# Submission and Suffering - Part 1

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[0:00] Amen. As I said earlier, it's good to see you guys. If you have your Bibles, you can open with me to 1 Peter 2. 1 Peter 2.

And tonight we'll be in verses 13 through 17, but before we get there, there are some topics that may not be acceptable to bring up around your family.
When they're all over for the holidays. Questions like, you know, LeBron or MJ. Does pineapple belong on pizza? Who did you vote for?
Things like that. It can be a little bit spicy topics of conversation, which we know MJ is clearly greater and pineapple does not belong on pizza. But one of these questions that can provoke a lot of heat in Christian circles is what is the Christian's relationship with the government supposed to look like?
What should our relationship with the government look like? And if we kind of step back, Peter has called them elect exiles as sojourners who are just passing through this world.
[1:21] Not truly and finally belonging to this world. And so since Jesus is Lord and since we're just exiles passing through, do we even need to obey the government?

Do we even need to listen to what they have to say? Okay. These questions, not the pineapple on pizza questions, but the ones about the government, they've been answered by lots of people very poorly.
Some think we should, as Christians, be political activists and go to every Trump rally ever and get matching spray tents. Some think we should be completely uninvolved.
Some people think we should be completely uninvolved from government. So that doesn't have anything to do with us. We are citizens of heaven. We'll just ignore what they say and try to live our lives following Christ.
One example of a guy like this, I was watching some cop show. I don't remember. I was in high school. But this guy got pulled over and the cop is saying, do you have your license?
[2:28] He said, I don't have a license. Which if you don't, like you don't want to just come out and say that. But he did. And the cop's like, okay, are you a citizen? He's like, not of America.

In just perfectly clear English. And he's like, what are you a citizen of? And he said, heaven. That's not how we live our lives as Christians.
We have to obey the rules and laws of the land. And so those two examples are those what the Bible calls us to.
1 Peter does call us elect exiles who don't ultimately and finally belong to this world or its political system. But our freedom in Christ, our detachment from this world because of our belonging to Christ, must be balanced by what Peter says in our passage tonight.
And so our title tonight is Submission and Suffering. Part 1. Submission and Suffering. There will be three parts with this same title.
[3:40] We won't be in the same text for three weeks in a row. So you can relax a little bit. But if you take a look at these next three sections. So verse 13 says, be subject. Skip down to verse 18.

Again, be subject. And in chapter 3, verse 1. Again, a third time. Be subject. And so in these three paragraphs, Peter is calling on three different groups of people to be submissive to the authorities over them.
To the authorities that God has put in place over them. Now, these people that he speaks to are very, very likely to suffer at the hands of those authorities that they're under.
And so Peter is calling these Christians to submission, even while recognizing that itself will lead to suffering. And he speaks, he directs these two Christians who are in the Roman Empire.

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We'll see in our passage tonight, 13 through 17. He talks about slaves being subject to masters, starting in verse 18. And he mentions wives being subject to husbands in chapter 3.
[4:52] These three categories of people would be very likely to experience abuse and suffering, even in these relationships that Peter talks about here. And he addresses these commands to people who would have no voice in society.

Christians, a minority group in the vast Roman Empire. Slaves, who by nature didn't have rights at the hands of unjust masters.
Wives, who have unbelieving husbands. And so he doesn't just speak to these people groups that are likely to suffer, but speaks to these people groups who are likely to suffer as they relate to unbelievers.
Emperor Nero, unjust and ungodly bosses, masters, and unbelieving husbands. And so this letter is filled with suffering.
And even here, these very practical commands are addressed to people who are very likely to suffer, even in their obedience to these commands. But I want you to notice also that these commands are centered around Christ.
[6:07] And so starting in verse 21 through 25, we won't cover it this week, but Peter gives us and shows us the example of Christ. The example of unjust suffering and yet of perfect submission.

And the submission that Peter is calling all of us in this room to tonight, along with his original readers, is a submission to the government. Isn't the government evil?
Sometimes. And Peter is calling these first century believers to submit themselves even under the tyrannical and wicked rule of someone like Nero.
Now Peter is not naive about this. He knows what suffering is like. He watched Jesus be executed by the government.
He himself was thrown in prison by Herod. He knew that Herod, the same guy that arrested him, also arrested James and killed James.
[7:17] And so Peter is not ignorant about the evil that government is capable of. He knew firsthand what the government had the power to do.

And so these commands, they kind of shock us as Americans because our country was built on disobeying the government, 1776. And it was built on sweet tea after we threw it into the harbor for the first time.
And so these kind of shock our sensibilities sometimes as we think through these things. But let me just read our passage. 1 Peter 2, starting in verse 13. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.
For this is the will of God that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.
Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. Tonight we'll have four points. The first one is submit to the government.
[8:34] Submit to the government. We see this in verses 13 and 14. He leads this section by saying, be subject to.

And as I mentioned, this is kind of a structural marker for the next three paragraphs. And it's focused particularly on people who are likely to suffer.
This phrase, be subject to, means to be obedient to or be subservient to. And so we see right here that just because we are exiles and sojourners in this world, that does not mean that we don't have to follow the laws that the government sets in place.
So you can't break the law just because you're a Christian. So if you're flying down Mustang Road doing like 80, like Kagan sometimes does, and you get pulled over, you can't be like, hey, I'm a Christian.
It's okay. Like, no, we are still subject to the governing authorities over us. But look at what he says. For the Lord's sake.
[9:39] This is our motivation for being obedient citizens. And so we submit not because the government is worthy, not because we are slaves to the government, but because we ultimately desire to glorify and honor God.

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We do this not because we worship the government, not because we're people pleasers who are afraid, but because we love Christ and we recognize he is the sovereign God, even over, in this case, the emperor, or in our case, the president.
It says to every human institution. And what Peter literally says here is to every human creation. And so does this mean that we are to be subject to Whataburger? No. But if you work there, yes. And if you've already paid and you're in the long drive-thru line, also yes, unfortunately.
But what institutions is he referring to? He goes on to clarify, speaking of the emperor and the governors, that he is speaking of the government here in this passage.
[10:50] And so whether it's a dictator or king that you find yourself under or a president or a prime minister, the Bible, the New Testament, calls us to submit to those in power over us.

And now there's no specific form of government mentioned here, so it's like Peter's not saying, if you're in a democracy, do this, but if not, just disobey. Regardless of the form of government, regardless of the situation you find yourself in, this command applies to us who believe in Jesus Christ.
This doesn't exclude leaders who make bad decisions, so you can't just disobey because you think the leader's an idiot. It doesn't get you out of it. And Peter, again, is writing while there's a very evil government ruling over Rome.
But we can recognize that even an evil government is put in place, put in power by God.
In Matthew 22, Jesus says, Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. In response to a question of like, hey, should we pay taxes to the government, even though they don't believe in God?
[12:01] You see Jesus in John 18 on trial before Pilate, and Pilate, as wicked as he was, Jesus says, You would not have any authority. You wouldn't have a position unless my Father gave it to you.

And so we can recognize under God's sovereignty that even an evil government is put in place by God himself. And Peter says whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or literally to the king as supreme, the head honcho, el jefe, or to governors as sent by him.
And so this high-ranking public official is the king, or even lower-level people like governors in this text. But what is their purpose? Why are they sent by the emperor?
Here's the function of government. To punish those who do evil, and to praise those who do good. This is the true function of government, the proper function of government.
And so governments that do this, that punish evil and praise good, are to be considered good governments. And there will always be things we disagree with, but if a government does those two things, it is to be considered proper or good.
[13:18] And as you think through, even the most oppressive governments in human history, they've still to some extent held evil in check.

There's still a check on evil. A bad government is actually still better than no government at all. If there was no government, if there was no one who could enforce laws and rules, it would be complete anarchy.
Everyone doing what he sees fit in his own eyes. And so even an evil government is a better restraint on evil than no government at all.
So that's point number one, submit to the government. Number two, why we should submit to the government. Why we should submit to the government.
Verse 15, Peter says, For this is the will of God, that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.
[14:22] This is the will of God. That is submission to those in authority over us is God's will for our lives as Christians.

And so by submitting to these government authorities, we fulfill God's will for our lives as exiles here in this world. We need to pay attention when the Bible tells us what God's will for our lives is.
Many of you have asked this question, and as you get later on in high school, you will ask, what is God's will for my life? And when we ask questions like that, we're usually thinking specifically like, should I be an accountant or a police officer?
Just random examples. But you're trying to think through like, what is God's will for my life specifically? And the Bible does not give us those types of answers. The Bible does tell us what kind of people God wants us to be, regardless of where we go and regardless of what we end up doing.

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And so the Bible focuses on what kind of people we should be. And this phrase, the will of God, shows up in the ESV 17 times. And we need to pay careful attention when it does.
[15:39] God is speaking very directly to us. And it says that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

God's will is for us to submit to the governing authorities. And the result is that by doing that, we will silence our opponents.
Now, how do we silence them? Is it by arguing? Is it by beating them up? Is it by fighting? No. It's by living a godly life. By living a life that's pleasing to the Lord and submissive to his will.
And so our upright lives should silence the voices of those seeking to discredit Christianity and the gospel. And if you look back at verse 12, he says to keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.
Now, he says that we should silence the ignorance of foolish people. And Peter's kind of borrowing language from the Proverbs when he talks about foolish people. He doesn't mean that enemies of Christianity are idiots.
[17:02] Some of them are. But not all of them. That's not what he's saying. He means that they're morally stupid. They don't do what's right. They are fools in the sense of how Proverbs speaks of them.

And so it's not that they're uneducated uneducated or have low IQ. But they foolishly rebel against Christ. They don't do what's right.
And it appears at this point when Peter's writing, most of the suffering, most of the persecution was coming from citizens of Rome rather than from the very top at this point in history.
There would be a point in time when the government of Rome was directly persecuting Christians very severely. It appears at this time that most of the persecution is coming from citizens of Rome themselves.
And I mentioned a couple weeks ago they basically viewed Christians as atheists. And so in Rome they worshipped all the gods. They worshipped so many gods. There's a God over everything in their worldview, over every aspect of creation.
[18:07] And so if something went wrong, they interpreted that as the gods being angry with them. And so it was easy to point the finger at Christians because they were only affirming the existence of one true God.

And so the people of Rome hated Christians. They hated Christianity. They thought it was foolish. They thought it was evil. And Peter's preparing them to live a good life.
And by that good life you will silence those who object. Now when will this silencing take place? Is Peter expecting it to happen then or in the future?
Well, a little bit of both. Certainly some people would see Christians and feel convicted, see Christians as an example of virtuous life and feel convicted. But later on in this letter Peter says, even when you do good you will still be persecuted.
And so ultimately this silencing will come when Christ appears, when Christ returns and it will silence the ignorance of foolish people once and for all.
[19:19] So, submit to the government. Why we should submit to the government. Thirdly, how we should submit to the government in verses 16 and 17. He says, live as people who are free.

And he explains what that means. Not using your freedom as a cover up for evil but living as servants of God. He says, live as people who are free. So we submit to the governing authorities because we've been set free by Christ.
Because we have freedom in Christ we submit as the Bible calls us to. And Christ has made us free. Christ has set us free by his blood.
He paid the price of our sin on the cross to liberate us. To set us free from the penalty and the power of sin.
And he explains what it means to live as free people. Not using your freedom as a cover up for evil. So our freedom in Christ isn't just a license to disobey authorities.
[20:30] We can't just say well God will forgive us it's okay. He says, but living as servants of God. And so we have freedom in Christ but that freedom isn't unrestricted.

There are limits on our freedom. And so Christ has set us free from the slavery to sin but he has made us his servants. He has set us free from the slavery of sin so that we can serve him.

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But he is a good Lord. He is a good master. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. So according to the Bible freedom is the freedom to do what is right.
The freedom to do what is good. in verse 17 he concludes and says honor everyone love the brotherhood fear God honor the emperor honor everyone everyone means everyone everyone they come in contact with they are to honor as being made in the image of God they are owed a certain level of respect they possess a certain amount of dignity because they are made in God's image and he says love the brotherhood and our relationship with each other as Christians goes beyond honor goes beyond just a recognition of dignity it goes to love and this isn't just an I love hot dogs kind of love though I do love hot dogs and my wife in different ways but this is familial language we are to love each other as brothers and sisters we have been set free from sin and saved into the family of
God and Peter says love the brotherhood sacrifice for each other protect each other love each other remind each other of the truth and in fact this love is what Jesus said would identify us as his disciples in John 13 he says by this the world will know that you're my disciples if you have love for one another and he says fear God and notice in this passage God is the only one we are to fear and so Peter calls us to honor and submit to the emperor but we do not fear him we have a higher authority and so our obedience to him is because God has commanded it and in Exodus 1 there's a beautiful picture of these Hebrew midwives we'd call them labor and delivery nurses!
[23:33] But midwives works too! And so Pharaoh told them any Hebrew baby boys that are born kill them and these Hebrew midwives did not fear Pharaoh and instead they feared God and they did not do it they did not obey the king's command because they feared God and not the emperor and so we are called to fear God God alone is to be worshipped not the government not the emperor himself and I think here Peter is probably taking a swipe at something that was going on in Rome called emperor worship and so they viewed their king as a son of the gods they viewed him as a divine kind of figure and so they would say things like Caesar is Lord but the confession of the Christian church throughout the ages has been

Jesus is Lord and so Peter here is saying fear God we worship God not the emperor then he lastly says honor the emperor so the emperor here kind of bookends this passage he mentioned he's mentioned in verse 13 mentioned again here at the end of verse 17 and just a reminder that Peter did not live under an upright government he did not live with an upright emperor ruling over him and in the Roman empire emperors themselves were known to promote and tolerate homosexuality abortion abuse government corruption violence all of these promoted to various degrees by the Roman government how can Peter say to honor this kind of position because
God the true Lord has put them in place he's put them in place and commanded us to honor them and because Christ has set us free okay now last point this won't advance us in the text but just kind of reflecting on it are there limits to our submission are there limits to our submission or to phrase that question a different way are there times when we should disobey the government yes there are times so now how can we read chapter 2 verses 13 through 17 and all the things that Peter says about the emperor and the Roman government how can we come away from that and say that there are legitimate times to disobey well I think Peter gives us some built in limitations to our submission in this text as he walks us through it notice what he says be subject to or we could say obey and then also honor the emperor when we think about honor and obedience in human relationships what comes to our mind children to parents right what are children commanded to do in the
Bible very few things couple of them honor your father and mother and obey your parents in the Lord these two same commands very similar to what Peter gives us here in relation to the government are given to children as they relate to their parents are there limits on your parents authority yes there are and so if your parents were to ask you to sin or were to command you to disobey the Bible they're overstepping the bounds of their authority and so in a similar way just as there's a limit to parents authority even over the lives of their kids there is a limit to the emperor's authority as well and notice what Peter says it's for the Lord's sake in verse 13 it's because of Jesus that we are subject to the emperor and so what Peter is saying is
Jesus is Lord he is the ultimate authority he sets up human authority over us but those rulers those presidents those emperors those kings those prime ministers they are under the authority of God himself and notice Peter only tells us to fear one being not the emperor but God himself we do not worship the government we do not fear the government we fear God alone and he does not call us

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servants of the government or servants of the emperor he calls us servants of God at the end of verse 16 but he does not call us servants of the emperor and so if the emperor were to demand that we disobey God it's clear what we must do and so there are two situations in which we should disobey the government one of those situations would be if the government is asking us to do something that goes against the
[29:16] Bible so if the government said you cannot own a Bible we would keep our Bibles if the government says churches can't exist we would still meet as a church because those things are laid out for us in God's word and God is a higher authority than any human government and so in those situations in order to be obedient to God we must disobey the governing!

authorities there's another situation so one would be if they asked us to sin against the Bible the second thing would be if the government oversteps their bounds if the government oversteps their bounds so for example if the government said you are free to meet as a church but you can't have more than 25 people at your church for some churches that would be fine because they're 25 people or less for our church that would be we'd lose our identity we're far more than 25 people another example would be if the government said you guys are free to meet you're free to practice and teach whatever you want from the Bible you just can't have anyone under the age of 18 present and this has happened before back in Russia the Russian government said you can be Russian Orthodox or you can be evangelical which is what we would be if you're evangelical you're free to meet in your building you're free to preach your doctrine you're free to study the Bible but you cannot have anyone under the age of 18 present for those things and what the Russian government was trying to do was!
stamp! out Christianity they didn't want a bloody persecution to break out that would make them look bad they just wanted a way to make sure that Christianity ended with this generation and they could raise a generation that did not know the God of the Bible the Russian government overstepped its bounds and what did faithful Christians do in response to that they said we're going to meet and we're going to bring our kids we're commanded to train up our children and you have overstepped your bounds and so they would not meet in a building like this they would not meet they would not announce their service times like I sent out a remind saying elevate tonight they would not do that they would meet in the woods early on Sunday mornings disobeying the government so that they could be faithful to what God had commanded and so are there limits to our submission yes and so if those situations arise how is it that we stay faithful in those moments so
I want to give you just a little motto maybe you can think about if these things were to happen we should obey God and humbly! accept the consequences obey God and humbly accept the consequences and I would argue that according to the Bible's teaching even in those situations where we are required to disobey the government if we conduct ourselves in that way we are still honoring those in authority over us we are effectively saying I recognize you have authority over my life and you have overstepped your bounds and so I am going to disobey you and I accept whatever consequences this brings and we see this several times throughout the Bible one would be Daniel 3 when they're thrown into the fiery furnace they say our God is able to deliver us but even if he does not we will not bow down before your image and there's another example from
[33:18] Peter's life I'd like you to turn back to Acts chapter 4 if you've got your Bible it's back close to the beginning of the New Testament as I mentioned previously Peter himself wasn't naive to suffering that would come for the gospel from the government the example we'll see here is the religious authorities of Israel I think Peter puts on full display this mentality of obeying God and humbly accepting the consequences so if you're in Acts chapter 4 look at verse 15 with me so Peter and John had just healed someone who had been lame from birth they started preaching the gospel and the religious authorities did not like it so they arrested them and tried them and Peter boldly proclaimed the gospel to them in verse 15 when they that's the

Jewish authorities had commanded them the apostles to leave the council they conferred with one another saying what shall we do with these men for that a notable sign has been performed through them that's the healing of the lame man is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and we cannot deny it but in order that it may spread no further among the people let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name it's the name of Jesus how will Peter and John respond to this demand from authorities verse 19 but Peter and John answered them whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God you must judge for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and

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heard and when they had further threatened them they let them go finding no way to punish them because of the people for all were praising
God for what had happened for the man on whom the sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old and so they obeyed God and were willing to accept the consequences that came from that they said you judge if you want us to obey you or God you decide but we will be faithful to what God has told us to do and if you go over with me to chapter 5 verse 40 the apostles continued to preach in the name of Jesus and there would be consequences for that verse 40 when they called in the apostles they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go then they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name and every day in the temple and from house to house they did not cease teaching and preaching that the
Christ is Jesus and so we see in the life of Peter himself this willingness to suffer and be submissive to those in authority over him this submission itself will lead to suffering but we must be faithful to God and so we should not be known as Christians as those who are looking for an opportunity to disobey we as Christians should be people who honor the government not because the government is right but because it is instituted by our sovereign God and so we need to be careful even how we talk about those in authority over us even how we speak of the government itself this is not a call to agree with every one government we are called to honor them even if we oppose them at times and our culture today is very willing to criticize very willing to make comments and critique let's be faithful to the
Bible and be known as those who are submissive and who honor those in authority over us but let us never fear the people in authority over us let us only fear God and always be faithful to him we pray for us our father we thank you for your word we thank you for this passage even though it goes against a lot of our sensibilities a lot of our expectations of what you would teach us as redeemed people living in a fallen world but I pray that we would be obedient to your son Jesus Christ and for his sake would follow the commands listed here in our passage that we've been studying tonight I pray for the students as they go to small groups the discussion will be fruitful edifying challenging and helpful as they reflect on this challenging text that's the name of
[38:43] Christ we pray

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