

Sunday, November 7, 2021 pm

STUDIES IN 1 PETER (14)

Submitting to Governing Authorities

1 Peter 2:13-17

We are continuing our study of 1 Peter. It is a letter written to Christians who were facing persecutions for their faith that encourages them to endure. In our last lesson, we examined vs. 11-12 which calls for us to conduct ourselves honorably among the world thereby removing cause for accusations, and perhaps bringing some to God in the process. We noted that this is the introduction to much of this letter as it deals with our conduct in the world. Today, we will begin noticing the various relationships addressed by noting our responsibilities to our government.

I. Submit

a. *Submit yourselves...*

- i. What is submission? The word means to arrange under, subordinate or submit. It is the idea of yielding to another in some way.
 - ii. Submission is a subject fairly easy to understand, but difficult to apply, because such requires humility and not always having your way. We live in a society where this word is abused by some (authoritarian) and totally rejected by others (rebellion). Many of the problems we have seen in recent years have this abuse as its underpinning.
 - iii. Having said that, the Christian life is one of submission. Our submission begins with God and with that affects every relationship we are in.
- b. Our text begins to address submission by noting 3 areas, followed by various other subjects many of which will involve submission, and culminating with 1 Peter 5:5 where we are called upon to submit to one another.
- c. How does this help you with your faith? It shows proper respect for God and others. As noted, it removes opportunity to criticize.

II. Governing authorities (13-14)

a. *Every ordinance* (NASB "human institution") – every agency.

- i. This is descriptive of whatever laws or rules are put into place.
- ii. We cannot pick and choose what to obey anymore than we can pick and choose who to obey. In this text, which deals primarily with governing bodies, whether or not they are god fearing is not a factor. If we can follow their dictates without sinning, we are to submit.
- iii. Consider the only exception – Acts 5:29 – when laws put your faith in conflict with God's word.

b. *For the Lord's sake* –

- i. Peter gives a reason here that should be at the forefront of our minds always.
- ii. When we make decisions, we need to ask first, "how will this affect my standing WITH the Lord?" THEN, "how will my actions affect the Lord?" Remember Colossians 3:17, 1 Peter 4:11 – in all things let God be glorified. 1 Corinthians 10:31 – do all to the glory of God.
- iii. AGAIN, we are reminded of the incredibly bad behavior in our society, often done in the name of the Lord. It is not secret that our society is hostile to true Christian faith and Satan's servants are doing many wicked things to undermine God's standard and His people. HOWEVER, there are things being said and done by professed believers are no better. We have some who are proudly, openly and blatantly rebelling against governing agencies because they don't like their rules. **This DOES not help the cause of Christ!**

- iv. PERSONAL NOTE: I know I sound like a broken record in saying these things, but I keep repeating it because I do not want US to get caught up in these actions. You can let your light shine without harshly blinding those you are trying to influence (cf. Matthew 5:16).
- c. **Whether king, governor, or their representative**
 - i. In Rome, the **king** would be Caesar or some king who ruled under him (e.g. King Herod). In our text he is described as **supreme** -a word meaning to exercise the highest authority (in their domain).
 - ii. In the Roman empire, **governors** would have been men appointed by Caesar to rule over a specified area (Pilate was a governor, Felix was governor). So this would be more localized leaders at various levels.
 - iii. In our society, we have a president, governors, mayors and even other representatives of the government – policemen and others with authority to execute and enforce the law.
 - iv. We are to submit to such!
- d. Their role (ought to be) **punishment of evil doers and praise of those who do good.**
 - i. Ideally, governments protect those who comply with their laws and punish those who do not. They deal with criminals and punish them, and reward those who follow the law by protecting them in various ways. Paul gave the same reasoning in Romans 13:3-4, again noting that he is God’s minister for good.
 - ii. Sadly, our government’s definitions of good and evil are often skewed or even more tragically reversed (Woe to those who call good evil, and evil good – Isaiah 5:20) – typically in moral matters. But STILL, they are designed to punish the wicked (murders, thieves, the violent, etc.) and protect the law-abiding citizen.
 - iii. In all this, whether you like your government or not, you are to submit!

III. Why submit to governing authorities? (15-17)

- a. **This is the will of God** – this is what God wants.
 - i. Realize that He ordained government. Romans 13:1-7 addresses our responsibilities to governing authorities much like our current text. NOTE Romans 13:2, *Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*
 - ii. Furthermore, realize that to rebel is to bring the wrath of God against YOU! Romans 13:2. It is one thing to incur the wrath of a government in standing for what is right, but it is a totally different thing to incur the wrath of God because you unrighteously rebelled against the government. Remember Matthew 10:28 – *Do not fear him...*
- b. **By doing good we silence the ignorance of foolish men** –
 - i. Again, Peter notes that when we are as respectful as we can be, we silence foolish men. We addressed this in our last lesson.
 - ii. Accusations may be made against us, as we stand for what is right by refusing to engage in sinful laws or standards, but our efforts to respect the rules of law will be evident to most, including many who render accusations falsely.
 - iii. Foolish behavior always becomes manifest in its time.
- c. **In freedom, we do not use our liberties as a cloak for vice** –
 - i. Paul reminds us that in Christ we are free
 - ii. BUT, that freedom in Him is NOT license to do whatever we want, including rejecting and rebelling against governing authorities. Earlier in this lesson, we addressed how sometimes, in the name of Jesus, people act badly drawing undue negative attention to His cause just so that they can have their way. MANY do this in the name of Christian liberty! (cf. Consider OSAS - And with no eternal accountability why not act however you want?) They think that just because they do something in the name of Christ they can do whatever they want.
 - iii. We must NEVER use the gospel for selfish reasons!

- d. **Realize that we are bondservants of God** –
- i. God calls for us to submit to Him –
 1. James 4:7 – submit to God and resist the devil;
 2. cf. Hebrews 12:9 notes concerning chastening, we are to be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live.
 - ii. IF we are submitting to God, we will submit to the governing authorities.
 - iii. NOTE: He ordained governments, so when we submit to governing authorities, we are submitting to God. So even if you despised those in power over you, remember and honor God.
- e. **Honor all people**
- i. This phrase summarizes the groups mentioned in the rest of the verse. Consider that we must respect all men as being that have a soul that will live eternally somewhere. Every human is made in the image of God. Therefore, we must show due respect to all – which means when needed we submit to them. This is like Paul becoming all things to all men in 1 Corinthians 9:22.
 - ii. **Love the brotherhood** – a reference to our brethren everywhere. In this letter we have repeatedly noted that we need each other as a source of strength to stand firm in a crooked and ungodly world. Consider how your actions affect not only you, but your brethren as well. So when you act unseemly against governing authority, you are making it more difficult for the rest of the body of Christ. Let THAT be motive to act with restraint!
 - iii. **Fear God** – both reverence and godly fear. AGAIN, Peter emphasizes our need to consider God in our actions. Again I ask, “Who do you fear more?” (cf. Matthew 10:28). Consider also Hebrews 12:28-29 where we serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.
 - iv. **Honor the king** – summarizing our submission to government as noted.
 1. BUT consider in this, how do speak about the government at all levels?
 2. I’m not talking about noting their ungodly edicts, but how to address THEM? Do you show respect, even for the wicked and ungodly rulers?
 3. Remember that Peter was writing this while Nero was Caesar (ca. 65-67 AD). He was a very wicked Caesar who persecuted Christians (at least locally).
 4. See Titus 3:1-2 – be subject to rulers and authorities...speak evil of no one...;
 5. ALSO, do not forget 1 Timothy 2:1-2 that we are to be praying for our leaders, especially that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and reverence.

A good reminder in all of this is to remember that we are foreigners here (sojourners and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11) with our citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3:20). This means that spiritually we are foreigners while on this earth. To the best of our ability, we need to conduct ourselves honorably in this foreign land (respecting its rulings to the best of our abilities without compromising our citizenship). That is what our King expects us of.