

Submission to Civil Authority

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1 Peter / 1 Peter 2:13–15

INTRODUCTION

- We are looking again at 1 Peter this morning
- Please take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter chapter two
- We are looking now at verses 13-17

1 Peter 2:13–17 NASB95

¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

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

¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

¹⁶ *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.

¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

- The time in which Peter writes these words were during the reign of Nero
- Nero was a wicked and debased ruler
 - He killed his mother Agrippina
 - He killed his wife Octavia

In AD 64 Nero’s debauchery escalated. A few days after a banquet, complete with lakeside brothels and prostitutes, Nero donned a bridal veil and publicly wed a man as “people saw the witnesses of the ceremony, the wedding dower, the couch and the nuptial torches” (*The Annals*, Tacitus).

Soon after his homosexual wedding, Rome was engulfed in flames. In an attempt to deflect the accusations that he caused the fire so he could rebuild the city in honor of himself, Nero blamed the Christians for the fire and proceeded to torture, mock, and kill them. Some were covered with animal skins and ripped apart by dogs; some were crucified. Others were mounted on poles in Nero’s gardens and set on fire to light the night. Nero specifically

targeted Christians, the followers of one named Christus who “suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate” (*The Annals*, Tacitus).

<https://sharperiron.org/article/rome-rulers-and-respect-historical-context-of-romans-13>

- In the face of this kind of persecution, Peter called for submission to the governing authorities
- Why would he do this?
- He answers that very question in the passage we are considering today
- We are reminded in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith:

God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good; and to this end has armed them with the power of the sword, for defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil doers. (<https://www.the1689confession.com/1689/chapter-24>)

- It is by God’s wisdom that “kings reign”

Proverbs 8:15–16 NASB95

¹⁵ “By me kings reign,

And rulers decree justice.

¹⁶ “By me princes rule, and nobles,

All who judge rightly.

- There is no authority that exists except that which comes from God ([Rom.13:1](#))
- As Peter writes these words the church is suffering persecution under the king
- But in spite of this, they are to “submit” to those God has placed in authority

· **As we look at verses 13-17...**

The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) Chapter 2

This command introduces the theme of voluntary submission and obedience to those in authority

Believer’s Bible Commentary B. As a Citizen in Relation to Government (2:13–17)

The next five verses deal with the Christian’s relation toward government.

- The key word in this passage is “submit”

· **So Peter begins with**

I. The Command (v.13a)

- The word “Submit” is the Greek word hupotasso

- It's occurs 31 times in the NT
- We find it used in its comparative passage in [Romans 13:1](#)

Romans 13:1 NASB95

¹ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

- We also find it in verse 5:

Romans 13:5 NASB95

⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

- Paul uses it in [Titus 3:1](#) to:

Titus 3:1 NASB95

¹ Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed,

- Peter uses it 6 times in 1 Peter
- He uses it here in verse 13
- He uses it in [1 Peter 2:18](#)

1 Peter 2:18 NASB95

¹⁸ Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

- He uses it in [1 Peter 3:1](#)

1 Peter 3:1 NASB95

¹ In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

- He uses it in [1 Peter 3:5](#)

1 Peter 3:5 NASB95

⁵ For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

- He also uses it in [1 Peter 3:22](#)

1 Peter 3:22 NASB95

²² who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

- Then last of all he uses it [1 Peter 5:5](#)

1 Peter 5:5 NASB95

⁵ You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

- hupotasso is a military term that means “to place or rank under” (Abbott-Smith)
- It is arranging oneself under authority

| 1 Peter (1. The Duty of Christian Submission (v. 13a)

| The form is passive and is strictly translated “be subjected”; but it is generally accepted that here the verb has a middle force and may be translated “submit yourselves,” or “put yourselves in the attitude of submission to.”

- The aorist tense is strong and decisive (Lenski) and therefore conveys a sense of urgency (Hiebert)
- For those that have a problem with the word “submission,” need to understand that:

The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter Word and Phrase Study

Submission does not imply inequality, for Jesus is described by this term.

Luke 2:51 NASB95

⁵¹ And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart.

- Peter continues with giving us the motive for our submission
- He says, “for the Lord’s sake”
- Everything we do should be “for the Lord’s sake” — for His glory!

1 Corinthians 10:31 NASB95

³¹ Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

- In those simple mundane things of life we are to glorify God
- The same is true when we submit to governing authorities
- When we do this, we honor God’s sovereign authority

Psalms 22:28 NASB95

²⁸ For the kingdom is the LORD’S

And He rules over the nations.

- When we recognize this and obey His Word we bring glory to Him

Colossians 3:17 NASB95

¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

· Peter tells us who they are to arrange themselves under?

· Notice...

II. The Human Institutions (vv.13b-14)

- Peter says to “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution”
- “Every human institution” refers to “every human” “authority” (NIV)
- The word “institutions” comes from ktisis which means “foundation”
- This word always occurs in the New Testament in connection with God’s creative activities (cf. [Rom. 1:20, 25](#); [8:39](#); [2 Cor. 5:17](#); [Gal. 6:15](#); [Col. 1:15, 23](#); [2 Peter 3:4](#)). (MacArthur)

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Extent of Submission

God has created all the foundations of human society—work, family, and the government.

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Command for Submission

Although they are not ultimately under human authority, God still expects believers to submit to the human institutions He ordained. He wants them to demonstrate godly character qualities (cf. 2 Peter 1:5–7) and a genuine concern for society—a concern that seeks peace (3:11; cf. Ps. 34:14; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 14:19; James 3:18) and desires to prevent trouble and crime (cf. Rom. 12:14–21). To that end Christians will obey all laws and respect all authority, unless called upon to do something God forbids or not do something He commands (Acts 4:19; 5:27–29).

- Peter lists “the human institutions” as a “king” (v.13b), and “governors” (v.14)
- First he says “a King” (basileus, noun) (v.13b)
 - This is translated “emperor” in the NIV

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Chiefly the Roman emperor, at this time Nero (A.D. 54–68)

The Complete Book of When and Where: In the Bible and throughout History 54—Nero Becomes Caesar

Nero, (37–68), the fifth Roman Caesar, ascended to the throne in 54.

- He committed suicide in 68 as the provinces began to demand his removal
- He was an evil, unworthy man

1 Peter a. The Supreme Ruler (v. 13b)

The personal unworthiness of the office holder does not cancel the duty of obedience to the office.

- The “king” was “the one in authority”
- He was given that authority by God
- Paul said in [Romans 13:1](#) that “there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.”

- So whether we believe the results of the last presidential election, God chooses who will be president for His sovereign purposes
- The “king” was “the supreme authority” (NIV)
- This portrays the emperor as one who held power over others as their overlord (Hiebert)

• **Not only were they to submit to the king or emperor but also...**

- Second he says “governors” (hegemasin) v.14)
 - This refers to a lower level of authority
 - These are officials under the king
 - [Luke 2:1-2](#) gives us an example of this:

Luke 2:1–2 NASB95

¹ Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

² This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

- Another example is found in [Luke 3:1](#):

Luke 3:1 NASB95

¹ Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,

- A tetrarch was a sovereign ruler of a domain, but with not as much authority or dominion as a king
- These governors and tetrarchs are “sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right”
- They have the power to condemn evil doers and praise those who do right
- The same is true of police and judges but they all operate within a designated authority
- It’s sad that we see today evildoers being praised while those who do good being punished

› **Peter gives us...**

III. The Purpose of the Command (v.15)

1 Peter 2:15 NASB95

¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

- It is the will of God
 - Peter says this again in [1 Peter 3:17](#)

1 Peter 3:17 NASB95

¹⁷ For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

- Suffering for wrong doing is never commendable it should be expected
- But when you suffering for “doing what is right” that brings glory to God
- Peter reminds his readers as they suffer they live for the will of God

1 Peter 4:1–2 NASB95

¹ Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

- We are not men-pleasers, we’re God-pleasers

Ephesians 6:6–7 NASB95

⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

- This refers back to [1 Peter 2:12](#)

1 Peter 2:12 NASB95

¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

- It silences the ignorance of foolish men when you do what is right

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Reason for Submission

The word rendered silence (phimoun) means “to restrain, muzzle, or make speechless” (cf. Matt. 22:12, 34; Mark 1:25; 4:39; Luke 4:35). It denotes the gagging or stopping of someone’s mouth so as to render that person incapable of response.

- When we do what is right it stops our critics in their tracks

James to Jude Chapter 2

One of the best ways of meeting the accusations of our enemies is to lead a life of strict integrity. It is not easy for the wicked to reply to this argument.

- Though they try like in the case of Daniel

Daniel 6:4–5 NASB95

⁴ Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or

evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

⁵ Then these men said, “We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him with regard to the law of his God.”

- These qualities are to be true of all pastors

1 Timothy 3:7 NASB95

⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- They are also to be true of all believers
- Paul says of this in [Titus 2:8](#)

Titus 2:8 NASB95

⁸ sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

- It’s “ignorant” and “foolish” men who attack believers
 - “ignorant” (agnosian) speaks of a willful, hostile rejection of truth (MacArthur)
 - It’s used in [1 Corinthians 15:34](#)

1 Corinthians 15:34 NASB95

³⁴ Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.

1 Peter a. The Intended Impact upon Foolish Men (v. 15)

Their ignorance, which gives rise to unfounded charges against Christians, is essentially characteristic of such foolish individuals.

- “foolish” (aphronon) speaks of senseless, without reason. It may express a lack of mental stability (MacArthur)

Believer’s Bible Commentary B. As a Citizen in Relation to Government (2:13–17)

Christians and the Christian faith are ceaselessly bombarded by the ignorance of foolish men. It may be in the university classroom; it may be in the science laboratory; it may be in the pulpit. Peter says that one of the best answers to such blasting is a holy life.

> We saw the command (v.13a), the institutions (vv.13b-14), the purpose (v.15), now notice...

IV. The Attitude that Accompanies Our Obedience (vv.16-17)

1 Peter 2:16–17 NASB95

¹⁶ Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.

¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

- You're free because of the work of Christ

1 Peter 1:18–19 NASB95

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ.

- Free from sin's condemnation

Romans 6:7 NASB95

⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

Romans 6:18 NASB95

¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 8:1–2 NASB95

¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

- Free from the Law's penalty

Galatians 3:13 NASB95

¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”—

- Free from Satan's bondage

1 John 2:13 NASB95

¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

- Free from the world's control

1 Corinthians 9:19 NASB95

¹⁹ For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.

- Free from death's power

Romans 8:38–39 NASB95

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

> Even though you are free...

- Don't use your freedom as a covering for the evil of not submitting to rulers

Galatians 5:13 NASB95

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do* not *turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Attitude of Submission

Covering indicates placing a mask or veil over something; evil (*kakias*) is a term that means “baseness” and arises from vengeance, bitterness, hostility, and disobedience (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Prov. 6:14; Isa. 13:11; Matt. 12:35; 15:19; John 3:19–20; 7:7; Rom. 1:29–30; Gal. 1:4).

> Instead you need to...

- Use your freed as slaves of God

1 Corinthians 7:22 NASB95

²² For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Attitude of Submission

Their freedom has delivered them from the bondage of serving sin into the privilege of being slaves of righteousness.

- The word “bondslaves” (*doulos*) should be translated “slaves”
- We are “slaves of God”

Romans 6:22 NASB95

²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

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Christian freedom rests not on escape from service but on a change of masters

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Attitude of Submission

Freedom in Christ and citizenship in the kingdom of God in no way permit believers to abuse or disregard the standards of conduct God has established for them on earth.

> Peter ends with 4 imperatives in verse 17...

- Honor all people
 - “honor” (*timao*, aor.act.imp.)

The MacArthur Study Bible Chapter 2

Highly esteem is the idea, and it refers not just to obedient duty but inner respect.

1 Timothy 6:1 NASB95

¹ All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against.

Romans 12:10 NASB95

¹⁰ *Be* devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

- Love the brotherhood (the church)

- “love” (agapao, pres.act.imp.)

1 Peter 1:22 NASB95

²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

John 13:35 NASB95

³⁵ “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Hebrews 13:1 NASB95

¹ Let love of the brethren continue.

Believer’s Bible Commentary B. As a Citizen in Relation to Government (2:13–17)

We are to love all men, but we are especially obligated to love the members of our spiritual family. This is a love like God’s love for us. It is utterly undeserved, it goes out to the loveless, it looks for no reward, and it is stronger than death.

- Fear God

- “fear” (phobeo, pres.mid. or pass. imp.)

James to Jude Chapter 2

The word fear, when used to express our duty to God, means that we are to reverence and honour him.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 NASB95

¹³ The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person.

Proverbs 24:21 NASB95

²¹ My son, fear the LORD and the king;

Do not associate with those who are given to change,

- Honor the king (returns back to where he started in verse 13)

- “honor” (timaō, pres.act.imp.)

1 Chronicles 29:20 NASB95

²⁰ Then David said to all the assembly, “Now bless the LORD your God.” And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and did homage to the LORD and to the king.

CONCLUSION

- God has called us to submission
- The purpose is bring people to the understanding of the Gospel
- If we're disobedient, unruly citizens, we detract from our purpose and we destroy of evangelism
- Let's not get caught up in the politics of the day
- Let's stay focused on leading the lost to Christ
- If you're here today without Christ, you are dead in your trespasses and sins
- You are also under the sway of the evil one
- The only way to come out from under his control is to repent and trust Christ
- Jesus died and resurrected from the dead for you
- Trust in His finished work and He will save you
- But you must:

Romans 10:9–10 NASB95

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

- And you must call upon Him:

Romans 10:13 NASB95

¹³ for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

- Let's pray.

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