

Title: A Mission of Submission
Date: September 30, 2018
Subject: Properly relating to authority
Scripture: 1 Peter 2:13 - 25

Jean and I went out the other day. The evening started out badly when a cop pulled me over for going 55 in a 25 mile zone. He got testy when I told him I didn't have to submit to his and others people's standards. Then at the restaurant, I wanted chicken tenders, not the option of 3 or 5 but 4 and at the price of the 3 piece meal. I told them I didn't have to submit to some menu. When they didn't cater to what I wanted, I posted a scathing review on FaceBook. And since it was my birthday, I thought it would be fun to go for a plane ride. They said I needed a license to fly the plane or at least go with an instructor and pay. No way was I going to submit to their standards. I drove tractors. I can fly a plane. I snuck back during the night and let the air out of the tires of all the planes. And don't get me started about the garbage pickup. I want mine to be picked up on Monday, between 10 and 11. The company said I needed to submit to their Friday schedule, so I dumped all the garbage out of the bin on Tuesday. I figured I gave them an extra day.

Not that much truth in that story. We've gone out to eat and I've ordered chicken tenders and I've driven tractors. And it was my birthday.

The purpose of the story is to introduce that nasty word submit and to show that we submit in dozens of ways everyday – as a sleeper to the alarm clock, employees to supervisor, patient to doctor, student to teacher, at grocery store to the cashier about the amount to pay.

Most people have a negative reaction to submission. Submit is a military term meaning to arrange under. The Army has a whole series of ranks from lowly privates to multi-starred generals. Just by signing up, the enlistee yields a whole bunch of personal rights. The lower echelons submit to those in authority above them. There's another nasty word – authority. People like to be their own authority, to view themselves as more important, that their idea needs to be listened to and need to be given respect.

Our text calls on the Christ follower to submit in specific life situations, even when treated unfairly, when life is unfair. The teaching is connected with suffering to show submission in even trying circumstances.

Before go any farther, here's another definition of submission. "Submission is an attitude of respect that results in obedience to authority and positive good deeds" (Steven J. Cole).

Peter begins with an overall statement about submission. It's intriguing that the Lord chose to speak this truth through Peter. He was a hard-headed, rugged fisherman who was used to being independent. There was no one to boss him around. Just him and the wind and the waves of the sea. He was a man of action, trying to defend Jesus by cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. He was frequently the first to speak. Maybe he had a type A personality. He was part of the disciples' discussion about who would be greatest in the kingdom

enabling Jesus to explain that his followers weren't to lord it over others (Matthew 20:20-28). He even rebuked Jesus for the notion the Lord would have to submit himself to the mistreatment instigated by the religious leaders (Matthew 16:21, 22). Later Jesus told Peter how the disciple would submit himself to martyrdom (John 21:18, 19).

I. Submission starts with the Lord vv. 13, 21 - 25

READ v. 13a. In the middle of this clause we're immediately introduced to the idea that we are to submit because of the Lord. The thought is dropped until v. 21 where Christ's submission is brought up as our example. How did he submit? Peter dips into Old Testament prophecy from Isaiah. READ v. 22. Jesus didn't sin as we'd expect he wouldn't since he was perfect. He didn't speak or act in a deceitful manner. There was no half-truth, no lies, no deviousness in his actions or words.

The focal point of Christ's submission was the crucifixion. READ v. 23. Peter was a witness of some of the events of Christ's trials and crucifixion. He heard more details from other followers. The intent of this verse isn't so much to detail the result of Christ's sacrifice. That comes in 24 & 25. Here he focuses on Christ's reaction to extremely unfair treatment. The accusations made against him were totally false. They called him every name in the book. They stripped him of his dignity. They forced him to endure one of the most brutal deaths perpetrated against another human.

Through it all He didn't retaliate. He didn't respond with similar insults. He didn't revert to name calling. He didn't threaten them by saying he wasn't going to be their friend or by the vague "You're going to get yours" or the specific "You're going to suffer in hell for this!" Jesus rarely spoke during the mockery of a trial and fulfilled the prophecy – "like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Submission was also given to God. READ 23c. Jesus entrusted himself to the Father. As he said in the Garden of Gethsemane – "Not my will, but yours." Through it all he was an agent of grace for we who were hostile toward God.

We are to copy the example of Christ. We aren't to sin in our lack of submission. No retaliation. Not engage in being deceitful where we say one thing and mean another. Watch what we say and how we say it. Trust selves to the Lord. We are to be agents of grace.

We go back to the beginning of the text where we see the first institution to whom we are to submit.

II. Submission to authorities vv. 13, 14

"Every authority instituted among men." Who did the instituting? Who came up with the idea? God. "There is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves" (Romans 13:1, 2). "Indirectly, when one disobeys a human ruler he disobeys God, who ordained the system of human government" (NIV Study Bible note on 1 Peter 2:13).

What is meant by authority? The *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* speaks of authority as “a power or right to direct the actions or thoughts of others. Authority is a power or right, usually because of rank or office, to issue commands and to punish for violations.”

The purpose of rulers is to punish wrong and celebrate what is right. This the ideal purpose, role, function of government. It's supposed to be for the good of the people. Bring about peace, justice, protection, maintain good order, and punish wrongdoers. Some rail against government legislating morality. That's basically the intent of law, designating what is okay to do and what isn't. History shows that without government there'd be anarchy. Maybe you've seen commercials for *The Purge* (movie and TV). The premise is that for one night there is no law. People can get away with murder. Sinners need to be restrained and the earth is full of them, people like us with a sin nature. Even a bad government provides the authority and structure for relative safety.

The “every authority” is pretty inclusive. Specifics are given – king, governors. The king of v. 13 is sometimes translated emperor, the highest government official in Peter's day. And the emperor was Nero. He wasn't exactly best buddies with Christians. Peter was martyred during his reign. It wasn't just big-name Christ followers who were persecuted. Nero blamed the fire that consumed large parts of Rome on Christians. If we'd been alive during that time and someone accused us of following Christ, we could be used for entertainment of the masses by being thrown to the lions in the Coliseum. Nero might have us wrapped in animal skins and light us on fire to be street lights for his parties.

We've got it good compared to what Biblical people faced. We'll learn more in Sunday School about Daniel's experience in godless and repressive Babylon. Nehemiah spoke of the kings who “rule over our bodies and our cattle as they please” (Nehemiah 9:37). We have it much better compared with what persecuted believers in other parts of the world have endured. Believers in North Korea, the MidEast, Russia, China and Vietnam have been and are imprisoned, beaten and killed. No one is demanding we offer sacrifices to false gods. No one is telling us that we can't read the Bible. No one is telling that we can't meet together to worship. No one is telling us to denounce Jesus or die.

Submit by endeavoring to do good. V. 15 speaks of God's will, meaning this is something we should do. Doing good has the capacity to silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. This is a reiteration of v. 12. Live good lives so that people will see good deeds. Two organizations that do some of the best relief effort are Samaritan's Purse and the Salvation Army. Though lots of people don't agree with their belief system it's really hard to argue with their demonstration of caring for both the community of believers and those who couldn't care less about God.

Believers are to continue to do good. Get involved as a good citizen in community and country to meet needs, in what people say matters – education, community improvement. We're to live as free people but we aren't to use our freedom to do evil. Evil would be sinning or doing what we want without constraints by authorities. It's improper to say that since we're citizens of heaven we don't have to obey human laws like traffic rules or hunting regulations or property rights. Another name for that is anarchy.

V. 17 tells us to fear God and honor the king. When the Jewish religious leaders persecuted Peter, he told them, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 4:19; 5:29). Our supreme allegiance is to God. We are his servants. He is the one to be feared. He holds eternal consequences in his hands. He is the one who is sovereign. He orchestrates and allows things according to his plan. He overrules all other human and non-human entities. Human rulers don’t have that power.

Honor the king. Sometimes the honor goes to the position and not the person. Certainly Peter didn’t think Nero was honorable. Paul didn’t think Caesar was the next thing to God. They still gave honor and acted respectfully toward them.

It’s more important to obey God rather than human authority. This brings up the issue of civil disobedience. Bryan Clark (sermon 10/1/17), “It seems there are many people today, including many Christians, who are under the impression that we have the right to civil disobedience any time we disagree with policies or decisions that are made by the government. It’s important to understand that is not what Peter is saying. He’s actually saying just the opposite—that we need to respect the fact that government is in place by God and as the people of God, for the Lord’s sake, we submit to that. It means we respect that; we value that; we operate as good citizens within the system. Civil disobedience is restricted for those moments when the government requires us as Christians to do something that is immoral or offensive in the eyes of God. At that point we have to choose faithfulness to God over faithfulness to the government. But it is not an excuse to do as we please and disrespect those in authority every time there’s some sort of a decision or policy that is contrary to your opinion.”

The three friends of Daniel refused to bow to the image of the false god and were thrown into the fiery furnace. When ancient Roman believers were persecuted for worshipping Christ and not the emperor, they went underground into the catacombs, the sewers of the city. They developed the secret sign of drawing part of the fish symbol in the dirt to see if a person would complete the rest and show he was a Christ follower. The church in Vietnam and China and communist Russia met secretly in secluded locations at odd hours. They developed ways to fly under the radar in order to survive.

I skipped the first part of v. 17. “Show proper respect to everyone.” This includes good rulers and bad rulers and all sorts of people. We are to act respectfully toward all people. There’s a segment of the population that’s to receive better treatment. They are the brotherhood and sisterhood of believers. They are to be targets. . . of our love.

Another authority area is brought up in 18 with a focus on the word respect. The authority is the master/owner of slaves which is better translated as servants and specifically household servants. Household servants, including freedmen and slaves, were owned by the master who had absolute power over them. They weren’t race based slaves associated with modern history. Some were captives of war. Some sold themselves into servanthood so they’d have a better life. They could have families, own property and buy their freedom after 15 years or so of service. Many were highly skilled professionals -- doctors, teachers, musicians, actors.

This verse and others like it don't condone slavery but gave guidelines for people who found themselves in that situation. The Bible was misused by some to say slavery was okay. It wasn't acceptable and people who understood God's standards of human treatment used the Bible to get slavery outlawed.

God is saying that people who are in this kind of situation are to recognize they are under the authority of another. They're to show respect to both the kind and the harsh. It is a way to get through life and live commendably before God which we've already touched on.

III. Submit for our sake vv. 19-21

Submission leads to credit. God is pleased if one of his children suffers unjustly, simply because is a believer or because of doing good and endures it. The person is aware of God and his call on his life about how he is to act. It's commendable before God. There's no credit for being punished for doing something wrong, like for bombing an abortion clinic, and then claiming to be suffering unjustly. God is keeping score.

"The way to please God, to serve His will, and to experience His blessing, is for Christians not to be rebels against the prevailing order of society, but rather positively, submissively and dutifully to discharge the various responsibilities which the common relations of life put upon them. Christians should, therefore, be God-fearing, loyal and obedient citizens, considerate neighbors, diligent and faithful employees, uncomplaining victims of unjust treatment...sympathetic and generous in personal relations, using every opportunity actively to forsake evil and to do good" (Tyndale Commentary, p. 106).

Submission is part of our calling. V. 21 states we were called to suffer for doing good and endure it. That's part of who we are. It's part of how we fulfill our main calling which is to lead people to Jesus. We were like sheep going astray. We've returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. Our primary purpose is to bring people to the Good Shepherd.

After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 ironworker Frank Silecchia helped to recover bodies. He noticed two steel beams in the shape of a cross standing upright in the middle of all the debris. Appointing himself as the steward of the striking symbol of God's love, he often took heartbroken visitors to see it. Many were comforted by the silent testimony to God's presence in the worst of tragedies. When journalist Barbara Walters came with tearful friends who'd lost a son in the catastrophe, Frank simply led them to the cross.

Howard Hendricks told a story of being on an airplane that was delayed on the ground. Passengers grew increasingly impatient. An obnoxious man kept venting his frustrations on the stewardess. She responded graciously and courteously in spite of his abuse. After they got airborne and things calmed down, Hendricks called the woman aside and said, "I want to get your name so that I can write a letter of commendation to your employer." He was surprised when she responded, "Thank you, sir, but I don't work for American Airlines." He sputtered, "You don't?" "No, I work for my Lord Jesus Christ." She went on to explain that before each flight she and her husband would pray together that she'd be a good representative of Christ on her job.