

What To Do?
I Peter 2:13-17

This is our new puppy Blaze. We are in the process of training him. He does a really good job at sit. He's getting the hang of shake and we are working on stay and come and exit. For the most part he has the in ground fence down although sometimes his puppy curiosity takes him a little too close where he gets a reminder of the boundary line. From there we'll work on fetch and release and other commands. Our vet says he's a really smart dog. Right now it's relatively easy for him to get confused so he just barks or "talks". But mostly we still get blank stares.

Sometimes I wonder if the disciples got a little confused as well at the Lord's instructions. You may already be in I Peter 2, but I want to begin in Matthew 28. So keep your finger in I Peter and turn to the first gospel and the last chapter. Notice the commands given in this passage.
Matthew 28:16-20

The first command we find in verse 16. It's a simple one.
"GO to Galilee to a certain mountain."
I'm curious about a couple of details that seem to be missing. Now when I do pre-marital counseling we talk quite a bit about the importance of communication in a marriage relationship. Let's say in the middle of the day the wife gets a text from her husband stating that he wants to take her out for dinner. She gets all excited and spends the afternoon getting ready for a special evening. She selects the right dress, accessories and perfume and waits for her husband to come home for an evening out. He pulls in the drive way and enters the home and asks his wife why she's all dolled up and she says because you texted me stating you wanted to take me out to dinner. To which he says, I didn't mean tonight, just some night. He just entered the Twilight Zone and the dog house.

Let's say the husband texts her in the day and says he wants to take her out tonight and she thinks it's going to be at Olive Garden and it ends up being at a bowling alley eating pizza.

I encourage couples to ask those all-important clarifying questions.
When? Where? What time?

Maybe Jesus told the disciples which mountain and on what day and at what time, but we aren't given those details. John gives us some additional information at the end of his gospel. It appears they went to Galilee and perhaps even went to the right mountain, but Jesus apparently wasn't there so Peter decided to go fishing. John 21 says that six of the 11 disciples went with him. Now I want you to understand that this wasn't just a fun outing on the lake to pass the time while they waited for Jesus. The passage doesn't say they got into A boat, but that they got into THE boat. Whose boat? It was his boat that he had left 3 ½ years earlier when Jesus called him in Matthew 4:19 from fishing to become a fisher of men. When Peter announced that he was going fishing it meant that he was returning to his old job. He had come to believe that he couldn't do anything else because he had failed so miserably as a disciple.

He talked out of turn.
He spoke for the devil.
He denied Christ three times.
He ran away.

What was left for him to do but fish? But even when he tried he failed at that because they caught nothing.
But the Lord met Peter where he was at and accepted the level of love he could give.

In Matthew 28 they were told to go to a mountain. Then they were told to go into the world and Jesus told them what they were to do. Earlier they were told to only go to the people of Israel, the Jews. Now go into all the world and do what? Go make disciples.

What would a disciple look like?

Two things identify a disciple:

Someone who is baptized, an outward sign indicating their salvation

Someone who is taught to obey the Lord's commands

Maybe they were a bit confused by those commands.

Now turn to Acts 1 where we see another command.

In Matthew 28 He told them to go to a mountain in Galilee and go into all the world and make disciples and in Acts 1:4 He tells them to wait in Jerusalem.

Acts 1:4

Lord it's all so confusing. Even here the disciples didn't get their objective to go into all the world.

They ask the Lord in verse 6 if He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel why bother going into all the world? Just before He ascended into heaven Jesus again reminded them of their commission to go into all the world and be His witnesses. An angel appeared and told them that He would return just as they saw Him leave.

Now turn to our text for today in I Peter 2:13-17.

Writing some 30 years later I think any confusion was now clear to Peter. As he writes, his objective is obvious. His role is well defined. It was plain to him as he writes that we are not citizens of this earth, that we await our true home – heaven. But until that time comes, he advises on how to conduct ourselves.

1:15-16 – be holy because God is holy.

2:11 – abstain from sinful desires

2:12 – live good lives before unbelievers

And in our passage, how to respond to authority.

As we pick up in verse 13 we are going to see what that means practically

We are to submit to authority

We are to submit to masters

We are to submit in marriage

Today we will consider our relationship as Christians in submitting to authority.

The measure of our submission

The motivation for our submission

The means of our submission

I. THE MEASURE OF OUR SUBMISSION – v. 13-14a

Let's begin here by defining the word submit. It's a compound word in the Greek.

Hupo – under Tassow – to arrange

Literally it means to arrange under. It's a military term having to do with the rank and file of soldiers. Every military branch has its tier of authority. If they didn't everyone would be giving orders and no one would be taking orders.

Peter is essentially saying that we are to put ourselves under those who are in authority over us. Looking first at the end of verse 13 they were to put themselves under the authority of the king. It's a reference to Nero.

Nero was not a nice guy or a fair ruler.

He murdered members of his own family.

He was notorious for killing Christians by putting them in the sporting arena to be killed by wild animals.

He would dip them in pitch or tar and then hang them on the streets lighting them on fire to be used as human torches.

And Peter says to his readers put yourself under his authority. He is your ruler.

In verse 14 he also includes governors, those who were in positions placed there by the king or Caesar. We think of Festus and Felix in Acts and Pilate in the gospels. Nehemiah was a governor in Jerusalem placed there by King Artaxerxes of the Persian Empire during Israel's captivity.

Now look back at the opening words of verse 13

because there is an all-inclusive phrase that is important. “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men.”

“Every authority instituted among men.”

In Peter’s lifetime that would have been Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Vitellius, Otho, and Vespasian. Two other notable Caesars who wreaked havoc against Christians who ended the first century were Domitian and Trajan. And Peter says to submit to every authority.

Who comes to mind for you?

Hitler – Germany
 Idi Amin - Uganda
 Saddam Hussein - Iraq
 Ayatollah Khomeini - Iran
 Fidel Castro - Cuba
 Joseph Stalin – Russia
 Benito Mussolini – Italy
 Kim Jong-Il or son Kim Jong-Un – North Korea

How about in our own country?

We have had some good presidents and some not so good presidents. In my lifetime I have never seen such a toxic environment that has led to brazen, rebellious rioting that’s been going on since the election. Regardless of who’s in the White House, he or she is our president.

We are to submit to every authority, not just at the federal level, it also includes but is not limited to the following:

State and local authority
 Emergency services like Police and fire fighters
 Teachers
 Employers
 Parents
 Condo Association
 Township zoning
 The IRS
 And that’s just a start.

Time and the intent of this message does not allow us the opportunity to discuss if and when it’s okay to commit acts of civil disobedience. Even a glance at our own history and to the Declaration of Independence we see evidence of such actions even preached from pulpits. Built into the Declaration is an outline for reasons to rise up against authority when necessary.

So let me just say here that there are two fundamental reasons for which we can and must disobey authority.

If we are told to do something illegal or immoral as a Christian we must disobey. If it’s contrary to God’s Word – disobey.

Acts 4:1-20

Acts 5:17-42

Daniel 1:3-14

Daniel 3:1-30

Daniel 6:1-15

When we are asked to do something that violates a clear command from Scripture, disobey the law of man.

You shall not murder – don’t perform an abortion.

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife – don’t perform same sex marriages.

I will resign this pastorate and relinquish my ordination rather than be forced to comply with something that violates Scripture.

Is it okay for a florist or a cake decorator or a photographer or a city clerk to deny service to a same sex couple wanting to get married and use those services?

It violates the principles of God’s law.

You might want to put on some steal toed shoes with this next one because I’m going to step on some toes. And don’t think I’m perfect in this. Is it okay to speed, even a little?

In this case it does not violate God’s Word so I believe no, it is not okay.

Speed signs are regulatory signs that limit how fast you can drive under ideal conditions. Just because everyone else is going faster doesn't give you the right to go with the flow.

I've heard the argument that if I go the speed limit I'll endanger other drivers who are going faster.

I've also heard the argument that officers say they allow 5 or 10 miles over.

The law is what's posted not what the officer allows or that others drive.

If a parent asks you to lie or steal are you to obey your parent or God's Word?

If your boss asks you to fudge some numbers on a report are you to obey your boss or God's Word?

If a church begins a building project, is it okay to cut some corners on a building code to save money? After all we're trying to be good stewards of God's money and besides we're exempt from taxes doesn't that mean we are exempt from other regulations as well?

Let me get off the stove and back to our text. We are to submit to authority when it does not violate God's Word. But before we close out this point there is one more passage to consider.

Romans 13:1-7

Frances Schaeffer, arguably one of the greatest 20th century Christian thinkers writes in his book *A Christian Manifesto*: "A material-energy, chance orientation gives no base, no reason, except force and patronage, as to why citizens should obey the state." In case you are wondering who this is referring to it is referring to the non-Christian.

He continues "The Christian, the God-fearing person, is not like that. The Bible tells us that God has commanded us to obey the state.

But now a second question follows very quickly. Has God set up authority in the state that is autonomous from Himself? Are we to obey the

state no matter what? In this one area is indeed Man the measure of all things? And I would answer not at all."

The government isn't equal to God. All government and those who govern are God's servant.

Schaeffer adds: "The civil government, as all of life, stands under the Law of God. In this fallen world God has given us certain offices to protect us from the chaos which is the natural result of that fallenness. But when any office commands that which is contrary to the Word of God, those who hold that office abrogate their authority and they are not to be obeyed."

The state is a delegated authority by God and the Christian, according to Romans 13:5, is to obey the state as a matter of conscience.

The measure of our submission is to be to all those in authority over us so long as it does not violate God's Word.

Turn back to I Peter and we'll consider next the motivation for our submission.

II. THE MOTIVATION FOR OUR SUBMISSION – vs. 13-16

A. We Submit Because It Is "For the Lord's Sake" – v. 13

By submitting to those in authority over us regardless of their position, we honor the Lord by that kind of conduct. It is a direct reflection on our relationship with Christ and the change that has occurred in our life because of His redeeming work.

I once read a story about a wealthy couple in another part of the world who had a number of servants. They were very hard on their servants and required a lot from them but giving little in return for their service. One day they heard the gospel and were saved. They wanted to show the change that

had taken place in them and apologized for their very rude and cruel behavior to the servant boy who always brought them their meals. They said he would see a change in them because of Christ. The boy responded that he too had recently become a Christian and with the evidence of their new faith he would no longer spit in their soup.

Our submission to authority as Christians should be done willingly and joyfully. Honoring the Lord should be one motivation to submit to authority.

B. We Submit Because It “Is God’s Will” – v. 15

When the boss asks us to work an extra shift or come in over the weekend; when she asks for a report today that was initially due next week; when the teacher asks for an unexpected assignment; when the township issues a notice of an increase in taxes; when the condo association limits the size of the garden or the type of fence in your yard; when the IRS says pay your taxes – we are to submit because it is God’s will.

Now, let’s keep a couple things in mind.

The first is that God is sovereign and Scripture is clear that God sets up authority and takes down authority. He’s in control of it all.

Scripture also says that every ruler regardless of whether they follow Him or not are His servants. Jeremiah 25:9 “I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the Lord, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin.”

When we disobey those in authority over us, we are disobeying God who sovereignly placed them in that position. He uses them to mete out punishment and reward where appropriate.

A motivation to submit to authority is because it is

God’s will.

C. We Submit Because It Silences Critics – v. 15

As we saw in verse 12, it puts to shame those who falsely accuse us.

Remember from last week that Christians were accused of all kinds of things like defying Caesar. Rome was tolerant of other religions so long as those religions also acknowledged and worshipped Caesar as lord, but Christians wouldn’t and couldn’t do that because they only worshipped the Lord. So they were branded as rebellious. However, their obedience in all other areas, in godly character would silence those who would otherwise talk foolishly about them.

The word silence comes from a word that means to muzzle. Here it means to put an end to false talk. The word ignorance comes from a word that means self-caused ignorance. Rather than fact check they just spout their opinion. The term “fake news” applies here.

The word foolish means a person who is senseless. It was used by Jesus in Luke 11:40 to describe the hypocrisy of Jesus.

Submission to authority will show the criticism of others to be baseless.

D. We Submit Because It Is The Right Thing To Do – vs. 14-16

1. When we submit we avoid being punished
2. When we submit we are rewarded
3. When we submit we have the right motive
4. When we submit we serve God

Rules aren’t meant to restrict, but to keep us safe. The word punish as used here literally means to avenge suggesting that punishment proceeds from justice. Disobedience brings justice and justice brings punishment. We saw that in Romans 13 where God uses authority to punish the wrong doer. So if we break laws then consequences will follow.

If you speed and get caught, there is a fine.
 If you fail to yield the right of way, there is a fine.
 If you drive while under the influence, there is a fine, the possibility of your license being revoked and possible jail time.
 If you steal, jail.
 If you cheat on a test, you can fail the test, the course and possibly get kicked out of school.
 Falsify a job application and you will get fired.
 Athletes who use some type of performance enhancing drug can be banned or barred from future competition in the sport.

When we submit we avoid being punished.
 On the other hand, when we submit there is some kind of reward. It may just be an acknowledgment from the boss, a bonus, a certificate or plaque honoring your good work.

In verse 16 we read that we are to “Live as free men, but not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.”

Essentially it's saying just because you are a Christian doesn't mean you have the right to disobey authority. Just because we are citizens of heaven doesn't negate our responsibility to act obediently as citizens here.

In Jesus' day there was a group called the Zealots. According to Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, Zealots saw God as their only king and so believed they owed obedience to no one else. You may recall that Jesus selected one of them to be a disciple. He was known as Simon the Zealot. This group defied Roman rule wherever they could. After Jesus called him to follow as a disciple, he became a zealot for the Savior.

There are Christians today who think that they don't have to obey manmade laws because they follow God. Keep in mind that Jesus said to give God what belongs to Him, but also give Caesar (or the government) what belongs to him.

In this way we are really serving God.
 All these should serve as a motivation for submitting to authority. Just as we saw last week regarding our conduct so it is with our submission that it brings both exoneration and evangelism among the non-believer.

Let's close with one final point found in verse 17 where we see:

III. THE METHOD OF OUR SUBMISSION – v.17

There are three actions here.
 We are to honor or respect everyone
 We see it again when we are exhorted to honor the king.
 We are to love the brotherhood
 We are to fear God

We honor or respect everyone because we are all made in the image of God. Even if you don't agree with them or they make life difficult. Honor them.

A student nurse recalled a particular professor who gave a pop quiz during class. She breezed through the quiz without any trouble until she came to the last question. “What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?” All the students thought it was some kind of joke. They had seen her different times, but didn't know her name. One student asked if the last question would count toward the grade. The professor said absolutely and then made this concluding remark: “In our careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello.”

Honor and respect everyone.

If you show reverential awe to the Lord who sovereignly allowed those governments to exist and placed those leaders in their positions, it will be easier to honor everyone else. If you don't reverence God, you won't honor others or obey authority. Let me remind you in closing that to disobey them is to disobey God.