

I Peter 2:13-25 - Willing Submission to Worldly Authority Part 2

Saturday, December 01, 2012

11:01 PM

Passages to Read

Romans 13

I Timothy 2

Introduction

1. Plan for this morning

- A. This week we will be continuing our study of I Peter 2:13-25
- B. Last week we did most of the exposition of the passage but left off before doing the application
- C. So, this week, we are going to return to this passage and think through some application
- D. We'll first think through some general, universal application - how does Scripture teach us to submit?
- E. Then we'll think through some more specific application - how should a 21st century American live this out?

2. Read I Peter 2:13-25

3. Review of last week

- A. What are the commands?
 1. Be subject to human authority, and we primarily considered government as the main emphasis of that command
 2. Honor human authority that God has placed over us
 3. Respect human authority that God has placed over us
- B. Why should we follow the commands?
 1. Because of our purpose - to proclaim the excellencies of Christ (vs. 15)
 2. Because of our identity - free in Christ to serve joyfully and not grudgingly (vs. 16)
 3. Because of our example - Christ subjected Himself to human authority and persecution (vs. 21-23)
 4. Because of our salvation - Christ died to set us free from sin and free to righteousness (vs. 24-25)
- C. When should we follow the commands?
 1. All of the time, regardless of how good we think our government is
 2. Specifically, we looked at how we can disobey our government if they are commanding us to disobey Christ
 3. But even in this situation, it does not free us from submitting to government, we ought to submit in everything that we possibly can
 4. Just because a government is not good or godly does not give us reason to not submit

4. Proposition and Outline

A. Overarching thoughts

1. I stayed up last night after Bethlehem Revisited to put my notes together for this sermon
2. As I started thinking about my sermon, I was less than excited because the topic seemed so drab compared to what we've been involved in presenting this weekend - the gospel of Christ
3. But, as I considered it more, that is the reason that we are considering this topic this morning
4. How we submit to our government is a testimony to the gospel - so the gospel is at stake in what we are considering today
 - a) We consider this last week - the first reason we obey this command is because we are to proclaim the excellencies of Christ and this is Peter's first example of how to do that in action
 - b) We proclaim the excellencies of Christ by submitting willingly and joyfully to our government
5. This is a very important topic, because I am afraid that in the United States, Christians have failed to live out our submission to the government well, and because of this, we have not adorned the gospel well
 - a) I'm not necessarily saying that anyone here has failed to adorn the gospel
 - b) But the larger Christian culture has not, I'm afraid, so we need to be careful to examine ourselves and be sure we aren't being carried along with them
6. So, I want to emphasize as we start, we aren't looking at these commands in merely a legalistic sense - these are things we can and can't do - that would be a drab and boring message
7. But these things are important to guarding our witness to the gospel - we are considering how we can best proclaim the excellencies of Christ
8. Now since this is an extended application message, it is going to feel less expositional than usual because we did most of the exposition last week - it is actually going to feel more like the rare topical sermon because we're going to expand our scope and see how all of Scripture talks to the topic of our passage

B. **Proposition:** We need to consider how the Scripture calls us to submit to our government, because our testimony to the gospel is at stake.

C. **Outline**

1. What are our responsibilities to the government? or What does submission look like in attitude and in action?
2. What are our responsibilities regarding our government? or How do we use our privileges to interact with the government to demonstrate our submission to Christ?
3. How can a 21st century American live these things out?

I) What is our responsibility to the government? or What does submission look like in attitude and in action? (Six Commands)

1. Submit to the government, even to the unjust

- A. I Peter 2:13-14, 18 - *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...Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.*
- B. Romans 13:1-2, 5 - *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment...Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.*
- C. Titus 3:1 - *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,*
- D. We ought to strive to obey our government to the utmost of our ability at all times, unless there is no way to obey apart from disobeying God - this is the clear teaching of Scripture

2. Pray for the government, specifically for salvation

- A. I Timothy 2:1-4 - *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
- B. Ezra 6:10 - *that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.*
- C. We ought to devote ourselves to praying for the salvation of those who rule over us

3. Pay taxes to the government, without grumbling

- A. Romans 13:6-7 - *For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*
- B. Matthew 22:15-22 - *Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.*
- C. We ought to gladly pay taxes without grumbling, knowing that God is using that money for His purposes

4. Honor the government, even those not worthy of honor

- A. I Peter 2:17 - *Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*
- B. Romans 13:7 - *Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*
- C. The way we think about our government, which should be reflected in how we speak about our government, ought to demonstrate our high regard for those God has appointed over us

5. Respect (or fear) the government, because of its God appointed function

- A. I Peter 2:13-14 - *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.*
- B. Romans 13:3-4 - *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.*
- C. The way we think about our government, which should be reflected in our speech and actions, ought to demonstrate that we properly respect the authority that God has given to it

6. Live above reproach toward the government, to demonstrate your true allegiance

- A. I Peter 2:15-16 - *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.*
- B. Titus 3:1-2 - *Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*
- C. We ought to do everything we can to be above reproach toward our government, because we are demonstrating who Christ is
- D. We ought to work, not only to not be actually wrong, but to look as upright as possible
- E. So, each of the five responsibilities above should not be done in the minimum, but should be done to the fullest measure

II) What are our responsibilities regarding our government? (Six Principles)

- Beyond the above responsibilities, if we are going to be involved in or with our government, every command of Scripture must apply to our interaction
 - A. But, I want to lay several before you for your consideration in our voluntary interaction with the government

- 1. We must remember where our citizenship truly is**
 - A. Philippians 3:20-21 - *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*
 - B. Ephesians 2:19 - *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*
 - C. Regardless of where or when we are born or what government we might live under or what country we live in, as Christians we are not ultimately citizens here
 - D. Our citizenship is in heaven
 - E. We are Christians, not Americans

- 2. We must not get entangled in civilian affairs, so that we can please the one who enlisted us**
 - A. II Timothy 2:1-7 - *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*
 - B. As soldiers, we must not get entangled in civilian affairs
 - 1. This is a verse that I have mediated on for a long time, and it has application to many areas of life
 - 2. But, one of the major areas of application, especially to Americans, is our interaction with our government
 - C. Our interaction with our government must never be characterized by us being entangled in things of this world
 - 1. This does not mean we cannot interact with our government absolutely
 - 2. But, if substantial amounts of your time, energy, desire, devotion, etc. are drawn into interacting with your government, which is emphatically temporal and not part of the kingdom of God, then you are being entangled in a civilian pursuit
 - 3. The picture is excellent, because civilian pursuits are not things that are necessarily wrong, they just distract the soldier from his purpose
 - 4. In the same way, participating with our government is not necessarily wrong, but we must be very careful to make sure it is not distracting us from our purpose
 - 5. If you are in Christ, then you are a soldier of the cross, you should care about pleasing Christ not about temporal governments

- 3. We must not be captured by human philosophy or empty deceit**
 - A. Colossians 2:8 - *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*
 - B. In participating in our government, we cannot imbibe worldly ideas
 - C. This is often hard to do, because worldly ideas often sound like plausible arguments
 - 1. Colossians 2:4 - *I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.*
 - D. So we must be careful to be living out of Scripture and not following after worldly ideas and arguments

4. We must remember where Christ's kingdom is

- A. John 18:36 - *Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."*
- B. However we participate in our government, we must not forget that Christ's kingdom is not of this world
- C. So, our participation in government, whatever that might look like, must be to display the otherworldliness of Christ's kingdom somehow

5. We must seek the (true) good of our country

- A. Jeremiah 29:7 - *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*
- B. In a way, we are very similar to the exiles of Israel, the people of God that had been scattered among the nations - I think we can appropriate this command for the elect exiles of the dispersion
- C. If we are to participate in our government, then, it ought to be to seek the good of our nation
- D. As we think about what this means, though, we must be careful to be seeking the ultimate good for our nation which is the gospel going forward among us
 - 1. So, legislating better economics is not necessarily the best thing to seek for our nation, although it may be
 - 2. Even legislating morality is not always necessarily the best thing to seek for our nation, although it may be
 - 3. The best thing to seek for our nation is a situation where the gospel can be clearly seen and the distinction between the gospel and the world is clearly evident

6. We must seek others good above our own good

- A. Philippians 2:3 - *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*
- B. If we are participating in our government, we ought not to participate in order to pursue our own good, but others good

7. We must act with humility

- A. I Peter 5:6-7 - *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*
 - B. This is another important command to think about, because all too often in our interaction with our government there is very little humility demonstrated
 - C. Usually a very brash attitude that is very sure of its own correctness is displayed
 - D. If we are to participate in our government, though, this command must be followed
- So, like I said, every command of Scripture has bearing on our voluntary participation in our government, but these five stood out to me as important to consider and bring before you this morning

III) How can 21st century Americans live these things out?

1. Four attitudes to guard against

- i. We must guard against complaining about our government
 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) Respect the government
 - b) Honor the government
 - c) Pay taxes without grumbling (only because Americans love to complain about taxes)
 2. Why is this something American Christians should guard against?
 - a) In America we have a great privilege of being able to participate in our government and, to some degree, choose our government
 - b) But, somewhere along the line, the ability to participate with the government was equated with the right to criticize our government
 - i) The saying goes, "you can't complain if you didn't vote"
 - ii) The implicit understanding here is that if you do vote, you can complain
 - c) Complaining about our government and its policies is not exercising either respect or honor for our government
 3. How do we live this out?
 - a) We are careful not to complain about the policies of our government, even when we disagree with them
 - b) Unless we are prepared to disobey our government because they are calling us to disobey God, then we should honor our government and their directives
- ii. We must guard against being too quick to invoke our right to disobey the government
 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) Submit to the government
 2. Why is this something American Christians should guard against?
 - a) My estimation is that American Christians are very cognizant of their right to disobey the government if it calls them to disobey God
 - b) In fact, I think that often we can be too cognizant of that right, and we fail to see how we can submit to our government
 - c) Our attitude is in danger of looking for ways that we might not have to submit, not being grieved after we have exhausted every possible route of submission
 - d) American Christians need to be quick to submit, not quick to revolt
 3. How do we live this out?
 - a) Just because the government legislates something that you think is immoral does not mean that you should immediately disobey
 - b) First, you should look to see if there is a way to change what you are doing that exempts you from the government's command - we should try to see if there is any way to keep ourselves in submission
 - c) An example - a couple years ago here in Manhattan, there was a debate about a provision to include sexual preference/orientation in the list of protected categories
 - i) One of the main arguments I heard against this was that it would force landlords to rent to homosexual partners even though they believed it was wrong, which may be true
 - ii) But there is no law that says a Christian must be a landlord - if your conscience is harmed by renting to homosexual partners, then you can simply get rid of your rentals
 - iii) So, there is a way to be in submission to both the government and to God
 - d) So, we cannot run too quickly to exercise our right to disobey in favor of obedience to God, we must stop and consider carefully if there is a way to obey God and man if possible - we can only disobey man when it is clear there is no way to obey both God and man

- iii. We must guard against participating in disrespectful rhetoric
 - 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) Honor the government
 - b) Respect the government
 - c) Act with humility
 - 2. Why is this something American Christians should guard against?
 - a) Our political process is given to argumentative, disrespectful rhetoric of all sorts
 - i) Campaigns anymore are made up nearly entirely of this, especially in larger national races
 - b) The American Christian can be easily drawn into this rhetoric if we don't guard against it
 - c) Any type of campaigning that is not very respectful to those currently in power is off limits to a Christian
 - i) It's off limits to the Christian in that we cannot produce such campaigning
 - ii) It's off limits to the Christian in that we cannot repeat such campaigning
 - iii) It's off limits to the Christian in that we cannot have thoughts captured by such campaigning
 - 3. How do we live this out?
 - a) We must first realize that disagree and disrespect are different words and different ideas
 - i) We don't live this out by having to agree with everything our government does
 - b) But, when we disagree, we must do it in a humble, respectful manner
 - i) There is a way to humbly propose a better solution without disrespecting those in power
 - c) Christians ought to be known for disagreeing in humility that is not seen in the world
 - i) Unfortunately, I don't think we are known for this
 - ii) We are known for being just as argumentative and disrespectful as the world, or even more so

- iv. We must guard against getting entangled in civilian affairs
 - 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) We must not get entangled in civilian affairs
 - b) We must remember where Christ's kingdom is
 - 2. Why is this something American Christians should guard against?
 - a) Americans can easily get caught up in our rights in participating in our government
 - b) Especially during election seasons, we are prone to devoting enormous amounts of time, energy, emotions, etc. into an election
 - c) I'm afraid that the level of dedication to the political process is indicative of being entangled in worldly affairs
 - d) Now I'm not saying voting is wrong, or is, of itself, necessarily being entangled
 - e) Any time an election starts to direct substantial amounts of your time or thoughts or you find yourself worrying about the outcome of an election, you are being entangled in civilian affairs and not being given over to Christ
 - f) Elections are a thing of this world, they must be extremely secondary in our thinking
 - 3. How do we live this out?
 - a) We must be careful to guard our thoughts and emotions to keep them from being entangled in the world
 - b) If we find our emotions and thoughts being entangled in elections or politics, then we should be willing to 'cut off the hand and gouge out the eye' as it were

2. Four attitudes to cultivate

- i. We must be fervent in prayer for our government
 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) Pray for the government
 - b) Seek the good of our country
 - c) Seek others good
 2. Why is this something American Christians should cultivate?
 - a) I do sense that Christians in America pray for our government, so I don't have this on here because I think we don't
 - b) But, I'm afraid that we often miss the point of I Timothy 2
 - c) The point of I Timothy 2 is not to pray for our leaders to do certain things
 - i) I Timothy 2 doesn't call for us to pray that certain laws would be passed
 - ii) I Timothy 2 doesn't call for us to pray that certain laws wouldn't be passed
 - iii) Not that these are bad things or that we shouldn't do them, but they are not the point
 - iv) I'm afraid we often stop our prayer at this level
 - d) The point of I Timothy 2 is not to pray for our government to do certain things, but to pray for their salvation - this is what I want to call us too
 3. How do we live this out?
 - a) We pray for our leaders every day
 - b) We pray that the Spirit would open their eyes to the beauty of Christ and the ugliness of sin
 - c) We pray that they would come to know Christ and be joined to our brotherhood
 - d) We pray that we would be able to welcome them as brothers and sisters
 - e) We make this prayer more urgent than any other pray we have about them
- ii. We must exercise humility
 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) As Christians we must continually act with humility
 2. Why is this something American Christians should cultivate?
 - a) Because of how our political process is organized, it seems to encourage proud, argumentative disagreement, not humble proposals of what the government ought to do
 - b) It is very easy for Christians to get caught up in this as Americans
 - c) So, we need to remind ourselves that we are supposed to act humbly at all times
 3. How do we live this out?
 - a) We need to be very careful about how we present ourselves in the political arena
 - b) We shouldn't present ourselves as proud, argumentative, or disrespectful of current authority
 - c) Instead, if we disagree, we should do so in an imminently humble way
 - d) So, this is the flip side of guarding against a disrespectful attitude toward our government
 - e) We guard against disrespect and dishonor and we culture humility in disagreement
- iii. We must identify with Christ
 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) We must remember where our citizenship is
 - b) We must remember where Christ's kingdom is
 - c) We must not get captured by human philosophy or empty deceit
 2. Why is this something American Christians should cultivate?
 - a) Our culture likes to identify people based on their political affiliations - are they democrat or republican
 - b) American Christians have absorbed this mentality in a large sense, both in choosing to identify themselves as members of a political party and in thinking of the world in this way
 - c) But this should not be our primary or ultimate identification - we are Christians, not republicans or democrats or libertarians or reform party members or whatever other party you might belong to

3. How do we live this out?
 - a) We should be much quicker to identify ourselves as Christians than members of any political party
 - b) We must be careful to think of ourselves as Christians and not members of a political party
 - c) We must be careful to act as Christians and not members of a political party
 - i) We shouldn't be captured by human philosophy
 - ii) We shouldn't tow the party line because it's the party line
 - iii) We should be bound to Scripture and Christ, not a party's agenda
 - d) We must be careful not to associate a political party with being a Christian
 - i) I say this, because Christians seem to have been captured to do the will of the Republican party and Christians often seem to characterize anyone who would vote for a democrat as not a Christian
 - ii) Neither the Republican party nor the Democratic party is a Christian party, it is not *a priori* immoral to vote for someone in either party
 - iii) Both parties have some good things to say, and both parties have serious moral issues that do not represent Christ - their good points and moral failings are different and must be weighed carefully, but neither is perfect
 - iv) Neither party is the party of Christians, both of these are worldly political organizations

- iv. We must testify to the Lordship of Christ through our participation in government
 1. What commands apply here?
 - a) We must remember where our citizenship is
 - b) We must seek the true good of our country
 - c) We must seek others good and not our own
 2. Why is this something American Christians should cultivate?
 - a) I think this is something that is easy to forget when we enter the political arena
 - b) Our purpose is not to make better government or to make sure our ideas prevail
 - c) Whatever we do, the purpose ought to be to testify of Christ
 - d) We need to think consciously and carefully about how our actions are or are not testifying to Christ and then act accordingly
 3. How do we live this out?
 - a) I'm going to leave this one to you, there are many different ways that this could be lived out
 - b) But I want you to go home and think about how your participation in our government is testifying to the Kingship of Christ
 - c) Do others see your political participation and know that your citizenship is in heaven?
 - d) Or do you simply look like another American who is trying to forward their own ideas?
 - e) Do people see the excellencies of Christ in how you enter the political arena?
 - f) How can you be more intentional about displaying the excellencies of Christ?

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
 1. Scripture list out specific ways we must submit to our government
 2. All of Scripture ought to be brought to bear on our privilege to participate in our government
 - B. We must consider how we live these things out as 21st century Americans with unique privileges regarding our government
 1. Four attitudes to guard against
 - a) We must guard against complaining about our government
 - b) We must guard against too quickly invoking our right to disobey the government
 - c) We must guard against participating in disrespectful rhetoric
 - d) We must guard against getting entangled in civilian affairs
 2. Four attitudes to cultivate
 - a) We must cultivate an attitude of prayer for our leaders
 - b) We must cultivate an attitude of humility in politics
 - c) We must cultivate an attitude of identifying ourselves in Christ
 - d) We must cultivate an attitude of desiring to testify to the excellencies of Christ in the political arena