

1 Peter 2: 13-25

Submit to authority by remembering who you serve.

Historical Context: In this time, the ruling authority of Nero is intense and overwhelming. Christians are suffering an intense spiritual, physical, emotional battle. In this time, Peter is encouraging them and giving them hope by reminding them of who really has the control and power over them: God.

(v. 13-16)

God allows Nero to be over them, allows them to suffer because it makes them more like Christ. HE has the authority. HE has the sovereignty. Nothing has been called into being without His commanding it to. Therefore, His sovereignty is in control over the governing authority on earth. It was God's sovereignty that put this authority over us. By being servants of God, we have to serve those who are put in charge above us. Its God saying "You are free, I have set you free, but you are still under me and you serve under my authority."

Now, we hear this said a lot: we are set free in Christ. We are. We are free to trust that earthly authorities are only in place by his permission.

If we are under the sovereignty of Christ, and we follow him, then why should we be subject to the rule of a government? This is to maintain spotless character. In verse 15 it talks about how you will "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." To maintain trust and respect, you need to abide by the laws placed over you, the laws that God allows to govern you. By keeping your conduct and record spotless, no one can call into question your character.

When we undergo persecution, people will look at us, look at our reputation, and ask themselves "why are we trying to hurt the people who are only trying to help us?"

My dad always used to say: The two most precious things you have on earth are your time and your reputation. I don't steal (anymore) because it's against the law, and I have made a choice to be above reproach (above negative criticism).

Outsiders see us and say: "They say they follow Christ, but look at how they live. Isn't that what I do now? What is it that sets them apart?" We are set apart because we obey the laws set in authority over us out of respect for the government Christ allows to be in authority over us. Through that respect and obedience, we paint a picture of Christianity that people see as respectable and they look up to it.

You are free, Christ has set you free, and verse 18 says "ACT LIKE IT". The people in Nero's time, the persecuted Church, they didn't walk around saying "I'm free, so I don't have to do what Nero says!" You did not learn a Gospel that said you can sin and do what you want and die and go to heaven. We are set apart, and our hopes/desires/affections are separate from the world.

They abided by the law because they knew they were called to set an example. They were called to something greater. They were called to be set apart. Some people think that because they are free in Christ, then they answer only to God. That's like saying, "I only answer to the principal, so I don't have to listen to what my teacher says." The principal is who set the teacher above you in authority. So by obeying the rules set in the classroom, you are in obedience to the one who set them in authority over you.

(v. 17) is literally a step-by-step of how to walk out a life as a servant free in Christ.

(v. 18) I think its safe to say Nero was unreasonable. He blamed his own mistake on others, and then brutally murdered them as punishment for his own crimes. AND YET THEY STILL SUBMITTED.

Matthew 5:43-48 are literally the words of Jesus.

What about submitting to bad boss and bad king? Don't submit because God said so, but because Christ suffered. Christians, we are called to suffer. The calling we live out is not an easy one, and if it is, you are doing something wrong. We are called to suffer. How? One way is by respecting authority. You persevere when the authority is persecuting you.

We are called to respect and love those around us, including those placed in authority above us, regardless of their attitude towards us. We GET to show them grace the way Christ showed us grace, and through our actions present the Gospel to them. It's easy to love someone who loves you. But how easy is it to love someone who has it out for you? Who talks about you behind your back? WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE BOTH. But more than just loving both, we are called to PRAY FOR both. The persecuted Christians in that time had to change their mindset about who is in authority. Peter was reminding the persecuted Christians that they must pray for Nero, because it kept their focus in the right perspective.

(v. 19-20) Suffering is a privilege. We get the opportunity to suffer like Christ suffered. We shouldn't waste that opportunity. They didn't waste that opportunity. We shouldn't look at the word persecution with a negative connotation. We should see it as an awesome opportunity and a blessing that we get to experience the sufferings of Christ and we get to develop characteristics that make us more like Christ through our suffering. When we refuse to react to suffering in sinful ways, it makes us like Jesus and testifies to our confidence in Him. Any injustice we undergo here on earth is temporary and fleeting.

(v. 21-22) Christ submitted to the governing authority in His time on earth!! He submitted to Pilate's ruling even though he had the power to overrule the governing authority. It doesn't matter that the authority was incorrect. He still submitted to it and endured the crucifixion because He knew that God had allowed that authority o be in place in that time. He intended to leave behind an example for us to follow

today. He suffered for the people who would be persecuted by Nero, just as he suffered for us, and He set an example of submission to authority. If Christ, in all His sovereignty, submitted to the authority the Father had **allowed** to be in place, then why should any less be expected of us as His followers?

Christ had all the power and authority to walk away from Pilate and not accept our punishment. He could have. But He chose not to. Why? Because grace abounds more in Christ's decision to take the crucifixion rather than walking away. Just like we have the opportunity to show more grace when we are faced with persecution, than we would if we never came up against any trial or persecution.

(v. 23) Christ did not respond in anger or resentment towards the government when he was under persecution. HE ENTRUSTED HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY. That's what Peter is charging the church to do. Shouldn't we do the same? We are called to respond in love in the face of persecution because we answer to a higher authority and we are on a higher calling. We are called to respect the laws set over us in order to be above reproach, but we are also held under the sovereign authority of the one who allows all other human institutions to exist. Keep the focus on who you serve, and following human institutions should be relatively effortless.

(v. 24-25) Christ bore our sins so we would be set free. Christ set the example for us. He did it in his power. In his wounds we are healed. Its nothing that we could have done ourselves, its all because of His sovereignty that we have freedom. At the same time, Christ set the ultimate example of why we submit to authority. Because He submitted to authority, we are free today. Who knows who will see your choice of submitting to authority today, and be set free tomorrow because they follow your example and receive Christ in their hearts?

What does this mean to you? Submit to authority, show love in the face of persecution, remember who you serve.

Imagine what this campus could look like if we all embraced this mentality? If we all submitted to, respected, and showed love to those who love us and those who hate us? What if, when people tried to talk about us, they couldn't think of anything negative to say?

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