

SOMEBODY'S WATCHING YOU!

1 Peter 2:11-25 “¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul, ¹² by keeping your conduct excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good works, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation. ¹³ Be subject for the sake of the Lord 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 good. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing good you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ Act as free people, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil but *use it* as slaves of God. ¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brethren, fear God, honor the king.

¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are crooked. ¹⁹ For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unrighteously. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer *for it*, you endure, this *finds* favor with God. ²¹ For to this you have been called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps, ²² who did no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; ²³ who being reviled, was not reviling in return; while suffering, He was uttering no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously. ²⁴ Who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that having died to sin, we live to righteousness; by His wounds you were healed. ²⁵ For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

The central section of Peter's first letter (2:11-3:12) focuses upon submission in the life of a believer! Unfortunately, submission has become identified with inferiority and forced servility. However, submission does not mean slavery or subjugation!

Submission is simply the recognition of Almighty God's authority in the lives of His creatures. It is the recognition that God established the home, the government, and His church. Therefore, He has the authentic right to tell how these institutions should operate and how we should act. God wants us to exercise authority, but before we can exercise authority, we must know how to function UNDER authority!

Peter applied the theme of submission to the life of the believer as a CITIZEN (2:11-17), a WORKER (2:18-25), a SPOUSE (3:1-7), and a CHURCH MEMBER (3:8-12).

Why should believers submit to authority in living obedient Christian lives?

1. For the Sake of the Lost (2:11-12)

As believers, we must constantly remember *who we are*:

1) We are **God's beloved children**! In his two epistles, Peter reminded his readers of God's love for them. This is a very important reminder because there is nothing about us that God should love—we constantly fail Him in our devotion and obedience. So why does He love us sinners? He loves us because of His only begotten son, Jesus! Of course, He loves Jesus—*"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17). In addition, He loves us—He loves us so much *"that He gave His only Son"* (John 3:16).

Our love for our Lord Jesus ought to motivate us to live godly lives that honor our Savior—in fact, Jesus said, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* (John 14:23). However, obligation is a very ineffective motivation for obedience. However, devotion is a much stronger incentive: *"If a man love me, he will keep my commandments"* (John 14:23).

The problem we face is conflicting loyalty! We are God's beloved children, but we are strangers and pilgrims in this world. We are resident aliens who are citizens of another country—the kingdom of God in heaven. Like the patriarchs of old, we are temporary in this life while enroute to the heavenly city (cf. Hebrews 11:8-16). Though this world is not our home, we are committed to living comfortably in this *foreign* land.

2) We are **soldiers** involved in a spiritual war! There are both spiritual forces and personal desires we battle that want to defeat us. Our battle is NOT with flesh and blood—the people around us—but passions within (Galatians 5:16-26) and spiritual forces without (Ephesians 6:12). It is constant warfare that we face, and we must stay on guard!

3) We are **witnesses** to those who do not have a relationship with Jesus, our Savior! Unsaved people are everywhere, and they are watching us, judging us, and Looking for excuses to reject the gospel! If our witness is to have credibility, we must live *honest* lives that gives credibility to our faith in Jesus.

Of course, our witness much more than *talk*—it must be confirmed by our *walk*! Our good works must back up our good words (cf. Matthew 5:16; James 2:26)! Peter encouraged his reader to witness to the unsaved by word and deed so that on the *day of visitation* God might visit them and save them!

2. For the Lord's Sake (2:13-17)

Everything we say or do should be for the glory of the Lord and the good of His kingdom! Peter was careful to point out that Christians are representative of Jesus Christ for good or bad! It is our responsibility to “advertise God’s virtues” (cf. 1 Peter 2:9). This is especially true when it comes to our relationship to the government and to people in authority. Christians are responsible to obey the law (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-2).

For example, when Daniel and His three friends refused to obey the king’s dietary regulations, but they did so in a way that honored the king and respected the authorities. They were not rebels! They were careful not to embarrass the official in charge, and they stood their ground. In other words, they glorified God and at the same time honored the authority of the king.

Peter and the apostles faced a similar challenge after Pentecost (Acts 4-5). The Sanhedrin commanded them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, but Peter and the apostles refused to obey. They did not cause a rebellion or deny the authority of the council. They submitted to the council, but they refused to stop preaching! They showed respect to the leaders even though the council leaders were opposed to the gospel.

It is important to respect the office even when we cannot respect the person in office. As much as possible, we should seek to cooperate with the government and obey the law. However, we must never allow the law to cause us to violate our conscience or disobey God’s Word!

For example, the government has no right to control the pulpit of church affairs, but it has every right to control matters that relate to safety and building construction codes and operation.

When we are acting as the servants of God to accomplish the will of God, we are serving “*for the Lord’s sake*.” Christians submit themselves to authority because they are first submitted to Christ.¹ God desires that we silence critics by doing good, not by opposing legal authority. If we are sincerely submitted to authority “*for the Lord’s sake*,” we will show honor and respect to all who deserve it.

¹Wiersbe, Warren W.. Be Hopeful (1 Peter): How to Make the Best of Times Out of Your Worst of Times (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 72). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

3. For Our Own Sake (2:18-25)

In this pericope, Peter addresses the Christian slaves in the congregations and continued his emphasis on the importance of submission. Apparently, some of the converted slaves thought that spiritual freedom also granted personal and political freedom—their desire for freedom created problems for themselves and the churches.

Paul addressed this matter in his letter to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 7:20-24) and in his letter to Philemon. Ultimately, it was the gospel that was instrumental in overthrowing the Roman Empire, as well as the institution of slavery, even though the early church did not preach against either.

Although our scripture specifically addresses the issue of slavery, these principles are typically applied to employees. Christian employers must never take advantage of employees. Employees are to submit to those who are in authority, whether kind or unkind. Employees should do a good day's work and honestly earn their pay.

If a Christian employee is wronged by an unbelieving co-worker or supervisor, for conscience' sake, he must "take it" even though he is not in the wrong. His relationship to God is much more important than his relationship to men. A dedicated Christian can take it when he is in the wrong, but it takes a dedicated believer to "take it" when he is in the right. We must depend upon God granting us the necessary grace to submit and take it to glorify God!

It is our tendency to fight back and demand our rights—that is the natural reaction of the unsaved! However, our response must do much more than the unsaved do (Luke 6:32-34). It requires a Spirit-filled Christian to submit and let God fight His battles (Romans 12:16-21).

Peter encouraged the suffering slaves by referencing Jesus:

1) **He is our example in His life** (vv. 21-23). Jesus, the Son of God, suffered at the hands of the authorities. Jesus demonstrated that a person could be loved by God and living in the will of God and still suffer unjustly! The Lord's humility and submission were not evidence of weakness, but of power! As committed believers, we want to closely follow the will of God and imitate the example of Jesus.

2) **He is our substitute in His death** (v. 24). Jesus died as the sinner's substitute! Jesus did not die as a martyr—He died as a Savior, a sinless substitute! Christ was wounded that we might be healed! He died that we might live! Because we died with Him, we are *dead to sin* (Romans 6) so that we might "live unto righteousness!"

3) **He is our Watchful Shepherd in heaven** (v. 25). In the Old Testament, the sheep died for the shepherd, but at Calvary, the Shepherd died for the sheep (John

10). He seeks the wayward sheep to bring him back to the shelter. Once the sheep is safely in the Shepherd's care, He watches over them lest they stray—the Savior in glory watches over His sheep to protect and perfect them (Hebrews 13:20-21).

The wonderful truth is this: As we live godly lives and submit in time of suffering, we are following the example of Jesus and becoming more like Him! The unsaved world is watching us, but so is our Shepherd in heaven.

Therefore, we have nothing to fear. We can confidently submit to Him and know that He will work together everything for our good and for His glory (Romans 8:28)!