

Submit Yourself

Introduction

- There's two things you're not supposed to talk about, and this morning, we're going to cover both — politics and religion! Not because we're coming up on an election, but because it's where Peter goes next in his first letter that we've been studying together. But his take on the topic may seem *radical* from our modern American viewpoint.
- Remember that Peter is telling these "elect exiles of the Dispersion" how to handle rejection and suffering. While he'll go into more detail later, he's already started by calling us to be "born again" to lives of hope and holiness. We're "living stones" and a "royal priesthood" for Christ. And now he drops the hammer on his practical instructions, with a message about **subjection**.
- In this lessons we'll see how submission **silences, may bring suffering, and it shows** to the dark world around us. He applies this idea of submission to our relationships with **government, masters, and husbands**.
- But let's set the stage by defining the word — ὑποτάσσομαι (hypotassomai | hippo-tassomai) — to submit to the orders or directives of someone, to obey, to submit to, obedience, and submission.

Submission Silences (Government)

"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. 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 to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:12-17).

- **Context**
 - While it's hard enough to imagine Peter's words in a modern context, think about what it must have sounded like to these believers! Both emperors and governors were often actively persecuting the church — evil men who didn't *seem* worthy of this kind of honor (and if you think you've got it bad with our political leaders, you've never seen anything like Nero!). But Peter isn't focusing on the specifics, rather highlighting the intent of these positions of power — punishing the evil and protecting the good. But their actions to the contrary are irrelevant! They didn't even vote for their elected officials, which makes Peter's comments about freedom even more powerful.
 - Remember Daniel and his friends (Dan. 2:46-48), whose submissive conduct in the sight of a captive king led them to honor and positions of authority.
- **Takeaways**
 - [24-hour cable news, of any political leaning, only leaves me feeling more disconnected and divided from others — it doesn't build bridges.]

- The world already has enough "ammo" to throw at us, so don't give them *politics* as another area to accuse us.
- Peter equates our respect and honor for government with "doing good," leaving our enemies with nothing negative to say! Our goal is still to silence them, but we do it without "fighting words" and negativity.
- Though we have the freedom to express our political views, never use your freedom to act in an un-christlike way.
- **Application**
 - Noticing how Peter (and others) address politics here — not specifically, but generally — how preoccupied are you with our political system vs. the most impactful change of leading people to Christ?
 - Do worldly people appreciate your godly character, even while disagreeing with your views?
 - Does "honor," "fear," and "love" describe how you treat everyone, even those who disagree with you?

Submission May Bring Suffering (Slaves)

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 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. 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. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 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. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:18-25).

- **Context**
 - Turning his attention to servants, these positions in Roman culture would often have been harshly treated and demeaning jobs. There's no room for the believer to break their bonds and revolt, but instead they should continue serving and suffering if necessary. It didn't matter if their master is "*good and gentle*" or "*unjust*," their respect and submission should be unwavering.
 - Remember Joseph (Gen. 39:3-6), whose submissive conduct led him to honor and a position of authority.
- **Takeaways**
 - [*I've worked for plenty of bosses on both ends of the spectrum — thoughtful ones who were kind and motivating, and one that yelled and screamed when their expectations weren't met.*]
 - Respecting our masters isn't optional, or even an outward show — it's deeply rooted in our heart and revealed by our words and actions.
 - Suffering is a gift — as he mentions twice — but not if it's deserved by our evil behavior.

- We're in good company, knowing that Christ is our perfect example of suffering without cause. And God, just like he did with Christ, will care for us through our suffering if we trust in him over ourselves!
- **Application**
 - Do you excuse your anger and violent responses to a boss, when pointing to the mistakes they've made or their unfair treatment?
 - Have you ever been mistreated for legitimate reasons, yet convinced yourself you were right (i.e. martyr complex)?
 - Is Christ your example when staying quiet during your suffering at the hands of evil people of the world?

Submission Shows (Wives)

"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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:1-7).

- **Context**
 - Maybe one of the hardest "biblical pill" to swallow in our modern culture, is the idea that wives are to submit to their husbands. But in a traditional Roman marriage, the husband was already in control, to the point where their pagan gods and beliefs became the rule for the house. How should a wife act if their husband wasn't a disciple of Christ? Submission! And it's the same today.
 - Remember Sarah (Gen. 18:12), whose submissive conduct led her to become honored in the line of Christ.
- **Takeaways**
 - *[And if I could "toot" my wife's horn: "Praise God to be married to a woman who takes these verses seriously!"]*
 - A wife's respect and purity can influence an unbelieving spouse in powerful ways.
 - An object lesson in "cleaning the outside of the cup," what matters most is in the heart, not the fancy trappings of jewelry and clothes.
 - And if a husband *is* a believer, the wife's submission is even easier, when coupled with his understanding and honor for her.
- **Application**
 - Sitting around a table with your friends, is it easier to bash your *ignorant* and *lazy* husband rather than finding the good in them?
 - How much emphasis are you putting on your *external appearance* vs. your *internal beautiful and quiet spirit*?

- Husbands — not to give you a pass — does Christ's treatment of the church parallel your treatment of your wife (Eph. 5:25-33).

Conclusion

- **Submission Silences** the critics of the world.
- **Submission May Bring Suffering**, just like Christ promised (John 15:20).
- And **Submission Shows** like a bright light in the midst of darkness.
- Whether we're relating to our government, bosses, or husbands, submission is a powerful tool in our spiritual toolbox — the makeup of the sincerely christlike character.