

Submission: Christ's Unpopular Example

Got Hope? Messages from 1 Peter

March 20 & 21, 2010

1 Peter 2:13-3:7

Intro:

Today we are going to focus on one of the least popular words in the English language: *submission*. We don't like to give in and we don't respect people who do. Our heroes *stick up for their rights*. They're *independent, strong-willed, and assertive*. Some are even *defiant, revolutionary, and rebellious*. Laying down and letting someone else win is for losers.

Presenting submission in a positive light is pretty tough. *Why shouldn't we push for our way?* What can we possibly read in the Bible that could convince us not to demand our rights? Well, Jesus didn't. That's the reason. Today's passage in 1 Pet seems to say, *if you're so concerned with having your rights, here's one to try on: You've got a right to be wronged!* How's that for politically incorrect?

Our method in this series is to walk through the text, getting the flow of the material and noticing interesting things along the way. But we are also pausing for the most applicable points. We pick up our tour in 2:13. There are four groups addressed in this section of 1 Pet: citizens, slaves, wives and husbands. In the center of the passage we'll see the ultimate example of submission, Jesus himself. His sacrifice is both the model and the motivation for our similar submission.

2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. Here's where he starts: citizens are to submit to governing authorities. (There are exceptions to this general rule - see stq.) *Obey the laws? Submit to authority? Why? 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence*

the ignorant talk of foolish men. The word translated *ignorant* here is a strong one. This isn't just describing someone lacking information, but lacking a good attitude. There are those who are waiting to catch Christians doing wrong. They have a chip on their shoulder. So when some church member makes the paper in some scandal, they say, *I just knew it; those Christians are all hypocrites!* Let's not trip people who are already off balance. Obeying the law protects the gospel by removing any basis for accusation. It's like I said last week about verse 12 - *People are looking for reasons to reject the gospel - let's not give them any!*

16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Your responsibility to *do right* overrides your *personal rights*. This teaching is common in Scripture. *It's just not all about us!* Even if something is legal, don't do it if it is immoral. Don't think freedom means you can do what is only *technically* okay - that's just a cover up. Use your freedom to do right. **17 Summarizes social obligations: Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.** How we live matters.

Next he deals with *subjection of servants to their masters*. There were many slaves in the Roman Empire. I've wondered why the Bible doesn't more directly condemn this terrible practice. It's important to recognize that the *institution of slavery* wasn't the only thing *morally outrageous* about the Roman Empire; the whole culture was corrupt. The mission of the first Christians, like Christ, wasn't to save society, but people. If they had aimed at anything else, they wouldn't have been able to hit their main target. *If you're deer hunting, you don't focus on and fire on a pheasant or you'll ruin your chances to get a deer.* **18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.** This has application to us as employees. *Skolios =*

bent, twisted. This says you're not just to work hard if your boss is a Christian or is fair or pays you well. Peter encourages persistence without complaining. **19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is *conscious of God*.** **20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, *this is commendable before God*.** *Let's pause and make a point:*

- **The fallacy: *submission is all for nothing*.**

The fact: *submission is all for God*.

I think many people struggle under the misconception: that there is *no reason* to submit. But what we read here is that *the reason* is the *highest possible reason* for doing anything: vs 13 - *it is for the Lord's sake*, 15 - *it is God's will*, 20 - *it is commendable to God!* Submission isn't bowing to unworthy men, it is bowing to God and he is worthy! He made us. He's the one with the rights! Rom 9 - he is the potter; we are the clay! Don't say, *it's all for nothing!* It's all for God. It is not for the recipients - they are often unworthy. Col 3:23,24 - *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.* Eph 6:5 submit not just *when their eye is on you but doing the will of God from your heart.* **7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.... R.**

All of what Peter says here is based on Christ's example. **21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.** That's just the calling you were hoping for, right? This says suffering related to submission is inevitable. It is part of the program when you are following Christ - after all, he went to the cross. *Example* is literally: *that which is written under*

(to be traced). He's the pattern - a perfect one at that. **22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."** This goes to show, *if we didn't already know*, that the innocent suffer. Now Peter quotes from Is 53, which foretold that the promised Messiah would be mistreated: **23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.** There is no more difficult response to suffering than silence. It's *natural* to retaliate - to lash out - to try to get back at others. But to *follow this example* takes *supernatural* strength.

Having mentioned Christ's sacrifice, he just has to explain the result of Christ's death. *What did it accomplish?* **24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.** Lest you think that the death of Jesus was *only* an example, here Peter presents *the gospel* in a nutshell. (*Explain!*) What does all this mean to us?

25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. We were lost, wandering, wayward, and unable to take care of ourselves. But God brought us back to himself through the sacrifice of Christ.

T - But these verses about him submitting to sacrifice are here in context to show us something:

- **The fallacy: *submission is only for weaklings*.**
The fact: *submission is Christlike*.

There is a misconception that submission is for pansies. But when we refuse to retaliate, we are following in Christ's footsteps, which is what our faith is all about. The man with the most power and the highest position, Jesus, was *gentle and humble in heart* (Matt 11:29). Submission isn't weakness; it is strength under control.

Peter now moves on to the submission of spouses.

3:1 Wives, *in the same way* be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over *without words* by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. These verses are written to women who are married, whose husbands are not Christians. The general application is broader than that, but we should understand the specific aim of the text. Several subjects emerge here that I must cover.

1. The advantages of submission in marriage.
2. The concern that this implies inferiority.
3. The matter of modesty. I'll take these in opposite order.

First, concerning **modesty**: note that these verses speak of what women are trying to accomplish with how they dress. While modesty is not a popular topic, let's think: *Who sets the standard?* The world's values are *materialism, sensuality, and self-assertion*. Note in 3:1 *in the same way* - it all points back to Christ. He is the example of submission in this whole section. This phrase implies imitation. *In the same way as whom? ... as the celebrities? Who's pattern do you follow? Who do you emulate? Who do you try to look like? What do you dress to call attention to?* 1 Sam 16:7 - Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. No kidding - men aren't much like God in that regard. Men are easily diverted away from your character to your body. But why

help men be even more superficial than they already are? What is external shouldn't be the main focus. Verse 4 says that *the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit is of great worth in God's sight*. The concentration should be on what matters most. Beauty comes from your heart, not the mall.

Now, concerning **submission implying inferiority**, let's see if we can make sense of this command. Some may say, *this doesn't sound fair! Who would suggest such a thing?* The Bible reveals a God-ordained order in the home. The idea of *the husband as the head of the home* is not just traditional; it is biblical (Eph 5:22). Throughout history, these verses have been misunderstood and misapplied. But functional subordination *does not mean* there is a difference in value. To *rank under* has to do with authority, not worth. The Bible teaches that husbands and wives have *different roles*, but it does not teach that they have *different value*.

Two examples come to my mind to show *submission doesn't mean inferiority*. The first is theological. Jesus submitted himself to the Father. They were co-eternal, co-equal, yet different in rank.

The other example is from my experience. I outrank the other employees at our church. But I'm not more important than the other, I don't act like it they don't either! My position has authority, but I am not better than anyone. In fact, the way to treat someone who is organizationally under you is to lift them up. And that is what husbands can do for wives. Not crush them, but build them up. More on that in a minute.

Now, concerning *the advantages of submission in marriage*, let me state my point:

- **The fallacy: submission is passive and pathetic.**
The fact: submission is strategic. It serves your purpose. It is a powerful way of having an effect. Notice in 1 - so

that... have you noticed that arguing doesn't work? *Lives are louder than a whole lot of words.* If a loved one does not believe, they are more likely to be swayed by your example than your preaching.

And men need to follow Christ's example too. Let's cover our last verse: **3:7 Husbands, in the same way** (He's calling us all to Christ-likeness) **be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.** lit: *live with them according to knowledge.* Recognize how she's different from you. One difference is mentioned: *weaker*, but in what way: emotionally, intellectually, or spiritually? Well, we get a hint when we learn that the word *vessel* means *jar* or *vase* and refers to the *physical* body as a container of soul. This terminology makes me think of *a crystal vase: precious, delicate, and fragile.* The point is that she *needs special attention and protection.* Take her nature into consideration. But the verse also shows how she is just the same in the most important of all ways, that is your value - lit: *honor her as a fellow-heir of the grace of life.* One last phrase: **so that your prayers may not be hindered.** What is this saying? If we fail to follow Christ's example, our selfishness will distance us from God. If your prayer life is pitiful, ask yourself how you've been doing in your relationships. *When we obey we have unhindered access to God.* Ask yourself if you are demanding your rights and distancing yourself from God.

Unused extra ideas and verses (More Meat):

We think we know better than those over us, our teachers, parents, politicians, church leaders, etc.

You don't root for the compliant character in the movie.

X-refs on submission:

Rom 12:19

Luke 6:32-35; 16:7-10

Jon 13:12

Mat 20:25-28

13

Notice he mentions the authority of government; there are rewards for doing right and penalties for doing wrong.

Gal 5:13 - You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Rom 13:1 - Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7

Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Eph 5:21 - Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Tit 3:1 - Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

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16

Gal 5:1 - It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Free to serve God.

John 8:32 - **Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free;**

Rom 6:15 - What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means.

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It's our calling. Part of the plan. Here's a promise: 2 Tim 3:12 - everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Jesus was sinless: Acts 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26.

22

23

Jesus in action: Mat 27:12-14; 34-44.

This was prophesied: Is 53:5-7,9,12.

24

Ps 103:3 - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

Heals? Every time? According to our timing? Epaphroditus wasn't healed: Phil 2:25-30.

Peter proclaims substitutionary atonement.

25

Rom 6:13,14; 2 Cor 5:14,15; Gal 2:20; 6:14.

2 Cor 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1

in the same way (He's calling us all to Christ-likeness)

2

3

Is 3:16-24 - pride exhibited through fashion.

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Do you put more time into preparing your face for church or your heart? Inner beauty is more important than anything.

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For more Scripture on women, see 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; and Titus 2:5.

7

A husband's role is summarized in Eph 5:3 - love your wives as Christ loves the church. Nourish, cherish. In 3:16; Rom 5:8 - love gives.

Here's an outline based on the NASB of 3:7

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

The first phrase gives us...

1. The connection: to the context. This tells us how it fits into the flow.

You husbands likewise... *In the same way*... as whom? In this letter, Peter has just been pointing everyone to the selfless example of Christ. He addresses citizens, servants, wives and now husbands. *All* are to follow Jesus. He's calling us all to Christ-likeness.

2. The first command:

...live with your wives in an understanding way...

The form shows that it is to be continual, not just something you do once. NIV translates: *be considerate as you live*... but it's lit: *According to knowledge*. Many of us pride ourselves on our *knowledge* about various things, but we remain *oblivious* about women. Men must become *students* of their wives. To *know* her, you must listen! You need to understand her nature and peculiarities. Recognize how she's different from you. Take that into consideration. One difference is mentioned in...

3. The corresponding comparison:

...as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman...

Weaker in what way: emotionally, intellectually, or spiritually? Well, we get a hint when we learn that the word *vessel* means *jar* or *vase* and refers to the *physical* body as a container of soul. This terminology makes me think of *a crystal vase: precious, delicate, and fragile*. The point is that she *needs special attention, consideration, and protection*. Look out for her. Does she want to ski as fast as you do? Or hike as far? *She's not another you*. She needs consideration, protection. Never taken for granted.

4. The second command:

...and grant her honor...

Giving honor means you show her respect. NIV - "treat her with respect."

Grasp and convey her high worth! It's dishonoring to squash others into our mold. I asked women: how can he honor you? "*Be proud of me, don't put me down, build me up. Notice things. I look nice? In what way?*"

T - While women have a distinct identity, they have absolute equality. This is shown in...

5. The corresponding comparison

...as a fellow-heir of the grace of life...

This phrase describes our equal access to God. We have *equal standing spiritually*. This is a way in which we are the same. But what about the verses concerning submission? To *rank under* has to do with a position of authority, not worth. Husbands and wives may have *different roles*, but they don't have *different value*. Many verses make this clear. No one is more important than anyone else. We're equal where it counts: our value! *R verse*.

6. The consequence:

...so that your prayers may not be hindered.

What is this saying? If we consistently fail to take into account the ways in which we differ and the way in which we're the same, that sin will distance us from God. If your prayer life is pitiful, ask yourself: *Am I a jerk to my mate?* If you don't know, *ask your wife*. When we obey we have *unhindered access to God*. But disregard God's instructions and you're on your own. We need to see others as they are and take into consideration how they differ from us, honoring them as valuable. You know, this is how Jesus Christ treated people. He took into consideration how people differed from him and yet treated sinners like they had value.