

I Peter 2:13-25 - Willing Submission to Worldly Authorities Pt 1

Thursday, November 08, 2012
10:08 AM

Passages to Read:
1. Romans 13

Introduction

a. Review of I Peter

- i. Remember what the overarching premise of I Peter is - The magnificence of salvation and the example of Christ enables the suffering Christian to proclaim the excellencies of Christ.
- ii. Over the last five weeks, we've considered the first point in that premise - the magnificence of salvation
 - 1) We saw how great our salvation is in I Peter 1:3-12 and contrasted it with the temporariness of suffering
 - 2) We saw how to set our hope on salvation in I Peter 1:13-2:3
 - 3) We saw what the purpose of this great salvation is in I Peter 2:4-12
 - a. Two key verses that conclude Peter's thoughts in the first major section
 - b. I Peter 2:9 - *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*
 - c. I Peter 2:11 - *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.*
- iii. Now we are moving on to the second major section of I Peter, which we've titled 'Proclaiming His Excellencies'
 - 1) I wanted to remind you of what we've been through so far, because this second major section flows directly from Peter's conclusions in the first major section
 - 2) If the purpose of salvation is to proclaim His excellencies, how are we supposed to do that?
 - 3) Peter uses this next section to answer that question, and he answers it in a way that interacts with the situations his readers were facing

b. Read I Peter 2:13-25

c. Premise and Outline

- i. Premise: Our response to those who have authority over us in this world demonstrates the excellencies of Christ
- ii. Outline:
 - i. Exposition
 - a. What are the commands?
 - b. Why should we follow the commands?
 - c. When should we follow the commands?
 - ii. Application
 - a. General: What responsibilities do we have, Biblically, to our government? (Or what does submission look like in action and in attitude?)
 - b. Specific: How should 21st century American Christians live these things out?

I. What are the commands?

1. We should submit to those who have authority over us in this world - this entire second section of I Peter is dedicated to submitting to authorities and responding to persecution

- A. In this first sermon this morning, we are going to look at two areas where Peter calls for submission: Citizens to their government and slaves to their masters

2. Government (vs. 13-17)

- A. The first command happens in verses 13-14 - we must be subject to our government
 - i. This means we must obey and submit to our government - we'll consider what this means in more detail in the second half of the message this morning
- B. The second set of commands happen in verse 17
 - i. We must honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God and honor the emperor
 - ii. I've meditated on these commands at some length to try to understand their order and connection, and I think there are several ways we could understand these
 - a. There is a contrast between these commands
 - i) Peter starts by saying we must honor everyone
 - ii) Then Peter adds to specific responsibilities we have
 - One. Love the brotherhood
 - Two. Fear God
 - iii) Finally Peter tells us which category our responsibility to government falls into
 - One. It falls into the category of honor - that which we must do to all men
 - Two. This doesn't lessen the command of submission
 - Three. But it does show that we have a greater responsibility to the church and to God
 - Four. Peter's call to submit to the emperor does not subvert or lessen our submission to God and to the people of God
 - b. There is a unity between these commands
 - i) Peter is telling us why we should honor the emperor
 - One. We should honor the emperor because we ought to honor everyone
 - Two. We should honor the emperor because we love the brotherhood and honoring the emperor is good for our brothers and sisters in Christ
 - Three. We should honor the emperor because we fear God and know that God has appointed the emperor as His servant
 - iii. In any case, the emphasis is on the last point, we must honor the emperor - or to apply it to our situation, we must honor our government
 - a. This means we must esteem and value our government as appointed by God
 - b. The opposite, which we are not to do, is to dishonor or discredit the government that has been appointed over us by God
 - c. Again, we'll consider this in more detail in the second half of the message

3. Masters

- A. The command to slaves happens in verse 18 - slaves must be subject to their masters in all respect
- B. Now, the first thing we notice about this command is the lack of direct relevance to our lives today
 - i. In America, we don't have master/slave relationships any more
 - ii. So, the question is, how do we appropriate this command for ourselves?
- C. Possible areas where we appropriate the command
 - i. Boss/employee relationships
 - a. There are some similarities to the boss/employee relationship
 - b. We ought to be subject to our employers and respect them
 - c. But there is a breakdown because we can, usually, voluntarily leave our employment
 - d. So, if an employer was habitually being unjust, I could, in good conscience, encourage you to seek new employment instead of submitting to the just and the unjust
 - ii. General command in how we should submit to those to whom we owe submission
 - a. Peter's arguments to slaves could be appropriated to any situation where we owe submission
 - b. If we are under authority of any kind, even temporarily, we can exercise this type of submission with respect for the duration we are under that authority
 - c. So, we could apply this to many areas of life, but two stand out to me as relationships that most people are involved in that are somewhat involuntary:
 - i) Citizens to their government
 - ii) Wives to their husbands
 - iii) In other words, the other examples Peter gives in this section
- D. So, there is value to meditating on how this type of submission is exercised in all of life, but because I am specifically preaching on the government this morning, I am going to appropriate this command to look at how it helps us understand how to submit to our government

II. Why should we obey these commands? (Four reasons)

1. Because of our purpose (vs. 15)

- A. Verse 15 calls us to submit to the government in order to silence the ignorance of foolish people
 - i. It appears that one of the first charges leveled against Christians was that they were anarchists and insubordinate to the government because they refused to worship Caesar
 - ii. Thus, foolish people (those who do not obey the gospel and do not know the true behavior of Christians) accused them of anarchy
 - iii. Peter calls them to respond to these charges, not by verbally arguing against them, but by living a life that demonstrated they were false, thus putting to silence foolish accusations
- B. This harkens back to our core verses up in verse 9 and verse 12, which call us to display the excellencies of Christ and to keep our conduct among the Gentiles honorable
 - i. If we are to proclaim that Christ is excellent, then we must live as though Christ is excellent
 - ii. If we refuse to submit to our government and its rule, we do not demonstrate the excellence of Christ
 - iii. We demonstrate the excellence of Christ when we put ourselves in submission to our government, thus silencing foolish accusations

2. Because of our identity (vs. 16)

- A. Verse 16 produces a sharp contrast to verses 13-14 - are we subject to the government or are we free?
- B. Peter says that we are both, but our freedom is more fundamental than our subjection
- C. We should live as though we have freedom in Christ
 - i. Human authority ultimately does not have authority over us - Christ has ultimate authority over us
 - ii. But, here's the twist - we are free from the government so we can submit to the government
 - a. We are free to obey the government joyfully and not compelled to obey grudgingly
 - b. We are also free to disregard human authority at the point it directs us to disobey God
- D. We should live as servants ('slaves') of God (contrast freedom in Christ with slaves of God)
 - i. In pronouncing that we are free, Peter proclaims that we are also slaves
 - a. There is a tension in this verse too
 - b. Not only - Are we subject to the government or are we free?
 - c. But also - Are we slaves of God, or are we free?
 - ii. The answer comes in understanding what freedom means
 - a. Freedom is never absolute, unless you are God
 - b. So, we must define what we are free from and what we are free to
 - c. Here Peter is saying we are free from the government and we are free to serve the government
 - d. But Peter is not saying we are free from God, we are free to serve God
 - iii. If we are slaves of God, then our freedom cannot be used for wrong doing
 - a. And if the right thing to do is submit to the government, then we ought to submit to the government because we are serving God
 - b. This is the ultimate reason we submit to the government, not because the government is absolute, but because God is absolute
 - c. We are slaves of God, therefore we submit to the governments that God has appointed over us under God

3. Because of our example (vs. 21-23)

- A. In verses 21-23, Peter outlines the core theology that undergirds this entire major section of I Peter
- B. Why should we submit to all of these people who are not obeying God and are persecuting us?
 - i. We should submit to our government
 - ii. Slaves should submit to their masters
 - iii. Wives should submit to their husbands

- C. The answer is: because this is what Christ did and we ought to be imitating Christ (Four ways to imitate Christ)
- i. Christ submitted Himself to worldly authority, even though He was truly free from it
 - a. John 19:10-11 - *So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."*
 - b. Christ was God incarnate and not subject to review by any human authority, but He willingly submitted to the judgment of the Jewish and the Roman authorities of the day in honor of His Father
 - ii. Christ lived above reproach in everything even when He was mistreated (vs. 22)
 - a. Verse 22 reminds us of the sinlessness of Christ - in regards to everything He was above reproach
 - b. Therefore, we also ought to be above reproach in everything we do, including our submission to proper authorities
 - iii. Christ suffered persecution from worldly authority willingly (vs. 23)
 - a. Verse 23 reminds us of the persecution Christ endured - He was not immune to authorities mistreating Him
 - b. Also, it emphasizes how Christ responded - He did not respond in anger or retaliation, but He quietly entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly
 - c. Acts 8:32-33 - *"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."*
 - d. Therefore, we also ought to expect persecution because Christ was persecuted, and we ought to respond to persecution in the same way
 - e. Persecution does not mean we can cease submission, in fact, it is a chance to increase submission to demonstrate our hope in Christ
 - iv. He did this to secure our salvation (vs. 21)
 - a. Why is this point important? Because it leads us back to our first reason.
 - b. Christ's purpose in submission and suffering was to provide salvation to His people
 - c. Our purpose in submission and suffering is to proclaim salvation to His people
 - i) We don't suffer and submit in the same way as Christ or accomplish the same things as Christ
 - ii) But we do suffer and submit in order to advance the same gospel, to work for the salvation of Christ's people
 - d. In other words, we suffer and submit in order to proclaim His excellencies
 - i) We proclaim His excellencies first to glorify Him
 - ii) But, we also proclaim His excellencies in hope that the world will see and love Him

4. Because of our salvation (vs. 24-25)

- A. Peter continues in verses 24-25 with Christ, but He moves away from the example of Christ to the work of Christ
- B. Christ not only suffered in order to leave us an example, He also suffered to provide something for us
 - i. He suffered in order to set us free from sin - so that we might die to sin
 - ii. He suffered in order to set us free to righteousness - so that we might live to righteousness
- C. If Christ's work has allowed us to die to sin and live to righteousness, then we ought to see sin put to death in our lives and righteousness being lived out
 - i. Submission to authority is one area where this can and should happen
 - ii. We have been freed from sin that would cause us to rebel against authority
 - iii. We have been freed to righteousness that would allow us to humbly and joyfully submit to authority
 - iv. We have been freed by the suffering of Christ on our behalf
- D. If Christ set us free from sin, the sin of rebellion should be put to death in us and the righteousness of submission should be cultivated

III. When are we to obey these commands?

1. All of the time

- A. What do I mean by this? Notice what it says in verse 18
- B. Peter specifically says we are to submit both to the just and the unjust
- C. We don't get to choose when we submit to authority, we submit to all authority that is over us, even if they are ungodly and unjust
 - i. Peter doesn't say - if the authority is too bad, you don't need to submit
 - ii. In fact, Peter's emphasis is exactly opposite - he is telling us to submit to those authorities that are persecuting us
 - a. Governments that persecute believers
 - b. Masters that persecute believing slaves
 - c. Husbands that persecute believing wives

2. What sort of government was Peter and Paul writing about?

- A. The government that Christ, Paul and Peter were referring to:
 - i. Proclaimed that the emperor was god and required worship
 - ii. Sacrificed men for sport in the gladiatorial arena
 - iii. Waged war on the surrounding nations solely to increase their power
 - iv. Persecuted religions that did not conform to their polytheistic, pluralistic rule
 - v. Shortly thereafter (which was assuredly known to the Holy Spirit) started specifically persecuting Christians in horrendous ways
- B. So, however bad you may or may not think our current government is, the government that these things were directly written about was just as bad or worse. Christ, nor any of the apostles ever called for any interaction with the government to change policies, nor did they call for any revolution to overthrow an incredibly immoral government.

3. So, to be specific, there is no caveat that we don't have to submit if the government or the authority is bad enough

- A. We have to be careful to obey God always, so yes, there may be times we must disobey in order to obey God
 - i. Acts 4:19-20 - *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 heard."*
 - ii. If the government commands you to do something that is against the law of God, you can respectfully refuse to do that
- B. But, even if you must disobey to obey God, your disobedience should be limited to exactly the actions that would cause you to disobey God
- C. In all other things, you should still submit to the government
 - i. For example, if there was a government that required abortion, we could and must respectfully refuse
 - ii. But, this doesn't mean we can therefore refuse all submission to this government, we must still pay taxes, follow other laws, etc.
 - iii. And, even in our refusal to obey, we must submit, which may often look like accepting the penalties that are leveled on us in our disobedience

Conclusion

1. What is the command? Be subject to human authority, this morning, we've primarily considered government as the main emphasis of that command.
2. Why do we follow the command?
 - A. Because of our purpose - to proclaim the excellencies of Christ
 - B. Because of our identity - free in Christ to serve joyfully
 - C. Because of our example - Christ subjected Himself to human authority and persecution
 - D. Because of our salvation - Christ died to set us free from sin and free to righteousness
3. When do we follow the command? All of the time, regardless of how good our government is.
4. Application - we must live out our faith in our interaction with our government
 - A. We absolutely must follow the Scriptural commands that I have set before you this morning
 - B. I've tried to list before you some of my meditations on what these commands require of us now in America, I don't need you to absolutely agree with me on all of these final specific applications, but I do want you to consider these things and make sure you are living out the commands of Scripture