

INTRODUCE **SLIDE** 1 PETER

So, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to 1 Peter chapter 2.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to 1 Peter 2,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find 1 Peter 2 on page **1014**.

INTRODUCTION: GOVERNMENT

So, I don't know if you've picked up on this, but I certainly have...

- it seems that in my lifetime,
 - so almost 40 years,
- that we live in a day and age...
 - where the political arena...
 - is more hostile...
 - than anything I've experienced before.

Now, I have been told...

- that in the late 60s and early 70s,
- it was far more hostile.

I've even been told that during the Cold War it was pretty wild...

- but listen...that's when I was like 6!
- And when you're 6, you're not really dialed into politics.
 - I pray your 6-year-old isn't right now.
 - I pray you're not,
 - "Man, this nationalism vs. socialism stuff...
 - when you get to be my age, son...
 - you can thank Trump and Biden for that."

- I'm hoping you're not doing that.
- I'm hoping you're just letting your kid play with Legos.

But it just seems like there's such hostility AND...listen...

- a sinful,
- ignorant,
- wicked rhetoric...
- that's dominating the two-party system.
 - This right vs. left...
 - Elephant vs. donkey...
 - Red vs. blue thing...

And what's more, it's found its way into Christians, as well!

So, our text today addresses the governing authorities.

- And what I thought would be helpful,
 - we'll find out tomorrow when I check my inbox
 - whether or not that was true...
- but what I thought would be helpful...
- is for us to look at how Peter says...
- we are to interact with government.

So, that's my plan.

It's for us to look at what our text says about **SLIDE THE GOVERNMENT**

- And I know many of you are like...
 - "This is not smart..."
 - Pastor, just stick to the Gospel."
- and I know...
- but it's here...
- in the book!

So we're gonna handle it.

EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

Now, before we turn there, let me remind you where we've come from.

- Peter is addressing Christians in the Roman Empire,
- and he constantly calls them EXILES.
 - They are NOT primarily citizens of Rome,
 - but rather, they are citizens of heaven.
 - Their primary identity is Christian,
 - and everything else follows.

And so, Peter has been instructing them how to live.

- He started personally,
- then he moved corporately
 - by instructing how to live in community, as the church.
- And now he turns to how Christians are to interact
- in the social order of their day:
 - specifically in relation to the government,
 - the slave/master relationship,
 - and the husband/wife relationship,
 - which we'll get to next week.

So, let's start in verse 13:

1 PETER 2:13a

[13] Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,

EXPLAIN: SUBMIT

So, the word **be subject** in Greek is *hypotassō* (hoop-o-tas'-so).

It literally means: *be subject to* OR *submit yourself to*.

Now, we don't like the word SUBMIT.

- We think it implies inferiority.
- Which it does not!
 - Submitting is yielding to another's authority.
 - It has nothing to do with being superior or inferior.

But, Peter says to SUBMIT yourself to EVERY human institution.

And you see that word **every**? Means EVERY!

Peter is commanding us to submit to every rightful authority over us.

Let's keep going:

1 PETER 2:13b-14

whether it be to the emperor as supreme, [14] or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

EXPLAIN: PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

In other words, the government is supposed to exist:

- to punish evil doers,
- And to support the common good.

That's what the offices of authority are supposed to do and why they exist!

- Hey, I want you to understand that in the mind of Peter...
 - and really all through the Bible,
- governing authorities are a good gift from God
- to uphold and work toward human flourishing.

Verse 15:

1 PETER 2:15-17

[15] For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. [16] Live as people who are free, not using your

freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. [17] Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

TRANSITION

So, this is what Peter is commanding Christians.

SUBMIT TO THE GOVERNMENT.

So, the main questions for us to deal with in this text are:

- How do we submit to the government...
 - when there's so much about their lives,
 - and their beliefs,
 - and their policies,
 - that we disagree with?
- What about when they don't live up to their mandate?
- Or, what if they start to do things that go against God's Word?

Cause that's more akin to the climate of the Roman Empire.

Peter says **honor the emperor** in that context.

And we need to realize that Peter...

- would not have approved of
- or endorsed the vast majority
- of what the governing leaders of his day did.

And yet he says to **honor** them.

EXPLAIN: PETER'S CONTEXT

So, this letter was written around 60 A.D.,
which means that the Emperor whom Peter is talking about is NERO.

- Now, can we do a little history work here?
- You don't actually have much of a choice!

Nero was the 3rd of a group of terrible Caesars:

- that started with Caligula,
- then Claudius,
- and ended with Nero.

Caligula was a real piece of work.

- Shortly after becoming Caesar,
 - he had his mom and brother killed...
 - to make sure they didn't ever challenge his throne.
- He openly committed incest with three of his sisters.
- He installed his favorite horse as a senator...
 - and then later PROMOTED him to consul.
 - How does that even work?
 - All in favor? Aye.
 - All opposed? #dadjoke
- Caligula once got mad at the weather
 - and declared war on Neptune,
 - the Roman god of the sea.
 - He ordered his soldiers to take whips into the water
 - and beat the waves for punishment
 - and bring home seashells
 - to symbolize taking plunder from his domain.

And after him you have Claudius,

- who may have been a hair less crazy than Caligula,
 - but was every bit as cruel.

- Caludius really began the persecution against Christians.
 - He kicked the Jewish Christians out of Rome
 - because he heard that they were proclaiming
 - that Jesus was Lord,
 - rather than Caesar is Lord.

And Caludius was then succeeded by his nephew Nero,

- when Nero's mom killed Claudius in his sleep,
- so that her son could replace him.

And Nero turned out to be the worst of the 3.

He was one of the cruelest, most sadistic Christian-haters of all time!

- He intentionally set fire to Rome,
 - then he stood on his balcony, watching it,
 - and playing his harp like he was a tragic poet.
- Then he blamed the whole thing on the Christians
 - and used it as a pretext to have them rounded up
 - and fed to the lions.
- Nero would have parties,
 - and he would impale Christians on stakes,
 - light them on fire,
 - and use them as light for the party.
- Nero crucified so many Christians,
 - that the famous Roman roads
 - were lined for miles and miles
 - between towns
 - with crucified Christians.

This guy was sick...and here's the sickest story I could find...

- so I knew you would want to hear it.
- At one point Nero got upset with his wife
 - who was pregnant,
 - and he kicked her to death.
 - Killed her and the baby.
 - He felt bad about it,
 - and so he found a young boy who resembled his wife,
 - captured him,
 - castrated him,
 - married him in public,
 - and called him his dead wife's name.

So, Peter says: **Honor THAT emperor.**

EXPLAIN: DISOBEDIENCE IN THE BIBLE

Now, if you know your Bible...

- there might be some things going on in your mind right now.

You might be like,

- *"Woah...hold on there Peter..."*
 - *submitting to the governing authorities*
 - *isn't the only message we find in the Bible!"*

MOSES

In Exodus,

- didn't God go to Moses and tell him to go to Pharaoh,
 - the ruling authority in Egypt,
- and tell him to let my people go?

Didn't God tell Moses to disobey the governing authorities?

And in fact, there wouldn't even be a Moses...

if the midwives had obeyed the law.

- Because the law in Egypt,
- was for the midwives to kill
- all the Israelite baby boys.

But the midwives disobeyed the law...

- and sent little baby Charleton Heston.
 - you remember the movie?
- They put him in a basket
- and sent him down the Nile.

And God commended them for it!

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Or how about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo? From Daniel 3?

- Nebuchadnezzar sets up an idol,
 - a statue to himself,
- and commands all the people to bow before it.

And those boys say,

- *"We ain't bowing down."*
 - They disobeyed the authority over them,
 - and were punished for it
 - by being thrown into the fiery furnace.

And when Nebuchadnezzar looks in...

- he sees four guys walking around in the fire...he's like,
 - *"Didn't we throw three of them?"*
 - *And the fourth one looks like a son of the gods."*

- See, scholars think that was a Christophany...
- Jesus showing up in the Old Testament!
 - Jesus was so into their rebellion that he was like,
 - *"I wanna get in on that with you, boys."*

DANIEL

Or just a few chapters later in Daniel 6,

- Darius is now the king,
- and he creates an injunction
 - stating that for 30 days,
 - no one should pray to any god.
- And when Daniel hears about this
 - he goes to his house,
 - opens the upper windows,
 - and gets down on his knees
 - and prays three times toward Jerusalem
 - as he had always done.

Daniel is in...

- glad rebellion against this law...
- regardless of the consequences!

PETER

And what about Acts chapters 3 and 4?

- Peter himself is walking along,
- this lame beggar is just laying there begging for money,
- and Peter's basically like,

- *“Hey, I’m in ministry, so I got no money...*
- *but what I do have I give to you.*
- *In the name of Jesus, get up and walk!”*
- And the dude gets up and walks.

Well, Peter gets arrested,

- and he’s standing before the council,
 - and they charge him not to speak
 - in the name of Jesus Christ anymore.
- And his response is,
 - *“Is it better to obey you or God?”*
 - *We can’t NOT speak of what we have seen and heard!”*

TRANSITION

So, Peter, that doesn’t sound like you’re obeying the authorities over you!

So, how do you know when to SUBMIT...and when to DISOBEY?

Well, Peter gives them three other imperatives,

- three other commands,
- Before he says: **honor the emperor.**

So, look again at verse 17.

He says: **Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.**

- And those will inform how we **honor the emperor.**

So, let’s run through those quickly:

EXPLAIN: HONOR EVERYONE

So, HONOR EVERYONE.

- Christians are to treat every person with dignity and respect
- since all human beings are created in God’s image.

Interestingly, that same **honor** is repeated and given to the emperor.

- So, to Peter, those with more power and dignity...
- are not exalted over ordinary people.

Rather, Romans 12:10 says **to outdo one another is showing honor.**

So, submitting to THE GOVERNMENT is rooted in how we see everyone!

EXPLAIN: LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD

Then he says LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.

- That is, love other Christians.

Now, in this context...

- of submitting to the governing authorities,
- here's how I think we should apply this.

- Our political disagreements...
- should never cause a wedge
- to come between our love for other Christians.

ILLUSTRATION: EARLY CHURCH

Now, historian Larry Hurtado gives four features...
that made the early church unique.

Those marks are:

- The early church was multi-racial in a Roman-biased world.
- The early church was about hospitality to the poor and the sick, even at the expense of their own lives.
- The early church was sexually conservative, in a culture where it was expected that men would have sex outside of marriage.
- And the early church was a community committed to the sanctity of life.

Now, what makes these features so ironic,

- is that the marks about race and the poor sound liberal to us.
- And the sexual ethic and life ethic sound conservative.

APPLICATION: PARTYS

And I bring that up because...

- as a Christian in America today...
- there isn't a clear political party...
- that "everyone" should side with.

There is good AND bad on both sides of the American political aisle.

- And people want us to be all-in on one side or the other.
- They want you to be either pro-emperor or anti-emperor.

But a Christian is not captive to any emperor.

- So, that means we honor them all...
- AND we critique them all.

And I'm not saying you don't align with the party you choose...

- In this country we have the ability to work towards change...
 - Peter, in the Roman Empire, did not!

We can! So, don't take this injunction from Peter to say...

- we should just sit back...
- and let the powers that be...
- do their thing...

No, no. IF and TO THE DEGREE...

- that we have the option,
 - the ability,
- to do something
 - like vote or sign petitions or run for office...

- to affect the governing where we live...
- we can and should do it.

But it does not give us the right to DISHONOR those we disagree with.

Especially your brothers and sisters!

- You're a Christian before you're...
 - a Republican...
 - or a Democrat...
 - or a moderate.

And furthermore,

- that means that sitting in this room today,
- there ought to be different political opinions.

In fact, one of the things I love about Fathom

- is that we really do have people,
 - members of this church,
- from the left side of the aisle,
- and from the right side of the aisle.

You are both in this room!

You are both in the same D-Groups!

Fathom isn't on one side or the other.

- And we must commit to love one another...
 - because we are citizens of heaven first...
 - and then any political affiliation second.

EXPLAIN: FEAR GOD

Third, Peter says to FEAR GOD.

So, listen:

- Believers are to HONOR the emperor,
 - and show him RESPECT because of his office,
- but they are not to FEAR him.
- Only God is to be feared.

Now, here's what that means:

- in submitting to authority,
- we never disobey the commands of God.

There are certain lines we can never and should never never cross.

If our government one day tells us...

- that we can't preach Jesus as the only way of salvation...
- then we have to disobey!

If they tell us we can't pray, or sing, or share...we disobey.

- We have to honor what God says
 - about the sanctity of marriage
 - and the sanctity of life
 - regardless of what the government says.
- Nor can we go along with any kind of...
 - injustice or discrimination,
 - economic, racial, or religious.

So, yes, we submit to the governing authorities.

- But if our government,
 - by law or by force,
- tries to dictate to the people of God
 - that they be disobedient to God,
 - we are not to acquiesce
 - and we are to pay whatever penalty comes.

That's called CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

Now, even in that place,

- we are not to be grandiose and big-chested about it,
- but rather
 - we walk in humility,
 - compassion,
 - and grace,
- but we actively rebel.

EXPLAIN: RESULT

And what happens when you do this?

People see Christ.

- They see someone who is confident
 - that politics and earthly judges don't have the last word.
- They see people who belong to a heavenly Kingdom.

That's why he says in verse 15: **For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.**

- This was the most notable posture about early Christians,
- and it made their witness incredibly powerful.

It's like church historian Lesslie Newbigin said,

SLIDE *"The victory of the Church over (corrupt Roman power) did not come by seizing the levers of power: it was won when the victims knelt down in the Colosseum and prayed in the name of Jesus for the Emperor...in so doing, the entire mystique of the Empire, its spiritual power, was unmasked, disarmed, and rendered powerless."*

TRANSITION

This is how Peter says we are to submit to **SLIDE THE GOVERNMENT**

- So, church, how do you think we're doing on this?
- Some of us need God's help here, right?

How we submit to authority IS how we live differently as Christians.

Now, I'm gonna skip verses 18-20...

- because they really cover the same big idea,
 - submitting to unjust authority,
- but they do it in the cultural context
- of the slave and master relationship in ancient Rome.

We do not have a completely analogous relationship to apply this to, but the same big idea is there:

- Peter's purpose in writing this...
- is to encourage those experiencing injustice.

Now, look at verse 21,

- because it's in verses 21-25
- that we find the model for how
- to submit to the government, and why we do so!

1 PETER 2:21-25

[21] 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. [22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. [23] 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. [24] 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. [25] For you were

straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

EXPLAIN

Peter ends...

- by showing us what Christ did
- when he experienced unjust treatment.

And we are to follow in his steps!

- He committed no sin.
- He didn't reciprocate evil for evil.
- He continually trusted God, the just judge.
- And finally, he sacrifices himself...
 - he didn't take his freedom for himself,
 - but he laid it down so that we might be healed...
 - so that we, like sheep,
 - might return to the good shepherd.

Aren't those beautiful words?

Hey, is that how you are submitting to authorities over you?

- We SUBMIT...
 - because in doing so...
- We FOLLOW in CHRIST'S STEPS!

CONCLUSION

So, I'd like to end this sermon a little differently than normal:

- Let me put a scripture up on the screens:

SLIDE W/PADS 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

[1] First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. [3] This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

APPLICATION

This is the drumbeat for those of us who are believers in Christ...

- to HONOR the powers that be,
- to RESPECT all positions of authority,
- and to be PRAYERFUL for them.

So how we're going to end our time together is to pray for our top leaders:

- we're going to pray for our president,
- for our senators,
- and for our congressman.

And then we're going to celebrate that our hope is found in Jesus Christ...

NOT in this country...by taking the Lord's Supper like always.

Now, you might disagree with these men in so many ways!

But listen,

- if you can't pray for these men,
- then your allegiance is to the wrong land.
 - You've really pledged your allegiance
 - to what is transient...
 - instead of pledging your allegiance
 - to what is not transient, but eternal.

You can hope for and vote for and even pray for a change in leadership.

- Gosh, I find some of their policies deplorable...
- but I'd say the same for the other side of the aisle as well.

Regardless, **Christians pray.**

That's how we **honor the emperor.**

ENDING

So I want us to spend some time praying for these men.

Here's a slide so you can just see their faces.

SLIDE

- I want us to pray for President Joe Biden,
- and our two United States senators,
 - Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper,
- and then Governor Jared Polis.

So, let's pray and then respond in communion and worship.

Father, I thank you for these four men.

- I pray a prayer of blessing on all four of them.
- I pray protection over all four of them.
- God, I pray you guide them and shape and mold them.
- That you would point them in Godly directions...
 - and grant them the courage it'll take...
 - to be all you would have them be.

I pray you would give us wisdom.

- That you would help us be informed men and women,
 - not prone to buy into hollow rhetoric,
- but that we might pay close attention,
 - to all that is going on.

I pray we'd be good citizens.

- Good citizens whose allegiance is solely upon you,
- but also understanding government as a tool in your hand.

I pray that we are subject to these authorities...

- until that time they require us
- to be disobedient for you.

So Father,

- I pray you would grant us courage...
 - if this gets stormier...
- to be men and women of God...
 - steadfast with our roots in you.

Help us, Jesus. We need it.

- We pray these things in the name of Jesus
- and the power of the Holy Spirit,

Amen.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- Chandler, Matt. *God and Government*.
- Greear, J.D. *Submission: Training For Exiles*.
- Jobes, Karen H.. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. 1 Peter.
- Martin, Joby. *Submit to Authority*.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. The New American Commentary. 1, 2 Peter, Jude.