1:

- First, we can live the gospel out and show the hope of Christ by respecting those in authority.
- Instead of trying to fight against human institutions.
 - We're called to respect authority.
 - To submit to authority.
 - To honor public officials.
- Why?
 - Because this brings peace.



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- Listen to 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 13 and 14.
 - **“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, 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.” 1 Peter 2:13-14**
- Think about this.
 - Peter wrote this letter when people weren't allowed to vote.
 - This wasn't a democratic society.
 - People couldn't choose their leaders.
- Furthermore, Peter most likely wrote his letter when Nero was the emperor of Rome.
 - Nero was someone who persecuted Christians.
 - In fact, it was most likely during Nero's reign that Peter was martyred for his faith.
- And it's in this context, Peter commands his readers to subject themselves to all human authority.
- And this is really important for us:
 - Because the way we respond to authority reveals where we've placed our hope.
 - If we trust that Christ rules over all.
 - We can submit to authority with confidence.
 - Because we trust God's plan.
 - But if we doubt his rule.
 - We'll find it difficult to submit.
 - And try to control.



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- Our response to earthly authority reveals how much we trust Christ's authority.
- This doesn't mean we need to agree with all the opinions of public officials.
 - This doesn't mean we shouldn't pursue better laws.
 - This doesn't mean we blindly follow unjust leaders.
 - But it does mean we need to be respectful to those in authority, even when we disagree.
 - Because through our subjection, we can bring stability and show the hope of God's promise.
- King David is a perfect example of this.
 - After God said David would become the king of Israel, Saul tried to kill David.
 - And so, David had to run away.
 - And as he was running, David had two opportunities to kill Saul.
 - But David refused to murder.
 - He refused to take the throne by force.
 - And after Saul's death, David didn't say to the people:
 - "Saul was a wicked murderer."
 - "He was a wretched king."
 - "Finally, he got what he deserved."
 - "You were a fool for following him."
 - Instead, David wept for Saul.
 - He even wept for Abner, the commander of Saul's army.
 - Later on, David even found Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth, and gave him a place of honor at his table.
 - David didn't take vengeance.
 - He showed honor.
 - And do you know what happened?



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- David brought stability to the land.
 - In fact, Saul's men saw how David responded, and he gained their respect.
 - And eventually, he united the kingdom.
 - By honoring Saul, David was able to bring stability, and peace, and hope.
- In the same way:
 - It's not with threats that people will come to Christ.
 - It's not by forcing people to obey Christian ethics people will change.
 - Rather, it's by respecting and honoring others, that we can bring peace, and show the hope we have in Christ.
- Now of course, we can respectfully disagree.
 - And of course, we can pursue change.
 - But let's not celebrate when someone we disagree with fails.
 - Let's not speak rudely to those in authority.
 - Let's not insult authorities on social media.
 - Let's not add to conversations that put leaders and managers down.
 - Let's not pray against our leaders.
 - But instead, let's pray for all our leaders.
- By respecting those in authority, we can bring stability and show the hope of Jesus Christ.



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Point 2:

- Second, we can live the gospel out and show the hope of Christ by using our freedom for good.
- Take a look at verse 16.
 - **“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.”** 1 Peter 2:16
- When the Bible speaks about freedom, it can mean our freedom from sin.
 - We’re no longer slaves to sin, but through Christ we can now live for him.
 - We have power over sin.
- Freedom can also refer to our freedom to serve God without fear of judgement.
 - We’re not saved by works.
 - We’re saved by grace.
 - That means we have freedom to serve God, not to earn his love, but because we already have his love.
 - This frees us to serve.
- But in this context, I think Peter is speaking about another kind of freedom.
 - He’s speaking about our freedom from worldly powers.
 - No authority in this world is our ultimate master.
 - Rather, we’re servants of God.
 - That means we can freely submit to others because God is our highest authority.



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- In other words, since God is the one who's placed every authority in their place, we can freely submit.
- Imagine the owner of a large company sending his daughter to work in one of his stores because he wants her to help his workers.
 - But no one knows who she is.
 - And so, she clocks in with everyone else.
 - She wears the uniform.
 - She cleans the floor.
 - She stocks the shelves.
 - She takes one hour for lunch.
- And even though her father owns the company.
 - Even though her father is her ultimate authority.
 - She doesn't say to her manager:
 - "I don't need to listen to you because I answer to my father."
 - Rather, she freely submits.
 - Why?
 - Because she knows she belongs to her father.
 - She knows her father is the one who's put that manager in his place.
 - In fact, she can serve more freely because she knows her father is the owner.
- That's similar to what Peter is saying in verse 16.
 - We can freely serve authorities on earth.
 - Because we know we belong to Christ.
 - We're sons and daughters of God.
 - God is the owner.
 - And so, we can freely serve and submit without fear.



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- At the same time, we also need to be careful we don't use our freedom as a cover up for sin.
- If the daughter said to herself:
 - "You know, my father owns this company, so I don't have to listen to my manager."
 - "I'll do a sloppy job."
 - "I'll play Candy Crush all day."
 - Then she would be using her freedom as a cover up for evil.
- In the same way, when we say we don't have to obey authorities in this world because we answer to God.
 - It may be the case, we're using our freedom as a cover up for evil.
- When we were remodeling our church building, the inspector from the Village of Vernon Hills wanted us to change the handles on some of our toilets from one side to the other.
 - He also wanted us to add mixers under certain sinks so the water wouldn't get too hot and burn someone's hand.
 - Of course it cost extra money.
 - But we complied with the authorities.
 - However, if we said:
 - "Change the handles?"
 - "Fix the plumbing?"
 - "Forget that."
 - "He's not going to notice."
 - "And plus, we answer to God."
 - We would be using our freedom as an excuse.
 - We wouldn't be setting a good example.



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- Or if someone said:
 - “My boss isn’t my ultimate authority.”
 - “I’ll just do the minimum and not by best.”
 - That person would be using their freedom as a cover for their laziness.

- Or when we need to follow someone who doesn’t have much experience.
 - When we know more than others.
 - We may be tempted to put them down, instead of supporting their leadership.
 - But it may be we’re using our freedom to cover up our jealousy or pride or impatience.

- Christian author Howard Hendricks once sat on a plane that was delayed for takeoff.
 - As people grew frustrated, he noticed how gracious and patient one flight attendant remained.
 - In fact, one man kept giving her a hard time, but she remained kind, and loving, and gentle.
 - After the plane took off, he asked her for her name because he wanted to write a letter to American Airlines for her great service.
 - And to his surprise, she told him she didn’t work for American Airlines.
 - She said she worked for Jesus Christ.
 - Before that flight, she prayed with her husband, that she might show Christ well.
 - And that’s what she did.
 - She was a servant of God.



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- Christian freedom doesn't mean we can do whatever we want.
 - Rather, Christian freedom means we can rightly serve others, because God is our ultimate authority.
 - That's exactly what it says in verse 16.
 - **“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.”**
- Let's become faithful servants of God.
 - Because when we do we'll become:
 - Trustworthy employees.
 - Trustworthy citizens.
 - Trustworthy neighbors.
 - Trustworthy spouses.
 - Trustworthy church members.
- We can bring stability, and show hope, when we use our freedom as servants of God, and not for ourselves.

Point 3:

- Third, we can live the gospel out and show the hope of Christ by fearing God and not man.
- Take a look at verse 17.
 - **“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”** 1 Peter 2:17
- Notice how it doesn't say we are to fear the emperor.
 - We're called to respect those in authority, but we're called to fear the Lord.



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- This means God's word comes before man's word.
 - It means our highest allegiance isn't to any ruler, but to God.
 - And when God's word conflicts with human authority, we're called to obey the Lord.
 - We're called to respect all people, even those in authority.
 - We're called to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - But above all, we're called to fear the Lord.
- Some may believe these commands conflict with each other.
 - Some people think:
 - "If human authority conflicts against God's word."
 - "You can't honor authority and fear God at the same time."
 - But that's not true.
 - These commands don't contradict each other.
 - Even when we can't obey human authority, we must still honor human authority.
- The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is a perfect example of this.
 - King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image and commanded all the people to worship the image.
 - But these men refused to bow down and worship the image.
 - And when the king threatened to put them in the fiery furnace.
 - They didn't insult the king.
 - They didn't conspire against the king.
 - They didn't pray for God's judgement against the king.
 - Rather, they respectfully refused.



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- And after being saved from the furnace.
 - Do you remember what the king declared?
 - He said:
 - **“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.”**
Daniel 3:28-29
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- These men honored the emperor, and at the same time feared the Lord.
 - And because of this, they were able to show the hope they had in God.
 - Here’s what this means for us.
 - It means we must boldly speak the truth, but we also need to honor those in authority and those around us.
 - For example:
 - When you’re in a town hall meeting, and you disagree with what a leader is saying.
 - It means you don’t get angry.
 - You don’t stand up and call the leader a liar.
 - But you listen.
 - And then respectfully state your point.
 - Maybe even talk in private.



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- That's how you can fear the Lord and honor authorities.
- Another way we can do this is by creating healthy boundaries and respectfully speaking the truth.
 - If you have a friend, or boss, or a family member who constantly pressures you.
 - And they try to control your decisions.
 - And if you're afraid to say no because you're scared of how they'll respond.
 - Because you're afraid they'll feel hurt or it'll cause tension.
 - If you keep giving in, when you know you shouldn't.
 - It may be an indication you're being controlled by fear.
- At the same time, if you just lash out and keep blowing up.
 - It shows we're not being respectful.
 - You're not honoring those around you.
- Fearing God will give us courage to speak the truth and create healthy boundaries.
 - At the same time, honoring others teaches us how to speak.
 - And how to respect.
- And by creating healthy boundaries and respectfully speaking the truth.
 - We can honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, and even honor those in authority.
- Next time you need to confront another person.
 - Consider this verse.



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- And ask yourself:
 - “Am I honoring everyone who may be affected by this confrontation?”
 - “Am I loving others, especially my brothers and sisters in Christ?”
 - “Am I honoring those in authority, even though I disagree?”
 - “Am I fearing God more than I fear man?”
 - Consider these questions before you confront.
- And when we do, it’ll bring more stability to our relationships and show others the hope we have in Christ.

Point 4:

- Fourth, we can live the gospel and show the hope of Christ by enduring suffering.
- Take a look at verses 18 and 19:
 - **“Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.” 1 Peter 2:18-19**
- In this verse, Peter is writing about household servants.
 - These servants didn’t only include cooks and cleaners.
 - But in the Roman world, they also included teachers, accountants, managers, and many others as well.
 - Some were even highly educated and entrusted with significant responsibility.



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- Think about Joseph in the Old Testament.
 - Joseph was purchased by Potiphar.
 - But eventually, Potiphar put him in charge of everything he owned.
 - Even though Joseph lived about 2000 years before Peter's time.
 - His story helps us imagine the situation in Peter's day.
- And during this time, there were some servants who served under good and just masters.
 - And others who served under masters who were harsh and unjust.
- And in these verses, Peter commands his readers to remain faithful even when they suffer unjustly.
 - To endure patiently.
 - To remain respectful.
 - And to continue doing what is good.
- This doesn't mean we shouldn't take action when we see injustice.
 - There are times we need to remove ourselves from a situation.
 - There are times we need to take legal action.
 - There are times we need to confront what is wrong.
 - Times we need to respectfully push for change.
- But there are also times when we need to endure.
 - Situations we can't immediately change.
 - Situations where we need to wait.
 - Situations where we need to stay and remain faithful.



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- And continue to do what is good.
- And the Bible says:
 - **“This is a gracious thing in the sight of God.”** 1 Peter 2:20
 - In other words, God sees when we suffer unjustly.
 - God sees when we refuse to retaliate.
 - God sees when we continue to do what is right.
 - And this brings glory to his name.
 - This is pleasing to the Lord.
- And so, when you’re speaking with someone.
 - They may say a comment that hurts your heart.
 - But when you let it go.
 - This is pleasing to the Lord.
- When someone at work treats you unfairly.
 - But you respond respectfully.
 - And still treat others fairly.
 - And don’t hang on to bitterness.
 - And you continue to do good work.
 - This is pleasing to the Lord.
- When you move on from your job.
 - But you leave well.
 - And you honor others at work.
 - Even though you didn’t feel appreciated by others.
 - This is pleasing to the Lord.
- When there’s tension in your marriage.
 - And emotions are high.



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- And walls are going up.
- But you choose to pursue peace.
- And you refuse to retaliate.
- And you apologize first.
- This is pleasing to the Lord.
- When others don't appreciate what you do.
 - But you continue to serve the Lord.
 - And serve his people.
 - And you endure.
 - This is pleasing to the Lord.
- When we endure suffering and continue to do good.
 - And honor others.
 - We can bring stability and shine the hope of Jesus Christ.
 - This is what the world needs to see in us.

Point 5:

- Finally, we can live the gospel out and shine the hope of Christ by following the example of Christ.
- Take a look at verses 21 to 24.
 - **“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on**



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the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” 1 Peter 2:21-24

- The suffering of Jesus Christ is a sacrifice we need to trust.
 - At the same time, it’s also an example for us to follow.
 - It’s like taking tracing paper, and tracing over a drawing that you can copy.
 - That’s the idea Peter is stating here.
- And what is the outline that we need to trace?
- Here we see how Christ put integrity over deceit.
 - It says:
 - **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.** 1 Peter 2:22
 - He didn’t bend the truth.
 - He didn’t exaggerate.
 - He didn’t defend.
 - He simple spoke the truth.
- Christ also didn’t retaliate.
 - Rather, he considered how he could lead more people to faith.
 - **“When he was reviled, he did not revile in return...”** 1 Peter 2:23
- Christ also refused to make threats.
 - **“When he suffered, he did not threaten...”** 1 Peter 2:23
 - When people threatened to hurt Jesus Christ.
 - He didn’t ask the Father to bring judgement on the people.



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- Rather, he prayed for their forgiveness.
- He also trusted the judgment of God.
 - **“He did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”** 1 Peter 2:23
 - He trusted God’s plan.
 - He knew he was safe in the hands of his Father.
- Finally, Jesus chose to act redemptively.
 - **“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”** 1 Peter 2:24
 - If someone hurts you and you choose to retaliate, you reflect the pain back to them.
 - But if you choose not to retaliate, you will find that you absorb the pain into yourself.
 - The pain ends with you because you choose not to pass it on.
 - That is what Jesus did.
 - He chose to act to redeem.
 - And Christians are the only people who can follow Christ’s example.
- When we choose integrity.
 - And refuse to retaliate.
 - And refuse to threaten.
 - And trust God’s judgment.
 - And act redemptively.
 - We can shine the light of Jesus Christ.
 - And show the hope we have in him.



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- We live in an unstable world.
 - Many people are looking for hope.
 - They're searching for a Savior they can trust.
 - And so, let's respect authority.
 - Let's use our freedom for others.
 - Let's fear the Lord above all else.
 - Let's endure suffering.
 - And let's follow Christ's example.
 - So that, through our lives, more people can find faith, hope, and love in Jesus Christ.