

God has absolutely been pressing us to get over ourselves and all the ways that we keep Him at bay. As He communicated in that vision I sent to you this week regarding the airplane that is trying to fly while all of its cargo is attached to a rope hanging from the back of the airplane; He wants us to cut off the baggage that drags us down. The fleshly lusts, which we discussed in **2:11** thrive and feed upon the baggage that we have decided to keep: the pain, the memories, and the experiences of our life which we think are so unique and special (which, by the way, they are not; and believe me there are stories that are far worse than yours). These fleshly lusts keep us tied to this world that is burning and cause us to lose the amazing life that Jesus wants us to live and enjoy in Him. Even the goodness of the Lord that we have tasted and experienced will be lost if we don't cut the baggage and abstain from these fleshly lusts that wage war against the soul.

God wants us to accept the fact that the pain, the memories, and the experiences were not for this world, but they were specifically handcrafted to pull you out of this world. You were chosen by God, you are beloved, and all that you have been through was simply to wake you up from the dead so you might receive His life. That is it! Thus, you can let it go; it has served its purpose and is no longer necessary for you to drag around. It is slowing you down and killing you. **Hebrews 12:1-2** instructs us to always lay aside the encumbrances which slow us down, especially the sin which entangles us and ties us to this world, and instead run the race that is set before us with endurance fixing our eyes not on our pain, not on our past, not on our fears, but on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

To do that, you must accept the fact that you are a royal priest, part of a holy

nation, a people of God's own possession, such that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. You have position, you have authority, you have power, and you have purpose. What more could you desire? But it is not enough to just know these truths, you must accept these truths. Acceptance requires an active and willful participation; hence, you must refuse to indulge in those emotional pools of self-pity and self-love (the "fleshly lusts") or you will always be dragged down to this earth and the life you hoped to experience will be marred by your self-pity and self-love. It is a sad, miserable, lonely, and disgustingly selfish way to live.

If you think about it, that is why religion is such a powerful medicine. In effect, it gives people a salve they can apply to their wounds to help them feel better. If they are doing things for God and things they believe are "good," then it gives them some very temporary relief from their self-pity and self-love. But it does not last, so they need more and more and more and more. And the sad disgusting truth is that religion can never satisfy. Only Jesus truly satisfies, However, He says that as aliens and strangers we are to dig down deep in our soul and choose in our now to abstain from those fleshly lusts which wage war against our soul. The fleshly lusts of self-pity and self-love tear at our very fabric of faith and tempt us to substitute religion and doing things right for true faith. Think about it, every single one of those fleshly lusts tempt us to trust in ourselves and not in our living God. Abstain from them!

The Spirit says that this life we live in the flesh must be lived by *faith* in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself up for us. Faith, betting our lives on all that Jesus has said, versus fleshly lusts, betting our lives on all that we feel; this is our

battle: the Spirit against the flesh and our choices are never free from this conflict (*Galatians 5:16-17*). When you choose faith over flesh, you will be able to proclaim, just like Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me” (*Galatians 2:20*). What a powerful and glorious statement: I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. This is the testament of one who has waged the war and had victory and is now ruled by Jesus and not those sick, dark, and grotesque wells of self-pity and self-love.

This is what it means to live as an alien and stranger in this world, as one who does not belong, as one who is **beloved**. And unless you are in agreement with the Spirit on this point, you are going to have a very hard time receiving what He has to say over the next few chapters. The Spirit’s message is premised upon our being confident in the Lord, confident in the new identity that we have received from Him, fully assured that we do not belong to this place. You see, He is going to ask us to choose to live with a heart and attitude of submission in all sorts of relationships and to endure the suffering that comes as a result of our belonging to Jesus. But you cannot live with a heart of submission or endure unjust suffering unless you know you’re **beloved** and are confident that everything Jesus allows in your life is carefully, purposely, and lovingly prescribed by His hand.

With that said, I want you agree with Jesus that you are the Father’s **beloved**—the most precious possession of our Father. Agree with Him; accept this truth; fight any lie that tries to steal this truth from you: fight it, hate it, reject it, and let it have no place in your mind. **Beloved** is who you are and it is necessary that you stand in this truth or else you will miss the glory, joy, and power of living as the Father’s **beloved**.

I am going to start with **1 Peter 2:16** because the entire message regarding submission and suffering hinges on this verse. Then I will back up to **2:12** and we will move on from there.

1 Peter 2:16

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.

The Spirit gives us another aspect of our identity in Christ: we are free men. But you must ask, free from what? In **John 8:34** Jesus says that everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin; sin being your master. But He goes on to say in **8:36** that if the Son sets you free you are free indeed. If you are the Father's **beloved**, sin is no longer your master; you are free. In **Romans 6:20-23**, the Spirit says it this way:

Romans 6:20-23

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The wages of sin is death, the absence of life, but Jesus gives us the opportunity to live free from this destruction as slaves of God. The issue here is not so much sin, but sin's effect on your life, which is death. Consider ***Romans 8:5-8*** which says: "Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God."

As the Father's **beloved**, we have been set free from the bondage of our old master, but freedom is clearly a learned experience. When we let the sinful nature control us and those fleshly lusts dominate our lives, we experience death, the absence of Jesus' life. Thus, we are to cut off the baggage we have been dragging around, abstain from those fleshly lusts, and instead choose to live as one who is free, as a slave of God. This choice leads to life and peace and a life that is alignment with God's will where we can be confident that we please Him. So to answer the question from what have we been freed, the Spirit makes it clear that we are free from the control which sin and our *Old Sinful Nature* wielded over our mind and emotions. In other words, not a single one of us is a victim; we are now free to fight these forces, empowered to conquer them, and set apart for victory.

Romans 8:12-19

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have ***no obligation*** to do what your

sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later.

We are Sons of God—His very own children—and we are under absolutely no obligation to live according to the dictates of those fleshly lusts. This is why I have said that if you find yourself consumed by your feelings of self-pity and self-love you have surrendered to their control. Admittedly, we have been largely unaware of how these fleshly lusts have dominated our lives; but we are no longer ignorant. The Spirit has graciously taught us the truth; therefore, we no longer have to remain slaves to these fleshly lusts. In fact, as God reveals them to us, we can, without fear, go to war against them and put them to death. That is the pathway to life and peace. After all, we are not fearful slaves; we are confident, authoritative, powerful, and purposeful children of God, heirs with Christ.

As free men, we are not to use our freedom as a covering for evil. This is why the Spirit, in **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**, says that the body was not made for immorality (for those fleshly lusts) but for the Lord and the Lord is for the body

because your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you; hence, you are not your own. You belong to God. And this is why Paul, in his freedom, says: "All things are lawful for me but I will not be mastered (or enslaved) by anything."

Yet, when you conclude that since you are forgiven and are under grace you can either do whatever you want to do or simply choose to not do what God wants you to do, you are using your freedom as a covering for evil. The same goes for when you compare the gravity of your sin with the sins of others and use their choices to justify yours. This prohibition applies equally to all our thoughts, words, and actions. And since "do not use" is in the *present active participle*, every moment of our now is to continually be about not using our freedom as a covering for evil. It is an ever present, continual, and very active job of ours. In other words, we must pay attention, we must be aware, we must be willing, and we must always identify ourselves as bondslaves of God and not slaves of those fleshly lusts which lift themselves up against the true knowledge of God and express themselves through our life in evil behaviors. The Spirit explains it this way.

Galatians 5:13-17

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

You who have always felt overcome, conquered, and defeated by the mastery of your emotions, wrong belief, and unbelief, no longer have to live under such oppression. You are free and you can live free. Self-pity and self-love will have no room when through God's divine agape love you give yourself to others. When your focus is truly on others, it is very hard to be obsessed with yourself. Besides, as we know, God's divine agape love is not something you can go do for another; rather, it is a natural byproduct of having made the choice to walk by faith in the Spirit of God as the Lord's bondservant. Again, to do this you must be fully convinced you are the Lord's **beloved**, an heir with Christ, and that your relationship with the Father is that of "Abba" or daddy.

So what is a bonds slave? It is a person who has chosen to give themselves to their master to willfully serve and love them. It is not a slavery of compulsion or force; rather, this kind of slavery is a result of a mental, emotional, and physical bond of love which is birthed from intimacy, knowing and being known, trust, security, and provision. This slavery is evident when one willingly puts their entire livelihood and personhood in the hands of the only One who can and will take care of it. Knowing this, we can be confident that we are safe to always center our life on what our Lord and Master wants and not on what we want, how we want it, and when we want it. His will and not our own is to be our maniacal focus, which is why "do not use your freedom as a covering for evil" is in the *present active participle*—our ever present and continual way of life. Therefore, knowing we are **beloved**, we are to fight those fleshly lusts which have dominated our soul in order that we might walk in the Spirit and not carry out the deeds of the flesh.

With that as our baseline, let's turn to the first expression of this way of living.

1 Peter 2:12

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Let's first work through some technical points and then we will move on to its application. There are two words in the Greek which we translate as good, they are "*agathos*" and "*kalos*." "*Agathos*" is used to define something that is by its very nature good. For example, only God is good; goodness is intrinsic to His character. Whereas "*kalos*" denotes that which is generally considered to be good or beneficial and is probably best explained by such synonyms as beneficial, honest, worthy, fair, beautiful, valuable, and virtuous. In **2:12**, the word "*kalos*" is used twice and it is first translated as "excellent" and then as "good"—but it is the same word.

"Keep" is also in the *present active participle*, so it should be understood as "Now keeping" or "Always keeping your behavior honest, beneficial, or worthy among the Gentiles." Going back to **2:11**, if you are ruled and controlled by your fleshly lusts, then even the best of your behaviors will be marred by your pools of self-pity and self-love and intrinsically be not good or unworthy. Thus, you must abstain from those fleshly lusts in order to produce "good" or honorable deeds.

Then there is the use of the phrase, the "Gentiles." Does the Spirit mean we

don't have to act excellent around the Jews? No of course not. The Spirit is using this concept of "Gentiles" as a metaphor for those who have chosen to make their abode in this world and do not live as aliens and strangers who belong to God. This similar phrasing is used in **1 Peter 4:3-4** when the Spirit says: "For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries." Obviously, this does not mean that the Jews did not have these types of desires; rather, the Spirit uses the historical separation between the Jews, one who is chosen and belongs to God, and the Gentile, one who belongs to this world, to make His point. **Galatians 6:16** makes it clear that adherence to the Jewish law does not make one spiritual, but it is the **New Creation** or the new nature which is indwelt by Spirit of God that makes one spiritual. And the one who lives by this principle is the Israel of God; yes, those who live by the **New Creation** are the people of God and those who don't still belong to this world and are considered to be Gentiles.

The implication of this passage is that if you live like an alien and stranger they will know who you are; they will know you don't belong to their kind; and they will treat you accordingly. You will face unjust accusations by those who have made their abode in this world, and that includes both the unbelievers as well as those who consider themselves believers, call themselves Christians, but do not live according to the **New Creation**. Not surprisingly "slander" is in the *present active indicative* which means that is happening even now and that is a statement of fact (*indicative*). They come after you, they slander you, and they don't care because you are not one of them.

They also always twist light into darkness and darkness into light. This is a characteristic of those who don't really know God. If you are now keeping your behavior "good" they will call it evil and somehow justify all their slander toward you and convince themselves that they are doing you, God, and others a bona-fide "good" service. We were warned about this in **John 16:1-3**. And Jesus says they do these things to you because they have not known the Father nor have they ever truly known Jesus.

For instance, they look at our maniacal focus on God, our fellowship, our intimacy, our commitment to one another, our willingness to deal with the pains and torments of our past and reconcile it with God's love, and our willingness to surrender our rights and demands for one another, our willingness to take God at His word and bet our lives on the truth, and they say it is weird, not normal, cultish, and not how church is done. They always twist light into darkness because they do not really know the light and quite frankly it frightens them. **John 3:20** says that everyone who does evil actually hates the light. You see, in their self-proclaimed goodness and shame, they refuse to admit that they do not really know the light (especially those who claim to belong to the Lord); thus, they will always twist light into darkness.

With this instruction, we can be ready for and expect this type of treatment as a normal course of our interaction with those who have chosen to make their abode in this world. We are not to be surprised when it happens; rather, we are to rejoice knowing that it means we are actually living as aliens and strangers; it is actually happening. Besides, on their day of visitation, they will glorify God for the "good" or beneficial deeds which they observe.

Now, about this day of visitation. The same word is used by John the Baptist's dad, Zechariah, when he prayed over his son. He said: "Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people" (**Luke 1:68**). When Jesus raised a boy from the dead the people proclaimed, "God has visited His people today" (**Luke 7:16**). Peter spoke about God visiting the Gentiles and to take out of them a people for his name (**Acts 15:14**). And it is also linked with the judgment of Jerusalem because they did not recognize their day of visitation (**Luke 19:44**); the day when God sent His Son.

As such, I believe we are to understand that each and every person, without exception, gets visited by God—even the pygmy in Africa. You see the Spirit of God hovers over the earth and moves among the peoples of the earth. And at some point in a person's life, without exception, the light pierces the darkness and He brings to them conviction of their sin and an awareness that only God is good and they simply are not good enough to be God. **John 16:8** says that the Spirit convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness, and judgment concerning sin. Thus, in that moment in time, the day of their visitation, they know right from wrong, truth from error, and suddenly what has been twisted is unwound in the light of the Spirit's conviction. Thus, we will have our vindication and they will, maybe only for that moment, glorify God because of the example we have set.

By the way, it says they will observe your good deeds, and "observe" is in the *present active participle*. The implication is that since this is how you are to live that you will actually choose to live this way all the time and they will always in the now and continually observe these worthy deeds which pour forth from your

life as a result of you choosing to live like an alien and stranger in this world.

1 Peter 2:13-15

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Here we start the series of relationships to which we are to be found submitted. “Submit” is in the *aorist passive imperative*. Thus, submission is a command (*imperative*), it is something which we do by the power of the Holy Spirit within us (*passive*)—and thank goodness He is our submission because I don’t think I naturally have it in me—and it is to be our way of life, from beginning to end (*aorist*). In this sense, submission is a fruit of the Spirit and a marker of one who uses their freedom as a bondservant of Christ.

In the Greek, this submission is literally to every ordinance or creation of man. This same Greek word is most often translated as creature or creation (as in our ***New Creation***). So this provides for us a pretty broad application—every creation of man—and it includes kings and the rulers established by kings. For our application, that would include the President, Congress, Judges, State Governors, Mayors, Councilmen, IRS, justices, Homeland Security, police and so on. The list is long. But the point is clear; if our heart struggles to submit to these earthly authorities then it is a sign that we are not living as the Lord’s bondservant.

Did you notice that this is an unqualified statement? That should cause some concern. Does that mean that those believers who resisted Hitler, Stalin, Mao, the Ayatollah, or any of the other world dictators were in the flesh? Does that mean we are supposed to submit to the antichrist and his dictatorial rule? Well, this may seem like an unqualified statement but it is actually very qualified. Submit is in the *passive* voice—a work of God. This means that if God ever wants to defy man's authority He is in His right to do so; after all, He is Lord. Thus, there will be times when it is God's will to defy these human institutions and working through you that is what will be done.

An example of this can be found in **Acts 5** where the High Priest and the Council and the Senate over all of Israel instructed the Apostles to stop teaching in the name of Christ. But the Apostles refused and were arrested and thrown in jail. But in the middle of the night an angel opened the prison doors and set them free and they returned to the city and once again started teaching. They were once again dragged before the council. The High Priest questioned them saying: "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (**Acts 5:28-30**).

Thus, when God wants to defy the will of man God can defy the will of man; and in those instances if you are submitted to the Spirit you will also defy the will of man as the Lord will defy these human institutions through you. Remember our motto: it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. This is why we will not be found bearing the mark of the beast or participating in his unholy system of

governance; rather, we will by the Spirit of God live in defiance. But the issue here is that it must be God's will as He lives in you not your will as you do what you want to do because you cannot stand having someone tell you what to do? A simple check of your attitude, and the fruit of your life, will help you be honest about what is really going on.

Now interestingly, the word we have translated as "right," in both instances, is "*agathos*," or that which is intrinsically good in character and nature. I believe this reinforces the use of the *passive* voice in "submit." If it is intrinsically good, then it most likely comes from God. And "doing right" is unquestionably the will of God since "is the will of God" is in the **present active indicative** (it's a fact); and "doing what is intrinsically good" is in the **present active participle**. In always doing what is intrinsically good, we silence in real time (**present active**) the ignorance of foolish men. Once again, if we choose to live as the Lord's bondservant, as an alien and stranger in this world, as a child of God, submitted to His Spirit and not to the fleshly lusts which wage war against our soul, we will do what is right, what is good, and it will be Christ living in us doing His will whether it is to submit or to defy. And people will notice, they will be amazed and they will not know what to do with us. They will know they have no true power over us because we do not fear them; rather, we fear God and God alone. This kind of position, authority, power, and purpose silences them and they will not know what to do with us.

It sure is amazing how the details matter and make such a difference in our ability to accurately understand and interpret the scriptures. I know it can be tedious at times, but it is so important that we get this stuff right. Otherwise we carry burdens that were never meant to be carried. With that, we will stop here

and pick up next week, the Lord willing.

Let's Pray