



RESIDENT ALIENS | WEEK FOUR SERMON NOTES

Week Four: Grace Means Submission

Jesus changes everything. This is a reality we often talk about, but this is not merely bumper sticker verbiage, this is truth. The presence and power of Jesus make way for a cataclysmic shift in absolutely everything about us. Paul referred to it as “the new creation” in his letter to the church in Corinth. The old is gone and the new has come. This is the reminder that Peter has been offering to this point in his letter to the believers in Asia Minor. And from this point forward, with the resounding truth that Jesus changes everything as our backdrop, Peter moves into the concept of submission. Peter goes into great detail to illustrate that the journey towards restoration will be marked by submission. He does so by illuminating Jesus’ ability to redeem certain human interactions.

1 Peter 2:13 *Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. 16 Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. 17 Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.*

A common accusation against Jesus is that he came to develop a movement that would thereby institute anarchy. Jesus never modeled this in the slightest. He urged believers to honor Caesar by paying taxes. Paul would later

tell the church in Rome that authorities of any kind were given their power by God and used for His purposes. He would later urge Timothy to pray for all those in positions of authority whether they were believers or not. Peter very much affirms the New Testament view of earthly citizenship here, stating that it is your cooperatively doing good that will shut the mouths of ignorant people. Again, we must remember that these believers are under persecution, and though in time it will be physical persecution, at the present time it's verbal. Christians are being discredited, and one of the most common allegations lobbed against believers (then and even now) was that they were causing civil unrest. And so Peter prescribes a response that also resembles Jesus and has been prescribed by every other New Testament writer, and that is to overcome evil by doing good. Here Peter is quite literally saying... become a shockingly good citizen within the city and society that you are apart. Be reminded constantly of your freedom but don't let the existence of your freedom distract you from your true identity... a servant... not to an earthly king but to God. And then verse 17, a one-sentence summary of the calling to be a good citizen.

1. Show proper respect to everyone.

2. Love the family of believers

3. Fear (or revere) God

4. Honor the emperor.

I'm not interested in turning this into a political discussion of any kind but simply hear that list and in our current culture... with everything going on around us... what if we committed ourselves to these four things?

1 Peter 2:18 *Slaves, in reverent fear of God, submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who*

judges justly. 24 "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds, you have been healed." 25 For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Always important to note in passages like this that slavery was a far different concept in this culture than it is in our modern culture or within the history of our country for that matter. At the time this letter was written it is estimated that there were some 60 million slaves throughout the Roman empire. These individuals had become slaves by way of conquest. When Rome absorbed a kingdom, the citizens of said kingdom thereby became members of the Roman working class. One historian describes the attitude of Rome this way, "What is the point of ruling all these nations if they don't ensure that all your work is done for you?". That was the Roman view of slaves. They do absolutely everything. So it wasn't just the menial tasks it was everything else too. Doctors, teachers, musicians, secretaries, and the list goes on and on. With this understanding, we realize that the vast majority of the individuals reading this letter were in fact slaves.

So to these slaves, Peter frames the same argument as he did to citizens of a society. Out of reverence to God... submit. That's your calling and in this case, it's to a master or "boss" so to speak. Peter urges the believers to do this whether they have a good boss or a terrible boss and in fact, places the emphasis on those with terrible bosses because what good is endurance if it's easy right? Now some translations separate the thoughts of verses 18-20 and 21-25 but that would be doing us a great disservice as these ideas are very much tied together. Peter is illustrating what distinct opportunities servants have to know the heart of Jesus and to grasp the demeanor in which we are called to live in regard to other human beings. Jesus willingly laid down his rights, willingly restricted his own power and free will on behalf of other people. We are called to do the same. And so, as Peter illustrates, learning the demeanor of a servant is key in better embodying the character of Jesus.

All of this is a part of the sweeping shift from the old life to the new. All of this is a part of the process of restoration. Now, remember what we are being restored to - life in the garden. Walking with God in the cool of the day, harmony with the world around us, and peace with other people. Remember how all of that was lost - pride. It was when we seized control of our world and

the world around us that that world was broken. So it makes perfect sense that the road back there is through submission. Submission breaks pride.

But let us also remember the key illustration of wholeness we were given in the garden. The pinnacle of God's creation... the union of a husband and wife. The picture by which God would best express the relationship he desired to have with all people. That relationship was devastated by the fall and that relationship needs to be repaired. Peter has some advice as to how to do that.

1 Peter 3:1 *Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornments, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*

Peter uses a lot of words, but the message is relatively simple. Wives are called to submit to their husbands and by doing so have the opportunity to lead them to the truth. This is almost poetic when you consider that Eve's temptation leads Adam away from the truth. Wives, by submitting to their husbands and setting an example of Jesus are quite literally reversing the curse. Peter also illustrates how the gospel sets women free from the need to appease the ramifications of the curse. Remember, part of a woman's curse was that she would long for her husband. Her identity would thereby be tied to her image and how she was treated specifically by men. Did they want her? Did they desire her? Not so in the gospel. Now, a woman's identity was in Christ. There was no need to entice the eyes of a man to gain value because she already has value in Christ.

1 Peter 3:7 *Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

Husbands, you're called to the same thing. Submit. Now, there have been great errors made in the interpretation of this truth so let's get it right. Peter is not saying, "return the favor" or "when she submits to you, submit back." Peter is echoing what Paul says in Ephesians 5:21, "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." You have likely heard that marriages are like triangles. God is at one point, the man at another and the woman at another. This is profoundly true. Your duty as a spouse is to submit to one another not because either deserves it or has earned it but because of Jesus. Submit to Jesus by submitting to one another. There is no way to twist this truth that suggests that men are superior to women in any way. Peter calling women the weaker partner was not an insult... it was cultural commentary. In that culture women held very little value... so what Peter is inherently saying... love your wife that places more value on her than the world around her does. That means, love your wife in a way that suggests that she is a tool to be used for cooking, cleaning, and sexual gratification. Love your wife as a part of your very own body. Love your wife more than yourself. Love your wife the way that Jesus loved His church. You know how much Jesus loved His church... he died for it. And therein is the perfect definition of submission. Love something else enough to die to yourself on its behalf.

In an immediate sense, how would greater submission to God the Father lead to you becoming a better citizen, employee, and spouse?