

1 Peter 2:13-17  
Submission to Authorities

*<sup>11</sup> Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

<sup>13</sup> **(AF) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, <sup>[b]</sup> whether it be to the emperor<sup>[c]</sup> as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him <sup>(AG)</sup> to punish those who do evil and <sup>(AH)</sup> to praise those who do good. <sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, <sup>(AI)</sup> that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. <sup>16</sup> <sup>(AJ)</sup> Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but <sup>(AK)</sup> living as servants<sup>[d]</sup> of God. <sup>17</sup> <sup>(AL)</sup> Honor everyone. <sup>(AM)</sup> Love the brotherhood. <sup>(AN)</sup> Fear God. Honor the emperor.**

**Prayer:**

*Holy and righteous Father in heaven, you are the supreme Ruler overall and your will for us is what we must strive for and live out during our pilgrimage on earth. Thank you that your Word gives us clear and unmistakable directions on how to live out our lives. Open up this section of your Word to our understanding. Help us to grow knowledgeable in the things of Jesus Christ. We ask in our Redeemer's precious name. Amen.*

One of the Apostle Peter's chief themes in this first letter of his to those churches in what is present day Turkey - one of his chief themes is the fact that God's people on earth have been transferred to a different kingdom. Though they still live out their daily lives on earth, their real citizenship is now a heavenly one, not an earthly one. They are just here temporarily – he calls Christian people sojourners and exiles – that is, they are pilgrims passing through on their way to a better city – a heavenly one, whose builder and Maker is God.

Christians have been delivered from the kingdom of Satan and placed into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is no longer their master, but Jesus is. An evil and cruel master has been replaced by a holy and good Master. To serve the Lord Jesus Christ on earth is a good thing, is it not?

Here is the theme, as I see it, of today's passage:

***Sojourners and exiles, citizens of heaven, while on earth, must submit to the authority of human institutions.***

In other words, though we belong to a better and greater kingdom, we still live on earth and are still participants in the society and culture that God has placed us in and we are still under the authority of the earthly government and earthly rulers in which we find ourselves. And we have to respect and submit to these earthly authorities.

Had we been among those Jews who had been exiled, carried off to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC, we would have been living under the rulership and kingship of Nebuchadnezzar.

Had we been living here in the 13 colonies before 1776, we'd have been living under the kingship of King George of England.

Or had we been born as a native American of the Aztec tribe in Mexico we'd have been living under the kingship of Moctezuma II in 1519 when the Spanish under Hernando Cortez invaded the country.

Look at Chapter 2, verse 13: <sup>13</sup> **(AF) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, <sup>(b)</sup> whether it be to the emperor <sup>(c)</sup> as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him <sup>(AG)</sup> to punish those who do evil and <sup>(AH)</sup> to praise those who do good.**

### **Human emperors and governors were establish by God.**

It is no accident as to who becomes president or prime minister in a nation. We may not like the leader of a nation, even of our own nation, but ultimately God is the one who has set that person in place. We have to recognize the sovereignty and purpose of God in all this.

Rom. 13:1-7 is quite clear about our obligation to earthly rulers:

Let every person <sup>(A)</sup> be subject to the governing authorities. For <sup>(B)</sup> there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you <sup>(C)</sup> will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup> for <sup>(D)</sup> 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, <sup>(E)</sup> an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also <sup>(F)</sup> for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> <sup>(G)</sup> Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

So we see from this passage that it is God himself who sets in place the governing authorities of all the nations and we had better submit to them or else suffer the consequences of being rebels or law-breakers.

We have an obligation to respect and submit to earthly rulers. When the Jews tried to put Jesus in an awkward position by forcing him to declare allegiance to the Roman government or not, you remember what he did?

He asked for a coin and said, - Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." **Matt. 22:21** So Caesar, that is the governmental

authority under which the Jews were living at that time, did have a legitimate claim on the submission of their lives, at least in certain areas, as in paying taxes.

In fact, we read in Matt. 17:24-27 about how Jesus also respected the paying of the temple tax in his day:

<sup>24</sup> (AJ) When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of (AK) the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the tax?” <sup>25</sup> He said, “Yes.” .... Jesus then told Peter to....” go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.[G] Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

You see, **The Lordship of Jesus Christ affects every aspect of our lives, all our relationships, as...**

- to God himself
- to people in our lives
- family
- to my boss and co-workers
- neighbor
- person in the aisle at Wal-Mart
- animals – “the righteous man regards the life of his beast...”
- our own bodies – which are not our own, but temples of the HS
- and our relationship to the government.

At the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, his life and destiny were subject to the Jewish Sanhedrin and the local Roman authority under governor Pontius Pilate. Although Jesus was unjustly condemned and tried he had to submit to their authority and will. Yet all this was in the providence and purpose of God.

Later, the Apostle Paul himself was also tried by the Roman authorities.

Paul before Governor Festus - Acts 25:10-12 - <sup>10</sup> But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s (J) tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. <sup>11</sup> If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. (K) I appeal to Caesar.” <sup>12</sup> Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

Paul, a roman citizen, knew the Roman law, and he knew the Jews in Jerusalem would kill him if he was returned to stand trial in Jerusalem, so he took advantage of the Roman law and appealed to Caesar.

We see in v. 13-14 how God uses earthly rulers in human society:

<sup>13</sup> (AF) **Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,<sup>[b]</sup> whether it be to the emperor<sup>[c]</sup> as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him <sup>(AG)</sup> to punish those who do evil and <sup>(AH)</sup> to praise those who do good.**

At the time Peter was writing this letter, the Roman emperor was probably Nero . When Jesus was crucified he was Caesar Augustus.

But we see here two major purposes or functions in those days that the Roman governors served: They were appointed by the Roman emperor to punish those who did evil and praise those who did good.

So this is not a bad thing but a good thing. Sometimes it didn't work out that way, as in the case of Jesus. Pilate, knowing Jesus was innocent, yielded to the pressure of the crowds screaming out "crucify him!"

But the basic point here is that we Christians are to submit to the authority of the secular government wherever we live.

This means we must obey the laws of the land, of the national government, the state, and the city.

We must pay our taxes, obey traffic rules and so forth. If we break the law, if we commit crimes, we will have to pay the penalty – go to jail or pay a fine.

The city of Dallas only allows residents to water their lawns on certain days and certain times of the day. If break that law, and a Code Enforcement officer drives buy, he can fine us.

For a more serious infraction, if we drive drunk, we can go to jail and lose our driver's license. If we murder someone, we can go to prison or the electric chair.

Laws are set in place to protect the public good and those who break those laws have to suffer the punishment. This is for the good of society.

Titus 3:1 - Remind them <sup>(A)</sup> to be submissive to rulers and authorities, <sup>(B)</sup> to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

Look back at v. 13:

<sup>13</sup> (AF) **Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution...**

Why do we subject to earthly rulers and governments? It is for the Lord's sake. It's because we're committed to God and his sovereignty and we recognize that he is the one who has placed these earthly rulers in their positions. By submitting to these earthly institutions, we are submitting to God, to the way he has ordered things in human society.

Maybe I think the IRS is taking too high a percentage of my income in taxes. I may not like it; but this is the law of the land. I can refuse to pay it and may eventually have to pay even more in fines, or go to jail.

Maybe I don't like having to pay taxes on our house to the school system because I don't have any kids in school, but I still have to pay. It's the law of the land. It is the ordained way to support public education, whether a person has children in school or not.

So we try to have a good attitude about this, and realize we have to do this, to pay these taxes, not just because we are forced to, but we do it for the Lord's sake. Because he has ordained this method of supporting public education.

**15 For this is the will of God, (A) that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.**

Why do we submit to human institutions, to governments and laws, because it is the will of God. Now what follows is a number of ways that we Christians should do the will of God:

In verse 15, the context indicates that the specific way of "doing good" is to submit to human institutions.

And there is a reason for this: in order **to silence the ignorance of foolish people.**

Foolish people had been slandering Christians – accusing them of all kinds of evil. They were accused of being atheists because they refused to worship the emperor of the Roman gods. They were at one point accused of cannibalism because of the Lord's Supper ritual in which they spoke of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood. Of course, they were speaking in spiritual, not literal terms.

Early Christians were accused by the Jews of being law-breakers because they did not adhere to the Law of Moses as a way of obtaining righteousness before God.

So what does Peter say? Remember that he had said in v. 12: *12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

Live your lives in honorable conduct so that although people may accuse you of evil – in time they will see these are unjust and unfounded accusations. Here in verse 15 he says "doing good." By submitting to the rulers and laws of the law, we prove that we are law-abiding citizens, not disruptive to society, but upholders of the rules and laws that all must operate under for the common good.

If you buy alcoholic drinks at Walmart, they check your ID, no matter how old you may be. They don't want to sell to young people who tend to be more irresponsible in

drinking which would lead to car wrecks. Just yesterday I saw two men in their 60's laughing when they had to show their ID.

Verse 16 tells us another way we live for the will of God:

**<sup>16</sup> (A<sub>J</sub>) Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but (A<sub>K</sub>) living as servants<sup>[d]</sup> of God. <sup>17</sup>**

(In the Roman empire a freedmen could become slaves of the one who freed them)  
**R & R** – in Roman empire “freedom” had great significance because of the pervading presence of slavery. To be free from this placed one in a whole new category of human life...]

NBC (p. 1242) -

“The Christian’s freedom is the liberty to live as the servants of God, doing what he wishes, and not the license to do as one pleases, indulging sinful lusts under the pretext of “permissiveness.” David Wheaton

Martin Luther (quoted by Kistemaker – p, 101 “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

John Calvin (p. 272) – “Peter...shows ...how far the liberty of Christians differs from unbridled licentiousness. In the first place he denies that there is any cloak or pretext for wickedness, by which he means that we are not given liberty to hurt our neighbors or to do any harm to others. True liberty is that which harms or injures no one. ..To confirm this, he declares that. those who serve God are free. The immediate conclusion is that we obtain liberty in order that we may more promptly and more readily obey God. That is simply freedom from sin, and the dominion is taken away from sin, so that men may become obedient to righteousness.”

Q's – Free from what? V.16

Control of our consciences by others.

Free from the controlling power of sin.

Free to give kindness instead of evil for evil.

Ex. Matt. 5:39-41 - <sup>9</sup> But I say to you, (A) Do not resist the one who is evil. But (B) if anyone (C) slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And (D) if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,<sup>[a]</sup> let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone (E) forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles

Christians are free from the condemnation of the law, but not free to sin. We're free to life righteously before God – a holy life. A life separated out from the sins of the flesh, the world and the devil.

Sanctification goes with justification. It's all part of the same package. A justified person is also a sanctified person – a person set aside by God for his own special purpose. He is to be a person who reflects the character of God, who reflects and imitates the God he worships.

Gal. 5:13 - <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. <sup>(A)</sup> Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love <sup>(B)</sup> serve one another.

Examples:

**Lastly, in verse 17 Peter gives 4 specific ways we can do good, to the will of God, be true servants of God.**

<sup>17</sup> <sup>(AL)</sup> **Honor everyone.**

This is everyone – to the rich and to the poor

**Love the brotherhood.**

Not specific individuals but the group.

### Westminster Confession Chapter 26

#### Chapter 26 Of the Communion of Saints

##### SECTION I:

All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: [1] and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces,[2] and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce [lead to] to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.[3]

Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification;[4] as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offers opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. [5]

<sup>(AN)</sup> **Fear God.**

Holy reverence before him

**Honor the emperor.**

We may not like the man or his policies, but we have to respect his office.

These 4 short commands could be seen as a summary of our obligations, our calling as Christians. As the letter from the Jerusalem council to the new Gentile believers included 4 practices they were to abstain from such as food offered to idols, ended in this way, "If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

We could say to fellow Christians if you do these 4 things, <sup>(AL)</sup>**Honor everyone.** <sup>(AM)</sup>**Love the brotherhood.** <sup>(AN)</sup>**Fear God. Honor the emperor.** ... you will do well.

***Sojourners and exiles, citizens of heaven, while on earth, must submit to the authority of human institutions.***

We do this for the Lord's sake, for he has ordained all these rulers and governments.

We do this because it is God's will ; how we are to live and get along in human society.

And we go this as servants of God. Ultimately, we are not obeying these laws and submitting to these policies to please men but to please God. s

As sojourners and exiles, we march to the drumbeat of heaven and heaven's Lord; this affects how we live under human institutions. We submit to them in the fear and love of God, and so our submission honors him, brings glory to him, and reveals to the world our true character as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen.

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