

September 14, 2025

1 Peter 2:13-17

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.

Scriptures for further study:
Romans 13:1

Titus 3:1

Romans 13:1-2

“Peter gave a command that represents a general truth, that is, he specified what Christians should do in most situations when confronting governing authorities. Believers should be inclined to obey and submit to rulers. Yet their authority is not absolute. They do not infringe upon God’s lordship, and hence they should be disobeyed if they command Christians to contravene God’s will.”

-Thomas Schreiner



Grace and Submission Part I

1 Peter 2:13-17

BIG IDEA: Since it is the will of God to wisely submit to those in authority, let us serve Him by doing good for the sake of witness and freedom in Christ, for Christ.

OUTLINE

1. The Calling to Submission

2. The Motive for Submission

3. The Fruit of Submission

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Would your friends or children say that you respect the governing authorities based upon your comments about them?
2. How does Peter tell us that God uses civil authorities in 1 Peter 2:13-14?
3. How is a Christian to respond when civil authorities enforce laws that require a Christian to disobey God’s will? Are you prepared to suffer the consequences for resisting obeying government commands that contradict God’s commands?
4. In 1 Peter 2:13 and 15, what do you see as a Christian’s motive for submitting to governing authorities? What does Peter mean by “the will of God”? Read Romans 13:1-2. How are Christians honoring God by submitting to governing authorities?
5. What does Peter say is the fruit of submission in 1 Peter 2:15-17?
6. In what ways can you imitate Jesus by submitting to governing authorities?

“We are not to obey the authorities in everything, but only in what is consistent with the will of God. When civil disobedience is required, we should be willing to suffer for the sake of God’s truth.”

-John Piper

“Government is ordained by God, and God has appointed civil authorities to maintain peace and order. Christians are commanded to submit to them, unless the government requires them to do something that directly contradicts God’s will.”

-R.C. Sproul

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Peter believes that holding to the gospel will make us not problematic revolutionaries but humble and honorable citizens. This underscores yet another distinction between Christians and those who trust only in the things of this world and who consequently are always seeking power and privilege (Ps. 20:7).

- ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible

Praise to Jesus – Praise Jesus that in His common grace, He still provides governing authorities to restrain evil in the world and to promote goodness and virtue. Praise Him that He is the ultimate authority over all earthly rulers and that you have been called to a greater submission to Him.

Repentance through Jesus – Confess that all too often we walk in fear instead of freedom, that in our hearts we are inclined to rebel instead of submit...that we lack a greater faith vision for God's sovereignty over all things, including earthly authorities. May we repent for not seeing suffering as a part of the Christian life, particularly suffering that may come because of standing on our convictions. May we confess the sin of walking more in comfort than we do in truth.

Consecration for Jesus – Let us commit ourselves to a life not of begrudging obedience but a conscious choice to honor God by respecting the structures He has ordained, even when it's difficult. And to commit ourselves to yielding to God's authority above all things, even at the expense of our comfort. To be better stewards of the Gospel by doing good through a life of submission.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Since this passage deals with following authority. Play a game of “Simon Says” or “Follow the Leader” with your children and talk about following rules and following the leader.
2. This passage talks of a Christian’s call to submission and to our freedom. What do submission and freedom mean? How does Peter direct us to balance these two? (Submission means to come under the authority of someone. Freedom means that we can do what we want. Peter teaches us that as Christians we are set free from all other authorities when we proclaim Jesus as Lord. Yet we are called to voluntarily come under the earthly authorities that God has established since He is a God of order. See 1 Corinthians 14:33.)
3. Which earthly authorities does Peter refer to in this passage? (He starts by saying “every human institution” and then refers to governing rulers such as emperors and governors.)
4. What does the phrase “for the Lord’s sake” mean? (It is an important reminder that we voluntarily submit in such a way that God gets the glory and He is shown as the ultimate ruler and king.)
5. What does Peter mention in verse 14 that shows us one of God’s purposes for governing authorities? (We read that the governing authorities are to “punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.” God sets up governments for our protection.)
6. How does Peter describe our freedom in verse 16? (He wrote that we are not free to do evil. Instead, we are free to testify to the fact that we are “servants of God.”)
7. How can we live this passage out this week?

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 13:1-7

Colossians 3:23-24

Galatians 5:13

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 13:1-7

Colossians 3:23-24

Daniel 3:16-18

Acts 5:27-29

Titus 3:1-2

1. Peter starts this section by saying, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.” What does it mean to submit “for the Lord’s sake,” and how does this change the way we view submission to earthly authorities?

2. In verses 13–14, Peter says that civil authorities are sent by God “to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.” How does that shape your understanding of government? What’s one example of how you’ve seen government fulfill or fail in that role?

3. Verse 15 says that it is God’s will for us to silence ignorant talk by doing good. How might your actions as a Christian influence the way others view Christ and the Church?

4. 1 Peter calls believers both “free people” and “servants of God” in verse 16. How can someone be both at the same time? How does being a servant of God shape the way we use our freedom?

5. In verse 17, Peter gives four short commands: honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the emperor. How are each of these connected to one another? Which is hardest for you to live out, and why?

6. Think about some of the authorities in your life right now—parents, teachers, coaches, bosses, or government leaders. What would it look like to reflect God’s grace and submission in how you interact with them this week?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. These verses show how the Christian way is directly opposed to the spirit of our world today. In our society, people demand their rights, and freedom is often defined as freedom from responsibility or freedom to live however we choose to live.

Question: How do these verses, instead, show what is the Christian way and the Christian version of freedom?

2. Even while we as Christians are “strangers” here on earth, and we are a holy nation of God, and citizens of heaven, yet we are also citizens and members of our earthly societies.

Question: What are some ways we are to live as good citizens here, and why is doing so important?

3. Some people will always have ill will towards Christians or speak falsely against us.

Question: How are we to answer our critics?

4. Verse 17 makes the bold and sweeping command to “show proper respect to everyone” (i.e., “every human creature”).

Question: Why do you think God made this command? (Hint: see Genesis 1:26-27)

5. Are there ever times when the ruling authorities should be resisted?

Should we always do what our earthly authorities command of us? What are some possible exceptions?

6. Who are some of the authorities in your life currently? In what ways can you show each of them respect and submission?

Living Hope: How God's Glorious Grace in Jesus Shapes and Empowers Us by the Spirit to Live with Gospel Grit in a Foreign Land.



Daniel in the Lion's Den by Briton Riviere, 1872

About the Artist: Briton Rivière, a British painter known for his animal paintings, particularly those featuring dogs and wild animals with deep emotion and dramatic flair, came from an artistic family. His father, William Rivière, was a drawing master and art teacher. Rivière initially studied at the University of Oxford, drawn to literary and historical themes, but later developed a fascination with animals and became renowned for his ability to imbue them with emotional depth and narrative presence.

About the Artwork

"Daniel in the Lion's Den" (1872) depicts the biblical story with lifelike lions, a popular and symbolic theme in Victorian England. It explores faith under trial, divine protection, and moral strength against tyranny, themes that resonated with Victorian audiences during a time when Christian values and moral courage were emphasized.

In Riviere's painting, Daniel's calm, unarmed demeanor symbolizes absolute trust in God. His gaze suggests prayer, hope, or spiritual communion, not fear. He represents the righteous man steady in the face of evil. The lions, though fierce, are subdued, a miracle of restraint. Riviere doesn't show angels or supernatural intervention; the restraint is invisible, spiritual. Some lions are relaxed, others alert, suggesting the tension between nature and divine command. Each lion has a distinct personality, reflecting the mystery of creation. The focused light on Daniel recalls God's presence in darkness. The murky den symbolizes the unknown, death, or temptation, yet Daniel remains untouched. Unlike dramatic biblical scenes, there's no movement or violence. The silence emphasizes Daniel's victory through trust, countering 19th-century action-heavy storytelling with a meditation on spiritual endurance.

1 Peter and Daniel in the Lion's Den

This painting, based on a biblical scene, helps us understand the overall theme of the New Testament letter. 1 Peter teaches Christians that as God's elect, they are called to live holy lives of faithful witness, enduring suffering with hope rooted in God's grace, while embracing their Gospel identity as a holy, royal priesthood in a hostile world. Like Daniel in the Old Testament, we are strangers in a distant place. Jesus told his disciples and us in the Gospel of John that we are "not of this world." Hebrews reminds the church that "this world is not their permanent home." Even within 1 Peter, God's people are called "sojourners and exiles."

Like Daniel, the darkness of this broken, sinful, and fallen world is always present. While we may never face a physical lion, Peter's first letter tells us that our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, and the spiritual forces of evil are ever present. Yet, like Daniel, we must face the opposition with a Gospel poise, knowing that which is unseen is more powerful than what is seen and against us. Peter uses the language of "standing firm" in God's grace as we encounter all forms of darkness.

Church, may we see the beauty of 1 Peter in its overall message: God's glorious grace leading us to Gospel grit as sojourners in a dark world. But may we not just perceive its beauty but also embrace God's unique calling in these words: stand firm!