

I PETER

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. **I Peter 2:11-17** . . . Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. [12] Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. [13] Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, [14] or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. [15] For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. [16] Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. [17] Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.
 - B. Last Sunday we looked at **I Peter 2:12** and talked about the importance of godly living in full view of unbelievers and how it often results in being falsely accused, put down, or even persecuted. And yet, there are those times when unbelievers will give God His due glory because of the way God's people have lived. Today, we will look at some specific ways God gives us for keeping our behavior excellent before unbelievers.
 - C. Pray
- II. Keeping Our Behavior Excellent – Humble Submission vs Arrogant Self-rule
 - A. **I Peter 2:13-14** . . . Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, [14] or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.
 1. Verse thirteen points to a characteristic that is to be a part of every Christian's life – humble submission. And the focus here of our humble submission is the governmental authority over us.
 2. And this exhortation is best understood and more wisely applied when viewed in the light of the following three truths.
 - B. **First**, in spite of our high calling and noble standing as Christians, we are to have a humble and submissive demeanor. As you recall, Peter has already told us that we are a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a

chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for God's own possession.

1. In other words, Christians are not only significantly different from unbelievers (new nature/old nature), we have positions and responsibilities given to us by God that place us in an eternally superior position to unbelievers.
2. However, this eternally superior position is never to be a reason or justification for pride or arrogance of any kind – including the way we relate to those in authority. Nor does it excuse us from humbly obeying those over us.
3. Therefore, the point here is that in spite of our high calling and noble standing as Christians, we are to humbly submit to **every** human institution, including every form of government.

C. **Second**, pride has been and continues to be an enemy of God, and pride is our enemy too.

1. For example:
 - a. Pride is the reason Lucifer thought he should be exalted above God in heaven, and the reason he was expelled from Heaven.
 - b. In the Serpent's temptation of Eve, pride was one of the main things he appealed to in Eve as a reason to rebel against God and eat fruit from the forbidden tree.
 - c. The nation of Israel was guilty of both religious and national pride – including an arrogant pride manifested by the religious leaders in Jesus day that ultimately motivated them to have Jesus put to death.
 - d. And should you think you would never be so proud as to do any of the things just mentioned, let me remind you that when we knowingly and willingly sin, we are trampling under foot the son of God, and treating His sanctifying blood as worthless, and insulting the Spirit of grace (**Hebrews 10:29**).
2. The important point here is that pride is not only God's enemy, it is our enemy too. It is an evil that besets us all, and in directing us to humbly submit to every human institution (*which includes far more than government*) God is giving us the opportunity to frequently and harshly deal with this evil – in our personal lives and in the life of our church. And let me add here, that Christians have known for centuries that anytime you can humbly submit to another person, you are gaining rich spiritual profit because you are subduing and further destroying whatever pride is in you.

3. Now given our human tendency toward self-protection, you may be thinking that humble submission leaves you vulnerable. However, let me give you two truths that should make you feel safe.
 - a. **James 4:6** . . . God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble.
 - b. **Matthew 5:5** . . . Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
4. Therefore, this **second truth** is intended to help us understand and apply God's exhortation to humbly submit to every human institution by showing us that killing off pride and feeding humility is spiritually profitable because . . .
 - a. it wars against pride while nurturing humility in us as individuals and in us as a church,
 - b. and it brings profit to God in that we become a living and practical demonstration of the significant difference in thinking, attitudes, and behavior between believers and unbelievers.

D. **Third**, this exhortation to humble submission is a rule of life given to us directly from God – which means we either comply or we are in rebellion against Him. And yet, there are exceptions.

1. Let's start with Paul, who confirms Peter's words a bit more fully, in **Romans 13:1-7** . . . Every 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. [2] **Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance (rule, command) of God**; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. [3] For 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; [4] for 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. [5] **Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.** [6] For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. [7] Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

- a. God is clearly telling us that it is our responsibility to humbly submit to human government because it is established by God and it serves God's purposes.
 - b. And yet, as I said, there are exceptions which OT Jews and NT Christians have practiced for centuries.
2. As we know, human governments are imperfect, so much so that some of them have punished those who do what is right, while supporting and even encouraging those who do what is evil.
 - a. Therefore, the exhortations of **Romans 13:1-7** and **I Peter 2:13-14** are based on government being reasonably good in fulfilling God's purposes for them.
 - b. But what are Christian's to do when the level of imperfection goes so far as to support evil and turn against what is good? Are we to remain faithful to God's specific rule of submitting to those in authority over us, or are we to openly disobey?
 - c. For example, our government has many praise-worthy qualities. Yet we also know that both the national and state governments are currently making decisions that support activities and lifestyles that are in direct opposition to God's boundaries of right and wrong. So what are we Christians to do?
3. Let's answer this "what are we to do" question by looking into God's word and seeing what others in similar situations have done.
 - a. At the time of Moses' birth, the mid-wives feared God rather than Pharaoh and let Jewish newborn boys live (**Exodus 1**).
 - b. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego told the King they would neither serve his gods nor worship the golden image he had set up. Of course, this got them thrown into the fiery furnace, but they disobeyed nonetheless (**Daniel 3**).
 - c. Daniel continued his daily routine of prayer to Jehovah in spite of the King's edict that everyone must pray only to him for thirty days. And Daniel knew the lions den would be the outcome of his disobedience (**Daniel 6**).
 - d. Peter and John, in response to the religious leaders demanding they stop speaking of or teaching about Jesus, said: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (**Acts 4:18-20**).
 - e. Soon after Peter and John's experience, the religious leaders put all the apostles in jail for not obeying the command to stop speaking and teaching about Jesus. An angel came in the night

and led them out of prison and told them to continue teaching about Jesus in the Temple area. As a result, the apostles were arrested again that next day and reprimanded for disobeying. Speaking for them all, Peter said: “We must obey God rather than men” (**Acts 5:27-29**).

- f. In the earlier days of the church, Rome put Christian’s to death because they refused to proclaim “Caesar as Lord.”
 - g. And in our day, Christians who stand against abortion, the practice of homosexuality, and same-sex marriage are, at the very least, given derogatory labels.
4. My point here is that our primary duty is to humbly submit to those in authority over us. But should it become necessary, we are to disobey when they use their authority to support evil and punish good, or in other words, when they require us to sin against God.
- a. Therefore, we are not to give blind obedience any more than we are to have an arrogant, disparaging, or even hostile attitude toward government.
 - b. The Christian way is to give thoughtful, humble submission, and should it become necessary, to humbly disobey.
5. Let me add two more points to this third truth.
- a. **First**, standing against the rule of government on any issue does not mean that that government is inherently evil, or that it is unworthy of any humble submission and obedience. We are to obey where we can, and if needed, resist where we must – and in all of it, we are to trust that God knows what is going on and that He is working it all out for good.
 - b. **Second**, if an individual Christian or a local church or a denomination or even the church at large chooses to break the law for conscience sake or out of allegiance to God, we are to be fully prepared to accept the punishment handed out by those in authority. Daniel was. His three friends were. The disciples were, those mentioned in Hebrews 11 were, many like-minded Christians down through the ages have been, and so should we.
6. Now before moving on to **verse 15**, let me remind you of the three truths we just looked at:
- a. **First truth** – In spite of our high calling and noble standing as Christians, we are to humbly submit to every human institution, which includes all forms of government.
 - b. **Second truth** – Humble submission produces rich spiritual profits by warring against pride and nurturing humility in us,

and by making us a living demonstration of the significant difference between believers and unbelievers.

- c. **Third truth** – Not all government is good, so there will be times when Christians must choose, as individuals and as a church, to humbly disobey.

E. **I Peter 2:15** . . . For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

1. There are three things I want you to notice about this statement.
2. **First**, it is **God's will** that we humbly submit to the earthly authority which God has established.
3. **Second**, it is **God's will** to use our humble submission – which is part of our excellent behavior – to silence the ignorance of unbelievers concerning God and His people. God could use lighting bolts, or plagues, or snakes, or He could open the earth and swallow these ignorant unbelievers. But God has not chosen any of those methods at this time. He has chosen to use our godly behavior to silence the ignorance of foolish unbelievers.
4. **Third**, when we humbly submit, we take away many of the slanderous complaints and untrue accusations unbelievers make against us – complaints and accusations that are most likely based on what they heard others say about us rather than what they know from personal experience: which is why God refers to them as foolish people speaking in ignorance.

III. Final words

A. I want to end our teaching time today with a short reminder of the vital importance of making God your supreme source of security. The first thing I want to say about this issue is that this is not the single most important reality we Christians must come to in order to live a godly life. But it is one of the vital realities – and it is vitally applicable to today's teaching on submission to earthly authority.

B. The second thing I want to do is give you some scripture examples of making God your supreme source of security. One of the reasons Noah built a boat on dry land and then got into it is because God was his supreme source of security. One of the reasons Abraham took his male workers and went off to rescue Lot from the marauding armies is because God was his supreme source of security. One of the reasons Abraham raised his knife to slay his son as a sacrifice to God is because

he was convinced that his life and his son's life were completely safe in God's hands. One reason Moses did not fret over the challenges to his position as leader of Israel is because God was his supreme source of security. One of the reasons David fought Goliath is because God was his supreme source of security. One reason the persecuted saints of Hebrews 11 remained faithful to God in spite of their harsh circumstances is because God was their supreme source of security.

- C. Which brings us to today. One of the reasons we can feel safe in humbly submitting to **every** human institution is because God is our supreme source of security.
1. You see, when God is your supreme source of security, you will have an unwavering confidence that you are safe in His hands – just as David was confident he was safe in God's hands as he faced Goliath.
 2. You may be sorely tempted to waver in your confidence, but if God is your supreme source of security, even if you waver, you will quickly come to your senses, repent and return to trusting Him with your life.
 3. However, if God is not your supreme source of security, then you will not trust Him with your well-being, and you will not obey Him or live according to His will **when His will compromises your sense of well-being or rattles your sense of security.**
- D. And so I urge you, if you are going to value humble submission as God values it, and if you are to live it as God wants you to live it, you must make God your supreme source of security.
1. At first, it will seem like the cost to your safety, well-being, and even happiness is too great a cost to pay.
 2. But I urge you, stay the course. Pay the price of dying to self-protection and unfounded fears, and you will come to a day when the gain from making God your supreme source of security will make the cost seem insignificant.