

## 1 Peter 2:13 – 3:7

### Week 4 - There's No Shortcut Home

#### Learning Objectives

- How are we called as Christians to deal with others in our lives who are in authority?
- Is submitting to authority taking the easy way out?

**Read out loud:** We're going to cover some passages from 1 Peter this week that can be quite controversial, since they talk about authority and submission. While we read and discuss these passages, we want to keep in mind Christ's example of submission to the Father and use it as the lens through which we view all of this teaching.

#### 1 Peter 2:13-25 (NIV)

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

<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

<sup>22</sup> "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

<sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> "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." <sup>25</sup> For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

**?** What authority figures are identified in this passage, and why does Peter highlight the reader's need for submission and obedience?

*Possible answers: The passage mentions governmental figures (emperors and governors) and supervisors and masters (slave masters). Peter highlights the reader's need for submission and obedience because it is following Jesus Christ's example (verse 23), rather the established Jewish custom (see text box).*

? Verse 16 says, “Do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.” Can you think of examples of how some Christians might do this today?

*Possible answers: Paul says in his letter to the Galatians, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery.” We are called as Christians to be freed from our sins and therefore fight sin, not fall into it again. There are many ways that Christians might hide their “sins of the flesh,” as Paul says in Galatians, whether they are sexual sins or anger or love of money.*

Deuteronomy 17:15 commanded the Jews to appoint one of their own as ruler: “Be sure to appoint over you a king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite.” Jews of the time had taken this to mean that they did not have to obey any ruler except for one of their own. Peter, in contrast, writes that it is the will of God to follow governmental leaders - emperors, magistrates, etc.

? How do you react when you disagree with an authority figure? How does verse 20 say that you should act?

*Possible answers: “If you suffer for doing good and endure it, this is commendable before God” is not necessarily a call to a poverty gospel or a suffering gospel, but it is a reminder that Christ suffered for our sins, and that we cannot expect not to suffer as part of our Christian walk.*

? How does Christ approach submitting to God’s authority in verse 23?

*Possible answers: Jesus submitted to God’s authority, saying, “Not my will, but yours be done.” To submit to God’s authority, he had to submit himself to earthly rulers - to the governors who arrested him, and the Pharisees who accused him.*

? What conflicts have you faced between authority, and your beliefs? Does submitting to authority feel like taking the easy way out?

*Possible answers: While this discussion need not be a “who has suffered the most for Jesus” competition, this is a chance for people to share their stories of conflicts between their beliefs and authority figures.*

Optional transition: The second part of this week’s passage now moves to a much more personal type of authority and one we’re much more familiar with. Again, it’s worth a reminder that our model for both authority and submission remains Christ’s example, both in how He submitted to the Father and how He leads the church.

## 1 Peter 3:1-7 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. <sup>3</sup> Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.

? In this context - a believing wife and an unbelieving husband - what does Peter say that "submission" looks like?

*Possible answers: Peter does not say that the wife must follow her husband instead of Jesus; instead, he commands her to win him over, not with outward beauty but with her inner self.*

? How does Peter's reference to wives as "heirs with you of the gracious gift of life" in verse 7 affect how husbands should view the "submission" that Peter mentions in verses 1-6?

*Possible answers: Submission, in Peter's view, is not dominant or all-commanding. Peter is giving husbands the responsibility of leading the family towards Christ's gift of salvation.*

? Which is easier to use to convince people - outward adornment, or inner beauty? Why?

*Possible answers: A shallow American culture treats outward beauty and adornment as the last word in persuasion; flip through any magazine, or watch any television show, and you'll find a hundred examples. It is far harder to convince others by example.*

Some other translations will translate "weaker partner" (verse 7) as "weaker vessel." In some ways, "vessel" - as in a container, the body - might be a better translation, as it helps make Peter's meaning more clear. Peter is only referring to women's physical strength, which is generally less than that of men; he's certainly not noting that they are less worthy because of this, as he's quick to call them "co-heirs." Instead, it's a call to husbands to protect their wives, as one might protect a valuable and rare but fragile container.

? What would the current cultural response be, regarding the issues of this passage (the value of the inner self and of submission for women, and the value of respect and consideration for men)? How do we as Christians struggle with these prevalent attitudes?

*Possible answers: Much of this passage would be considered backward, ignorant, or even offensive by modern American culture. The instruction to wives to submit to their husband would be considered particularly offensive, but the rest of this passage is quite counter-cultural as well.*

#### **For Discussion and Accountability**

? Do you ever want to take the easy way out in your Christian walk? What does it look like to live out the teaching in this passage instead?

? How do you live up to Christ's example in your own life, when faced with authority that disagrees with you?