

As we journey along in the series from 1 Peter we now come to one of Peter's practical instructions regarding submission and respect. These are not necessarily fun topics but they do catch us where we live and work on a daily basis.

Listen then to these words from 1 Peter 2:13-20:

*For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority—whether the king as head of state,<sup>14</sup> or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.*

*<sup>15</sup> It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. <sup>16</sup> For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. <sup>17</sup> Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters Fear God, and respect the king.*

*<sup>18</sup> You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you—not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. <sup>19</sup> For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment. <sup>20</sup> Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.*

1 Peter 2:13-20 NLT

These are verses that many people would just as soon not read. In fact, for Pastor's these verses come with a temptation to try to unpack them to say something quite the opposite of what Peter was trying to say.

Peter gives clear directions on the relationship that the Christian community (Kingdom of God on earth) is to have with those who are in authority over us. Peter gives us an unqualified call to submission that very frankly is unsettling to our human sense of fairness. In many ways the case could be made that Peter is calling for civil obedience and not civil disobedience.

Many times people, even Christians, who fall at the extreme ends of a biblical discussion, are way too willing to engage in civil disobedience. Yet in this letter we find no room for it. Let me quickly add that one could look in other places in the Bible and find that there were people who practiced an unwillingness to obey every rule that was made by man.

There were Egyptian midwives that refused to follow Pharaoh's orders out of fear of God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were three young men who refused to bow the knee when the King declared that all should worship the image of himself. Of course, there is also Daniel who refused to follow legislation that made it illegal to pray to anyone but the King.

While these are good stories and certainly should make us strong to stand in our faith I think we need to wrestle with the words from Peter and his call to submission. My hope is that we find a balance and learn to walk softly while listening to God's still small voice.

Remember that while Daniel never compromised his convictions and biblical principle he did go on to work with and for three of the most ungodly Kings in Old Testament history. That is the balance we must find as we seek to follow Christ daily.

## 1. We need to find Peter's intentions

To find his intentions you have to go back to verse 11 and 12 and realize that Peter is only concerned with one aspect of our behavior. He is concerned with demonstrating what good works looks like in several different contexts. He is also apparently only concerned with looking at the one that will be most adversely affected or mistreated for doing good works. This is not a comprehensive look at all sides but narrow focus on those placed in difficult positions by those in authority.

It is very important to notice that Peter is not writing a comprehensive or exhaustive letter on the subject. To fully comprehend the balance of the bible one should also read Paul's words found in Ephesians and Colossians that deal with husbands, wives and children as well as masters and servants. In Paul's writings those in authority are also told how to behave. Peter concern is highly specific and limited to those most likely to be mistreated by the world's institutional economy.

He is writing specifically about how those who feel oppressed should respond.

His call to submit can be startling and about as counter culture as one can get, especially in our day of individuality and personal rights. For Peter the good and honorable work of the Christian community is nothing if it is not submissive to authority.

Now let me clarify before some of you experience a stroke.

The principle of submission found in this scripture is not our foundation for living. Submission should describe the Christians way of "being like Christ." This is not about some blind adherence to a rigid principle or person but rather a call to first love and not resist. Way too many of us are ready for a fight most of the time. The intention of Peter and the call is to submit to those that are over us with an intention of showing the love of Christ and not some anit-Christ hatred. Now keep that in mind as we look at specific instructions.

Let's wade into this together.

## 2. We need to follow Peter's instructions

Peter's instructions can be summed up in one word: submission. As each scenario is presented in the next few verses he calls us to submit. Some translations actually use the word submit. What we will read from the New Living Translation happens to use the word respect.

<sup>13</sup> *For the Lord's sake, **respect** all human authority—whether the king as head of state, <sup>14</sup> or the officials he has appointed.* 1 Peter 2:13 NLT

<sup>18</sup> *You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters with all **respect**.* 1 Peter 2:18 NLT

And looking ahead into 1 Peter 3:1 we find the trend continues with these words:

*In the same way, you wives must **accept** the authority of your husbands.* 1 Peter 3:1 NLT

There are two kinds of submission that Peter is instructing us on.

**a. Submission to those in political office**

Let's go back for a moment and look at verses 13 and 14:

<sup>13</sup> *For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority—whether the king as head of state, <sup>14</sup> or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right.*

To put this in context we must keep in mind that the leaders in the day of this writing were men like Pontius Pilate, Felix and Nero. Nero was the Roman ruler who led a great persecution against the Christians in the first century. Historians tell us that Peter was martyred during Nero's reign.

Why would Peter call Christians to submit to men and leaders like them? We can find an answer in verse 15.

<sup>15</sup> *It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.* 1 Peter 2:15 NLT

Try to wrap your heads around this. Submission to authority is the strongest apologetic against the view that Christians are never up to any good. You do realize that in today's culture very often Christians have a really bad reputation right?

The self-centered nature of the church, the hypocrisy of church attenders, the lack of biblical living, the ability of the church to forget the poor and dismiss the need to change to reach lost people. All of these things and more make much of Christianity irrelevant to the average person on the street.

Peter had learned his lesson in the garden with Jesus on the night of his crucifixion. It was Peter who grabbed a sword and cut off someone's ear in an effort to resist the arrest of Jesus. Jesus chided him and now Peter as an older and wiser man writes that there is a better way.

<sup>16</sup> *For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil.*

<sup>17</sup> *Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters Fear God, and respect the king.* 1 Peter 2:16-17 NLT

Freedom is for serving. Look at this scripture and notice the progressive nature of verse 17.

Respect everyone – love your Christian brothers and sisters – fear God – and then he comes back to the subject at hand – respect or honor the king. We are to show proper respect to rulers even when we might oppose their policies and positions on most things.

How do you do that? Well before I give you some suggestions look at one more passage of scripture. If you are a bible following and Christ following Christian you are going to have to wrestle with this subject:

*Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. <sup>2</sup> So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. <sup>3</sup> For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. <sup>4</sup> The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. <sup>5</sup> So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.*

*<sup>6</sup> Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are serving God in what they do. <sup>7</sup> Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority. Romans 13:1-7 NLT*

- 1. Start by reading and studying what God says about it instead of following your instincts.**
- 2. Pray for those that are over you.**
- 3. Set a good example for those around you. (Children)**
- 4. Understand that you are not going to agree with everything political leaders do or think.**

This is tough stuff especially if you happen to disagree with the person that is in charge. You must remember that we are “aliens, sojourners and strangers” just passing through this earth on our way to our heavenly home for eternity. Like it or not the Bible encourages us to live peaceably as much as we possibly can with those around us and over us.

More often than not I think most of us look at people especially in the federal government and struggle with the lack of common sense and morals. Sometimes a little humor may help.

A Department of Water Resources representative stops at a Texas ranch and talks with an old rancher. He tells the rancher, "I need to inspect your ranch for your water allocation."

The old rancher says, "Okay, but don't go in that field over there."

The Water representative says, "Mister, I have the authority of the Federal Government with me. See this card? This card means I am allowed to go WHEREVER I WISH on any agricultural land. No questions asked or answered. Have I made myself clear? Do you understand?"

The old rancher nods politely and goes about his chores.

Later, the old rancher hears loud screams and sees the Water Rep running for his life. And close behind is the rancher's bull. The bull is gaining with every step.

The Rep is clearly terrified, so the old rancher immediately throws down his tools, runs to the fence and yells at the top of his lungs, "Your card! Show him your card!"

Respect is one thing but you don't have to always think they are very smart.

### **b. Submission to those over you in the work place**

I am sure you have been waiting for this one. I don't even want to talk about but here we go. Look at verse 19 and 20.

*<sup>19</sup> For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment. <sup>20</sup> Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you.*

Actually you should also note that in verse 18 Peter talks about slavery. Let me just say that the while there was slavery in the bible it was not anything like the shame of North American slavery.

Typically in the Bible, slaves were granted years of jubilee or means by which to earn their freedom. It was never something that was to last for generation after generation. In fact, 1 Timothy 1:8-11 mentions things that are contrary to sound doctrine and one of them is "enslavers." (v10)

In our modern day context we have to draw from this information on how we should act toward are "masters" even those who are unjust.

We are to do what is right.

We are to exercise patience and endure unfair treatment.

This is about practicing grace. The longer I live the more I realize I should keep my mouth shut about those that I work for. If I don't like my work environment and the treatment then according to Peter I should endure it patiently. Let me quick to say that if you are being disciplined or punished for something that is company policy and you constantly break the rules then you are responsible for the treatment you receive.

We have several options as Christians in the work place.

Be quiet – Work hard -- Be trustworthy -- Be kind – Be unselfish – Be faithful – IF you just can't deal with it then find another place to work. Pray for those that are over you.

It is through our actions and reactions that the grace of God is revealed to the world.

In Bill Gates' book *Business @ The Speed of Thought*, he lays out 11 rules that students do not learn in high school or college, but should. He argues that our feel-good, politically correct teachings have created a generation of kids with no concept of reality who are set up for failure in the real world.

RULE 1 - Life is not fair; get used to it.

RULE 2 - The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

RULE 3 - You will NOT make 40 thousand dollars a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice-president until you earn both a high school and college degree.

RULE 4 - If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure.

RULE 5 - Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping, they called it opportunity.

RULE 6 - If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

RULE 7 - Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills; cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parents' generation, try "delousing" the clothes in your own room.

RULE 8 - Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades; they will let you try as many times as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to ANYTHING in real life.

RULE 9 - Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.

RULE 10 - Television is NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop to go to their jobs.

RULE 11 - Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

Just thought I would throw that in there since we are in the heart of graduations.

### **3. We need to faithfully imitate Christ**

So there is answer to all of this. Of course the answer for people who take the name of Christ and call themselves Christians is going to be found in Him. Peter was greatly influenced by Isaiah 53 which is a prophetic description of the coming Messiah which of course was Jesus.

Peter knew just how hard it would be for us to sojourn on this earth. At times it may be easier than other times but there is an example that we are told to imitate and He will never fail us.

*<sup>21</sup> For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered<sup>[k]</sup> for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.*

Peter says in essence that he has an exile for us to follow. And then he gives us these words:

<sup>22</sup> *He never sinned nor ever deceived anyone.<sup>[1]</sup>*

<sup>23</sup> *He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.*

<sup>24</sup> *He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.*

With Peter's quoting of parts of Isaiah 53 we are ushered into the sacredness of the covenant of salvation. When you accept Christ as your Savior you don't get to make up the rules to suit your lifestyle or life choices. You and I don't get to accept salvation and then live however we want to live. There is a pattern.

There is an example and we are to imitate Christ every day and every moment of our lives. The humility of Christ – His season of suffering on this earth should be studied and imitated every chance we get.

*My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.*

<sup>3</sup> *He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.*

<sup>4</sup> *Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows<sup>[a]</sup> that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!*

<sup>5</sup> *But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. <sup>6</sup> All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.*

<sup>7</sup> *He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. <sup>8</sup> Unjustly condemned, he was led away.*

<sup>25</sup> *Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.*

Because of this Guardian of our souls, We submit to ungodly authorities in an effort to please Christ and emulate His life.