

People Under Pressure

Honoring God by Honoring Authorities

1 Peter 2:11-25

In the previous three messages of our series, we have observed that the Apostle Peter encourages these exiled believers to bear up under the enormous pressures of their life situations. Similarly, for us to bear up under life's pressures, Pastors John and Mike Luciano have challenged us to: (1) Know Who We Are – we have been delivered and given citizenship in heaven through the shed blood of Jesus; (2) Embrace the Hope that Leads to Holiness – instead of the desperation that leads to despair; and (3) Acknowledge the Opportunity for Growth – since pressure facilitates accelerated growth.

Main Idea: People Under Pressure Honor God by Honoring Human Authorities

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 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. 13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, 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. 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. 18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 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. 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.” 1 Peter 2:11-25

Three Ways We Honor God by Honoring Authorities from 1 Peter 2:11-25:

I. Honorable Service – 1 Peter 2:11-12

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16

We honor God by our Honorable Service, despite unfavorable scrutiny; and secondly we honor God by our Honorable Submission to secular authorities.

II. Honorable Submission (1 Peter 2:13-18)

The Christian church, known as the Way, was only a few generations old, after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And it was not only identified with the Jewish nation that was conquered and subjugated by Rome; not only were Christians in Rome living as immigrants and exiles; but they were also ***persona non grata***, i.e., they were the worst kind of unwelcome, because they were believed to be arsonists, seditionists, outlaws, and a threat to the Roman way of life.

But Peter twice instructs these Jesus-followers to “be subject”:

A.) First, Peter says, “be subject to every human institution”:

Peter appeals to the motives of these believers by characterizing this submission as being “*for the Lord's sake*,” and as “*the will of God*.” Our moral responsibility as Jesus followers, is to pray for our government leaders, to wish the best for them. To ask God to give them wisdom and godly insight into their decisions. We are **bound as believers to be God-honoring “subjects”** to our American human institutions and its leaders.

Jeremiah 29:4-7 reminds us that we are not just to tolerate, or to endure, the secular society in which we live, but to actually work and pray for its good. The word from the Lord, delivered by Jeremiah, to Jewish exiles living in Babylon:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Jeremiah 29:4-7

B.) Secondly, Peter says to “be subject” to earthly masters (v. 19):

Not only are we to be subject to human institutions, but we are also taught by God's words through Peter, to honor our “masters.”

There are at least 3 types of earthly “masters” to which the Bible says believers are subject:

- 1) Governing authorities**
- 2) Commercial authorities**
- 3) Spiritual authorities**

The **Reasoning**, as Peter stresses, is so that Jesus Christ will be made known, and God will be glorified:

“And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col 3:17)

“And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col 3:23)

III. Honorable Suffering – 1 Peter 2:19-25

Pastor John spoke so well to us last week about how pressure is an opportunity for growth. Athletes are taught that “pressure is a privilege.” This is the recognition that the pressures of disciplined training, the risks of competition, and even the dangers of injury accompany the privilege of representing your team, the thrill of emerging victorious, and the accolades that result from representing your home team.

It is this theme with which Peter concludes this passage, reminding the churches of Asia Minor, that God’s grace abounds in suffering. God gives us the grace to suffer well, and he reveals more of Himself in the midst of suffering.

Paul’s words to the church in Corinth are so appropriate here: In the midst of Paul’s own personal struggle, which he begged God to take away, Paul writes, *“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* 2 Corinthians 12:9

Peter reiterates twice that *“this is **a gracious** thing in God’s sight, ...when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.”*

Don’t miss the word that Peter uses here: to submit, even to unjust treatment, is a **gracious** thing. In other words, to submit to **unjust** treatment—even when you could **justify** disobeying or disrespecting a master, supervisor, or authority figure—**to submit instead, is a sign of God’s grace in you**, a submission, a benevolence, and a meekness that goes beyond what you can muster in your human strength. Indeed, it is God’s power working and showing through you, when you do submit, Peter says. To suffer in this way is the very essence, Peter says, of “following in Jesus’ steps.”

“To this you have been called...” to *“follow in Christ’s steps.”* Through our suffering, God is working in us, and through us, to reveal more of Himself (1) to our earthly masters; and (2) to us.

Main Idea: People Under Pressure Honor God by Honoring Authorities...
Tr: ...when we Seek to Serve Honorably, Submit Honorably, and Suffer Honorably.

Under Pressure? Don’t allow service or submission or even suffering to cause you to become bitter, resentful, or to subscribe to false gospels, trust in the provision that Jesus has made for you, and for the work that He desires to do in you and through you.

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *NIV Study Bible* – Kenneth Barker, General Editor (1985)
- *Wiersbe Bible Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (2007)
- *1-2 Peter St. Andrew’s Expositional Commentary* – R.C. Sproul (2011)
- *Greek Hebrew Key Study Bible* – Spiros Zodhiates, General Editor (1985)
- *1&2 Peter, Jude: Sharing Christ’s Sufferings* – Helm & Hughes (2008)
- *New American Commentary: 1&2 Peter, Jude* – Thomas Schreiner (2003)
- *MacArthur NT Commentary: 1 Peter* – John MacArthur (2004)