

Outsiders: Stand Firm

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

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1 Peter 5:6-11

Today is the final sermon on our sermon series from the Book of 1 Peter called: "Outsiders!" Set in the original context of Peter's letter to Christians who were suffering under persecution, it recognizes that sometimes "Outsiders" are exactly that: "Outside the governing system."

We are finding it to be increasingly true in the USA that Christians are being labeled as "Irrelevant" at best and "Extreme" at worst.

Today we read from this great Book today. Our reader is Wade Witcher, a senior at Union HS, who by the way, is also a National Merit Semi-Finalist. 1 Peter 5:5-11 is found on page #1892 in your pew Bibles.

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Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Our fundamental choice = Which Kingdom will we inhabit: **KINGDOM OF GOD** v. **KINGDOM OF SELF**? Our innate, natural state is to live in The Kingdom of Self (KOS). This means we are the authority and govern our lives. The advantage of this way is WE get to be the boss and the final arbiter of our lives. We do whatever we want to do. Living in the KOG means we defer to the authority and governance of God. These 2 kingdoms lead to different outcomes.

There are a lot of different **terms** used to describe the transition from the KOS to the KOG. "Being born again, conversion, salvation and redemption" are just a few. Maybe THE main point of the Bible = to help people be redeemed. It is

fundamentally an intentional shift to living life under my terms over against living life under the authority and rule of the KOG. Many of us think we'll do this at the very end of life. We predominantly want to live under our own authority until we have to do it God's way. We mightily resist.

Everyone has their own **experience**. Many had very emotional, dramatic conversions. Mine was. I presumed EVERYONE had that, too. When Dana that she'd never had a dramatic conversion experience I told her that she couldn't be a Christian. She didn't exactly embrace or appreciate my remarks. Since then, and especially since being a pastor, my guess is that it's 2-1 in favor of Dana's experience. However it happens, the fundamental thing is that we make an intentional commitment to live in the KOG, not according to our own kingdom. It deals with repentance

Once we enter the KOG it doesn't mean we're now perfect. We have to continually re-align with Kingdom principles. It is a lifelong pursuit. And it has a worthy goal = eternal life. But there's much to be gained in this life, too.

I heard "The 7 Deadly Sins" are represented by the 7 characters on Gilligan's Island: Gilligan = Sloth. Skipper = Anger. Ginger = Lust. Mary Ann = Envy. Thurston Howell = Greed. Mrs. Howell = Gluttony. Professor = **Pride**. The chief vice in the KOS = **PRIDE**. Pride CAN be a **good** thing – Paul described feeling pride in the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:4). We have a right to be proud of others and their accomplishments. I'm proud of my granddaughter. That's not a problem.

But Pride is usually about being competitive with others. That's when it becomes sinful.

We see this pride, arrogance, competitiveness and ruthless preoccupation with self clearly in the Bible. The New Testament shows what King Herod did – on top of all of his destructive deeds, he had the baby boys killed in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. They were his perceived rivals. Another king in the Old Testament, Nebuchadnezzar, who was the King of Babylon. He was the "King of the World" at his time. Everything was going really great for him until he had a terrifying dream. When no one in his kingdom could interpret his dream, Daniel, the Hebrew, was summoned. He told him what would happen. A year later, it did. Dan 4:29-37 *Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."*

Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. One of the worst things about Pride = we lose our sense of **AWE**. "From everlasting to everlasting, **YOU are God.**" NOT me. There's someone greater than ME. We will all die. God is eternal.

HUMILITY = the chief virtue in the KOG. True humility = gives us a sense of proportion & a holy reverence. When in proper context with God, then everything's okay.

Humility allows me to **SUBMIT** to God/others. My ego isn't dominant. Peter wrote about having mutual respect to the Government, slaves to masters, spouses and now young to old. This is extreme! We've been talking about living as 'OUTSIDERS.' Why were the Disciples competitive and fighting over who'd sit at Jesus right hand? Pride. Their pride put them in competition with each other. They didn't just want a seat at Jesus table – they wanted a BETTER seat than their rivals and competitors (who were also disciples).

Humility reduces **ANXIETY**. If I know that GOD cares for me.... what difference does it truly make if others ridicule me? Christians in the early church weren't concerned about being popular – they focused upon doing God's will. Humility (which in the Latin meant "of the earth") helped them trust in God in the present moment. They didn't fret the past – they were forgiven. They didn't dread the future – God was in control. They lived in the present moment and were empowered and focused.

Peter says to "**CLOTHE YOURSELVES.**" Some of us are very concerned about our clothing. Peter's concern was not about fashion, but about faith. We are to clothe ourselves with humility, not pride. When we get it right and wear the garment of humility, it's a lovely fitting!

In Jim Collins' book he describes how the best leaders (he calls them "Level 5" leaders, are humble. Their focus isn't about their own status and position – but about advancing the cause of the business.

Peter says to resist our **ENEMY**. C.S. Lewis wrote: "The devil became the devil through pride." The devil's image elsewhere as being deceptive, sneaky and manipulative – like a serpent quietly sneaking up on its prey. Sometimes, that happens. We get caught, trapped and surprised. But here, he's roaring because he's powerful. We can run away, but he doesn't care because he'll track us down and eat us up. Remember the context of who Peter is writing to – Christians were "fed to the lions." Literally. They suffered and were martyred. If you tour Rome you'll probably see the catacombs, where the suffering Christians hid underground to escape. Lions also pick off prey that's alone. Need to stay together.

If we submit there's a real possibility we will suffer. But, God will restore us after suffering and make us strong, firm & steadfast.

*To God be the **POWER** for ever and ever.* This line threw (I anticipated: "To God be the GLORY..." but it says "POWER"). Who has THE power? Herod or Nebuchadnezzar? Our enemy? No! It is God. The church in suffering needed this assurance.

What do I want you to do? Give yourself to God. When we talk about confessing our sins, the most frequent and devastating one is Pride, because our pride keeps us from repenting and keeps us from God. Confess your pride. Turn to God through Jesus Christ. Keep your eyes upon Jesus.

Three young men hopped on a bus in Detroit in the 1930's. They spotted a man in the back of the bus seated by himself. They went back to where he was sitting and they began to taunt him trying to provoke him into fighting. They thought that three men could handle one. They hurled insults at him. He didn't say a word. When he finally had enough he stood up. That's when they realized how big a guy he was. He reached into his coat pocket and handed them a business card. The card read: "JOE LOUIS, BOXER." These clowns were trying to pick a fight with a man who'd be the Heavyweight Champion of the World from 1937-1949. Some say he was the #1 boxer of all time. It was said he could knock out a horse with one punch. A man of immense power and skill, capable of defending his honor with a single, devastating blow. Yet, he chose to forget his status and hold back his power – for the benefit of some very fortunate young men.

It was Jesus' sense of **IDENTITY** which allowed him to be humble. So, on Palm Sunday, he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey – the symbol of humility. At the Last

Supper, he stooped to wash His disciples' feet. That was the lowest, dirtiest job. He humbled Himself before God in the Garden of Gethsemane while He prayed. And His ultimate, shameful death was upon the Cross. Jesus was the ULTIMATE OUTSIDER. The ULTIMATE OUTSIDER wasn't the ULTIMATE LOSER....God raised Him from the dead. And all the suffering, all the hurt, all the pain, all the sacrifice we make on His behalf will be redeemed.

That is the POWER that was in Jesus Christ – and as we receive Him into our lives, that's the power that's now in us, too.

Is the Lord calling you to humble yourself under His mighty hand? Humble yourself, and He will lift you up. Do you need to repent of pride? *Don't we all?* Maybe you are carrying anxiety about something that you need to cast onto Jesus, I invite you, give it to Him—He cares for you! Do you feel the enemy coming at you like a lion? Come to the altar and let us pray with you, that you will be able to stand firm and resist him. The God of all grace will make you strong. Come now, give yourself to God and receive His power.