



1 Peter 2:13-17

Submitting For the Lord's Sake

13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,

14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.

15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men --

16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

I have to admit that I am not looking forward to the 2008 presidential elections much. While I am no prophet, I tend to think that once again the American people will be presented with a choice between bad and worse, and I fear that once again America will get the kind of leadership she *deserves* rather than the kind of leadership she *needs*.

Well what if I'm right and worse beats bad and becomes President, how should I react? Do I have a right to say, "*that's not my president?*" Do I have a right to rebel or begin my own campaign of active civil disobedience?

Brothers and Sisters as much as I might want to, the answer to that question is **no, I do not**. Far from having an individual right of rebellion accorded to me, I am told again and again in Scripture that as a Christian is my calling to *submit*. That is precisely what Peter is once again telling us in these verses.

Perhaps you are thinking, yeah well that was back in Peter's day in the first century. He didn't have to deal with the really corrupt and evil politicians we do like (depending on your political viewpoint) Hillary Clinton or Dick Cheney.

Well before you go down that particular road, the head of the Government in Peter's day was an Emperor by the name of Nero, a name that has become almost synonymous with evil and corruption. Peter was very aware of the corruption of Nero's government, he is writing this letter from the city Rome which he describes in his closing greeting as "Babylon."

Additionally, remember that Peter himself was a man who knew what unjust persecution by a corrupt government looked like. He had grown up in a country that was occupied and oppressed by a foreign power and subjected to a never ending stream of bad, vicious, and corrupt governors. He himself had been dragged before the rulers of the Jews and beaten for preaching the Good News and Healing in the name of Christ. He had been seized by Herod and was about to be executed when he was miraculously delivered by an angel.

Peter has seen and experienced bad government and persecution all his life and He is writing to Christians who are entering into a time of merciless and unjust persecution, surely if ever someone had the right to rebel it was these people, and yet he tells them to submit to all the authorities over them.

Why was Peter able to do that? Was it because he was a kind of Caspar Milquetoast character, naturally subservient, a doormat? Not at all brothers and sisters, Peter was a fiery character. You recall that when the Soldiers came to seize Jesus at Gethsemane he was ready to start the armed rebellion then and there. He took up his sword and chopped off the high priest's servant's ear. This was also the man who openly defied the orders of Sanhedrin when they told him to stop preaching. Hey, Peter was not above saying "*Not So Lord*" to God **HIMSELF!** There was no lack of fire and resolve and stubbornness in Peter.

But what had changed Peter forever, was when Jesus had said to Him, "***Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?***" And he saw the man who was able with a single word to still the raging of the storm, who could drive out demons, and walk right through the midst of a blood thirsty mob submit to being bound and led away by a group whom he had knocked over simply by saying "**I am he.**"

And then Peter watched as that man, Jesus underwent beatings and humiliations and a farce of a trial and then submitted to the cruelest form of capital punishment the Romans could think up, and recollecting it he must have thought of the words in Isaiah 53

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken

And Peter learned that it was by that incredible act of submission that Jesus had opened wide the gates of Heaven and made atonement for the sins of his people.

And so here is my first application and it's a hard one: Brothers and Sisters, what Peter learned was that true Christian strength is not seen in *rebellion*, it is seen in *submission*. Rebellion is at the heart of every sin. Rebellion was the cause of the fall. Your biggest problem, your children's biggest problem is that by nature you are rebels, and you are not inclined to submit to *any* external authority be it man or God. Being a rebel is easy, submitting is hard.

In fact, it is only after we have been born again, that our rebellion against God ends and we are finally able to submit to his good government.

Peter knows that the Christian's calling is to follow Jesus and to die to self and to submit to authority. But he knows how hard that is, even for the regenerate. So he gives three reasons as encouragements for our submission,

The **first** and the paramount reason is that we submit *for the Lord's sake*. In other words your obedience to all authorities, whether they be parents, or elders, or bosses or civil magistrates is an act

of obedience to the Lord. You render your submission ultimately not to men, but to God. I will admit, that when April 15 rolls around, I am full of rebellious thoughts, but I sign that check to the IRS as an act of obedience to God.

The **second reason** is because it is God who has given us government for the suppression of evil and the encouragement of God in the midst of a fallen world. Even bad government is better than *no government*. Have you ever noticed that anarchists tend to be sickly intellectual types who have never considered who will protect them from the strong and the brutal once government is gone.

Now the power that government has is not limitless. The authority that all governors have is not self-derived. Man has no authority in and of himself, it all comes via His creator. And therefore good government whether it be in the home or the church or the legislature is government according to God's rules. When a governor goes against God's rules, he is acting as a tyrant. This is true of all authorities including parents, husbands, even Pastors. My own authority as an elder in Christ's church, is absolutely constrained by God's word. I cannot tell you to do *anything* that God has not commanded.

So if any authority tells you to do that which is against the law of God, you must answer the way Peter himself did when the Sanhedrin told them to stop teaching in Christ's name. "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" For the Christian, "I was only following orders" or "I was only obeying the law" can never be an excuse for sin. So for instance the Ten Boom family was right to refuse to turn in Jews to the Nazis and instead protect them, and the soldiers and police who did round them up to be murdered were wrong.

The **third reason to submit**, is an apologetic one, as we submit, we are showing the evidences of that great change I spoke about last week. We are showing that Christians should be the best citizens of them all. That happened in the Roman empire. The Christians, for instance, would not burn the pinch of incense and repeat that "Caesar is Lord" and so the Roman accused them of being rebellious and seditious, and yet the evidence that they *were not rebels was overwhelming*. The Romans had encountered rebellion all over the world, and yet these Christians while they would not worship Caesar, did not rebel. When the Jews rebelled in 66 AD the Christians fled from the city of Jerusalem so that they would *not* have to fight against the authorities and that had a great effect on individual citizens. Today, we are being spoken evil of once again, and acts of defiance like that of David Koresh will not help to silence that evil speech, but if Christians once again are seen to be *the best of citizens, what a difference that would make*.

As I said, Peter knew how hard this submission is so in verse 16 he goes ahead and answers an objection that a Christian might offer, namely his Christian liberty. Look, says the Christian, I have freedom in Christ. But Peter says, the Freedom that Christ has purchased for you is not freedom to sin, you were bought at a price and that price was Christ's willingness to submit on your behalf and die in your place. We are Christ's purchased possessions, and now we can serve Him by serving the authorities He has given.

In fact, in keeping with Paul's admonition to submit to one another, Peter explicitly says, don't just honor authorities, respect all men, for they were created in the image of God, love your brothers and sisters in Christ, fear and reverence God and honor the king. Treat others as you would like to be treated, regardless of whether they treat you that way. ***Matt. 5:41 "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two."***

Friends, there was a time when I cherished rebellion. I was kicked out of my first school at the age of three, and I was subsequently asked to leave several others, I was disobedient child, a class clown, I spent most of my school time either in the hall or in the principal's office. I had detention every day of the week – my mother can confirm that. I was kicked out of the cub scouts. My heroes were all rebels too. I saw no value in submission, but it never really occurred to me that my persistent rebellion only resulted in suffering and evil. I would not be tamed.

When I tell people that today, they don't believe me. I am asked what brought about the change? Same thing as Peter. Jesus Christ. It was a change of heart that ended my rebellion. My eyes were opened, I saw my state, and I saw that if I continued my rebellion against God would carry me all the way to hell. I saw also, that the Lamb of God was worthy to receive my worship and my submission. For the first time in my life.

Until you come to faith in Christ, you are at enmity with God. Your rebellion may not be as gross and obvious as mine, but the ultimate consequences will be the same. I often talk to unbelievers who complain of their lack of peace with their fellow men, brothers and Sisters you cannot be reconciled to man till you are reconciled to God and really submitting to anyone will be impossible if you are the God of your own universe. Also please do not believe for a moment that Jesus can be your savior if he is not your Lord. If you have not submitted to His Lordship, then it can only be because you do not yet love and trust Him and you are still in your rebellion, still in your sins.

Friends, historically, rebels have tended to be treated very poorly by those they rebel against. But the love of Christ is manifest in this, God offers to pay the consequences of your rebellion with the blood of His own son, and says if you will but return to Him, you will not only be accepted, but treated as a prince. Like the Prodigal returning:

Luke 15:21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

23 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

24 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

You will never hear of better terms than this!