**Abundant Life Church**

**Journey Series –**

**Title: Free At Last**

**Text:**

**16  *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.
17  Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.**

**1 Peter 2:16-17 (NASB)**

**Intro:**

What does freedom look like?

What does it mean to be free?

What do you think the attitude would be towards the very institution that is attempting to destroy you?

How can you navigate a world in which your personal rights are being taken from you or at least not recognized?

How do you survive in a world where the promises of justice are not being fulfilled?

How do you survive in a world where the concept of personal rights just does not exist?

This is the world of the New Testament, so the counsel that Peter gives these believers is totally counterintuitive.

The premise for navigating all these issues begins with our relationship with God, the Father.

To understand your identity begins with the *imago dei*. You were created in the image of God.

By Him, For Him, To Be With Him Forever.

 Sin desecrated the image of God in you releasing death.

 Jesus redeemed you with His blood and restored the image of God within you.

 Now we are to live as bondslaves to God.

Our identity is not who we are, but whose we are. – Ravi Zacharias

God is our master, not the political institution, career institution or even family institution

Freedom is not the same as license or an excuse to do evil

We use our freedom for His purposes.

**Political Institutions**

Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority – **1 Peter 2:13**

**Job, Career**

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect – **1 Peter 2: 18**

**Family Relationships**

Wives, be submissive to your own husbands – **1 Peter 3: 1**

A transformation happens when I do not look to government, career, or relationships for my identity and worth. My identity and worth come from the King of Kings who died on my behalf that I might know Him. I now live as a free man and serve God through every human institution.

The institutions of men, whether they be just or unjust, do not have the power to devalue or demean me as a child of God. I am whole and complete in Christ, a member of His household, and when the façade of this life fades His life and therefore my life will just be getting started.

**Honor all people**

 If you are capable of giving honor than God must think highly of you.

 Believer, unbeliever, the strong, the weak, the privileged, the underprivileged, those with a platform of power, the disenfranchised of society, those that agree with you, those that disagree, hate, loath your existence… It is so sad, especially on social media, to see how easily believers can treat others with contempt. We are called to give honor to people. I can disagree strongly but still give honor.

13  Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.
14  But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and *so* lie against the truth.
15  This wisdom is not that which comes down from above but is earthly, natural, demonic.
16  For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.
17  But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.
**James 3:13-17 (NASB)**

Since you belong to Jesus, have His image burning within through the power of the Holy Spirit give honor to people. Respect them, love them, care for them….

**Love the Brotherhood** – we talked about this a few weeks ago…

We need each other. We need to care for each other. We need to be invested in each other’s lives.

**Fear God**

**Honor the King**

I have the right to disagree with political leaders, but I do not have the right before God to treat them with dishonor. Like the counsel that Peter gives to wives in chapter three, even if they have an unbelieving husband let their lives be such an example that they win their husband, without speaking a word. I must tread carefully when I start denouncing people, calling others names, even political leaders.

I am not saying there is no room for political dissent, certainly, there is. But the attitude that is displayed in that dissent must be one of honor.

**This is what it means to ACT AS FREE MEN**

8  To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;
9  not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

**1 Peter 3: 8-9 (NASB)**