

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

**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.**

We continue this morning with what is considered by many to be a very sensitive and often volatile subject – the teaching on submission. However, it is important to keep in mind that both last week and this week are just an introduction to this very long section through [1 Peter 3:7](#). We left off last week by defining that the virtue of submission is really a godly mindset and an attitude that every believer has to develop. No believer is exempt. For instance, and I think this is a great illustration, what if one of your children were misbehaving or being disrespectful to you, and so you made them go sit in the “quiet corner” for a while. Well, they may go, they may submit and obey, but when they get there they are still fuming, still mad, arms crossed and not talking. In essence, they have not submitted to anything or anyone. They do not have an attitude of submission, but rather an attitude of defiance. You can make someone submit to something, but if they truly do not want to do it, then in reality it is not what we defined as a viable quality and attitude of submission.

The Greek verb for “**submit**” that we previously studied is “*hypotasso*” and simply means to arrange under. It means that the person willingly, and with the right attitude, places himself or herself under the authority of another person. It does not mean, nor imply, that the person is forced into submission against their will. Rather, this word clearly refers to a voluntary submission, not a forced submission – and that requires a certain attitude. So, when this word for “**submit**” is used in the Greek text in the passive and middle voice, it involves how a Christian is going to behave and respond to difficulties in the context of divinely ordered authority structures that have been created by God.<sup>1</sup> It always means that the believer is submitting voluntarily. They are voluntarily placing themselves under and willingly subordinating themselves to someone else. For instance, this would clearly be the idea in [James 4:7](#) which says,

**Jas 4:7 (NKJV) Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

Submitting to God is voluntary. God does not force anyone to obey Him or to submit to Him, so every believer has to consciously, willingly, and voluntarily choose to submit to God’s Word. A very important point is that none of this means that a Christian cannot disagree with those in authority. It does not mean that they cannot challenge what they are being asked to do. It does not mean that they have to submit to something that is clearly outside of the boundaries of God’s will. However, it still comes back to the kind of attitude that someone displays when disagreeing, when challenging, and when refusing to not submit to something that is clearly wrong and ungodly.

The problem that the average person has who struggles with this dimension of submission is that they often fail to see God’s greater purposes for their life. We have to see what God’s overall intentions are in the virtue of submission. I cannot find anywhere in Scripture that there is a promise that “if” someone submits to someone that Scripture divinely places over them that everything will work out great for the person submitting. Scripture simply does not guarantee that, and that is where the “rub” develops –

submitting to someone who does not really outwardly deserve that privilege. However, one of the greatest purposes of God is that of developing character in the life of His children, and very often character is developed through very difficult trials. I am personally convinced that God does not allow the trial so that He can find out how we will respond, but so that **we** can find out how we will respond. We may have the best and godliest intentions possible, but when those very trying and testy moments comes, we all often act differently than planned. Listen to how God explains some of this in His Word. For instance, [James 1:2-4](#) says,

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.**

This is the quality of endurance that God is developing in someone, and endurance is developed under trial, under a testing of their faith. The encouragement is simple – “**let patience have its perfect work**”. The word let is an imperative mood, present tense, active voice verb – a very demanding verb parsing for everyone. The goal? That the believer may become mature in their faith.

[1 Peter 1:6](#) says,

1Pe 1:6 (NKJV) **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,**

Someone is going to say “*So, what is the value of being grieved by various trials? I don’t get it!*” Well, the value is that the believer learns how to rejoice in the midst of “**various trials**”. If you are a believer, then you need to get use to trials of all different kinds. The word for “**various**” (Gr. – “*poikilos*”) means manifold, variegated, diverse, many kinds.<sup>2</sup> The trials will come in all different kinds of shapes, styles, and colors. Some will be big, some small, some severe, some mild, some financial, some emotional, some relational, some difficult, some easy – all kinds, all types, all kinds of people involved. Some of those trials will be with people that God has placed in authority over you – so just keep that in mind before you criticize God for allowing that to happen in your life.

[1 Peter 4:12-13](#) says,

1Pe 4:12 (NKJV) **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup> but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.**

Trials and difficulties are normal, and very often the trials that someone may face are related to those who are in a position of authority over them. So, there has to be an understanding of what God’s overall purposes are in the “chain of command” in which all believers have to live. That “chain of command” is biblical. It exists in the home, in the nation, in the workplace, in the armed forces, in local governments, in the church, and in many other circumstances. It exists in our relationship to other believers. For instance, [Ephesians 5:21](#) says,

Eph 5:21 (NKJV) **submitting to one another in the fear of God.**

In the context of this verse, it is obvious that submission is the fruit of someone who is under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit because Paul says in [Ephesians 5:18](#),

Eph 5:18 (NKJV) **And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,**

Please appreciate that submitting yourself to someone else is not a natural reaction, but is the supernatural reaction of someone who is allowing the Holy Spirit to control their life, their attitudes, and how they respond to other people. [Romans 12:10](#) puts it in a different light, but it is the same principle,

Ro 12:10 (NKJV) **Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;**

The word for “**giving preference**” means to go before and lead in the sense of taking the lead in deferring to someone else. It means to lead the way by example.<sup>3</sup>

Another element that is very critical to get right is that an attitude of submission is not a requirement to do something wrong just because someone over you in authority may “demand” that you do it. The requirements to obey the government are very serious biblically, but it is not a mandate to obey those laws that violate God’s laws. [Romans 13:1-7](#) is the classic New Testament passage on the believer’s submission to those who have authority over us in the government, but there is **always a balance** in the issue of submitting to God-ordained authority and that balance must be achieved. Take the example of biblical leadership within a local church setting provided in [1 Peter 5:5](#).

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.*”**

Here the younger men are to be submissive to the elders in a local assembly. However, what cannot be removed from the context is what Peter first says to the elders in [1 Peter 5:3](#),

1Pe 5:3 (NKJV) **nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;**

V3 is what provides the balance. An elder cannot lord over the people that have been entrusted to him. If he does, in essence he is disqualifying himself as an elder. So, the younger men are not obligated to yield themselves to those elders who have disqualified themselves by lording over them in some way. When I was a much younger Christian, I was under the ministry of a pastor who lorded over everyone. He wanted everybody in the congregation to be his clone, to think exactly like he thought, to dress like he dressed, to act like he dressed. It was oppressive, and he would use verses like [1 Peter 5:5](#) to make people feel guilty if they did not honor his teaching the way he wanted them to act. In reality, he was not even qualified to be an elder or a pastor because of his lording attitude over people.

In [1 Peter 2:18](#), we are given another perspective on the biblical idea of submission where servants are told to be submissive to their “**harsh**” masters. One would think that their being “**harsh**” would disqualify them so the servant did not have to submit to them. However, that is not what the text teaches. It teaches submission to “**harsh**” masters. So, what should be taken from this? It really is simple. If the Scripture provides limitations of a believer’s subjection to bad authority such as the elders lording over their people, then the believer is released from submitting to bad and harmful demands on them. However, in the case of the “**harsh**” master, the Scriptures do not release the believer from submission. The balance, however, is that in America, we have public laws for the workplace that protect people from abusive or demeaning behavior and mistreatment by their employers. As long as the laws are there, then we as believers have a legal right to a certain level of respect. However, keep in mind that there is

a much greater principle here. It is the testimony that we are able to provide to the world. It is the attribute of biblical submission and surrender to the will of God for our lives that is being developed in us and lived out through us. It is the sovereignty of God over our lives that is being visibly worked into the deepest of our beliefs. Please notice in this passage that Peter makes the point that if a servant is beaten for their faults, that there is no real credit for that when they take it patiently. For Peter, the real acid test for the believer is what he says in v20 and the end of the verse,

**1Pe 2:20 (NKJV) For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.**

The word for “**patiently**” is one of my favorite New Testament Greek words – “*hupomone, hupomeno*”. It literally means to stay under, to persevere, and to endure (ESV, NIV). Sometimes, it is critical to a believer’s biblical thinking to understand that one attribute that God is always working into our lives is the quality of “**endurance**”, and He is so often doing it through very difficult and stressful circumstances that are sovereignly designed to build that endurance into our lives. Notice these two verses from [Hebrews 10:16](#) and [Hebrews 12:1](#) on “**endurance**”,

**Heb 10:36 (NKJV) For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:**

**Heb 12:1 (NKJV) Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

Both of those words for “**endurance**” are the same root Greek word for “**patiently**” – “*hupomeno*”.

So, that is probably one reason why Paul inserted the text on Christ in [1 Peter 2:21-23](#). He wanted believers to know that what He seeks to develop in them is something that He Himself was willing to fully embrace and endure. Christ was willing to suffer, and did suffer, for “**righteousness sake**” ([1 Peter 3:14](#)) so that His Father would be glorified. Notice what precedes [1 Peter 3:14](#).

[1 Peter 3:9](#) – Do not return “**evil for evil or reviling for reviling**”. This is certainly a spiritual mindset, a determined attitude. God is making it clear that any believer who is fully submitted to His will may often times be mistreated, even maligned by others. Without sounding flippant or overly casual about that reality, it is perfectly okay and perfectly normal as a God ordained path that a believer may be subjected to in their life. In these verses ([1 Peter 3:8-9](#)), the context is that of being mistreated by other believers. In [1 Peter 2:23](#) speaking of Christ, it is in the context of being mistreated by unbelievers.

[1 Peter 3:12](#) – Notice that when these difficult moments take place in a believer’s life that God’s “**ears are open**” to their prayers.

Now, in [1 Peter 2:13](#), it would be a grave mistake not to notice the words “**for the Lord’s sake**”. I prefer the way that the Greek Interlinear says it – “**because of the Lord**”. I.e., submitting to God ordained authority is something that honors God. All of life is designed with different levels of authority to which believers are to be subject. So, at this point in the exposition, it is important to ask a very simple question – why does God want it to be this way, especially when the government, the employer (or master), and the husband may very often not be very kind or reasonable? Once again, the answer is

found in the text on Christ in [1 Peter 2:21-23](#) when it says that “**He committed Himself to Him who judges righteously**”. Listen very carefully. That is the verse to which we are driving. That is the verse that will make the greatest impact in our lives. That is the verse that will reveal the depth of our commitment, faithfulness, and devotion to Christ. We are headed there. Are we willing to simply commit our life to our God when life becomes extremely difficult? Stated another way, are we willing to “**submit**” our life to God when life becomes extremely difficult? It is a kind of acid test of someone’s degree of spirituality.

In reality, it is an act of faith in God when an individual willingly and voluntarily submits to those to whom God has said they should submit themselves. Christ was more than satisfied to commit everything that He did to His heavenly Father. He trusted His Father’s judgments completely and was not afraid in any way of allowing the sovereignty and power of His Father to be His ultimate protection. Listen very carefully. That choice cost Him His life, but He was in the perfect will of His Father, and believers became the recipients of His obedience. Our salvation was completely contingent on His willingness to submit His life to His Father under the most difficult of circumstances and not to take matters into His own hands. Here is a very simple principle. When believers submit themselves to God ordained authority, in essence, they are submitting themselves to God’s authority over their life. What an incredibly safe place to rest your life – in the will and sovereignty of God over all things.

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Verbrugge, 584.

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 1191.

<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, 1219.

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