The Witness of Submission and Suffering
1 Peter 2:13-25

Opening: How many of you like to be told what to do by the government? Most people don’t, especially in Naples. Over the past couple of years, Christians have been divided over how we should follow what the government says about COVID 19 protocols (mask or vax). The Church in America and the West has had to make big decisions and stands for religious freedom. We are not going to address vax or no vax; mask or no mask; but we are going to ask the question: in relation to the government and civil authorities, what should our posture be? Are we Zealots? Called to overthrow an unjust, ungodly government and establish a theocracy. Are we Patriots? Filled with nationalistic fervor and promoting our personal political ideology as the answer to every problem in society. Are we Conscientious objectors? Separating ourselves from a worldly government and refusing to take part, wear buttons and drive horse buggies. Are we Complainers? Always upset about the government, taxes, and the incompetence of our politicians. No, we are CHRISTIANS. What does that look like? Context: Peter has told us that ALL BELIEVERS are ambassadors and kingly priests in this world who are declaring and displaying the light of Christ so that others may glorify God. We live in this world, but we are citizens of the next world; our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:21) So the question these new believers have is: How do Christians, citizens of another world, relate to the government and authorities of this world?1 Peter is going to teach us that: Though we are citizens of another Kingdom serving a higher King, we must during our time of exile, submit ourselves to the authority that God has placed us under, in order that we may fulfill God’s purposes and be a witness to the watching world.

I. Meaning: What is Submission?

- **VS. 13**: Be subject: submit yourselves (voluntarily): go under the command of, obey, yield to leadership: to every human institution: human (lit. creature) structure: parents, teachers, bosses, church leaders and government. Peter has at least three human institutions in mind: the government, work, and the family. (2:13, 18, 3:7,8)
- **VS. 13-14**: Whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors: Who was the emperor? Nero. He was a murderous, hedonistic, sadistic, evil, lunatic who murdered and tortured people for sport. Every instruction in the NT in reference to submission to the government, did so, knowing there were no Christian leaders at the time.
- **Be subject to them**: even if they are evil and ungodly leaders: Christians are not to be politically or socially subservive. We are not from here but that does not mean we are to be in conflict or antagonistic to this world. We are to obey the laws, pay our taxes, and respect our government leaders as good citizens.
- **VS. 14b**: God ordained government to punish evil and promote good: we should seek the same things for where we live. Jeremiah 29:7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Even a bad government is better than NO government at all.
- **What about Civil Disobedience**? What about Corrie Ten Boon or Martin Luther King? But how many of you had Jews hiding in your closet because of the government? MLK, in Letters from a Birmingham Jail, explained that they tried to obey every law they could, and they disobeyed peaceably the ones that were egregiously unjust.
- **Peter understood civil disobedience**: he chose to obey God rather than the government. (Acts 5:29) Peter was crucified upside down because of his act of civil disobedience in preaching the gospel even though the state ordered him to stop doing it. That is not the situation most are in. **What is our rule? If the government forbids us to do that which God commands, or requires us to do that which God forbids, we must obey God rather than men.**2
- **But for most people, the issue isn’t that**: For many of us, our problem with submission to earthly authorities is a problem with authority in general. We don’t like anybody telling us what to do, including God.
- **Peter says, “obey the laws, pay your taxes and respect the authorities.” Not because the Government is God: Roman Syncretism and Civic Religion**: when the Romans conquered a nation, they would swap gods with them. They would adopt the gods of the people they conquered, and the people would adopt the Roman gods. Thus, they made Roman nationalism and religious syncretism one in the same. To support your gods, was to support the state and to support the state was to support your gods. To rebel against the state was to rebel against the gods. This is why they made Caesar or the Emperor a god. He was one you must give total allegiance to.3 (See American 2021)
- **Because God is God**: **VS. 13**: For the Lord’s Sake: we do not obey or pay or respect just for the sake of the person or their position, but for the LORD’s sake. Peter’s underlying argument is the emperor is not our ultimate emperor;

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2 My Threshold for Civil Disobedience in a COVID19 World - The Gospel Coalition | Canada
3 I got this from D.A Carson’s message on 1 Peter 2:13-25.
our boss is not our ultimate boss; our parent is not our ultimate parent. Jesus is our Ultimate Everything. Our allegiance is to God not to anyone else. Jesus is exalted above and over all powers of this world.

- **VS. 16**: Live as people who are free: Free from who? Not God because we are servants of God. Not a cover up for evil: *We are set free not to live however WE WANT, but however HE WANTS.* Jesus is our ultimate allegiance, not the government, ourselves, or anyone else. We are commanded to live this way for our KING’s higher purpose.

- **To Peter, submission is not a mark of slavery but freedom. Only those who are truly FREE, are FREE to submit:** We are willing to submit to human institutions, not because we have to but because we choose to because we are free to in Christ. We owe our allegiance to Him, so whatever He says we will do for His glory.

- **VS. 17**: Honor Everyone. Honor the Emperor: same word for both everyone and emperor: a little jab by Peter. Putting Caesar (not salad) on the same level. We should not dishonor or disrespect the leader, we should honor. Summary: *We honor and respect all people made in God’s image, love the brotherhood but we FEAR GOD alone.*

### II. Manner: How are we to Submit?

- **VS. 15**: SO THAT (purpose) By doing good: *2:12: When they see your good deeds, they glorify God: you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.* When we are submitted for Jesus’ sake, not for our personal gain and honor people regardless of whether they can pay us back and are devoted to blessing others, it can put to silence, at least a little, the ignorance of fools.

- **What is the ignorance of foolish people:** In Peter’s day, Christians were called, “cannibals (Lord’s Supper), incestuous (brother and sister), seditious and atheistic (they didn’t worship the idols). Today, they say that Christians are “non-progressive, chauvinistic, neanderthal, puritanical” but when we live like Christ, it can HELP silence them.

- **City Meeting at Central’s Downtown Campus:** There was a lady who got up and bemoaned the fact that churches were tax exempt free loaders who suppressed women, were homophobic, narrow minded and xenophobic. She was so mad that the churches paid no property taxes. She said, “What do churches do?” A man (who wasn’t a Christian) stood up and said, “we could never get back from the churches in our city in taxes, what the churches have done for our city free. They feed the homeless, they clean the schools and parks, they advocate for the poor and helpless, they provide disaster relief, and they are always there when we need them.” People cheered and she was silenced!

- **What would they say about us here at First?** Would we be able to silence those foolish talkers in our community by our good deeds and love for each other in this community?

- **VS. 18**: Servants, be subject to your masters: Peter moves from a general statement to specific: *We do not have time to unpack this, but a few things need to be said:* 1) Slavery in Roman society in the first century was not the same kind of slavery as it was in colonial slavery. But it was still bad. It was an evil institution. 2) The Bible does not do a FRONTAL assault on slavery but undermines the roots of it. The Bible never condones it but regulates it. 3) The abolition of colonial slavery found its roots in the gospel and through Christians who fought hard to get rid of it.

- **Be subject to unjust masters even when you suffer unjustly:** The premise of Peter’s earlier argument was the emperor was not the ultimate Emperor; the same argument works here: your master (boss) is not your ultimate master. God is. *This radically changes how we relate to others we work under. (Whether good or bad)*

- **We are to keep on doing good even if we suffer for doing good:** Some might silence foolish people by their good deeds, but some might suffer unjustly because of their good deeds. But that does not stop you from doing good deeds. We keep submitting, we keep showing up, we keep on respecting and honoring for THE LORD’S SAKE.

- **With all respect:** not talking about respect for the unjust master, but God: He is the One we should be consciously aware of and seek to please. **Mindful of God:** We are able to submit and suffer unjustly because we are thinking of God, not on the other people. *We are to be more afraid of displeasing our Father whom we love, than disobeying and suffering at the hands of the boss or parent or leader we do not like.*

- **It is a Gracious Thing in the eyes of God:** most of us have thought that if we live a righteous life that we will not suffer. Therefore, when we do suffer, we either A) think we have done something wrong or B) Think God has not done something right. But reality is, if we suffer for doing what is right, God is not absent, but He sees everything.

- **Peter says our mission is to do good and leave the consequences to God.** God sees and knows our suffering. He knows our frustration. We must submit to where God has us and trust Him with our future because God is doing a greater work than we know in our lives; even though we may not like it or understand it.

### III. Motivation: Why should we Submit?

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4 I have compiled this from multiple sources on the issue of the Bible and slavery. This was the most succinct one by Justin Taylor. [Does the Bible Support Slavery? (thegospelcoalition.org)](https://thegospelcoalition.org/articles/does-the-bible-support-slavery/)
• VS. 21: For this you have been called: God has called us to submit and even to suffer; this is the Christian life: Why? Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example: Jesus always did what was right, he perfectly obeyed, he submitted to the will of God. Yet, He suffered unjustly and greatly. (So why would we think that we wouldn’t?)

• You might follow His Footsteps: if you trace the footsteps of Jesus, it will lead you to and through suffering. Unjust suffering is NOT a sign that you have done something wrong or that God is out of control; but often a sign that you have done something right. Jesus is our suffering servant and if we follow His footsteps it will lead to suffering.

• If you have never been inconvenienced because of your faith, then you may need to evaluate whether or not your faith is worth persecuting or inconveniencing. Comfort and Christianity are incompatible.

• Jesus submitted to the governing authorities even to His own death: he committed no sin, no deceit, he did not talk back or threaten. If there was anyone who could have stood up to the governing authorities it was Jesus. He could have sent holy napalm and sent them all to hell; but instead, he submitted to them. He didn’t run his mouth.

• How could He do that? VS. 23b: He entrusted himself to Him who judges justly: He knew that God was the ultimate Judge. Because God is the ultimate judge, the wrath of God would be the ultimate justice. Hell is the ultimate righting of all wrongs. Sinn will not go unpunished; it will either be punished in hell for eternity or at the Cross.

• You and I do not have to take the responsibility of vengeance for unjust bosses, bad parents, or evil government: we can rest in the truth that God will have the final say. Miroslav Volf: If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make a final end of violence, that God would not be worthy of our worship.

• Romans 12:19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

• VS. 24-25: He did it for LOVE: He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree: Jesus is the only one who has ever voluntarily died. You say, “That’s not true! Some people have died voluntarily for great causes!” No. They might have chosen the moment or maybe the means by which they died, but they did not choose the fact of their death. They already had to die. Jesus is the only person to die who never had to; but he chose to do it. Why? LOVE!

• By His Wounds we are HEALED: We were the rebels who had resisted authority; the servants who rebelled against our rightful master; the unjust ones who rejected the rightful rule of God. Jesus was the Lord who submitted to death; the master who became a servant; the rightful ruler who suffered our injustice; but by submitting to our injustice, He saved us! Jesus’ death was to end sin and set His people free.

• He is calling us to do likewise, to take this posture in life, so that we may point others to Him: The world may not see everything we do or hear everything we say, but they will take notice to how we endure suffering. When we love others who seem unlovable, when we submit and suffer unjustly, when we do not retaliate with threats and violence, when we keep trusting in God when it does not make sense, when we have a joy that is inexpressible in the most painful moments of life, we are a witness of Christ to the world.

• Baptism Video: After the 9:30 service, a lady came to Pastor Kevin and said, “Whatever that woman has, is what I want.” She gave her life to Christ, all because of their witness of what Christ has done in their lives.

Application: What we see time and time again from 1 Peter, it is on every page and runs through every verse, is that Peter really believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Peter bases his whole hope on the fact that Jesus really was raised from the dead; is in control; and something happened on Calvary that redefined everything. I’ve heard skeptics say that the disciples made up the part about Jesus rising from the dead to convince people to go along with their new religion or system of morality.

But Peter is not trying to gain power here; he’s teaching people to submit and to suffer with joy like he is because of the hope of Christ’s resurrection.

He was not crucified upside down for preaching a message of resurrection that he did not really believe. If Peter knew he was lying, there would be no basis for his instructions or hope in suffering. Peter believed that Jesus rose from the dead.

Peter is saying, “Christ is in control. Christ is the God of resurrection. Christ is worth it.” [Light music starts]
Talking to one of our missionary partners in NAME. Their team had gone through so much heartache: We had two resignations, a tragic death of a child (accidentally backed over by parent), a team worker went to the ER, some of the team losing their housing, it’s been a horrible week in a very hard place in the world. “Jesus is WORTH IT ALL!”

You may have had a horrible week. You may be going through terrible suffering. You may want to give up. But don’t! Keep entrusting yourself to the ONE who judges justly and died for you on the Cross and rose again from the dead.

Jesus is WORTH it ALL! Don’t lose heart. You are getting a testimony through the test that may change a life for eternity.