

# Submission to Authority

I Peter 2:13-17

None of us like to submit though all of us are required to at some point in our life. As children we submit to our parents. As students we submit to our teachers. As drivers we submit to the rules of the road. As citizens we are required to submit to the rule of law. Submission is required, but it's not easy.

In this next section, Peter is calling the believer to a life of submission. Notice, he does not call them to a life of slavery or subjugation. Christians have been made free by the work of Christ. Still, God calls us to recognize his authority and the institutions he has established on the earth. There are four institutions Peter highlights: government, work, marriage and the church. If Christians can faithfully live under authority, they will successfully exercise authority. Satan's offer to our first parents was freedom without authority, but they ended up losing both freedom and authority.<sup>1</sup>

**Definition:** "Be Subject" v. 13

ὑποτάσσομαι (hupotassomai): to obey the orders or directives of someone<sup>2</sup>

- This is what Jesus modeled when he obeyed his earthly mother and father
  - o **Luke 2:51, "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart."**<sup>3</sup>
- This is the life Christians are called to live
  - o **Romans 13:1-2, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement."**
  - o **Titus 3:1-2, "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people."**<sup>4</sup>
- This is the state of the world...all things have been made subject to Jesus
  - o **I Corinthians 15:57, For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. <sup>5</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 403.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 467.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 2:51.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Tt 3:1–2.

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 15:27–28.

- **Psalm 8:6, “You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,”<sup>6</sup>**

## We must submit to the government (vv. 13-17)

<sup>13</sup> Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. <sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. <sup>16</sup> Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. <sup>17</sup> Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. <sup>7</sup>

Peter spells out the motivation for why believers are to submit to government authorities.

- A. For the Lord’s sake (v. 13-14)
  - a. Christians have a responsibility to be the Lord’s representatives on the earth. When Christians properly respond to authority, we represent Christ well.
    - i. This does not mean we are obligated to tolerate the tyranny of rulers or the injustice of a nation.
    - ii. In America, we have a representative democracy and not a monarchy. Our laws protect the right to protest injustice and I believe the Bible teaches us Christians have the responsibility to stand against injustice in any form.
      1. ***Micah 6:8, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”<sup>8</sup>***
  - b. When Christians live submissive lives, they take on the example Jesus models
    - i. Jesus is equal with God, but submits to the will of his Father (John 6:38, Philippians 2:5-9).
    - ii. When he gave himself to be crucified, he submitted to the governing authorities (Matthew 20:18).
  - c. God has a purpose for establishing government
    - i. Protection for all people
    - ii. Punishment for those who practice evil
      1. ***Romans 13:3-4, “For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.”***
    - iii. Praise for those who practice good
  - d. Is it ever right for Christians to protest the government? YES!!!!!!

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<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 8:6.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 2:13–17.

<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mic 6:8.

- i. Six Principles for Protest
  - 1. We protest on behalf of others and not ourselves
    - a. ***Matthew 22:37-40*<sup>37</sup> And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.<sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment.<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”<sup>9</sup>**
    - b. ***Philippians 2:3*<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves<sup>10</sup>**
  - 2. All other means of influence have been exhausted
  - 3. We protest to bring more good than harm
  - 4. There are clear goals and objectives
  - 5. There are limits to protest (no looting or violence)
  - 6. There is a reasonable chance of success (turnout is important)
- B. For the sake of unbelievers (v. 15)
  - a. We have several models in Scripture of passive resistance that shames the arguments of agitators.
    - i. Jesus before Pilate practices the principal of passive resistance (John 18:28-40)
    - ii. Paul stood before Festus, Agrippa, and, eventually, Caesar as a result of his submission to government authority. (Acts 24-26)
      - 1. ***Acts 25:18-20, “When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them.”***
      - 2. ***Acts 26:28, “And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am – except for these chains.”***
  - b. Our character and our conduct are on display before the world and have the opportunity to open the door for the gospel to go forth.
    - i. ***1 Peter 3:15-16, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”***
  - c. We should not fear the judgment of foolish people

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<sup>9</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 22:37–40.

<sup>10</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 2:3.

- i. Peter hearkened back to Proverbs, where the foolish are morally debased. They are foolish because they do not fear the Lord and walk in his ways (Prov 1:7), and hence their ignorance is culpable. Such people will be silenced by the good deeds of Christians.<sup>11</sup>
    - ii. Those who attack are motivated by hatred and often lack understanding of the object of their hate...in fact, they often lack substance in their claims.
- C. Three Inward Motivation (vv. 16)
  - a. The first section is about outward action, but these final verses reveal the inward heart motivation for our submission
    - i. We are to submit as people who are free
      - 1. Peter describes how we were set free earlier in the letter (I Peter 1:18-19)
      - 2. We do not submit from a position of weakness or inferiority
        - a. Matthew 17:24-27
    - ii. We are to submit as people who do good and not evil
    - iii. We are to submit as servants of the Lord
- D. Four Concluding Commands
  - a. Honor everyone
    - i. We have all been made in the image of God and are to be treated with dignity and respect
  - b. Love the brotherhood
    - i. I Peter 5:9 is the other place the word is used and refers to our unity through suffering
  - c. Fear God
    - i. We respect the king, but we fear God only. He alone establishes the boundaries of life.
    - ii. Peter reveals we ought not fear other human beings
      - 1. ***I Peter 3:14, <sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,*<sup>12</sup>**
  - d. Honor the Emperor

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 130.

<sup>12</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 3:14.