

Living Righteous in a Hostile World: Submission within the Body of Christ (Part 2)

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[0:00] 1 Peter 3 Peter says,

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Now, we considered, as I said a moment ago, we considered the first part of this passage last week.

And Peter's subject, keep this in our minds, his subject really, the overarching subject, is submission. Submission. Though he doesn't mention the word in this particular portion of the letter, the idea is still there.

It's submission. And this time it's submission within the context of the local body, the local church. Peter writes there, if you will see there in your copy of God's word, he says in verse 8, Finally, at least that's the word that is translated here in the New King James.

You may have last of all or other words there. That gives us the context. That tells us that what Peter is saying in verses 8 and following are a continuation of his subject.

[2:40] And the subject, again, being submission. That's the context. And so he has already spoken to us about submission within the context of civil authority, within the context of secular service, be it slaves to their masters or workers to their employees, employers rather.

And also in the context of the marriage relationship. And then here, fourth of all, finally, he says, the context of the church. And we understand that by the words, all of you.

And so finally, here's one more thing I want to say to you about submission as an answer to persecution. Here's one more thing I want to say to you.

And this time it is submission within the context of the local body, the church. And believe me, dear people, the things that Paul or Peter rather tells us that we're to do.

The things that are to be, you know, characteristics of our church that we're to participate in and move toward and involve ourselves in. All of these things take submission, take submission.

[3:54] But now, as I also mentioned last week, Peter's main idea here really doesn't come or it's not stated until the middle of the paragraph. He waits until verse 10 to give us the main thing that he wants us to understand here.

And everything that he says prior to this phrase in verse 10 and following it, all of it comes down to this one thing. He who would love life.

And see good days. There's the main idea that we need to get main thrust main the big idea, the big thing that he wants us to see. And everything that he says brings the focus to that one phrase that what you want to love life and see good days.

And really, this is a wonderful description of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who would. I want to emphasize that word in the phrase not wish to.

We all would wish to love life and see good days. But this is a much stronger idea, much stronger word. Those who would. That is, those who desire to love life and see good days.

[5:16] This should be a description of every one of you. Every one of us individually. As boarding you believers, that ought to be what we want and what we ought to be working toward.

And not just simply, you know, loving life in the sense of the set in a secular sense. And a lot of things that people say this is living and they're not really living. We're talking, of course, in the context of of God's word and in the context of our relationship with him.

If you want to see a good life, love it and see good days. That should be a description of us. It ought to be what describes us as a church.

This church is what every believer, born again believer, every member of this church should desire and to work toward. So Peter is saying, church.

If you want to love life and see good days. If you want that to be your experience, regardless of the wickedness that may be raging all around us.

[6:23] As well as sometimes in the midst of us. That's what you want. Then apply these instructions. All right. That's what he's saying. Now, last Sunday, I said that we could divide Peter's instructions into three parts.

And they really fit very neatly into these three parts. First, and this is what we focused on last week. He gives us specific instructions concerning the character of the church.

That's number one. The character of the church. And the character of the church should be marked by six traits that he gives us right here in verses eight. And all the way through to the beginning of verse nine.

Six traits. Kind of like strings on a guitar. They're all tuned and in harmony with one another. And these six traits appear here. Now, the first of the six traits or marks of the church whose members desire to love life and see good days.

First of these is unity. And we're not going to go through all of these. But I want to mention unity to begin with. Because as I mentioned last week, unity really is the theme of all six characteristics of the church.

[7:36] We can make a case as we look at each of the instructions, each of the things that are listed for us in these verses that really at the heart of them is unity. Harmony with one another.

Someone has observed that snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things. And yet, just look at what they can do when they stick together. We learned that this last winter, didn't we?

In a Peanuts cartoon, Lucy came into the living room and demanded of Linus that he change the channel, the TV channel, and then threatened him with his fist if he didn't.

And Linus responded, he said, what makes you think you can come in here and tell me what to do? And she said, these five fingers tell me that I can tell you what to do.

Individually, they really aren't much. But when you put them together into one unified unit, they represent a weapon awesome to behold.

[8:39] Linus said, which channel do you want? And then he looked at his own finger and says, why can't you guys get organized like that? You know, unity is very important, isn't it?

And it's the character of the church. Ought to be. Sadly, sadly, is not in many of local churches today. The church should be marked by unity and sympathy and family and sensitivity and humility and charity.

And I described all these last week. Now, the second thing I want us to see. Is the calling of the church. That's number two.

First, the character of the church. And then the calling of the church. And let's just look then again at verse nine and the latter part of verse nine.

And then we'll follow this all the way through verse 11. He says, but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this. That you may inherit a blessing for he who would love life and see good days.

[9:47] Let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it.

All right. Now, this all falls under the idea of the calling. The calling of the church. Now, where do you suppose Peter got this idea or got this principle?

Learned this principle of repaying blessing for evil. Where do you think Peter got this? Just by divine revelation. And as Peter was writing his letter, did he just God just heard from God?

And and so he just wrote down what God told him. No. Now, certainly what he wrote was inspired. It was divinely inspired. But Peter learned this from someone else.

Who do you suppose? The answer here is Jesus. All right. Sometimes the answer is not Jesus. But this time the question has this answer. Jesus. Jesus.

[10:45] He learned this from the Lord, of course. And Matthew chapter five and verse 44 from the Sermon on the Mount. You might remember that Jesus said you have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

That's what he that's how he began this part of his teaching. You've heard this said that is what you this is what you've learned. By the way, that's really living on the earthly level, isn't it?

We talked about that last week. Jesus teaches us, however, to live on the heavenly level. And so he goes on from there and says, but I say to you. Love your enemies.

Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

See, these are all active responses to those who would abuse you. Those who who might be your enemy. And so the response is very active. In fact, one of those is extremely active.

[11:46] Do good to those who hate you. And then he closes this by saying that you may be or prove that you are sons of your father in heaven.

Those are Jesus teachings. Now, I don't imagine that Peter learned that totally or fully understood that when Jesus taught him and the other disciples on that mountain during the Sermon on the Mount.

I don't imagine Peter got it all right then. Do you take a little time for him to learn this and understand this and work through this as it takes time for us to as well?

But I think Peter did understand it clearly by the time he witnessed Jesus arrest and trial and his ultimate crucifixion.

And Peter watched the Lord, albeit from a distance. And he watched Jesus submitting to his unjust arrest without any resistance.

[12:44] He watched as Jesus submitted to his unjust trial without a word of defense for himself. He watched as Jesus submitted to his unjust execution without a fight.

Jesus could have called 10,000 angels. Or more. Any one of them could have laid this planet waste. And Peter observed this about the Lord Jesus.

And we know why Jesus submitted in this way, don't we? To redeem us. To be our redeemer, to be our savior. But I would add, because Peter adds, that he says there's another reason why Jesus submitted in these ways.

He told us this back in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 21. And he said, Christ also suffered for us. And then he said this, leaving us an example.

Now, the cross was all about atonement. Jesus becoming the supreme sacrifice for our sins. It's not first and foremost an example of self-sacrifice.

[14:00] It is the atonement, his sacrifice. He being the propitiation, the full satisfaction for our sin. But it is also some other things.

And Peter mentions that here in 1 Peter 2, 20, 21. These are examples to us. He says, in case you don't understand, he says that you should follow his steps.

Follow his steps in what way? Allow yourself to be arrested without resistance. Allow yourself to be unjustly accused without a word. Allow yourself to be put to death without defending yourself.

Now, that's not the point. Maybe God would call us to do that. The point is that we submit. We are submissive to those who treat us with evil.

Now, with that reference in 1 Peter 2, 21, I want you to notice something here. It's interesting. And any time there's a repetition of phrases in God's word, it is a clue for us to pay attention and understand that there's something we need to get here.

[15:13] We put the two together. There's a repetition of this phrase, to this you were called. Or called, you were called to this.

It's repeated twice here in this portion of Peter's letter. In 1 Peter 2, 21, and I just read that a moment ago, though I didn't include this part of it.

He said, for to this you were called. And notice, to this points us backward to something that he's already said. And what is that? Well, that appears in verse 20, where he says, for what credit is it if when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?

But when you do good and suffer, then if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. You see, he's talking about referring to a totally different kind of response than the world would normally respond.

We respond in a heavenly way, in a divine way. And it's to that you and I are called. But then notice in our text in 1 Peter 3, 9, he says, you were called to this.

[16:22] Same idea, same phrase, same words primarily in the Greek text. To this you were called, or you were called to this. Called to what?

Called to repay blessing for evil treatment. Called to repay blessing for verbal abuse.

And now someone will say, now, wait a minute, Pastor. You know, that doesn't seem very fair. I mean, really, that's not fair. That's not right. How can I just simply let them get by with it?

Well, now, wait a minute. You don't have it quite right. You're not just letting them get away with it. You're not just simply letting them do evil against you and just letting that happen. That's not the idea. It's more than that. I mean, if that's all there is to it, then really, this is fairly easy. You just let it go. But that's not what Peter is saying.

[17:29] He's saying you don't just take it and let it go. You repay it. With blessing.

Now, that's another thing. And yet, that's exactly what he said. I heard a story a number of years ago about a young army soldier who was going through basic training. And this young soldier was a committed Christian and he lived out his faith. And every night before he went to bed, he would sit on the side of his bunk and read his Bible. And, of course, you can imagine some of his fellow soldiers who were unbelievers gave him a hard time about that. Ridiculed him and laughed at him. And sometimes would tell dirty jokes on purpose while he was reading his Bible so that he would hear these things and disrupt him. And they would even try to hurt him physically when they had the chance. And one evening while this young believer was sitting on his bed reading his Bible as was his custom, one of his antagonists came in to the barracks and he'd just been on a hike and it had been a rainy day and his boots were covered with mud.

[18:46] And he came into the barracks and he took his boots off and he threw them across the room at this young Christian soldier. And one of the boots hit him right on the head. Mud went all over his face and not to mention the pain of being hit in the head with a boot.

And this young Christian soldier just cleaned himself off. Went to bed without so much as a word. The next morning when the unbeliever woke up, he was astonished to find his boots sitting by his bed.

Cleaned. Polished. It's obvious that the young Christian soldier had cleaned up his boots. And it led him to.

Ask questions about this man's faith. He'd been so impressed by that kind of behavior to return such a blessing for such a curse. He asked about this man's faith and eventually became a Christian himself.

Now, someone will say, but now, pastor, that's, you know, that's. Neat story, but. You know, that doesn't happen very often, does it?

[20:01] Well, no. And someone will say, well, besides, an evil deed deserves some kind of retribution, doesn't it? I mean, there is such a thing as justice.

Right. But. Yeah, there is. But that's God's business. It's God's business. Romans 12, 19 says, beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath for it is written.

Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord. Yeah. See, Peter really is telling us to do something that's quite difficult.

It's not just simply putting up with. An evil deed directed toward you or evil speaking. Not just simply putting up with it and letting it go and not getting mad and not.

You know, not returning evil for it. He's saying something quite different. He's saying repay it.

[21:09] But repay it with blessing. The revenge, the justice and the retribution that should come as a result is my business and not yours.

That's pretty tough stuff, isn't it? And so really, see, we're called to bless. In response to unrighteousness. Something that really. Goes counter culture, doesn't it?

Certainly it's counter against. The flesh. What we would want to do is human. But also really in this passage, we're called to bless as evidence of righteousness.

Not just as a response to unrighteousness. But we're to bless as evidence of righteousness. He said there in that little phrase, and it's a difficult one to translate.

That you may inherit a blessing. And it's translated various ways, understood in at least a couple of different ways. But as I've studied this, here's what I think the idea is.

[22:11] The believer. The believer. As believers. We've been called to inherit. A blessing. Tremendous blessing.

Eternal salvation. We've called to inherit that. We have inherited that. And therefore, the believer should always. Extend a blessing.

Even to the enemies. Even to those who would persecute. And do persecute. We have received a blessing. Eternal salvation. Something we could have never deserved.

And therefore, we're to extend. A blessing. You see, by God's grace. I have been forgiven. Of the eternal offense against God.

And that's what my offense is to him. It's eternal. My sin. My rejection. My disobedience. In salvation. By God's grace. I have been forgiven.

[23 : 15] Of all of my offenses against God. And so should I not then. Extend or forgive. All offenses against me. That's the idea here.

And by the way. What offense against me. Could begin to compare. To my offenses. Against the God.

Who freely forgave me. There's no comparison. I don't care what. This wicked world. Or hostile world. Or unbelieving world.

Might direct toward you. Toward me. I don't care. I don't care what it is. How severe it might be. Even death itself. The offenses. That come. To me.

Could not compare. To my offenses. Against. A holy God. Those offenses. By the way. That have been forgiven. You see.

[24 : 11] This should be the norm. Within the body of Christ. It's what we all ought to be working toward. Are we ever. And could we ever. Come to the place of perfection in this. No. I don't think so.

Because we're human. And we're fleshy. And God knows that. But we're to be moving toward that direction. This is. This is. The submission. That.

That operates. And should operate. Within. The local church body. And it's the responsibility. Of every individual member. Peter says.

And he's quoting. Verse. Psalm 34. He says. He who would. Or desires to love life. And see good days. He. Or she. Should prove it.

Prove that reality. And what is it? Let him refrain. His tongue from evil. And his lips. From speaking deceit. Or.

[25 : 04] Crafty speech. Speech. Speech that's intended to. Allure. Or tempt. Or. Or. Or. Or. Bait someone. That's the idea behind that word. And then he gives us four.

Imperatives. Or four commands. And they don't need. Much explanation. If any. He says. Number one. Turn away from evil. Okay.

Any part of that. We don't understand. Then. Do good. Do good. Seek peace.

These are all right there in the text. All four are imperatives in the. In the Greek text. That means their commands to us. Turn away from evil. Do good.

Seek peace. And the fourth one. Is connected to that third one. Pursue peace. Seek it and pursue it. Those are all four commands. Ending with the.

[26 : 01] Harder of the. Of the four. Rather the last two. To go together. We're to seek peace. Aggressively. And we are to strive.

For harmony. In the body of Christ. Now let's move on. First. The character of the church. Second. The calling of the church. And then third. The confidence.

Of the church. The confidence. Of the church. Verse 12. Look at it. This is our unwavering confidence. As believers. This is incredible.

We have this confidence. Come what may. What. Whatever might come at us. In our lives. Individually. As believers. But more specific.

To the context here. Our life. Together. Collectively. As the body of Christ. No matter what. Comes. We have this confidence. The eyes. Of the Lord.

[26 : 56] Do you see it there. In verse 12. The eyes. Of the Lord. Are. On the righteous. And his ears.

Are. Open. To. Their prayers. But the face. Of the Lord. Is against. Those.

Who do evil. This is an incredible verse. Against a quotation. Of Psalm 34. Now listen. It's interesting. Ears. Or rather.

Eyes. Ears. And face. The. The eyes. Of the Lord. The ears. Of the Lord. The face. Of the Lord. We have the. These body parts. And that in itself.

Is kind of interesting. To think of God. In those terms. His eyes. His ears. His face. And all. Working. For our good. Interesting.

[27 : 53] And I listen. It is. It is. Really. The prepositions. Here. That speak volumes. To us.

And we could talk about. And be. Enamored. By the thought. Of God. Having eyes. And God. Having ears. And God's face. And so forth. But. But listen. The. The.

The. The. The rich meaning. Is to be found. In the prepositions. First. The psalmist. Says. And again. Peter is quoting. The psalm.

He says. The eyes. Of the Lord. Are. On. On. That's how. It's translated. Here. In. New King James. The eyes. Of the Lord. Are on. The righteous. Literally. Upon.

[28 : 49] That's the idea. The eyes. Of the Lord. I want you. To get this. This is incredible. The eyes. Of the Lord. Are. Upon.

That is. The idea. Here. The meaning. Is. God's. Focus. Constant. Focus. His. Gaze. His. Loving. Gaze. Is. Always. Toward. Us. On. Us. Upon. Us. Now. Let that sink in. You know. Sometimes. We have the idea. The guy's looking somewhere else. Not looking my way. But for his righteous ones. So we are.

Righteous. In Christ. His eyes are always on us. Always. Now the implications of that. Go. In a number of directions. Don't they.

[29 : 50] To think about no matter where you are. Or what you're doing. Or. What activity you're involved in. No matter what. To know. That. The Lord. Of glory. His eyes are on you.

Always. All the time. But the idea here is. That. His gaze. His loving gaze. Is toward us. His eyes. Are not upon us. Looking for evil in us.

His eyes. Are looking with favor. Upon us. With favor. And for the good. Of his righteous ones. All right. That's the first preposition. The second one goes with the ears. And he says his ears are. Open to their prayers. Now. Literally. The words.

Are open to. In the new King James. Come from one word. One. Small. Little preposition.

[30 : 47] And. It. Is literally the word. Into. That's. Kind of. Strange. Isn't it?

Think about that. That his ears are. Into. Our prayers. But that's an awesome image. That this gives us. God's ears.

Are. Into. The prayers. Of his righteous ones. He's not way up there. Off there. Somewhere. You know. In the. Heavens. Or some.

Place. That is. Beyond. Our comprehension. Out there. And we've got. Somehow. Get his attention. I have a God. Who has to be. Awakened.

From time to time. Or we have to. Shout to him. His ears. Are not just. Simply attuned. To our prayers. They are. Into them. Into them. That's an incredible thing. The idea.

[31 : 41] Being that. The image of that. Is that God. Bends down. Out of heaven. Into the prayers. Of his children. Intently. Listening.

To our prayers. Earnestly. Listening. Eager. And willing. To answer. Our prayers. He is ready. Always ready.

To come. To our aid. In time. Of trouble. His ears. Are into them. In a certain. Temple. In China. I'm told. There is. A giant gong.

And underneath. The gong. Is this sign. Ring the gong. Loudly. For gods. The gods. May be asleep. But our gods. Not asleep. It is not slumber.

Nor does he sleep. And his eyes. Are always. Upon us. And his ears. Are always. Into. Our prayers. Always.

[32 : 40] And then finally. The psalmist says. And Peter quotes him. He says something. That is very frightening. Really. But the face.

Of the Lord. Is. Against. There is the preposition. The face. Of the Lord. Is. Against. Those who do evil. Now that.

That is a frightening thing. Isn't it? And. And for. Unbelievers. It certainly is. Or should be. Can you think of anything. More frightening. Than to come to the.

Sudden awareness. That the face. Of God. Is against you. See. The idea here. Is judgment. That certainly. Is the idea. Judgment.

And the wrath. Of a holy God. Toward unrighteousness. Now these words. Appear. Though. Here in the text. A text. That is directed. Toward believers.

[33 : 37] So does that mean. His face. Is against us. No. That's not. The idea here. The idea. Is that God's. Favor. Is toward us. Not his wrath.

Praise the Lord. Not his wrath. But his favor. His favor. Is upon those. Who are. His righteous ones. Through faith in Christ. That's the implication here.

The. The direct meaning. Is. That. To those. Who do evil. Against us. Those. Who speak evil. Against us.

We can repay them. With blessing. Because. We can leave the judgment. To God. It's. His face. Of judgment. That is upon the unrighteousness. Right. Unrighteous. Not ours. It's his face. And this is. See. This is the confidence. Of the church.

[34 : 38] For one of these days. One day. It's not right now. But one day. Will come. When all things. Will be set. Right. And made right.

And our. Righteous. Lives. That have been. Ridiculed. And persecuted. And. Have been. Despised. By this. Wicked. And Christless.

World. One day. That. We will be vindicated. For who we really are. And. Why we live. The way we did. Why our devotion.

Was toward. God. And his son. Jesus. All that. Will be vindicated. All. Will be made right. We have that confidence.

Because. The face. Of the Lord. Is against. Those. Who do evil. And so. We have the character. Of the church. Marked. Primarily.

[35 : 36] By unity. And peace. We have. The calling. Of the church. To return. Blessing. For evil.

And we have. The confidence. Of the church. That the eyes. Of the Lord. Are on us. His ears.

Are into. Our prayers. We can repay. Evil. With blessing. Because it's his face. That's against. The unrighteous.

I'll see you next time.