

## Lesson 6

### 1 Peter 2:13-25

One of the modern lies that we often hear from the media is that this is the most important and consequential election ever, and that the world will end if we vote for so and so or fail to vote for another. These messages often rely on fear and buying into that fear is wrong. It is okay for us to be grieved by a leader or concerned about the direction of a government, but it is wrong for us to live in genuine fear. The reason for this is simple: government leaders do not have the final say over our lives or circumstances. God does. God rules with complete sovereignty over every ruler on earth, and not one of them draws a single breath apart from His permission. No matter who is in office they are only there because God permits it, God remains on the throne.

To put this further into context, Peter is writing these words to people who lived under Nero. He is telling them to be subject to Nero, the guy who is about to burn (possibly some of the readers of this book) alive, for the Lords sake. Peter's readers were not living under a good ruler. They were living under one of the most wicked rulers in history.

Because of that, we should not wonder whether Peter's teaching applies to our current presidents, governors, mayors, teachers, employers, or elected officials. Peter's readers faced situations far worse than most of us ever will. So, when our lives come into conflict with those in authority positions in our lives we too should live "as people who are free, not using [their] freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor[ing] everyone. Lov[ing] the brotherhood. Fear[ing] God. Honor[ing] the emperor."

Peter wants believers to understand that submission is not merely about avoiding punishment. Nor is it about whether a particular authority figure has earned our respect. Instead, Christians submit because they recognize God's sovereignty over the positions of authority that exist in their lives.

Peter is making the point that the quality of the person in authority does not ultimately change our responsibility before God. Even when authority figures are difficult, frustrating, unfair, or misguided, believers are still called to demonstrate humility and submission whenever doing so does not require sin.

Thankfully though, God does not call us to do this arbitrarily. He has a purpose in it. When we acknowledge the authority of people above us, such as teachers, employers, coaches, parents, or government leaders, we are ultimately acknowledging God's authority. When a teacher asks us to complete an assignment that seems unnecessary, our obedience should not be motivated purely by grades or by a desire to please that teacher. Rather, we obey because we recognize that God, in His sovereignty, has placed us under that authority.

The same principle applies to employers, coaches, and other authority figures. If God desired our circumstances to be different, He has the power to change them. Since He has placed us where we are, we seek to honor Him through our obedience.

At the same time, Christians should not view themselves as trapped in every situation. Submission does not mean becoming a "yes man" who blindly obeys every command. Human authority is limited. For example, if someone chooses to leave a job because they believe their employer is making poor decisions, they are free to do so. Likewise, authority figures only possess authority within the bounds God has given them. If an employer asks someone to break the law or commit sin, the Christian is not obligated to obey because God has not granted that employer authority in those areas. An employer may have authority over work responsibilities, but not over matters that require disobedience to God.

Once again, as we will see throughout 1 Peter, believers should expect suffering. Peter assumes that living under authority will eventually involve hardship. Teachers may frustrate us. Employers may treat us unfairly. Coaches may make decisions we dislike. Parents may make choices we do not understand. Throughout life, Christians will repeatedly be called to demonstrate humility, grace, patience, and faithfulness toward imperfect people in positions of authority.

### **Christ: Our Example in Suffering (vv. 21-25)**

Peter says that Christ suffered for us and left us an example to follow. This does not mean that Christ is merely a role model. Peter's emphasis is much deeper. Christ is both our Savior and our example. When Christ suffered unjustly, He did not revile in return. When He was insulted, He did not respond with insults. When He was mistreated, He did not threaten. Instead, He continually entrusted Himself to the Father.

When we are treated unfairly, our first instinct is often to defend ourselves, get even, prove our point, or make sure others know we have been wronged. Yet Peter points us to Christ, who trusted His Father even when He was suffering unjustly.

What made Christ's suffering unique, however, was that He was not suffering because of His own sin. Peter reminds us that Christ Committed no sin, spoke no deceit, and yet willingly endured the cross. More than that, Christ bore our sins on the cross. Jesus did not merely suffer as an example, He suffered as a substitute. He took the punishment we deserved so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

Remembering this helps us keep the most important thing the most important thing. We were destined for judgment because of our sin, but Christ stepped in and paid the ransom for us. Because of His sacrifice, we have been brought back to God. The freedom, forgiveness, and

hope we possess in Christ far outweigh any hardship we may face under the imperfect authorities of this world.

### **Big Idea**

**Because God is sovereign over every authority, believers should willingly submit to those He has placed over them, endure unjust suffering with humility, and follow Christ's example by entrusting themselves to God while remembering that Christ is the true Shepherd and Overseer of their souls.**

### **Application Questions**

- 1. What authorities has God placed in your life right now?**
- 2. What makes it difficult to respect authorities you disagree with?**
- 3. How can a Christian disagree with an authority figure while still showing respect?**
- 4. What does submission look like in different areas of life?**
- 5. How can honoring authority become a witness to unbelievers?**
- 6. Is there an authority figure in your life toward whom you struggle to show respect?**
- 7. What situations tempt you to respond with anger, bitterness, or revenge?**
- 8. Do you genuinely believe God is sovereign over the people He has placed above you? And do you act accordingly?**
- 9. Why didn't Jesus retaliate when He was mistreated?**
- 10. How does Christ's suffering help us endure our own suffering?**
- 11. How does remembering that Christ bore your sins change the way you respond to difficult people in authority positions over you?**
- 12. If someone watched how you responded to authority for a month, what would they conclude about your faith?**
- 13. What does your reaction to unfair treatment reveal about your heart?**
- 14. Are there areas where you submit outwardly while remaining rebellious inwardly?**

**15. What would it look like for Christ's attitude to replace your natural response to frustration?**