



*<sup>13</sup> Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. <sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— <sup>16</sup> as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.*

*<sup>17</sup> Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

This passage tonight is a great example of how important context is in the interpretation of scripture. As I first read this, it looks like a blanket statement of having to obey whatever crazy scheme government comes up with. This was Peter speaking to believers who were undergoing tremendous persecution. This is Peter trying to tell the Church how to get along as best they could in the horrible circumstances in which they found themselves. In chapter one Peter defined our identity in Christ, and he gave us directives in how to live out that identity.

On Sunday, we looked at the first part of chapter two, and we found that Christ is our Cornerstone. He is the foundation and pattern of all that we are to be and all that we are to do as individuals and as the Church. Christ is the measuring stick for us. As we go through the trials of life, we are living stones that are being honed and chiseled to look more like Him. In these next few chapters, Peter is telling us what our behavior should look like as we try to get along with the governing authorities and with the society in which we live. He'll then speak to the relationship between us and others in the marketplace, and he'll give instructions about the relationship between a husband and a wife.

In each of these cases, Peter is talking about "getting along" in life with those around us. A great clue in understanding this passage properly is found in chapter three, verse eight.

*<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; <sup>9</sup> not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8 NKJV)*

The Greek word there translated as "one mind" is the word from which we get the word "harmony". He is telling us in this passage tonight how to live in harmony with the

government, with masters and servants, in our marriages, in our families, and in our Church. Harmony doesn't always come easy. When you're singing in harmony with others, you have to sing in such a way that your singing is in sync with the notes that they are singing. Otherwise, the result is disharmonious. You have to submit to how the music goes. You can't be off singing who you think the song should be sung. I couldn't always sing harmony. I first learned how to play harmony on my guitar. Larry asked me to sing harmony and I told him that I didn't know how to. Larry Waddell told me "just sing what you're playing. Play the harmony notes that go along with the melody that I am singing". Harmony and melody HAVE TO FOLLOW THE SCORE THAT IT WRITTEN. When you're singing in harmony, you HAVE TO SUBMIT TO THE MELODY LINE. You have to be in sync with it.

As human beings we don't like that word "submit". It's just not in our DNA. Especially as Americans, the idea of submitting to a government ruffles our eagle feathers.

v.13 Peter starts off telling us to *submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake whether to the king as supreme,<sup>14</sup> or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.*

This should not be understood to be a blanket statement to obey whatever order is passed down to us from government. It is talking about the general thought that **we should be people of law and order**. We as believers shouldn't be identified as people who are lawless, rebellious, and defiant. We are to have a general attitude of obedience and compliance to the rules that hold society together.

For example, we shouldn't be the people always speeding. It doesn't honor the Lord at all when we're always running late, and we're insistent on doing seventy in a fifty-five zone. We shouldn't be texting while we're driving (and yes, that includes me). We are supposed to keep our cars inspected and have the right tags on them. It is easy in reading this passage to immediately go to the big "what-ifs" and to skip over and ignore the things that just help us get along with the governing authorities.

Paul talks about the same thing in passages such as Romans chapter 13,

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.<sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. (Romans 13:1-2)*

v.14 Paul is saying the same thing that Peter is saying. We're to follow the rules and not respond with rebellion. Both Peter and Paul are basically forbidding lawlessness, rebellion, and defiance. Remember that Satan is referred to as the "lawless one". As a lawyer, I look at the text, and embodied in here as well is a hint of the legitimate role of government, "*the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.*" This is quite interesting. It means that government is there in part to punish lawbreakers and to reward those who do good. It makes us pause to wonder what our role is when government is doing the opposite. We live under a government now that is often defining evil as good, and good as evil. (Isaiah 5:20)

Let's remember that Peter and Paul lived in a totalitarian dictatorship in Rome. They had no voice. We live in a Democratic Republic where we have a voice in everything going on. It is **not only our right, but our duty**, to vote for leaders who uphold righteousness, and it is our duty to urge behavior that makes our country a safe and secure place in which to live. This all came into view over the last couple of years with the pandemic and the great array of diverse mandates that came out of the federal government. There were some of you who legitimately wanted to follow every mandate. I am careful to call them mandates because more often than not they were not the law of the land. They were not created with the legislative process that our Constitution requires. There were people that had legitimate concerns who felt that everyone should be vaccinated and masked. BUT, there were also others who followed their constitutional right of self-determination who did so, not in rebellion, but with real medical data that conflicted with what the CDC etc was passing down to the public. Those with legitimate concerns refused to participate in the mandates.

We even had division here at Union Grove as to how we were to all respond to what the government was saying and doing. I think that Satan took opportunity to use the pandemic as a way to attempt to divide us; and he was not successful. We worked out these differences amicably. Many of us spoke to this issue not from rebellious hearts, but from true concerns over the efficacy of what was being mandated. What confused it all even further is that none of it was the law of the land. Perhaps not in our Church, but in some Christians ended up judging one another based on the seriousness with which we heeded the "mandates". Most believers differed, not with rebellious hearts, but with genuine concerns one way or the other. We always need to approach these things with a proper heart attitude.

We need to remember too, that Peter was writing a group of people that had no voice. They lived under a totalitarian dictator. We live under a democratic form of government we have the right to speak out and oppose anything that we think is unlawful and unconstitutional. I want to repeat that not only do we have the right, but we have the

obligation to speak out. Our type of democracy was totally unknown to Peter and Paul. We have the option of democratic process to voice our opinion. What Peter and Paul are saying, is "Don't be seen as a rebellious person that is a trouble maker". Don't be the firebrands that are out there stirring stuff up.

We shouldn't take these verses and try to apply them like the letter of the law under our system. These are valid verses. But they're saying that we are to be citizens that honor the system and we're trying to do right within the system. We want to be in harmony, but there are times that we need to stand up to laws that are wrong. It is our duty to do so. I don't want to dive into the deep well of when civil disobedience is called for in the Bible. Frankly, I haven't sorted it all out totally in my own mind. We do know that it is sometimes called for, especially when the laws of the land come into conflict with what God calls us to be, say and do. Let us remember the Hebrew midwives that were ordered by the government to kill all of the Jewish male babies They refused to do something that would be disobedience to God. (Exodus 1) We also remember Daniel refusing to defile himself with the king's non-kosher foods (Daniel 1). Also, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael (Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego) who refused to bow down to the king and worship him. (Daniel 3)

Verse 16 Peter then tell us to Live as free people. Peter is talking about our freedom in Christ. That's why if the government ever tells us that we can't for example share the gospel, we will engage in civil disobedience out of a heart for love of God and not just out of rebellion. I think what Peter is saying here is a warning to not use our "freedom" to cover up a rebellious heart attitude. It is God that knows the condition of our hearts. We should always have hearts that attempt as much as depends on us to be a peace with all men. (Romans 12:18)

Verse 17 Peter then adds,<sup>17</sup> *Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

We are to honor all people. This means that we should never put people down. We should treat all people with courtesy as much as we are able to do so. That's what makes us different, and the world should see that we ARE different. Don't fight fire with fire. Every human contact you have is a chance for courtesy or conflict. Choose courtesy.

To "love the brotherhood" is so very important. We are to love one another sacrificially. You are to do good to all men, but scripture tells us ESPECIALLY TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."* (Galatians 6:10)

Peter admonishes us to “fear God”. This means to have a healthy respect and awe for God. Remember, the fool has said in his heart that there is no God. (Psalm 14:1) And remember, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Proverbs 9:10)

Lastly, Peter tells us not to fear the king, but to honor him.. That was some hard advice to give and take when Nero was in charge, covering Christians with tar and setting them on fire. This tells us to be respectful of those that are in charge. I remember when I was frustrated with President Bush Jr, I began to refer to him around the house as “Bush” this and “Bush” that. This was not a good lesson for my children. Then when Donald Trump was elected the disrespect we saw (even among some Christians) was dishonoring. Now that President Trump is gone, and President Biden is in, those Christians who disagree with his policies and presidency must be very careful to object, but always to do so with honor. This is not something that we might desire to do, but we are orderd to do so.

It's all about our heart attitude. Peter is trying to teach us how to “get along”. It might be a good idea to listen and to put this into practice.

Let us pray.