

The Truth About Submission – 1 Peter 2

The story is told about Ben Franklin walking out of the Constitutional Convention in 1787 in Philadelphia when a lady approached him and asked him what kind of government our new country was going to have. His answer was, **“A republic...if you can keep it.”** Why do you think he put it that way? Well, if you think about it, a monarchy or a dictatorship is pretty easy to keep. One person is in control for life and everybody just has to do what he says. And when he dies, his heir takes over and the process is repeated. But a republic is based on people making good, honorable choices for the good of the people. Of course, our form of government was designed to have checks and balances so that when somebody made bad choices it could be remedied. But what happens when that system of checks and balances is corrupted? The country falls apart. That’s what Franklin was talking about. Every generation has to keep it.

Our country was built on Christian ethics. The Pilgrims who came over on the Mayflower were Separatists. They were not Puritans. The Puritans wanted to purify the Roman Catholic Church and the Separatists wanted to separate from it completely. So, they got on a boat and sailed to the New World to make their own country that was closer to their religious beliefs. The problem is that the type of government they ultimately came up with works great when Christians are in positions of leadership. There is trust and godly wisdom and no corruption. But what happens when unbelievers get in office? What happens when our tax dollars are used to fund abortions and sex changes? What happens when government officials are known pedophiles? What happens when it seems that there is corruption on every level of government from the president all the way down to the mayor? What are we to do? Should we rebel and riot? Should we get on a boat and start our own country again? What are we to do? It’s a hard question. But the Bible has some hard answers.

We are continuing our study of **1 Peter** this morning and Peter is having a shift in content here in chapter two. In chapter one and part of chapter two, he concentrates on living holy lives and how and why we should be pure as believers in and followers of Jesus. He warns us not to be worldly. But as we all know we are **in** the world but we don’t have to be **of** the world. And here in chapter two, Peter tells us that since we do live in this world we are to submit to the authorities. Now, is there anybody in this room that hears that and thinks, *“Oh good! I like this part! That submission stuff is right up my alley”*? I doubt it. Most of us struggle with submission, don’t we? In fact, submitting to God is hard enough and we know He is perfect and wise and He loves us. So, when it comes to submitting to a corrupt government or imperfect authorities who only care about money and power, that’s almost impossible.

Let me ask you to turn to **1 Peter chapter 2** and we will look specifically at **verses 13-21**. We have a generation now who talks a lot about their rights. They want this right and that right and don’t you dare deprive them of their rights. Well, rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. I’ve heard it said that if you teach a man about his rights without teaching his responsibilities, you will have a revolution. If you teach a man about his rights and his responsibilities, you get a revival. (Adrian Rogers) So, let’s see what God says through Peter in **1 Peter 2:13-21**. *Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. ¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.*

¹⁸ Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

That word “submit” in the Greek is “hupotasso” and it is a military term literally meaning to arrange in formation under the commander. It is about order. The Bible talks a lot about who submits to who. Wives submit to husbands. Employees submit to employers. And how we are all to submit to God. Without submission there is no order, only chaos. That’s not good for anybody. But how many of you think sometimes that if everybody would just submit to you, things would be great? Because you always know what’s best. You know what’s right. You never make a mistake, right? Well, then run for office. Because we are to submit to rulers because God appoints them. **Daniel 2** says that God removes kings and appoints them. So, we submit – we line ourselves up under the commander – and we do it for the Lord’s sake. That’s what Peter says in **verse 13**.

It’s for the Lord’s sake because it is the Lord who installs them, as it says in Daniel. And it’s for the Lord’s sake because Jesus is our model. Peter mentions this in **verse 23**. We didn’t read it but it says that Jesus didn’t retaliate when they hurled insults at Him and when He suffered, He made no threats. Then it says that He entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly. That’s not a man. That’s the Father. Jesus trusted that the Father is the final judge so He never tried to overturn their authority. He named off some sins of Jewish leaders but He never led a rebellion against them or even objected when they unjustly tried Him and crucified Him. If Jesus can do that, we can submit to our authorities for His sake.

But I know what you are probably thinking. How can we submit to a government like ours that has gone so far off the rails and so far against God and is so immoral and corrupt? Surely Peter wouldn’t say we have to submit to this kind of government, right? Well, think about who was emperor when Pete was writing this. Nero. And Nero was literally crazy. He was a psychopath. He killed Christians for sport. He dipped them in tar and then set them on fire to be lights for his nighttime parties. So, there is no exception to what Peter is writing. We have to submit to them. We don’t have to like them or support them.

Now there is something very interesting in **verse 14**. Let’s look at it more closely. It says we are to submit to all authorities “*who are sent by God to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.*” There is something there I want to bring out because it affects all of us here today. Paul said something similar in **Romans 13:4**. He said, “*For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the one in authority? Then do what is right, and you will have his approval. 4For he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not carry the sword in vain. He is God’s servant, an agent of retribution to the wrongdoer.*” Did you catch that? He does not carry the sword in vain. The government is placed there by God and tasked to use the sword when necessary. And what does that mean? Well, what do you use a sword for? Or, at least, what did you use one for back then? Letter opener? Orange peeler? No. You killed people with the sword. That’s what they were for and the government is an agent of retribution to the wrongdoer.

I said that this affects all of us here and by that I mean especially here in Wise County where the precious little Athena Strand was kidnapped and murdered by Tanner Horner. It’s been all through the news lately and I have an idea how most of us feel about that and how we feel about his death sentence. But can you defend it biblically? Yes, you can. The Old Testament law commanded the death penalty for various acts: murder ([Exodus 21:12](#)), kidnapping ([Exodus 21:16](#)), bestiality ([Exodus 22:19](#)), adultery ([Leviticus 20:10](#)), homosexuality ([Leviticus 20:13](#)),

being a false prophet ([Deuteronomy 13:5](#)), prostitution and rape ([Deuteronomy 22:24](#)), and several other crimes. God is the One who instituted capital punishment: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man” ([Genesis 9:6, NKJV](#)). ([GotQuestions.org](#)) And there is nothing in the New Testament that says anything otherwise and Paul is reinforcing it with his letter to the Romans. It is a sin for us as individuals to take a life but God has ordained the government to do it when necessary.

So, Peter is saying here in **verse 14** that the government is sent by God to punish the wrong and commend the right. I don’t know how much “commending the right” actually goes on these days but at least you usually stay out of trouble by doing the right thing. Now, with that being said and it’s understood that the government is sent by God, anointed by God to be there, good or bad, like it or not, we don’t ever equate Christianity with any political party. We reserve the right to call out the sins of either party and we should. There are plenty in both camps that need to get right with God and repent of their evil ways.

I will say this though that any party that advocates for abortion is not a party that should get the vote of a Christian. Abortion is murder. They call it reproductive rights. Remember what I said about rights and responsibilities? These people want their rights but they don’t want the responsibilities. Well, what about the rights of that unborn child? We need to stand up and call that what it is. We call it murder and God calls that sin and we can’t vote for that at all.

Also, any party that advocates for gay rights is not a party that should get the vote of a Christian. Homosexuality is called an abomination in the Old Testament. Romans, in the New Testament calls it unnatural, shameful and a perversion. And nothing is politically right if it is biblically wrong. Again, these people are screaming for their rights and they now have every right anybody else has but they just keep pushing their agenda and are pushing it on our children like never before. We need to stand up for the rights of the unborn children and the young children who can’t speak for themselves. So, I am just going to say that while we speak against those things and we stand up for the rights of those children, I will say without stuttering or stammering that you cannot be a Christian and vote Democrat in today’s United States.

The Republican Party is horrible in plenty of ways. I understand that. They are unbiblical in ways. I get it. But we have to draw the line and it was drawn a long time ago when this country was founded on the rights that we are given by God. And those rights do not include the taking of human life and the mocking of God’s gift of sex and marriage. If you have a problem with me saying any of that, please bring your Bible when you come talk to me.

Again, even with all of that, even when there is a Democrat president and a Democrat Congress, we will submit to that government. We don’t riot. We don’t rebel. We will write our congressmen and other authorities and express our beliefs but in the end, we will submit. And we will be the best citizens in the country. You know why? Peter tells us in **verse 15**. Look at that again. *For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.* That word “ignorant” doesn’t just mean they don’t understand. It means they have a willful rejection of the truth. These kinds of people consider Christians their enemy and God is saying through Peter here that when you are a good citizen and you submit to the authorities over you, it shuts the mouths of those who want to slander you. **Titus** said something similar in his book, **chapter 3**. He said, *“Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ²to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. ³At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”*

Every authority that we have over us is imperfect. We, too, are imperfect. But we don’t have to be foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved. We can’t rely on the government to make us good. It was never intended to

make us good. And, yes, I know the old saying, *“You can’t legislate morality.”* And that is true. You can’t make a law that makes people good. But we can legislate against immorality. There’s no law that can make you love me but we have laws that keep you from killing me. And without Christian moral laws that come from the Bible, who is to say what’s right and what is wrong?

When Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence, he said, *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable Rights...”* We get our rights from God, laid out in the Bible and when those **rights** are attacked, we will stand up and make ourselves heard. But we also know our **responsibility**, also in the Bible, to submit to all authority and we do it for the Lord’s sake.

How many of you have been coming to Bible study on Wednesday nights lately? The rest of you are missing out! Cindy has been leading us in a study of the book of Daniel and what a fascinating little book it is. A couple of weeks ago, we read in chapter three about King Nebuchadnezzar who built a giant statue made of gold. Then he made a decree that anybody that does not bow down and worship that giant idol would be killed. Well, these three Hebrew boys heard the decree. They understood it. And do you know what they did? They did not submit. They did not bow to that idol when they were supposed to and it made the king so mad he threw them into a giant bonfire to kill them. But then you will never guess what happened. The king was looking down there into the fire and he said, *“Now wait just a minute. Didn’t we just throw three guys down into that fire?”* All his men said, *“Oh, yes, king. Three men.”* And the king said, *“Well, now I’m looking down there and I see four men walking around in there and they look like they might as well be working on their tans!”*

Most of you know that story but I include that version of it here to illustrate what needs to be done when the government tells us to do something that God says not to do. Years before writing this book, Peter was told not to preach in **Acts chapter 5** and he said to the authorities, *“We must obey God rather than men!”* There comes a time when we are told not to submit. In lots of places around the world right now it is illegal to preach the Gospel. You can preach from the Koran or anything else but not the Bible.

In Canada today, not North Korea or Pakistan or someplace far off but in Canada they are considering a bill to make it illegal to preach the Gospel because they are calling it hate speech. What are we going to do when that comes here? Submission then becomes sinful. Moses’ mother, Jochabed, broke the law when she put baby Moses in a waterproof little boat and hid him from the authorities. Daniel broke the law when he prayed to God. Rahab broke the law when she told the authorities that the spies went thataway. Stephen broke the law when he preached the Gospel and I believe it was his testimony in part that had an affect on Saul who later became Paul and became a lawbreaker Himself. There is a time and place for obeying God and not being submissive to the government but right now in the United States those times and places are few and far between. We must submit to all authorities, like them or not, moral or not, right or not. And we do it for the Lord’s sake. We don’t answer to this world ultimately. We answer to the Great Judge. But while we are in this life, we submit to this world’s laws. And we let our testimonies be heard because the world is watching and listening to everything we do.

What do they see and hear from you? Does your way of life and your manner of speech point to Jesus? Do you pay your taxes and obey the traffic laws? Do you vote? You should. That’s part of what good citizens do. But the ultimate question is, do you have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus? You can. You can make sure that when your citizenship in the world is over that you have a permanent residence in Heaven. You can also have peace and joy in this life as well. Do you want that? Ask God right now to come into your life and change you. Repent of those sins and turn to His way and ask God to forgive those sins and He will. Do it right now as the music plays.