

Text: 1 Peter 2:13-25

Submission to Temporal Authorities

13Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. (1 Peter 2:13-14)

God commands us to be subject to those in authority over us. Because their authority is derived from God, defiance of the authorities is tantamount to defiance of God, and will be punished as such.

1Every 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. 2Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. (Romans 13:1-2)

Besides the eternal ramifications of defying God, disobedience of rulers also brings temporal consequences.

3For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. (Romans 13:3-4)

Both Paul and Jesus Himself extend the concept of obedience of government to the paying of taxes. Whether or not we think the taxes are just is irrelevant. God has established the authorities, and we are to obey.

5Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. 6For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:5-7)

21They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. 22"Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 23But He detected their trickery and said to them, 24"Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." 25And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Luke 20:21-25)

There is one exception to this command to obey governing authorities. If a government official or law commands something that is clearly contrary to God's Word, we are to obey God. When the apostles were commanded to stop spreading the Gospel they openly defied the governing authorities.

27When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:27-29)

One coming example of necessary government defiance has to do with the "Mark of the Beast." When the Antichrist sets up his government on earth he will demand that all worship him, and take his mark in order to conduct any business in the world. Taking that mark, however, is a grievous act of defiance toward God, and will be punished as such. Believers obviously should refuse the mark, even if doing so brings condemnation or death.

16And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, 17and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. (Revelation 13:16-17)

9Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (Revelation 14:9-11)

Silencing Christianity's Detractors

15For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. (1 Peter 2:15)

Besides obeying government authorities because God has ordained them and the avoidance of temporal and eternal punishments, we should live in subjection as an example to nonbelievers around us. Enemies of the Gospel have ample opportunity to criticize and ridicule Christianity when believers live and act in a way that defies and or dishonors those in authority over them. Remember, the best non-Christian apologists know the Bible well, and are eager to throw in our faces any example of wanton disobedience on the part of professing Christians. The Bible commands that we obey, submit to, and pray for those in authority over us, and to live a simple life of faith and obedience.

1First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (1Timothy 2:1-3)

This was definitely a message that Peter's audience needed to hear. Writing to an audience that no doubt included many Jewish converts, he did not want to see Christianity develop a reputation for being a seditious and unruly faith—Christians were, in fact, often falsely accused of being treasonous. The Jewish nation, with its different laws and zeal to escape from under the thumb of the Romans, had been in many ways a “thorn in the side” of the Empire. The Jews had a well-deserved reputation for being rebellious and impossible to control. In fact, at one point they even wanted to make Jesus their leader in an insurrection against the Roman authorities—remember, they were seeking a militaristic Messiah in earthly terms, not one that would instead conquer sin, death, and the grave.

14Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone. (John 6:14-15)

Peter recognized that the Romans were the governing authority that God had established, and that submission to them was pleasing to God, except in cases where one must choose between obeying Rome and obeying God's Word. Faithful submission was and is an act of witness that could silence Christianity's enemies.

We Are Free—to Serve God

16Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. (1 Peter 2:16)

Americans, with all their talk of liberty and “free will,” do not like the passages in the Bible that speak of us as being under slavery or bondage. However, God tells us that we do not have the option of absolute freedom—we will be enslaved to God, or enslaved to sinful desires and tendencies. Slavery to God leads to eternal life, slavery to sin leads to damnation.

24"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24)

11Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:11-23)

We are to choose: subjection to God, or subjection to sin. Jesus implored us to come to Him, where we will find life and rest.

28"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Give Each His Due Regard

17Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. (1 Peter 2:17)

This verse seems to reiterate earlier points, but it clearly separates the types of regard we are to have for different groups of people. First, we are told to **honor all people**. Because all people came from Adam and therefore bear God's image, every human being is deserving of respect. Any form of racism, sexism, or nationalism (if it leads to the dehumanizing of those of other nations) is dishonoring to God.

24"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, (Acts 17:24-26)

More specifically, we are told to **love** our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have discussed this before: those that have truly been regenerated by the Holy Spirit will have love for fellow Christians, seeking their company, welfare, and growth in the faith. This is a mark of a true believer, and where this is absent salvation can be doubted.

14We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:14-18)

34"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

Lastly, we are told to **fear God** and **honor the King**. We have already discussed the deference due to government authorities. They are to be honored, but they are not to be *feared*, or worshiped. That privilege is due to God alone, who will tolerate no other "gods" in His presence.

2"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3"You shall have no other gods before Me. (Exodus 20:2-3)

Submission of Servants/Slaves to Earthly Masters

18Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. (1 Peter 2:18-20)

Slavery was a reality in the Roman world. While a great evil, Peter still believed that the proper behavior of slaves was to live in subjection to earthly masters, much in the same way as we live in subjection to governing authorities. While slavery is fortunately not part of our lives, we still have earthly masters—bosses, etc.—that are to be obeyed. Disobedience of such authorities brings dishonor to Christ, while obedience—even under unjust circumstances—honors Him.

All that said, do remember that masters (or bosses) that are Christians are likewise commanded to show respect to those under their authority.

5Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. (Ephesians 6:5-9)

If you are unjustly treated by those that are over you, endure such treatment patiently. In so doing, you honor God, and silence critics of the Faith. God promises to give each person his due punishment, and God will certainly do so in a way that is both just and appropriate.

17Never pay back evil for evil to anyone Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. 20"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." 21Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21)

Remember that suffering punishment because of disobedience is not honoring to Christ in most cases, but suffering because of obedience is very honorable in His eyes. When forced to choose between comfort in defying Christ and obeying the Jewish authorities, or punishment for proclaiming Christ, they chose punishment—joyfully. Should it become necessary to make this choice I pray that we would do the same. Remember, there are Christians around the world *today* that are beaten, imprisoned, tortured, or even killed for their faith [TELL WATCHMAN NEE STORY.] God's enemies would love to see that happen here in America, and the way things are going, they just might succeed.

40They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. 41So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 5:40-42)

Follow Christ's Example

21For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; (1 Peter 2:21-23)

Jesus Himself is our example in this. He showed tremendous humility and deference, even when the authorities sought and took His life. We are commanded to follow His example in all things.

1Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

5Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. 14Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. 17But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. 18You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me. (Philippians 2:1-18)

Jesus trusted God the Father to bring about His desired end, that justice would be done and God would be glorified. For those that believe in Christ, God has promised to work everything together for our good, and His glory.

28And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or

peril, or sword? 36Just as it is written,

"FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;

WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." 37But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor 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. (Romans 8:28-39)

The Gospel "In a Nutshell"

24and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1 Peter 2:24-25)

Finally, Peter presents a "nutshell" version of the Gospel. Drawing heavily from Isaiah 53, he communicates that Jesus bore the sins of those that believe so that they would return to Him, **die to sin, and live to righteousness**. I want to read the whole of Isaiah 53, in which the saving work of Christ is described in detail. Amazingly, this was written more than 700 years before Christ's birth.

1Who has believed our message?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,

And like a root out of parched ground;

He has no stately form or majesty

That we should look upon Him,

Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

3He was despised and forsaken of men,

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

And like one from whom men hide their face

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4Surely our griefs He Himself bore,

And our sorrows He carried;

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5But He was pierced through for our transgressions,

He was crushed for our iniquities;

The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,

And by His scourging we are healed.

6All of us like sheep have gone astray,

Each of us has turned to his own way;

But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all

To fall on Him.

7He was oppressed and He was afflicted,

Yet He did not open His mouth;

Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,

And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,

So He did not open His mouth.

8By oppression and judgment He was taken away;

And as for His generation, who considered

That He was cut off out of the land of the living

For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

9His grave was assigned with wicked men,

Yet He was with a rich man in His death,

Because He had done no violence,

Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

10But the LORD was pleased

To crush Him, putting Him to grief;

If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,

He will see His offspring,

He will prolong His days,

And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

11As a result of the anguish of His soul,

He will see it and be satisfied;

**By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.**

12Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:1-12)

Christ came to bear our sins on the cross, so that we might be cleansed of sin and empowered to live in faith and obedience to Him. Every single one of us deserves to burn forever in the lake of fire, but He bore our punishment, and offers eternal life to everyone that will believe in Him, confessing Him as Lord and trusting Him as Savior.

16"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)