

Letters From A Fisherman
Week 10
1 Peter 2:11-25
“The Doctrine of Submission (Part 1)”

Introduction

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when He had come as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross. **Philippians 2:5-8**

Now, in the epistles of Peter, we come to a some of the most controversial and, may I say, despised doctrines in all of Scripture; namely, the doctrine of submission and the doctrine of suffering. I can promise you that no televangelist will ever speak of what we are going to discuss today, but these things are not only necessary (**1 Peter 1:6**), they are a vital part of spiritual maturity. You cannot be conformed into the image of Christ without learning firsthand of submission and suffering. For it was by submission to His Father’s will and the endurance of His suffering upon the cross, that Christ redeemed us from our sins. Therefore, to become like Him, we must also learn how to bear up under the trials that God allows to come into our lives for these are inevitable as well as for our good. For:

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose. **Romans 8:28**

My friends, I cannot *TELL* you how many times I have heard that verse in *Romans* taken out of context! When Paul says that “**all things will work together for the good**” of Believers, he was actually speaking about our sufferings here upon the earth. Just look it up for yourself and see if I am not speaking the truth here. God allows difficulties to come into our lives, so that we may grow from them.

I remember when I was a kid, sometime around my early teens, I used to wake up in the middle of the night with these really bad pains in my legs. It got so bad at one point that I thought something was dreadfully wrong with me. Turns out they was growing pains. For as our bones grow really rapidly in our early years it actually hurts! I don’t particularly remember enjoying that experience, but without it, I suppose I would still be a little kid, whose now in his sixties! I mean, that seemed to work for Peter Pan, but I’m thankful that wasn’t God’s plan for me. Sometimes, it just hurts to grow up. But who doesn’t want to grow up?

When Peter wrote this first letter to the church scattered from persecution, he wanted them to remember Who saved them, and to Whom they owed their allegiance. No one (except the televangelists) have ever promised us that following Christ would be easy. If it were, then Christ Himself would not have described the journey as “**taking up our cross to follow Him**” (**Matthew 16:24-25**).

We live in a world today where people are consumed with “*getting their rights*”. If they don’t like the rules of morality, they rebel. If they don’t like the government, they protest, often times with violence. And if they don’t like the way they are treated in the workplace, they strike. This is what happens in a world where the focus of its worship is on self. But we are not *of* this world, and therefore, we are expected, in fact commanded, to conduct ourselves differently than this world does. Sadly, even many Believers these days have forgotten just *Who* we are supposed to emulate. I am reminded here of the words of the Apostle Paul, who made no excuse for his own conduct, but rather, asked others to hold him accountable when he said: “**Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ**” (**1 Corinthians 11:1**). Can you imagine the impact the Church would have on our culture, if we actually had the guts, not only to say that, but to live it out?

So today, I ask you to allow The Spirit to open your hearts and minds as we study these doctrines in the coming weeks. Ask yourself, "Do I react to my circumstances as Christ did or as the world does." Spiritual growth can be painful, but the growing pains are necessary for us all. For if we have truly been regenerated by His Spirit, then it should be our aim to please Him above all else (**2 Corinthians 5:9**). So let us look together at the words of Simon Peter today, and see how we, as Believers, must learn to embrace the doctrine of submission, by first submitting to The Spirit, then to The Secular Authority, as well as to our Superiors.

Submission To The Spirit (vs. 11-12)

Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against your soul. Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day He visits. **1 Peter 2:11-12**

Peter begins this section of his discourse by once again reminding his readers that they (and us) are *strangers and exiles*. I think that we tend to forget sometimes that we do not belong here! This world is not our home, and we are on a pilgrimage passing through this place in order to get to the next. We are citizens of God's kingdom, and as such, we do not behave as this world does. To fit in here is not to fit in there. So what is our priority?

Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Christ. **1 Peter 1:13**

This world lives to gratify self. They are consumed with whatever their flesh desires. And their insatiable appetite to provision their own selfish desires is all consuming to them. All a person needs to do is drive down the interstate these days to see that people have no regard for the wellbeing of others. They simply pursue whatever their current urges might be at the expense of anyone who happens to get in their way. The lust for all they can obtain for themselves is evident in every facet of life, and it seems to be growing stronger with each passing decade. I remember a time when people at least pretended to care for others, but those days are gone.

Jesus warned us that in the last days it would be as it was in the "days of Noah" just before the flood. And just what does *The Bible* say in description of those days?

When The LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time. The LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was deeply grieved.

Genesis 6:5-6

History has a way of repeating itself, does it not?

But you, those who have been born again of The Spirit of God, have a new nature. You have been set free from sins power over you. But we do still have our old fleshy nature to contend with. And according to Peter this nature "*wars against our souls*". I think that's a perfectly adequate description of the conflict that goes on within ourselves, is it not? We long to please God, but our flesh fights us every step of the way, because it longs to please itself. The Apostle Paul also understood this struggle.

I say, then, walk by The Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against The Spirit, and The Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by The Spirit, you are not under the law. **Galatians 5:16-18**

So, in order to overcome our own fleshy desires, we must yield over control of ourselves, submit our own will to The Spirit of God. In all things, pray for His guidance, so we will not give in to the cravings of our flesh. It is a spiritual discipline that quite frankly many Believers seem to lack. Everything that we do must be bathed in prayer, so that we always act and react in a manner that glorifies God. Why does this matter, because we are being observed.

Peter reminds us that lost people are *watching* us! And how will we never *reach* them, if we are no different *from* them? In Peter's day, Christians were accused of all sorts of wickedness. They were called perverse, because they loved one another so much, and they were even accused of cannibalism, because they "*drank* the blood and *ate* the body of Christ" (otherwise known as communion!). Peter reminded the church that no matter what was said about them in slanderous accusations, they should respond in goodness and love. The word that he used for conducting ourselves "honorably" as translated in the CSB actually means "with beauty." When the world is ugly to us, we must respond with beauty to them. Now, that is difficult to do. Actually its pretty much impossible in your flesh, but when you submit yourself to The Spirit, you will be able to be beautiful in all circumstances.

Peter says, that when we do this, it will have an impact on those who are without Christ. Our beauty in The Spirit will bring them to conviction. I love the way Peter says this, He said it will cause them to "***glorify God on the day of His visitation***" (KJV). What does this mean? It means that when The Holy Spirit upon them, they will see our good works and long to be saved! So you see, how you conduct yourself will have an impact on the faith of those around you. Simply put, submit yourself to The Spirit, so that others will see Christ in you and want what you have. *So submit, because lives are at stake.*

Submission To The Secular Authority (vs. 13-17)

Submit to every human authority because of The LORD, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good. For it is God's will that you silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good. Submit as free people, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as God's slaves. Honor everyone. Love the brothers and sisters. Fear God. Honor the emperor. 1 Peter 2:13-17

Now, I know what you are thinking. None of us are very fond of the government these days. If it weren't for corrupt politicians, we wouldn't have any leaders at all it seems. However, in Peter's day, the emperor was Nero, perhaps one of the most deranged and violent dictators who ever lived. Nero was persecuting Christians by the thousands. But here we see Peter telling all those Believers who have literally been scattered throughout the region in order to escape Nero's wrath, to submit to and honor the emperor! Why would he do such a thing? Because the cause of Christ is far more important than even our own personal freedom.

Compared to Nero's government, ours is *practically* perfect, and yet, we see so many today who claim to be followers of Christ display absolute contempt for those in authority over us. God's Word commands us to be respectful of authority and to obey the law, even when we don't like those in charge or the laws that they pass. Why? Because all authority is instituted by God. We may not like whom God has chosen to lead us, but there is a sovereign purpose as to why they are in charge. Don't believe me? Let's see what God's Word says on the subject.

Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God. Romans 13:1

Now, you may not like the president. And you certainly may not like the congress. But all of them are where they are today because of God's sovereign choosing. So, rather than despise them, we should pray for them and trust that God is working all things together for our good. And yes, I am preaching to myself here as well as you, for I *really* struggle with this personally. Even if I do not respect the man (or

woman) who holds the office, I must respect the office. Why? Because I fear God, and I want to do as He commands.

We hear a lot today about various people groups demanding their so called “rights”. But we, as Believers, need to be reminded that we surrendered our rights at the cross. Jesus is now our sovereign, and although we are free in Christ, we are also His slaves, bought with the precious blood of Jesus. So, He is LORD, and we are to do as He says. And He says we are to honor those in authority and obey the law. For the child of God, there can be no such thing as “civil disobedience”. We don’t protest... we pray. And we conduct ourselves in such a manner that even those who despise us from willful ignorance (Peters’ words not mine) cannot find any real offense for which to accuse us. We are to live in beauty and innocence; submitting ourselves to every civil authority for The LORD’S sake.

The only time that we are allowed to disobey the law is if it is contrary to the Laws of our God. Then we may refuse, but even then, we are required to humbly accept the consequences of that refusal. Even if we are to be imprisoned for doing good, we accept this with grace. For we are not lawbreakers. All people need governance, for the alternative is anarchy. So we submit ourselves to every civil authority, even if that authority is as evil as Nero himself. We are to honor all people, especially those who are in charge; love those who are in the body of Christ; and do these things because we fear God.

Submission To Our Superiors (vs. 14-25)

Household slaves, submit to your masters with all reverence not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel. For it brings favor if, because of a good consciousness of God, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if when you do wrong and are beaten, you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God. For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when He was insulted, He did not insult in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to The One Who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:18-25

Peter continues his topic of submission by admonishing those who served as household servants or slaves to respect those who had authority over them. He doesn’t use the normal word for “slave” (doulos), but chooses to use a word that refers to the servants in a household. Perhaps The Spirit led him to choose this word so that the command would be viewed with a much broader lens.

Several of the new Christians in the first century were in fact slaves. And many of them believed that since they had been set free in Christ, then they should be free citizens in Rome as well. Many who despise our faith make the argument even today that *The Bible* somehow condones slavery. It does not. In fact, Then Scriptures plainly speak out against those who would steal a person in order to press them into forced labor (called *man-stealing* in the Scriptures; ie. **1 Timothy 1:10**).

However, Christ did not come to bring government reform. He didn’t run for political office in order to change the wicked systems of this world. No. He did not come to “fix” the world. He came to redeem us out of it. He plainly told Pilate when He was on trial that His kingdom “was not of this world” (**John 18:36**). So, to all of the so-called critics of *The Bible* out there, here is a message for you. God did not send His Son to repair the systems of this broken world. In fact, He ultimately intends to destroy them (see **Revelation**). So we should not be surprised to find that *The Bible* doesn’t really say a great deal about political reform or re-writing the world’s great injustices. It simply promised that if you will trust in Jesus, you won’t fit in down here, but there is a perfect kingdom that awaits.

With this in mind, Christ commands those who were enslaved and even those of us who work for horrible bosses, to submit to their authority! Why? Because we are to be like Christ in all that we do. That's why. No matter how bad it gets on our job, we have never suffered as He suffered. And He did it in quiet and humble submission. Anyone can be pleasant and kind when things are good, but we are to be constantly beautiful in every circumstance! To be filled with The Spirit of Christ is to be like Christ, even in the midst of suffering. Remember, we surrendered all of our rights at the cross! We don't protest or go on strike. We don't demand fair treatment. We are called to endure with grace. And that brings me to my favorite verse in this entire passage:

He entrusted Himself to The One Who judges justly...

THAT is why The LORD was able to endure all that He endured. He put His fate in His Father's hands. For He knew better than anyone just how good God is. Therefore, He had nothing to fear. No matter how bad it got for Him, God would see Him honored and glorified as the end result.

Do you remember when Jesus was arrested in the garden, and Peter, being Peter, tried to fight off the soldiers with a sword? Jesus reminded Him of just how much authority and power was at His disposal.

Or do you think that I cannot call on My Father, and He will provide Me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels? How, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way? Matthew 26:53-54

Just imagine the incredible amount of restraint it took for The Savior not to call down those angels and wipe His enemies from the face of this earth. But He refused to do it. Why is that? Because there was a greater purpose at stake. A purpose that He felt was worth the suffering. That purpose, my friends, was to die for our sins. And if we have Him within us, then we too must know that we can suffer for a greater good, so that the world may see Christ in us and long for His salvation.

So you see, once more, *lives are at stake*. So we must submit to The Spirit, knowing that we too have entrusted ourselves to the One Who judges justly. Remember, you are in this world. You are in your place of business. You are, wherever you may find yourself at any moment in time, a representative of the grace of God, and we demonstrate that grace through submission to Jesus, Our Shepherd and The Overseer of our souls.

TRUTH!!!