

Dual Citizens: How to Handle Unjust Authority, 1 Peter 2:13-3:7, 1/6/18

Typically, in the New Year you would expect to hear a message about making resolutions-setting goals, or making a difference in 2019...but today we are going to talk about submitting to authority...particularly emperors, slave masters... What are you thinking, Nate? Before you move to impeachment, remember we are continuing our series in 1 Peter through the month of January and this is the text, chapter 2:13, we landed on today. And we don't avoid hard passages in the Bible, we believe all of it is inspired by God and relevant today. So I didn't chicken out...although I thought about it... and I'm glad I didn't because I think it is actually more timely and relevant and needed now than ever.

The big question that this text will answer is, **How should Christians respond to authority?** particularly when that authority is not one you chose for yourself. An authority you disagree with. Or is unjust. Or makes your life difficult? I wonder- if anyone has ever experienced that or are experiencing it right now? Maybe it is political authority? Laws you disagree with? A school or a teacher? How you were treated when you were pulled over? Maybe a legal situation? Maybe it's your parents? All of us at some time in our lives will bump up against unwanted authority. How will we respond?

Remember the context, Peter is writing to an extreme minority, Christians, in the 1st century Roman empire. The Roman Empire is becoming increasingly hostile to this rapidly growing group of people who believe and practice some things that could appear defiant. Just the fact that they don't worship the emperor as a god, but say that Jesus is Lord is incredibly subversive and could get them killed. These Christians had no political power at this point in history. There were no lobbyists on Capitol Hill representing them, no laws that protected their rights, and some human institutions firmly in place whose very existence was against their Christian values. So we have it easy compared to these Christians. The context of Peter's teaching on authority begins in 2:11-12, which Todd touched on at the end of his message last week.

1 Peter 2:11-12

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Here Peter tells them two things. **1) Live as Dual Citizens with your supreme citizenship in heaven.** "Strangers and aliens." This isn't your home. **2) Be a lighthouse:** Live brightly before a watching world for gospel impact and the glory of God.

Now Peter from 2:13-3:7 is going to apply these principles to the various authority structures and institutions in 1st century Rome: **1) Civil Authority:** Emperors, Governors and Laws of the Land. **2) Domestic Authority:** At this time a typical roman household would have included Husband, Wife, Children and Slaves. We will not have time to address all of these domestic relationships in this message but will be video blog on e-news and web.

Civil Authority

1 Peter 2:13-17

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.

“Wait a minute, Peter...I thought you just said, I'm not from this kingdom, there are no authorities here that have claim on my life. Forget the emperor, forget these laws and taxes. And you say I should live free!” Your teacher tells you to read a book and you say, forget that, I'm only going to read the Bible. Or your boss says you need to work on a project and you say, you're not my boss, Jesus is my Boss. Peter says, yes you are free, you don't worship the emperor...but there are two things you must understand: **1) God is the author of authority. v.14 Punish evil and uphold what is good.** Many bristle and push back against this teaching of submitting to authority, and yet we all recognize, at least in general, that life doesn't work without submission to authority. What if the musicians didn't submit to the key. Or people didn't submit to traffic laws...Every time you play a game there were no rules, of son in game of Chess. The Purge TV show- 12 hr. period all crime is legal in US. Whether it is music, games, or laws...without authority there is utter chaos. Why is this true? Because God created human authority, church, the family, civil authority for human flourishing. And Peter here is teaching that as Dual Citizens we must realize that the Divine Authority of God reigns supreme above all the human authority. **2) Display your submission to the Lord THROUGH your submission to civil authority in your life. v.13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake.** Our submission to and respect for human authority reveals our submission to and respect for God's authority.

Blank Slide Now, if you are skeptical, you say, OK, That's fine- In this text he says that the emperor has put the governors in place so that they will punish evil and praise and uphold what is good. There is justice. But we know that there are so many governments that are unjust. What do Christians do when they believe laws are unjust or the government is corrupt?

People can take this passage and twist it to say that Christianity teaches that we should put our head down and just do whatever authority says. Be a doormat, go with the flow... But that is not the totality of what Scripture teaches. Think of Hebrew midwives whose governing authority was told to put to death children under 2, but instead they hid them in many instances. Or Daniel whose governing authority was told they cannot worship any other god and he could no longer pray to God, he opened his window facing Jerusalem and prayed. **What the Bible teaches is we submit to human authority except when it means compromising God's authority.** This is what Peter himself says to the Pharisees in Acts 4 when they tell him not to preach Jesus. He says I have to obey God rather than man.

Not just the Bible- Think about the history of Christianity- Feb 28, 1944 the gestapo kicks down the door in Harlem, Holland. It was the residence of the **Ten Booms**, Corrie Ten Boom and her family were part of the Dutch resistance who were fighting against the Nazis to save the Jews. The gestapo sat in the house a full day. Anyone who came to the house they arrested. 30 people were arrested in all and none of them flipped on the 6 Jews who hid in the walls for 46 hours while they awaited rescue. Corrie Ten Boom's father died 14 days later, her sister died 10 days later in the concentration camp that she was also in. She couldn't submit to the government. This is the history of who we are. But we try like crazy to submit to the authorities in place until we cannot.

OK, so we have it easy, for now... in comparison don't we? But what does this look like for us? We honor and respect our president, our governors, our congress, our police...EVEN when we think they are unworthy of respect and honor.

We don't have to agree with everyone in order to give honor. In fact, we have the freedom in our country to publicly disagree with a policy or someone's character or decisions. But we can still respect them. **Don't be Law-breaking (speed limit, taxes), name-calling and propagating slander, belittling, and demonizing them, disengaging w/head in sand. Instead be law-abiding, praying for, be engaged in politics, vote, write and call, give credit where credit is due, be fair, give benefit of the doubt, addressing them by their title, Honor but don't worship.** When we do this not only do we give glory to God and worship him as the authority above the civil authority, but we also stand out as strangers and aliens, citizens of heaven.

Domestic Authority- Slaves

1 Peter 2:18-20

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.

Now this hits our modern ears with all kinds of feelings and rightfully so, especially given our fairly recent history of slavery in America. **Next Slide** Let's try to understand this context in which Peter is writing. As far back in recorded history of humanity there has always been slavery, virtually every culture, just a fact. Not all slavery and bond-servant systems were equal in their treatment throughout human history. But the very existence of this institution is dehumanizing and goes against God's intent and the message of freedom and equality in the gospel. The Bible does not make a frontal attack on the institution of slavery, but it does subvert it. In fact, it will be the gospel seeds that are in the New Testament that will eventually crack at the foundation of slavery...led by Christians like William Wilberforce and move towards ending it in the west just a couple hundred years ago, to the glory of God.

But in Peter's day in the Roman Empire, slavery was an established institution in society. But unlike in American slavery- most were bond-servants who sold themselves into service to pay off debts. In doing so, they gave up their rights and became the legal property of their masters until their debts were paid. Here Peter says to these slaves both with just and unjust masters, who are in a powerless situation, **Response to Masters: v.18 Submit, v.19 Bear up under suffering, v.20 Do good, v.20 Endure, v.22-23 Do not retaliate (like Jesus)**

When someone bears injustice without taking vengeance, they are modeling the Gospel of Jesus, just like him. God's grace is powerfully displayed in the life of these slaves who would not retaliate but rather allow God to be the judge. This is hard teaching is it not? Remember, these were slaves in powerless circumstances he is addressing. Paul said to Christian slaves if you have an opportunity to gain freedom, do it and don't subject yourself to slavery. Also, throughout all of Scripture the people of God are called to advocate for freedom from tyranny, dehumanization and injustice, and be people of mercy and equality.

What about us today?

1) We should stand against any dehumanizing laws and practices and advocate for Justice.

-There are 40 million slaves worldwide right now. International Justice Mission- support them.

-Not just an issue of slavery...mass incarceration and unfair prison sentencing, all who are feel trapped in abusive relationships- children and women particularly. Also, Abortion because abortion and slavery are bedfellows. Why? Both are dehumanizing- treating humans made in the image of God as if they have no rights, are powerless and worthless.

2) We should submit to and respect those who hold positions of authority in your life.

Your boss. Your teachers. Your coach. Your parents. Even when they are unfair or you disagree. Can you show respect for a boss that is unethical? Is spiteful? Overlooks you or treats you unfairly? micro-manages you? Or do you talk bad about him behind his back? Do you slack off or do sloppy work because of it? Do you speak to them passive aggressively to them? Now, you have freedom, so that may mean getting a new job or respectfully confronting the boss or talking to HR. But it is about an attitude.

I would venture that in dozens of hearts in this room right now strong feelings of resistance are rising against this call for meekness and compliance. By nature we hate to give the impression of weakness. We hate to look like someone took advantage of us. We hate to let false accusations against us stand. We hate it when unreasonable people seem to have the last say. Tremendous powers within us recoil and push us toward retaliation. So what Peter calls for here is utterly contrary to our fallen human nature. When you live this way, you are not saying justice doesn't matter; you are saying God is the final judge and will settle accounts justly. So my compliance is not an indifference to justice. It is a way of saying that the safest place for retaliatory justice is in God's hands, not mine.

With such a hard teaching, how do we get motivation for living this way, where do we get the endurance? Look to Jesus both as your savior and your example. Peter doesn't tell us to do something without grounding it deeply in the gospel.

1 Peter 2:21-25

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.

Our freedom was purchased by Christ's submission to unjust authority.

Benediction:

What should a woman do who is in loveless marriage, or married to a man who isn't a Christian, or is a Jerk? Video Blog.