

# Heavenly Citizens in an Earthly Kingdom

## I Peter 2:13-17

### INTRODUCTION:

Last week Peter told us Who We Are. We God's chosen people living in a sinful world. But even though we live in this world we are not of this world. "THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME!" We are heavenly citizens living in an earthly kingdom.

So, the question arises then, if this world is not my home, then **how do we fit in?** In this morning's passage, Peter is going to tell us **how** we are to submit to our earthly governing authorities and **why** it is important to do so.

### All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 2:13-17 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. <sup>16</sup> Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God. <sup>17</sup> Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

### Prayer

Since we have been saved by the grace of God (a salvation that we do not deserve) and have been purchased by God with Christ's blood on the cross, we NOW belong to God and are no longer our own.

Do you want to know **HOW** you are to live your life for God? Starting with this passage, Peter discusses the **effect** of our salvation on our life and our relationships. Peter here indicates that one of the effects of our salvation is that we should submit to governmental authority.

All of the kingdoms of this world are part of the kingdom of darkness. We, as Christians, have been delivered from this kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God. So it would might seem to make sense that we should not submit to this world's authority.

Jesus was confronted with a similar question about submitting to the government by the Jewish scribes and chief Priests. They had become irritated at Jesus because He was interfering with their **livelihood and credibility as leaders among the Jewish people**. So they wanted to put Him to death. They decided to entrap Him with questions that they thought would incriminate Him by His answers.

## Luke 20:20-26 (NASB)

<sup>20</sup> So they (the scribes and chief Priests) watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they *could* deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor. <sup>21</sup> They questioned Him, saying, (Notice how they try to "butter Him up!) "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. <sup>22</sup> Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" <sup>23</sup> But He detected their trickery and said to them, <sup>24</sup> "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." <sup>25</sup> And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." <sup>26</sup> And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

Submission is certainly not a popular topic, but it is needful, especially in the rebellious and self-gratifying society that we live in today. Submission is a recognition of God's right to govern our lives. God established the home, the government, and the church and He has the right to tell us how these institutions should run.

I. The Call for Your Submission.

II. The Purpose for Your Submission.

III. How to live under Submission.

## **BODY:**

### **I. The Call for Your Submission.**

#### 1 Peter 2:13-14 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

God established governments to provide order for society. God's Word commands believers to submit to their established government.

Notice that Peter does not recommend one form of government over another. The idea is that the Christian should submit to the government or human institution under which he lives. Christianity has existed for two thousand years under all kinds of governmental structures. The Christian ought to fulfill his proper duties within and under it.

Isn't it amazing how God's Word transcends time. The call for submission for the people in Peter's time is the same call that is applicable for us today!

#### Romans 13:1 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

This is a command from God. It begs the question, "**Can I obey this law and not sin?**" Does this mean that the Christian is never to oppose authority?

Peter and John healed a lame beggar in front of the temple. The priests and the Sadducees were disturbed because they were teaching the people about Jesus and the resurrection from the dead which had caused about 5000 people to believe. So they threw them in jail. The next day Luke records what was asked of them.

Acts 4:14-20 (NASB)

<sup>14</sup> And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. <sup>15</sup> But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they *began* to confer with one another, <sup>16</sup> saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." <sup>18</sup> And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; <sup>20</sup> for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Occasions may arise when a Christian feels he must obey God rather than the government, but he must have extremely good reasons for disobeying. Scripture says we should submit to our government, and if we disobey, we must accept the punishment.

The motivation for obedience is not avoiding punishment but is for the Lord's sake. Believers obey earthly authority to honor God who ordained authority including human government. Christians are to observe man-made laws carefully **as long as those laws do not conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture.**

Unreasonable, evil and harsh rulers, and oppressive systems are far better than anarchy. So the context states clearly that we should do all that we can to obey civil authorities. However, this does not mean that we violate the "higher laws" of God nor the lordship of Jesus Christ. It was Peter himself when standing on trial before the Sanhedrin who said, "**We must obey God rather than men**" (Acts 5:29).

When man's laws come into conflict with God's laws, we must always go with God. Lordship sometimes requires civil disobedience. He is our Lord and King. We are His servants. We are citizens of His kingdom. But in most aspects of daily life, Christians are to live according to the law of their land.

## II. The Purpose for Your Submission.

Since the attitude of submission is so difficult, verse 15 gives us the reason behind our being commanded to submit.

1 Peter 2:15 (NASB)

<sup>15</sup> For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

It is the will of God that Christians should be subject to their governments, because through their obedience, they entrust themselves to their Lord and commend Him to others. Their law abiding behavior eventually silences those who would oppose Christians and their testimony.

Christians in the first century were the targets of all kinds of slanderous rumors.

People said,

- They are going to destroy the temple.
- They are people of another kingdom.
- They follow another god.
- They have plans to overthrow us.
- They are out to change our society, to impose their morality on us.

This kind of paranoia was common, all the way to Nero. To muzzle these rumors, Peter encouraged submission to the powers that be. Peter said that by submitting and doing right before God, our submission would muzzle the mouths of those passing around such rumors.

### ILLUSTRATION:

Let's translate it into today's terms. Our church building is located in Greenwood. The city does not have no right to tell us what to preach, what to teach, or which bylaws to adopt as a church. If they attempt to do that, we have a right (in fact, it's a duty) to rebel, because there is a higher law than their law, the higher law relating to the declaration of truth. However, they do have the right to say, "In this room you may put 100 people and no more. If you go beyond that you are violating the fire code and will be subject to a fine and possibly other penalties. It is neither right nor wise for us to break this civil law. It does not violate God's law and is, in fact, there for our protection. So we must submit to that law.

We don't have to look far into our society to find things we don't like. God has a standard of right and wrong, and it contrasts greatly with the crime, sexual immorality, and declining standards of decency that seem to be everywhere.

It would be easy to do nothing but point out the wrongs in our world and spend a lifetime denouncing them. But if we did, people would get tired of listening to us and eventually write us off as complainers.

Instead of being **against** a social sickness, be **for** its remedy.

So how does this apply to us? The apostle Peter said that by doing good we will silence those who criticize us. For instance, instead of only speaking out against immoral programming on TV be in favor of positive change and then work with local stations to make it happen.

Let's be known as people who are for the good, not just against the bad. While we may want to criticize our sick society, we should instead do what is good in order to change the bad we see. Even a small example can have a big influence.

### III. How to Live Under Submission.

1 Peter 2:16-17 (NASB)

<sup>16</sup> Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. <sup>17</sup> Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

As Peter continues on the theme of living good lives before others, he provides a list of specific examples of how that kind of lifestyle should be carried out in day-to-day living. The emphasis on submission is balanced by teaching that Christians are to live as "free men".

Submission does not mean subjection or slavery to the state. Christians are not bondslaves of the government, but of God. Irrespective of a believer's worldly status we have been liberated from the bondage to the way and sins of this world. We have been released by a new birth to live life on a spiritual plain instead of under the domain of the natural order of man.

It's important to keep the right perspective on the principle here. We do not submit because we necessarily agree. We do not submit because deep within we support all the rules, codes, and regulations. At times they may seem petty and galling, terribly restrictive, and even prejudicial. We submit because it is the "will of God" and because we are "**bond slaves of God.**"

This RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY is not easy and is best begun EARLY in life.

Children struggle to balance independence with obedience to parents. Have you heard or maybe said the words: "I know what is best for me. I have a brain, so why won't you let me make my own choices?"

Then as children mature, they better understand some of the reasons God placed parents in authority over them. They begin to appreciate and honor that authority.

The more we, as God's children, grow in Christ, the more we submit willingly to His authority. We get frustrated less often if we decide God knows what is best for our lives because His all-wise perspective transcends our pinpointed perspective. When we choose to walk on His path we try to avoid detours we may have chosen in the past.

As we submit to God's authority, we are enabled to love others and honor the authority of those who rule over us. We even begin to pray, "Thank You Father for guiding me to gain a healthy respect for authority."

Peter concludes this section on the Christian's submission to his government in verse 17.

1 Peter 2:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

This may have been a motto in the early Church

In little staccato bursts, Peter gives us several commands that list specific examples of how we must be servants of God.

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King.

The key is love and a healthy respect for God.

## CONCLUSION:

As Christians, we should increasingly appreciate our special status, privilege, and position as children of God. But we must be careful that does not cause us to look down on others. To guard against the tendency to feel superior to others we are to show proper respect to all. Respect is due to others simply because they have been created by God, in His image.

It may be if you have a problem with submission to governing authorities, that it is because you have not fully submitted yourself to Christ. That you are still a rebel against the King.

I challenge you today to make sure you have ended your rebellion against God.

If you have, than I also remind you to remember that we are first servants of Christ and not to the government. We must be careful that we are not blindly submitting to earthly things that contradict our instructions in the Bible. Our salvation depends on it!

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

So we offer His invitation, realizing that there may be someone here who has never accepted Christ as their Savior. We plead with you. We appeal to you not to let this moment escape nor to let this window of opportunity pass you by.

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, then come now, confess that you believe in Him, be faithful to Him in Christian baptism, arise to walk in the newness of life. God's invitation is offered to you. Will you come as we stand and as we sing?

**He is Lord.**

He is Lord. He is Lord.  
He has risen from the grave and He is Lord.  
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess  
That Jesus Christ is Lord.