

## 1 Peter 2:13-17, Part A

**1Pe 2:13 (NKJV) 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.**

Please appreciate as we begin to tackle this next large portion of Scripture, that it is simply an introduction. There are many issues, often very misunderstood issues, which will be addressed as we migrate exegetically through these verses. The goal is to make all of this practical, meaningful and then to integrate God's principles into our life in ways that are reasonable, sensible, and that honor Christ. This next section is often very misunderstood, so it is important to handle it with some level of caution. However, this part of the study is simply introductory, so please keep that in mind.

If we have any chance of understanding this next major passage of [1 Peter](#), especially from [1 Peter 2:13 - 3:12](#), then there is one word that will be vitally critical to understand. It is the word “**submit**” (v13), or “**be submissive**” (v18, 3:1, 3:5). People just cringe when they hear this word used, especially in relation to them and their having to “**submit**” to someone else, especially someone that they do not really like. It is a word that literally repulses people – the idea of having to submit their life to someone or something. It disgusts them, sickens them to even think about it, and for the lost individual, they think Christians are senseless to actually promote it as a way of life.

Peter uses the word in v13 in relation to obedience to the various laws and ordinances of men. He then uses it in v18 in relation to servants and their masters, especially the very difficult ones. Then, he uses it in [1 Peter 3:1](#) and [1 Peter 3:5](#) relative to the relationship between wives and their husbands. The question that always arises is one of “*Well, what about a bad government, or a bad boss, or a bad husband? Why should I submit to any of those?*” For a woman who is in a very unfortunate marriage, the idea of just blindly submitting to a husband who is unwise and maybe even emotionally abusive towards her seems terribly wrong. Then to just make matters worse for the person who questions the wisdom of these words, Peter gives one of the most incredible examples found anywhere in the Scriptures in [1 Peter 2:21-23](#) when he tells us what Christ did.

**1Pe 2:21 (NKJV) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:<sup>22</sup> *“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”*;<sup>23</sup> who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;**

Peter actually says that believers “**were called**” to “**this**” (v20). Called to what? Well, he says that believers are often “**called**” to “**suffering wrongfully**” (v19). He says that they are called on for doing good, then for suffering for doing good, and then for taking it patiently (20). Then he caps it all off in [1 Peter 5:5](#) and says,

1Pe 5:5 (NKJV) **Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."**

It appears from this verse that an unwillingness for believers to be submissive to those that God places over them as revealed in His divine order is most likely a sign of spiritual pride in their life – something which God says that He actually “resists”. The Greek word is “*antitasso*” and means to oppose. It comes from “*anti*” – against, and from “*tasso*” – to arrange, or to arrange against.<sup>1</sup> Every relationship in life has this submissive requirement to it whether it be men to the government, servants to masters, employees to employers, wives to husbands, children to parents, or husbands to God. No one is immune from God ordained authority having an impact on their life.

So, how is the word “**submit**” or “**be submissive**” to be understood, and just as importantly, how is it to be applied in a believer’s life? It is important to drill down through some grammatical rock at this point. The Greek word for “**submit**” is the actual opposite of the Greek word for “**resists**”. It is “*hypotasso*” – “*hypo*” means under and “*tasso*” means to arrange, or to arrange under. In v13, it is the very strong form of a verb that Peter uses more than any other writer of the New Testament – the aoist imperative which becomes the governing verb of the passage. It is also in the passive voice with a middle voice sense which in this context means that it is a voluntary subjection of someone to the will of another. When a verb is in the passive voice, it means that the subject is being acted on by an outside source, but the word “**submit**” is a word that the believer has to embrace, so it seems that it should be in the active voice. However, the parsing of the verb is that it has a middle voice sense which completely changes the meaning. In this context, it means that when the individual personally chooses to “**submit**” to God-ordained authority in their life that their actual submission is what is acting on them – i.e., it is the passive sense part of the construction. It is their choice that is the agent that is making the spiritual impact on their life. It is a somewhat unusual construction, but one that is designed to highlight the critical importance of the believer’s choice and the great benefit that it will produce in their life.

In the NKJV, the word “**yourselves**” is not actually in the Greek text, but it is added because it has a middle voice sense. The ESV, AMP, ASV, RSV, YLT, and many other translations do not use the word “**yourselves**” in the translation. However, because of what is called the “middle sense”, others do insert it. The actual Greek Interlinear simply says “**Submit to every human institution...**” Think of the verb “**submit**” or the verbal participle “**be submissive**” as a person doing something that they know will bring great benefit to them personally. In the marital relationship which shall be studied in [1 Peter 3](#), it refers to the wife placing herself into an attitude of submission because of the benefit that she will actually derive from that choice.<sup>2</sup> The husband’s responsibility to love his wife as Christ loved the church in [Ephesians 5:25](#) is an even greater command that is designed to make the wife’s responsibility a joy and not something grievous. In fact, [1 Peter 3:7](#) says that the husband is to give “**honor**” to his wife and that if he chooses not to that his prayers will be greatly hindered. In [Malachi 2:13-15](#), the prophet rebukes the husbands severely because they had so mistreated their wives. He actually says twice in that passage that the husbands had dealt “**treacherously**” with their wives and that God would not even accept their offerings. So, whenever the idea of submission is addressed, it is in error to think of it as something that is grievous to the individual. To the contrary, it really is a place of great spiritual protection.

Think of the idea of submission as an “attitude” that a person has or develops in their life. It is like the virtue of kindness. Either a person is kind or they are not kind. The person who is not kind is grouchy, complaining all the time, disrespectful of others, rarely gracious, somewhat arrogant, and lacking humility. Either a person has self-control or they do not have self-control. These godly virtues always become a mindset, an attitude, an outlook on life, and an approach to life. They have to be the way the individual thinks. Someone does not just get up in the morning as a kind person. Kindness is a quality, a virtue, and a spiritual fruit that has to be developed in a person’s life by the Holy Spirit ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). It is an attitude that is developed because the person clearly understands the value of being kind to others, as well as understanding the great contempt and disdain that unkindness will bring into their life. Just go out today and treat people without kindness, without charity, without grace, and see how long it will take for them to not like you at all. Just be rude to people, talk about them behind their back, be scornful towards them and then see how many friends you will have.

### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Zodhiates, 195.

<sup>2</sup> Precept, *1 Peter 2:13*, ep.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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