

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"Appealing Versus Rebelling – Part I."*

I'm going to do something a little different. I'm going to pray after sharing a few thoughts...so I can pray according to those thoughts.

First, I've had many interactions w/ people in the church over the last few weeks, most of them wonderful, and I want to share about three of them...

A few weeks ago a couple in the church reached out to me w/ some questions. They wanted to have a Zoom call and understand what the leadership was thinking and where we're coming from:

- I appreciated their attitudes
- They wanted to understand, and they asked questions and listened

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The second interaction took place this past week. A man reached out to me, disagreeing w/ something I said on Wednesday night. I appreciated this communication as well:

- He expressed his respect and appreciation for the leadership
- And he took the time to put his thoughts in a document for the leadership to read.

I'm also thankful for this communication, b/c it revealed something I wanted to clarify...

On Wednesday night I shared the three principles that have been governing us from the beginning. I said...

*"Principle 1: Submission to Government"*

He said, *"How could you say your first principle is submission to government, versus submission to God!"*

I thought, *"I'm thankful this person shared this w/ me in case it sounded this way to anyone else."*

So let me clarify...

The question we, as elders, are wrestling w/ is, *"What does God want us to do?"*

In that sense, there's only one principle for us, and that's submission to God.

When I said we had three principles:

- I meant these were the three principles that were helping us determine God's will...or helping us determine what it means to submit to God in these circumstances.
- I didn't mean submitting to government is our main principle. The only reason we care about submitting to government is b/c God commands it.

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The third interaction took place on Friday...

A couple disagreed w/ something I said in the sermon:

- I appreciated this communication as well.
- They reached out to me, asked if we could meet, and then they took the time to drive to the church, sit-down w/ Pastor Nathan and I, and share their hearts w/ us.

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One thing I appreciated about all the people in these situations is they came to me...and as far as I know they didn't go to anyone else.

One behalf of the elders I want to thank all of you who are handling things this way!

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And let me tell you why I'm sharing about these interactions...

You might disagree w/ this sermon, and if you do, please handle it like the people I just discussed.

And here's why this is so important...

We are already separated b/c of the social distancing, but I guarantee...

This is not enough for Satan!

He wants to take advantage of the current situation and:

- Turn us against each other
- Divide us
- And destroy our unity

We need to fight – not w/ each other – but against this happening.

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The third thing I want to share is that I have watched many webinars, and been part of many Zoom conference calls w/ pastors over the last few weeks.

All the pastors:

- Are saying the same things
- They're experiencing the same challenges in their churches
- Their people are voicing the same struggles and concerns

And they – or we – are all asking the same question...

How long do we keep obeying the government's restriction on assembling...or in other words, when do we reopen our churches...or in other words, when do we disobey the government?

So you could imagine how much I was looking forward to a webinar on Friday called, *"When Do We Disobey the Government?: Considering the Biblical and Constitutional Questions."*

The webinar discussed various perspectives on when to disobey government orders that restrict church attendance. Scott Brown hosted and the panelists were Gavin Beers, Jason Dohm, Sam Waldron, Kevin Swanson, and John Snyder – who published *Behold Your God*, which I believe the Cash home fellowship watched, and maybe others have seen too.

In last Sunday's sermon I said something close to this:

- The good news is if you want to find information that agrees w/ you, you can
- The bad news is if people want to find information that disagrees w/ you, they can

This webinar was a good example of this: wherever you fall regarding churches reopening or remaining closed, you could find at least one person to agree with you.

My suspicion is people said:

- *“There were some really good points made”*...regarding the points that agreed w/ their view.
- *“And there were some really bad points made,”*...regarding the points that disagreed w/ their view.

I know I did this!

Later in the sermon I'll tell you why I've come to the conclusion I have.

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Much of the reason godly people disagree w/ each other is:

- This is a completely new situation
- In our lifetimes, we've never went through something like this before
- We are all figuring it out as we go

So do you know what that means?

We must be charitable toward each other:

- We – as elders – must be charitable to the wonderful flock God has given us...many of whom are struggling, confused, and missing fellowship
- And we – as elders – are asking you to please be charitable w/ us

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May I share my heart w/ you?

We're doing our best:

- We're trying to lead the congregations through this difficult season the best we can.
- We're to make decisions that we believe most agree w/ God's Word

So we truly appreciate your grace and prayers for us

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**Heb 13:17** says you – the congregation – should **let [us – the elders – lead] with joy and not groaning.**

On behalf of the elders, I want to thank all of you who do this and make our positions a joy!

When Pastor Nathan was candidating, I told him, *“If you become a pastor here, you’ll find a wonderful congregation: they love the Lord, they love each other, and they’ll love you and your family.”*

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So going back to the webinar, it wasn’t as convincing as I was hoping on either side.

But if there is one thing I have become convinced of, it’s this...

We are at a pivotal time in our nation...in our state...and in our church.

I believe God wants me to preach on submission:

- What it is, and what it isn’t
- What it looks like to submit, and what it looks like to rebel
- When we should submit, and when we shouldn’t submit

And I don’t think we should rush this! Please believe me when I say I’m very picky – and most importantly prayerful – w/ each sermon. If I thought something wasn’t important or necessary, I would remove it.

But If I’m not clear and thorough now, I could be confusing...and that could be worse than not preaching on these topics at all.

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Please consider this:

- None of us have it all figured out...which is another reason we should be charitable
- None of us have perfect theology...which is another reason we should be charitable
- We all like to think we’re unbiased, impartial, and fair-minded...
  - But the truth is that none of us are
  - All of us – myself included – came to service today w/ some number of assumptions, suppositions, and prejudices,

My request for you as we begin these sermons is this...

Be open to what God wants to say to you through His Word.

My next request is this...

If God’s Word conflicts w/ any of your assumptions, suppositions, or prejudices, please reject them to embrace what God’s Word says.

Now let’s pray along these lines.

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I’m going to start off w/ the bad news...

The bad news is that if you're an American, you're probably going to have more trouble w/ submission than most of the rest of the world...b/c it seems un-American...or even anti-American to us.

Why?

We value freedom and liberty more than almost anything else...and what does submission look like?

It looks like a loss of freedom and liberty.

*"Give me liberty or give me death"* was the quote from Patrick Henry made to the Virginia Convention in 1775. This quote is credited w/ convincing the convention to commit troops to the Revolutionary War.

*"Give me liberty or give me death"* is close to, *"I would rather die than submit!"*

When a nation prides itself on quotes like this, we're going to have a hard time w/ submission...and as Christians there are two big problems w/ this:

1. First, submission is spoken of very frequently in the Bible; therefore, if you have a problem w/ submission, you're going to have a problem w/ much of the Bible.
2. Second, submission is spoken of very positively in the Bible...or I should say having a submissive spirit is spoken of very positively. If you don't want to be a submissive person, you're going to have a hard time following Christ.

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There are some passages on submission to government that we're going to look at, but before we do, I want to deal w/ some of the questions that I believe you'll have while we read the passages. If we consider the questions first, I believe you'll be able to read the passages w/o the questions nagging you.

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This brings us to Lesson 1...

## LESSON 1: WE DON'T SUBMIT (PART I) TO SIN.

Currently, we – the elders – don't think the government is telling us to submit to sin. If we believe we are told to submit to sin, we will disobey.

Let me cover the two most quoted passages associated w/ disobeying the government as I think they're instructive for us. The first one is in **Dan 6**...

The context is Daniel was in Babylon, many of the high officials hated Daniel, were jealous of him, and wanted to see him killed. They couldn't find any accusation to bring against him, so they said, "If we can get the king to forbid praying to anyone but him, we know Daniel will disobey, and then we can have him killed."

So listen to this...

**Dan 6:6 [The] high officials...said to [the king], “O King Darius, live forever! 7 [You] should establish an ordinance...that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions...9 Therefore King Darius signed the [ordinance]. 10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house...got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.**

This is wonderful, isn't it?

Daniel is told not to pray, but he declares that he's going to pray anyway.

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I want to ask...

Have we been told not to pray?

No.

If we're told not to pray, we will disobey.

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It's interesting that Daniel's time in Babylon is cited as an example of disobeying authority, b/c looking at the Jews in Babylon reveals one of the strongest examples of submission to authority in all of Scripture.

Listen to what God told the Jews who were going into Babylon...

**Jer 27:8 “[If anyone] will not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and PUT [THEIR] NECK UNDER [HIS] YOKE (or will not submit), I will punish...with the sword, famine, and pestilence...until I have consumed [them] by his hand...11 any nation that WILL BRING ITS NECK (or will submit) UNDER THE YOKE OF THE KING OF BABYLON AND SERVE HIM, [will live]. 12 To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke: “BRING YOUR NECKS UNDER THE YOKE OF THE KING OF BABYLON, and serve him and his people and live.”**

Three times God told the Jews to bring their necks under Nebuchadnezzar's yoke.

If anything, Daniel's time in Babylon shows the extraordinary lengths God expected His people to go...TO submit to authority.

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The second, and most well-known passage, is **Acts 5**.

The context is the apostles were brought before the authorities and told not to preach...

**Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”**

This is also wonderful, isn't it? The authorities tell them not to preach, but they declare that they're going to preach...and then they preach to the authorities.

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Let me ask you this...

Have we been told not to preach?

No.

We can preach the Gospel...and we have been...more than we ever have before.

But if the government tells us not to preach, we will disobey.

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Now please turn to **1 Pet 2**. Hebrews, James, Peter.

Let me explain this section of Scripture...

**1 Pet 2:13** to **1 Pet 3:6** is about submission:

- **1 Pet 2:13-17** is about citizens submitting to government
- **1 Pet 2:18-20** is about employees submitting to employers
- **1 Pet 2:21-25** is about Christ's example of submission that we're supposed to follow
- **1 Pet 3:1-6** is about wives submitting to their husbands

Look at verse **13**...

**1 Pet 2:13 BE SUBJECT FOR THE LORD'S SAKE TO EVERY HUMAN INSTITUTION, WHETHER IT BE TO THE EMPEROR AS SUPREME, 14 OR TO GOVERNORS as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. HONOR THE EMPEROR.**

The context of the verses is important: the Jews and Christians were suffering at the hands of the Romans, but:

- Peter didn't tell them to disobey.
- He didn't tell them to buy weapons, organize an army, fight back and march on Rome.

Instead, he told them to submit.

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One question people might ask is, *“What levels of government do we submit to? Do we only submit to the highest levels – like maybe the president, but not the lower levels, like the mayor?”*

Peter said: **Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him**

His point is we submit to all levels of authority over us: not just President Trump, but also Governor Inslee, and Mayor Finn.

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Please hear me when I say this...

We rightly consider Peter's example of disobedience to authority in Acts 5, BUT we must also consider that the Peter who disobeyed in Acts 5 is the same Peter who wrote these verses...which are some of the strongest in all of Scripture.

But here's what I notice...

People who want to disobey the government repeatedly quote Acts 5, but they act like these verses aren't in Scripture.

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Now as a pastor, I don't have the liberty to pick-and-choose which verses I want to follow and which verses I want to ignore.

But guess what?

If you're a Christian, you don't have that liberty either.

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Now here's what you might be saying...

*"Peter and the apostles were told not to preach, but they preached. Daniel was told not to pray, but he prayed. We're being told not to assemble, so why don't we disobey and assemble?"*

This is a good, reasonable question!

The simple answer is...

The apostles and Daniel were being singled out, and experiencing religious persecution...but we're not.

Consider:

- Daniel was told not to pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob so they could kill him, but people could still pray to the king
- In the apostles' day, they were told not to preach Christ, but they could preach other religions

But this is not the case w/ us:

- We aren't being told not to pray, worship, or preach the Gospel.
- We aren't being singled out.
  - There might be some inconsistencies regarding who is and isn't closed, and what is and isn't considered essential, but churches are far from the only institutions being affected.



- Other businesses and organizations are given the same restrictions as us.
- If we are singled out, then we will disobey.
- We aren't experiencing religious persecution:
  - The stated motivation of federal, state, and local governments for the quarantine and personal distancing is the protection of the general public.
  - If we experience religious persecution, then we will disobey.

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Let me say it like this...

- Maybe we'll be in Acts 5 and Dan 6, which demonstrate disobeying authority...but we aren't there yet.
- Right now we're in Rom 13, 1 Pet 2, and Titus 3, which command submitting to authority.

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And please keep this in mind...

Like we shared Wed night, even though we're submitting to authority, we're not doing it passively:

- We've asked you to fast and pray today so the governor allows churches to reopen. If churches don't reopen soon, we'll probably ask you to do so again.
- We're appealing. We've already written a letter to the governor and other politicians asking to reopen, and we've written other pastors in the area inviting them to do the same.

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In our appeal, we're even asking for alternative ways of meeting:

- Multiple services w/ lower numbers
- Drive-in services in our parking lot
- Meeting in a big field

According to Governor Inslee's Friday announcement, the first phase of the reopening plan "*would allow drive-in church services with one household per vehicle.*"

We're getting together again tonight as elders to pray and talk...and again, we ask for your prayers.

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Let me make one more point before we move on from these verses...

Earlier I said I listened to the webinar that had godly men on all sides of the issue...and it seemed like each of them could quote other godly men to support their positions. So it's like stacks of godly men on both sides.

While I can't tell you how other people decide, I can tell you how I've made my decision...and this brings us to Lesson 2...we'll come back to Lesson 1...

## **LESSON 2: BUILD THEOLOGY WITH IMPERATIVES SUPPORTED BY NARRATIVES.**

Build theology w/ imperatives supported by narratives...and if I wanted the lesson to be longer, I'd add, "Not the other way around."

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As your pastor, I want to equip you for the work of the ministry...and your ministry flows from your theology.

Please keep this lesson in mind as you build your theology.

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If you remember a few weeks ago, I told you imperatives are commands, such as:

- Forgive as you've been forgiven
- Do all things without complaining
- Pray without ceasing

And **1 Pet 2:13** contains an imperative: **Be subject for the lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors.**

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Narratives are accounts, such as:

- Moses and the burning bush
- Jesus raising Lazarus
- Gideon fighting the Midianites

And Dan 6, w/ him praying, and Acts 5, w/ the apostles preaching, are narratives.

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Build your theology with imperatives and support that theology w/ narratives.

If you ever see a tension between imperatives and narratives, give greater weight to imperatives, and less weight to narratives.

In other words, if you have to choose between:

- Narratives, such as Dan 6 and Acts 5...which demonstrate disobeying authority
- Or imperatives, such as 1 Pet 2, Rom 13, and Titus 3...which command submitting to authority

You follow the imperatives.

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And this reveals the two reasons I disagree w/ people encouraging disobedience to authority...

First, they typically argue w/ narratives. They'll build most of their case using Acts 5 and Dan 6.

Second, they'll minimize – or even manipulate – the crystal-clear teaching of 1 Pet 2, Rom 13, and Titus 2. These verses are not ambiguous or difficult to understand. I'm convinced, anyone who wants to be honest w/ them can easily understand what they're commanding.

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One final point...

Someone might – very legitimately – argue, “*Well, Heb 10:25 says not [to neglect meeting] together, as is the habit of some.*”

*Heb 10 tells us not to neglect gathering together, so isn't that an imperative?”*

Yes, but you aren't neglecting gathering, and here's why...

We aren't gathering. You can't neglect assembling when there's no assembly.

I'm going to talk more about this next week, but it's worth mentioning now...

If we should be gathering, but we're not, that's not on your shoulders:

- That's on my shoulders, and the other elders' shoulders.
- We are choosing to submit to the government, so if there's fault, it belongs to us.

I mention this b/c if you're convinced we should be gathering, I hope this might ease your conscience.

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Look at **verse 18**....

**1 Pet 2:18 Servants (or employees), be subject to your masters (or employers) with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while SUFFERING UNJUSTLY. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you DO GOOD AND SUFFER FOR IT you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.**

These verses are about employees submitting to employers.

I want to share a story w/ you about submission in the workplace that was significant to me and illustrates why we should be good witnesses to unbelievers around us...

When I was an elementary school teacher, before becoming a Christian, I attended a staff meeting and the principal said, *"The district needs to save money, so for the remaining months of the year you can only put your air conditioning at 78 degrees."*

But he said it in a way that communicated, *"I needed to pass this along...but I won't be checking the air conditioning in your rooms."*

So I left the air conditioning at 68, or whatever it was.

One day I went in another teacher's room and it felt like an oven. I said, *"Why don't you turn down your air conditioning?"*

She said, *"We were told it had to stay at 78."*

I knew she was a Christian at this time, and her dad was a pastor. I ended up getting invited to his church, and that's where I became a Christian.

Now I'm not saying I got saved b/c she submitted to authority, but I will say her submission impacted me.

Like we talked about on Wed night, we want to maintain a good witness among unbelievers – we don't want to be viewed as rebellious – and this was a good witness to me.

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Some of you might have seen this...

When we got our live streaming set up, I posted the link for it in the Woodland Facebook group. I told people that if they didn't have a church, or their church wasn't streaming, they were welcome to join us.

Even though I meant "join us online," some people thought I meant, "join us at the church."

Nobody said:

- *"Oh, that's so brave of you."*
- *"Wow, what a demonstration of your faith."*
- *"We see your good deeds and we're glorifying Your Father in heaven."*

Instead, they said:

- *"You're being selfish."*
- *"You're so inconsiderate."*
- *"You need to stop this...who do you think you are?"*

I'm not concerned w/ my reputation, but we should all be concerned w/ Christ's reputation...and if we disobey, we'll make Him look bad to many...including some number of people who have recently received the baggies from us.

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Now after Peter calls us to submit to authority, he talks about Christ's example of submission. Look at **verse 21**...

**1 Pet 2:21 For TO THIS YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED, because Christ also suffered for you, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE, so that you might FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS.**

Because Christ suffered so much for us, we're expected to submit...even if it means suffering.

**1 Pet 2:22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.**

Notice the verses are all about what He didn't do:

- He didn't sin
- He didn't deceive
- He didn't revile
- He didn't threaten

This the language of submission.

These must be some of the most challenging verses in Scripture, b/c we're told to show the same submission to authority that Jesus showed...when suffering.

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

## LESSON 1: WE DON'T SUBMIT (PART II) KICKING AND SCREAMING.

Since we're all called to submit there's application for all of us.

The way we submit, whether it's:

- Congregations to elders
- Citizens to government
- Employees to employers
- Children to parents
- Wives to husbands

Is as important as submitting itself.

And when we submit, if we do it kicking and screaming, we aren't really submitting.

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We think of submission as an action, or something that's done outwardly, but it's an attitude of the heart, which means it's done inwardly.

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During this season, what does it look like for us to submit to authority w/o kicking and screaming?

Let me answer this by sharing something a pastor-friend of mine – his name is Monte Simao, I don't mind giving him credit for this – shared during a webinar...

He told a group of pastors that he encouraged his church to do a “social media audit.”

He asked them to consider what their social media conveys:

- “Does your social media convey you hate authority?”
- “Or does your social media convey you love Christ?”

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Now let me just ask you, and please try to answer this honestly...

When you see Christians...

- Complaining about authority...
- Criticizing authority...

Does that look like:

- Christ in these verses in 1 Pet 2...or any place in the Gospels?
- Or does it look like any godly person in the Bible?

I don't think so.

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Let me remind you of something Pastor Nathan shared on Wednesday night...

**Heb 10:25**, which says **not to neglect meeting together**, is understandably receiving considerable attention during this season...

But the previous verse should also receive considerable attention...

**Heb 10:24** **Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.**

We're glad we can communicate w/ each other during this season, and as elders we encourage you to do so. Reach out to people:

- Call
- Text
- Email
- Facebook message
- Zoom

But I want to make one request w/ your communication. Ask yourself...

*“Is this text, email, message, or Facebook post stirring people up to love and good works...or does it simply show me kicking and screaming?”*

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Because we should keep this in mind:

- If you're using texts, emails, and social media to stir up one another to love and good works, you're using them morally and righteously.
- If you're using texts, emails, and social media to attack, criticize, or kick and scream, you're using them immorally and unrighteously.

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**Matt 12:36** Jesus said, **“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for EVERY CARELESS WORD THEY SPEAK.”**

Imagine Jesus said...

*“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they text, email, or post.”*

Putting things through this filter can really help us.

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Look at **1 Pet 3:1**...

**1 Pet 3:1 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct.**

The wives can relax: I'm not going to preach on submitting to their husbands 😊.

But I do want you to notice something...

Peter commands wives to submit to husbands **even if [they] do not obey the word**, or even if they're ungodly.

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He said something similar in **1 Pet 2:18**...

**1 Pet 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but ALSO TO THE UNJUST.**

We aren't expected to submit to sin, but Peter told:

- Employees to submit to ungodly employers
- Wives to submit to ungodly husbands

And this brings us to Lesson 3...

### **LESSON 3: WE DO SUBMIT TO UNGODLY PEOPLE.**

This answers one of the most common – legitimate – questions people ask about submission...

*“Do we submit to ungodly people?”*

The answer is, “Yes.” It's a theme in Peter's passage about submission.

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And if you want a narrative to support the imperative, think about the Jews in Jeremiah and Daniel's day.

God told them to go to Babylon and submit their necks to Nebuchadnezzar...an ungodly man.

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The point is, we can't make this argument...

*“We shouldn't be submitting to Governor Inslee, b/c he isn't a Christian, or b/c he's ungodly.”*

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Now I want to close by giving you some encouragement...

Look back at **1 Pet 2:13**...

**1 Pet 2:13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,**

Notice the words **for the Lord's sake**.

God appeals to us to submit...for Him.

We aren't submitting FOR the people we're submitting to.

We're not doing it for:

- President Trump
- Governor Inslee
- Mayor Finn
- And you're not doing it for us, your elders

You're doing it **for the Lord's sake**.

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Let me tell you why this is so important...

Many of the times we're called to submit, we don't want to submit to the people we're called to submit to:

- We don't want to submit to our employer
- We don't want to submit to our president, governor, or mayor
- Many times children don't want to submit to their parents
- Many times wives don't want to submit to their husbands

And I don't have any illusions that sometimes congregations don't want to submit to their elders

In those times, just remember you aren't doing it for them. You're doing it for the Lord.

So this is my encouragement to you as your pastor: submit for the Lord.

Let's pray.