

Peter and His Epistles

Lesson #10: Submission to Government

I. Godly living in a pagan society

Two bookends for “noble life”:

- A. Live a life that serves as an example. When examined, that life will glorify God (2:12). Example: Daniel (Dan. 6:4)
- B. Live a life that does not repay evil with evil (3:9) so you can inherit a blessing. Example: Stephen (Acts 7:60)
- C. In between those “bookends” – Submit
 1. The concept: “ To have an overwhelming desire to give of yourself to the other person for their benefit – no matter what it costs you”
 2. Eph. 5:21 “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
 3. “Hypotasso”: It means to plan in order, to place in an orderly fashion. It is a military term meaning to subordinate oneself to another.
 4. It means to subject oneself to the divinely willed order of society. “The thought is that a Christian is one who does not seek his own interests but rather assumes a “voluntary ordination of himself to others.” (Expositor’s Commentary, pg. 233)
 5. There are a variety of submissions required:
 - a. Children to parents (Eph. 6:1), slaves to masters (Eph 6:5-8), masters to slaves (Eph. 6:9), wives to husbands (Eph. 5:22), husbands to wives (Eph. 5:25), younger men to older men (1 Pet. 5:5) and everyone to those in authority over them.
 - b. Rom. 13:1: “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”
 - c. 1 Pet. 2:13: “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority.”
 6. The reason for the submission: “For the Lord’s sake” (vs. 13)

II. Submission to the Government – 1 Peter 2:13-17 (Titus 3:1)

- A. Peter’s view of government is not different to that of Paul’s. In Romans 13:1, Paul asserts that all powers are ordained by God. Peter agrees, he is just focusing on the human aspect of that government. His appeal is not a legal command,

but it is an appeal based on a “gospel motive”...submit because it is for the Lord’s sake.

(Note too, that there is no special form of government advocated in the New Testament.)

B. “Ordinance” or “human authority” (something instituted by man)

Obey the law of the land. Government is a divine institution (Rom 13:1, Ecc. 8:2, Matt. 17:27, 22:21)

Examples:

1. Before the flood (Gen. 4-6) – great wickedness
2. After the flood (Gen. 9:6) – capital punishment for murder
3. Old Testament law (Ex. 20) – 613 “separate commandments covering all phases of human life and society”
4. New Testament law (Mark 12:30-31)
5. Laws of Hammurabi (Babylonian law – 1772 BC, 282 laws)
6. Roman Law (mid 5th century BC – 5th century AD) “No code completely broke with the Roman tradition. Rather the provisions of Roman law were pitted into a more coherent system and expressed in the national language.”

C. Examples of the authority:

1. “Emperor” (supreme authority) or king – Nero
2. “Governors” (procurators, procounsels charged with carrying out the king’s will) – Pilate, Felix (Acts 24), Festus (Acts 25). Bottom line: the law is the law and it must be administered by someone.

D. Peter is addressing ordinary situations not persecutions (3:14, 17; 4:1, 12-19)

Note: there are exceptions to this rule of order. Consider:

1. Dan. 3 - Three Hebrew young men
2. 1 Sam. 22:17 - Saul’s bodyguard
3. Acts 4:19 - Peter and John

E. Two functions of government officials

1. To punish – literally means to avenge
2. To praise – examples: Pharaoh to Joseph (Gen. 41:38) Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel (Dan. 2:46-48)

III. So what? Consider the summary of the social obligations of Christians (2:17)

- A. Honor all men – proper respect. All are creations of God, made in this image.

- B. Love the brotherhood – the bonds of Christ require us to “regard with favor” our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - C. Fear God – reverential awe is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10)
 - D. Honor the King - Consider Paul’s example in Acts 23:1-5 (quoting Ex. 22:28)
-

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think our society is so opposed to any form of submission? How does the western mindset of individualism affect the biblical mind set?
2. Is it easy to submit to a corrupt, poor functioning government? What’s the biblical principle at work?