

copy of God's Word to 1st Peter chapter 2. 1st Peter chapter 2.

We'll be looking this morning at verses 13 through 25. 1st Peter chapter 2 verses 13 through 25. Well, last week we saw that God's people are chosen to be pilgrims. And because you are chosen to be pilgrims, that means you do not feel at home in this world. The very fact that God has chosen you makes you feel a bit of discomfort in this world. Because you are dear to God, you are not dear to the world. And because you are dear to God, the world and its worldliness is not dear to you.

And we live in a world that often has a bad attitude towards authority, whether it's presidents or police force or any other authority. We live in a world that generally has a very low view of authority. But our text this morning begins to address some of these issues of authority. Though we are pilgrims, we are still called to honor authority over us.

With this in mind, let us turn our attention to this text and pray and ask God to bless it to our lives. Oh Father, we pray that you would send your spirit, send him that we might know you and love you and obey you in Christ's name, amen.

First Peter chapter two verses 13 through 25, hear now the authoritative word of God.

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. 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.

Thus ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless the reading and now the proclamation of it to our lives.

We saw last week that the Christian is called to be a pilgrim. So if you're called to be a pilgrim in this world, the question might naturally arise, how should you relate to earthly authorities? After all, you're a pilgrim here, you're a sojourner, an exile, you're an alien, you're just passing through. So are you, who are a pilgrim, called to honor the authorities that God has placed over you? Again, It's a reasonable question. You're citizens of heaven. This is not your home. So how should you relate to authorities? Do you even need to honor them? Well, this text makes it clear that the Christian is called to submit to authority. The Christian is called to submit to authority unless that authority is commanding you to sin. That's the one exception. So this morning, submit to authority. That is the calling of the text. In a day and age which has a very low view of authority, this text says unto you, submit to authority. And look at this in two headings. Submit to civil authority. And second, submit to unjust authority. Submit to civil authority and submit to unjust authority.

So first, submit to civil authority. You see this in verses 13 through 17. Submit to civil authority. The Westminster Confession of Faith gives you a good way of thinking about this call to submit to authority. So in answering that question, why should I, a Christian, submit to civil authority, especially if those over you aren't Christians? Why, especially if you don't believe the people over you are Christians, should you still submit to them? Well, the Westminster Confession of Faith helps us think through that really well. They state it like this, God put the civil authorities under himself and over the people. God put civil authority under himself, those governors, those presidents, those kings, he put them under himself, but over the people. Therefore you ought to submit to them.

And all of this is actually captured quite well in verse 13, when here writing by divine inspiration, Peter uses this phrase, be subject for the Lord's sake. Those four words, for the Lord's sake, capture so much about how you should relate to civil authorities. Those words, for the Lord's sake, both serve as a motivation to submit to civil authority, as well as a limit to your submission to civil authority. They serve as a motivation to submit to civil authority because to submit to them, not for their sake even, but for the Lord's sake. In other words, because God wants you to. God wants you to submit to civil authority. Therefore, you should do it. You wanna honor the Lord? Well, one of the ways you do that is by submitting to those whom he has placed over you.

But it also serves to limit to set boundaries over the extent to which you should submit to them. Because you should submit to them for the Lord's sake. In other words, if they are asking you to do anything that is a sin against the Lord that you can't actually do for the Lord's sake, then you ought not to do it. If a civil authority or one over you commands you to do something that is sinful, you can't do that thing for the Lord's sake because he is the supreme king, the ultimate authority. But anything else that they command you are to submit to them.

Some examples of times in scripture where you learn of someone rightly not submitting to the civil authorities because they were commanding them to sin would be an example like Daniel chapter 3 with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You remember the story? They are commanded by King Nebuchadnezzar to bow down to a golden idol and they do not do it. They do not do it because to do so would be to sin against the highest authority, God himself.

Or you think of Acts chapter 5 when Paul and John are thrown in prison And they're mistreated by the Sanhedrin. They're mistreated by the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin say to them, you need to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. And they say, we must obey God rather than man. Because if they had listened to the Sanhedrin, they would have been sinning against God. But not only are you called in this text to submit to civil authority, You're told to do good underneath their reign. You're to actually positively strive to do everything you can to be good citizens. Not just submissive, but positively doing what you can to be good. You see this in verse 14. or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. You should be striving to be citizens who are doing what you can to be good."

Now, someone here this morning might object and say, well, you see, Peter was saying unto his audience that they needed to try to do what they could to be good citizens in his day. But Peter doesn't understand some of the leadership under which I've had to live my life. Peter doesn't understand some of the corrupt things that I see or believe are going on at times around me in leadership, and so he doesn't really get it. He could say to do good in those circumstances, but that's because he doesn't understand how hard my circumstances are.

Well, in response to that, you need to remember that when Peter is writing this, he's writing to those who are under Emperor Nero's rule. And Emperor Nero in just a few years will crucify Peter. Crucified him upside down on a cross under his leadership. And he will persecute many Christians and it's known from the history books that he would put Christians on a stake and light them on fire as lamps for his dinner parties. So whatever leadership that you might think you don't have the calling to be good underneath because, well, they haven't been good to you, Peter is saying this in a context that I believe I can say confidently is worse than any leadership under which you have had to strive to be good.

But what is one of the results of this obedience, submission, and doing good underneath leadership? Well, one of the results is that even when they don't like you, they will not be able to justifiably utter anything against you. Verse 15, they will be silenced. For this is the will of God that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. So people will ultimately be silenced. It will have an evangelistic, it'll have a evangelistic effect. It'll promote God's glory and it will silence those who would want to stop you because when they want to utter unkind things

about you, when they want to misrepresent you, in their hearts they'll say, I don't really have any reason to say these things. These people have been good.

You might put it like this, as citizens who may at times be underneath some leadership that is bad, that is not as good as it could be, you should desire to be a mouth stopper. You should want to be so good even in under bad leadership that when people want to utter bad things about you or misrepresent you, their mouths are stopped. They can't really do it, at least not in any justifiable way. You want to be a mouth stopper.

Peter then goes on in verse 16 to talk about something called Christian liberty. Look at verse 16, live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a coverup for evil, but living as servants of God. What is Christian liberty or Christian freedom? Christian liberty or Christian freedom is simply that you are free from sin and free to obedience. Freedom from sin and freedom to obedience. Freedom from sin means that you're free from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin, from the penalty of sin. You're free from Satan's tyranny. You're not under his bondage any longer. You're free from the sting of death and of the grave. You're free from eternal damnation. But you're also free to obedience. You have free access to God through Jesus Christ. You can actually strive to obey his commandments.

But does Christian freedom lead to a license to sin? Since you're free from the penalty of sin, I mean, after all, God's not gonna condemn you, so shouldn't you sin all the more that grace may abound? By no means. Christian freedom, Christian liberty, is never to be used as a license to sin. If it is used as a license to sin, it is actually returning to the bondage of sin, and it is no longer freedom.

So you can imagine how a Christian may abuse this idea. They might say, well, as a Christian, I have freedom to take a sip of alcohol or to enjoy a drink. And then they decide, well, I also have liberty to get drunk. No, or I have liberty as a Christian to own a television and to watch TV, you do. Then they'll say, therefore, I have liberty to watch whatever I want on my television. No, you don't. There's liberty, but it is not ever to be used as a license to sin. It is rather liberty to obey.

To understand this a bit more fully, turn with me to Galatians chapter five. Galatians chapter five. Look at Galatians chapter five, verse one. It says this, for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. So you're thinking, there I am, I'm free. You might, if you want to be licensed and try to use it for sin, you can say, I can do whatever I want. Well, what is that freedom to be used for? How should it be exercised? Look at verse 13, Galatians 5, 13. For you were called to freedom, Brothers, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

And Romans chapter six talks about this. You are a slave to righteousness in Christ Jesus. You are free from sin and you are now a slave to righteousness. God's laws, Peter is saying in verse 16, are good for you. You are servants of God, verse 16. God's laws are good for you. Being God's servant is good.

You can imagine the 16-year-old who's just gotten their license. They're very excited. They can finally drive on the road without mom and dad always looking over their shoulders and correcting them for all the supposed mistakes they make when they're just driving with their permit. They're convinced those mistakes aren't real, but anyways. They've turned 16, they can finally drive around without mom and dad looking over their shoulders, and they're driving around, and for the first few weeks, they're really enjoying this liberty, this newfound freedom of being able to drive their car on the road.

And then they realize there are all these restricting laws. What gives this metal sign authority to tell me to stop? All right, why should I listen to a light that changes colors from red to green and there's yellow in there too? And so after a little while they realized, I don't really need to listen to all these signs, all these restricting laws. And so they begin to blow through stop signs and red lights and they begin to drive as fast as they want, wherever they want. They consider sidewalks at least as an option when in, you know, if somebody's in front of you and you need to get around them, they just drive however they want. because of all those restricting laws that were put on them before.

Now, of course, eventually they're going to get the deal with higher authorities and probably lose their license. Who knows what else? Those laws, although imperfect, as we all would probably acknowledge on the road, those laws are there so that you can enjoy the roads. They are not restricting. They are actually freeing. They free you to actually enjoy being able to move around in the world safely.

Okay, those are human laws that are imperfect. But I ask you this morning, how do you view God's law? Do you view God's law as restricting and preventing you from enjoying the better life that you otherwise would be living if it weren't for all of these laws that he's placed over you? Or do you view God's law as the liberating commandments that enable you to enjoy the life you're supposed to actually be living. Do you review them as restricting, like that 16-year-old who's just gotten their license, or do you review them as freeing, and enjoyable, and helpful, and life-giving?

Peter says you should never use the freedom you have as an abusive thing, like that kid with the license, but you should use your freedom to enjoy God's good laws over you. One of the ways you do that is found in verse 17. Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor. That's one of the ways you enjoy God's lulls over you is found there in verse 17.

And in these words and in verses 13 through 17 as a whole, you actually get some insights into how inferiors should relate to superiors how superiors should relate to their inferiors, and how equals should relate to one another. These are sort of the three categories of relation among people. There are those who are over you, how do they relate to those who are under them? Those who are under them, how do they relate to those who are over them? And how do you relate to those who are on the same plane as you, your peers, your equals? These verses actually give you insight into all three of those types of relationships.

You learn throughout these verses that the superior, the one who is in charge, so to speak, or over, should relate to those under them by doing good to them, by striving to do what they can to actually be a blessing to those underneath them. They have a calling to lead, but to lead in such a way that is considerate of those underneath them. They're not to lead for selfish gain. They're not to abuse their authority, but they're to use their authority for the promotion of the good of those underneath them.

But how should those underneath them relate to those over them? So in other words, how should children relate to parents? How should the people relate to the government? How should any inferior relate to any superior? How should we relate to those who are over us? Well, again, according to the text, you should strive to do good to them. You should pray for them. You should honor them. should not look for reasons to kick back against them or to make their calling, their responsibilities, any more difficult than they already are.

And then how about equals? Verse 17 tells you this great phrase, honor everyone. There's no exception to it. Honor everyone, Christian, non-Christian, child, adult, your equals, everyone in your life you should be honoring, including your equals. And sometimes it can be difficult to want to honor your equals. You can imagine how sometimes you would want to look at an equal as a competitor, someone to outdo, someone to beat, someone to tear down, someone to surpass. But you should be honoring them. You should want to see whatever gifts and graces are in somebody at an equal level with you. You should want to see those built up and growing. not trying to compete with them. The way you might think of this in a very concrete way is you can imagine the high school girl who doesn't make the cheer team. And she's really upset that this other girl has. And so that's her equal. But instead of speaking kindly about her, she's bitter towards her and angry towards her and tears her down. That's not honoring your equal.

Or it can be the adult, the grown male, a grown person who's still having to work a day job. And they see many of their equals around them, perhaps, who have gotten to retire. And they think, why is it not fair? and they become bitter and angry towards that equal who's gotten to retire, that person at the same stage of life who's been able to retire and you're not. In all sorts of ways, you can want to tear down and compete with your equals rather than be thankful for them, encourage them, pray for

them, promote them, honor them, insofar as you really see the gifts and graces at work in their life. You should want to exalt them.

But not only should we submit to civil authorities, which is what you see in verses 13 through 17, Secondly, you see this calling, submit to unjust authority. Submit to unjust authority, verses 18 through 25. Look again just for a moment at verses 18 through 20. 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 sorrow 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.

So it is one thing to submit to authorities that are over you. But how do you submit to authorities that are over you that are unjust? That's a whole nother level of difficulty. These people are downright unjust. How are you to submit to them? Do you have a right to ignore them or to not treat them with any respect because they're unjust? You don't. The text is clear. You do not. You can think about an example would be the United States. For many, many decades, We legalized the murdering of infants. We call it abortion. And it's the murdering of infants. And we legalized it. Well, you were a citizen during that time. Did you have a right to have no honor for the authorities over you during those decades? No. You still had to honor Your authority, because they weren't commanding you personally to sin. They were doing a grievous injustice, a horrible wrong, but yet they weren't commanding you personally to sin and you were not allowed during that time to not submit to them because of this injustice.

What these verses get at is a very deep principle for the Christian life in verses 18 through 20. And that is this, that your biggest concern is not your suffering, It's your sinning. Your biggest concern is not, does this cause me to suffer? Your biggest concern is, is this a sin? If what you're going through is suffering for the sake of doing the right thing, that's the better choice than doing the wrong thing and sinning against God, even if it relieves you of the suffering. So if on the one hand you have the option which is, I do this, it relieves me of some temporal suffering, but I know it's sinning against God, or on the other hand you have this option which is, I'm going to experience temporal suffering, But I'm going to be faithful to God. So your two options are faithful to God and suffer, or unfaithful to God and ease. The answer is faithful to God and suffer. That's the principle at play here.

And so while it's talking specifically about the slave-master relationship, While it might apply in a special way, perhaps, to an unjust boss and an employee, the principle at work applies to the whole of your life. All of you will have many occasions in which you have that proposal before you. I'm going to do the right thing and I'm probably going to suffer for it. Or I'm going to do the wrong thing and I'm probably not going to suffer for it. The answer is do the right thing and suffer. That's what Peter is saying.

And you think, well, that doesn't sound like a very good idea. Well, you do it because you're living for God, not for man and not for yourself. You're not living for yourself. You're not living for other people. You're living for God. That's why you do it.

Verse 20. Look at the last words of verse 20. In the sight of God, your concern is being right in the sight of God. Whatever that costs you and whatever that costs your approval among men is not your primary concern. Your concern is, is this right in the sight of God? And if it is, you do it.

But the biggest reason you should follow this example of suffering and doing good is because this is what Christ has done for you. That's the ultimate motivation of the text, verses 21 through 25. You should suffer while doing good because Christ has done this very thing for you, hasn't he? This is exactly what Christ did for you, verse 21. For to this you have been called. Notice this is a calling. It's not random. Your suffering is not random. You've been called to it. 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. So as you suffer for doing good in your life, you are following the example of Jesus Christ.

And of course, how much did he deserve to suffer? Well, not at all, verse 22. He committed no sin, no sin. So how much did Christ deserve to suffer for his life? He didn't deserve to suffer at all. He committed absolutely no sin, and yet he suffered tremendously. So think about this. Every single time somebody got in a conflict with Jesus, Jesus was entirely in the right. You know how when you have conflict with someone, you sit there and you're like, well, hopefully, you sit there and you go, okay, where can I, what can I own, right? What can I acknowledge I did? Even if you still might be convinced the other person did maybe more than, it doesn't really matter. Your job, right, is not to be sitting there and considering all that. You should be thinking, where did I go wrong? How did I sin? How did I, Jesus never had to do that, right? He had no sin. He never had a conflict. You ever had somebody belittle you or speak unkindly of you or you hear that they said something behind your back? and it really hurts you, and then you think to yourself, I hate to say it, but there's probably an ounce of truth in what they said. Maybe they shouldn't have said it at all, maybe they went too far, but in the back of your mind, there's probably an ounce of truth in that assessment of me that they gave to so-and-so. It doesn't justify what they said, but there might be a sense of truth in it.

Jesus never had that happen. Nobody ever spoke ill of Jesus and he had to say, well, there actually was a little bit of truth in that. He did no sin, there was nothing wrong with him whatsoever. and yet he suffered to the point of death, even death on a cross. That's the way that you and I following in his footsteps ought to be. We ought to not be angry. We ought not to kick back. We ought to endure our suffering while striving to do good.

Well, how do you here this morning suffer when you do good in your life? How do you go about your suffering? In other words, do you suffer like Christ? Do you suffer and continually try to do good or do you suffer and then start to sin and then sin more and sin more? Does your suffering encourage you in the direction of disobedience?

Oftentimes in life, when you're suffering, especially suffering for doing good, you know you're doing the right thing and yet you're suffering for it. There are usually two types of responses and they kind of go together. But one is self-pity, right? You throw yourself a pity party, right? You say, my life is so hard, nobody understands, and you can become very self-absorbed. It's very, very easy to happen. And that's not what Christ did when he suffered. He continued doing good. And that's not what you should do either.

But you'd also want to lash out. Right, you get angry at everybody and angry at the world around you, you lash out against everyone around you because your life is very difficult and you think that justifies your reaction of sinning and becoming bitter towards everyone and everything around you. But again, is that what Christ did? No, Christ continued to entrust himself to his Father while doing good. That should be your disposition as well.

But praise the Lord, he's not just a great example as you see in verse 21 and following into verse 23. But you also see that he is your Redeemer. He's not just your example, he is your Redeemer. Verses 24 and 25. 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. So he bore our sins on himself on the cross. He's not just a good example for you, He is your Redeemer. And it says here that He bore your sins on the tree.

Why is the cross sometimes in the Bible called a tree? Is it simply because it was made of wood? Well, it was made of wood, but it's actually called a tree sometimes in the Bible, like Galatians 3.13, for example, because in the book of Deuteronomy, we are told, cursed is every man who is hanged on a tree. Being hanged on a tree, being crucified was a sign that you were a curse. And Jesus was hanged on a tree that he might be a curse for you. He took on your curse, the penalty of your sins on himself on the cross. And why did he do this? Well, he did this not only to take away the penalty of your sin, which is condemnation, right? Damnation. He also did this to take away the power of sin in your life, the dominion of sin in your life.

How does the text read? Look there at verse 24, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, your sin was slaughtered on the cross. Your sin was slaughtered on the cross. It was crucified on the cross. Therefore, don't live in it. Therefore, don't cherish it. Therefore, it's not who you are. At the end of the day, your sin has been crucified with Christ on the cross, therefore live to righteousness.

And Peter brings up this whole topic here because he knows that these saints are suffering. These Christians to whom he writes are suffering. And in the midst of suffering, it is the inclination of the heart to want to justify sinning. That's what you do in the midst of suffering. You want to justify sinning. It's very often the case. It's what you want to do. You say to yourself, well, I had a bad day. So I'm allowed to do X. I'm allowed to have a terrible attitude towards so and so. It's been a long week, so I'm justified to indulge in this, that or the other. This is what we do. And Peter is saying, no, Christ suffered for you, that you might live for him, that you might live a life of righteousness.

And all that he says here, and we don't have time to read it, but all that he says here is, full of the imagery and even at points quotations of Isaiah 53, about him going to the cross, about him being crucified for us.

But as we wind down our time this morning, I want us to consider just two words, two words from verse 25. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. I want us to consider these descriptions of Jesus, shepherd and overseer.

Think with me for a moment this morning, what does a shepherd and overseer do? Okay, a shepherd, according to one of my friends, and he's right about this, a shepherd leads, feeds, and protects his flock. That's what a shepherd does, he leads, feeds, and protects, right? He leads his people, or his sheep, he protects his sheep, and he feeds his sheep. And he also knows his sheep. He knows his sheep. This implies something about you. It implies something about us. We are sheep who need a shepherd. We can't lead ourselves. We can't feed ourselves and we can't protect ourselves. Jesus is our shepherd. He is our overseer. He watches over us and we need his shepherding over us every day. You need his shepherding this morning. You need his shepherding this afternoon. You need his shepherding tomorrow. You need to be led tomorrow. You need to be fed tomorrow. You need to be protected tomorrow. You need your shepherd.

My grandfather led a platoon on Okinawa in World War II in his early 20s. He goes over there in his early 20s leading a platoon, and he says to one of the men underneath him, he gives him orders, he says, don't stand up. The man stood up and the man died. And after they retrieved the man's body, my grandfather gathered the men around and he said, do you see what happens when you don't listen to orders? You die. And they didn't lose another man in the rest of the war because they listened to orders.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ this morning, I want to ask you this question. Are you willfully neglecting the orders of your good shepherd? He cares for, according to your text, the last word, your souls. He is a shepherd of your souls. And you are not doing yourselves any favor and you are

actually endangering yourselves when you do not listen to the shepherd's orders. I'm sure you're in your life, there are many times, where you are tempted to think you have a good excuse for not listening to the shepherd's orders in your life. I'm sure that man who lost his life thought he had a good reason for not listening to my grandfather's orders. But he didn't, and you don't. You do not have a good reason to not listen to his voice. You do not have a good reason to not long for his protection, to not desire him to feed you, to not want him to lead you. And so this morning, listen to him. It's good for you. Don't view these laws as being these hindrances to a better life. View his voice and what he tells you about who he is and what he's done for you as being what you need for your life, for your very souls.

This morning, some of you I know are suffering. And I don't know exactly how you might be doing in the midst of your suffering. Spiritually speaking, I don't know how you're doing. But I do know this, there's certainly a growing temptation to sin in the midst of suffering. I know that because that's what the Bible teaches and that's what human experience universally proclaims. In the midst of suffering, there's a growing temptation to want to sin. This text is saying to you, Don't do it. This text is saying to you, yes, there is an increased desire. But do you remember what Jesus did in his suffering? He continued to entrust himself to his heavenly father and did good. And that is a calling for you too, based on this text.

Well, submit to authorities, both civil authorities, as well as submit to unjust authorities, ultimately, because Jesus is your example, but even more so because he is your redeemer. He shed his blood for you. It is now your joy to live for him.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we do praise you and ask that you would help take these truths and work them deep down into each of our hearts. We pray that we would long to listen well to the shepherd's voice. We thank you that he has spoken to us in your word and that we get to hear it every time we hear it faithfully preached or we open it up in our homes. We do know what the shepherd asks of us in large measure. And sometimes, oh Father, those commands might hit us as being less than good for us. But that's not because they are not wholly righteous and good, but because we are prone to sin, and we are prone to not always want to listen to your voice. Forgive us, O Father, increase in us zeal to obey all those whom you have placed over us. O Lord, whether we think they are unjust, or whether they are doing what we believe to be just, Unless they are asking us to sin, oh Father, may we obey them and even be good underneath their leadership. We pray all this in Jesus's name, amen.