

Living in a Hostile World under authority.

Today's message gives us wisdom for living. There are a lot of educated people who lack wisdom. Knowledge is like having a room full of lumber – raw materials, while wisdom enables us to build something out of it.

“By wisdom a house is built, by understanding it is established, and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches...”

(Pr. 24:3-4).

Peter has been writing to believers who have endured persecution.

The apostle answers key questions on ‘how to live in a hostile world.’

His answer is to be submissive to God-ordained authority.

1 Peter 2:13-17

- 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,
- 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.
- 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.
- 16 *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.
- 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Our primary purpose as believers in a world that is hostile to the gospel is to be living witnesses in word and deed.

Peter's letter to a persecuted and scattered church instructs believers in four areas:

- Submit to Authority
- Doing what is Right
- Living in Freedom
- Showing Respect to others

Peter speaks of living under earthly authorities:

I. Submission to Authority

This concept is echoed in many other places in the Bible.

Jesus also spoke of ‘rendering to Caesar that which is Caesar's.’

Submission to authority is fundamental to all societies and institutions.

Peter's submission list:

- Citizens to Government
- Slaves to masters
- Christ to the Father's will
- Wives to husbands

Chain of Command: recognizing authorities

Children to parents

Employees to bosses.

Students to teachers...; youth to elders

All people to all local authorities, such as police and local leaders.

The writer to the Hebrews writes concerning church leadership,

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

(Heb. 13:17)

Paul adds a specific reason for submitting to authority his letter to the Romans:

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” (Rom. 13:1)

In his letter to his beloved Titus Paul writes,

“Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.” (Titus 3:1-2)

Submission to authority is connected with many other good works and attitudes.

To resist God ordained authority is to resist God; but we might observe this truth, there are no perfect authorities.

It has been said that

“Almost any government is better than no government.”¹

Sanchez says,

Even the most oppressive governments, however, hold evil in check to some extent, preventing society from collapsing into complete anarchy.²

How should those of us who are subjects of a greater King relate to local rulers?

- The job of governments is to ***punish evildoers and praise the righteous.***
- All believers should become ideal citizens for the purpose of evangelism.

¹ Mark Dever, pastor of Capital Hill Baptist Ch. Washington DC.

² Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [*1, 2 Peter, Jude*](#) (Vol. 37, p. 129). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

An example of rebellion to authority is with King Saul. He was told to “utterly destroy Amalek and all that he has” (1 Sam. 15:3). But Saul “spared Agag the king of the Amalekites, along with the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, sheep, and all that was good” (v. 9). In other words he allowed the people to take spoils and trophies. This wasn’t what the Lord had commanded him through Samuel to do. Saul justified his actions and expected a blessing for partial obedience.

Instead he received rebuke from Samuel, “Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination. And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

Rebellion, like witchcraft and divination, exposes people to the realm of Satan. Submitting to authority provides an umbrella of protection against Satanic attack, Satan’s lies and deceptions, as well as many destructive temptations.

Insubordination – a stubborn rejection of truth and God’s commands, is like **Iniquity** (selfishly doing one’s own thing) and **idolatry** – worship of make-believe gods.

Saul later received a demonic tormentor in his life and was filled with jealous rage against David.

Submission to authority has been defined as *the freedom to be creative under the protection of divinely appointed authority.*

By being obedient to God they would keep from unnecessary difficulties. “*Since you’re already in hot water, don’t turn up the heat.*”

Even if authorities are imperfect or wrong God’s greatest miracles can result as His people remain under authority.

Matthew 8:5-13

Healing of the Centurion’s servant.

A significant word is given by Peter, translated “institutions.”

It is literally “creatures” (v. 13)

On the one hand we are to submit to the government,
 but not to the point of offering worship to the Caesars.
 The emperor cult meant that offerings and declarations were to be made yearly to
 Caesar, as the human incarnation of a god.
 Christians knew that only Jesus was Lord.
 Without the certificates they could be declared enemies of the state.

Peter's message is clear. The Emperor is not divine, so he is not to be worshiped.
 No man is to be worshiped.
 Sometimes in politics we get caught up in ruler-worship. During election time
 people believe that someone man is the answer to society's ills.
 The truth is: No man can bring about heaven on earth. In the same way no man
 nor party can make hell on earth.

J. C. Ryle writes, "the best of men are only men at their very best"³

Earthly leaders deserve our submission and respect, not our worship.

II. Doing Right

For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish
 men. V. 15.

Proclaimers of truth must behave respectfully before a hostile world.

Peter has already mentioned the behavior of believers in the verses just before this:
 "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts
 which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among
 the Gentiles..." (v. 11-12).

- War within and without - in the world.

What believers say they believe must be demonstrated by their behavior.

The Scriptures encourage Christians to lead the way in good works.

St. Aristides the philosopher of Athens

– 2nd Century –reported to the emperor concerning Christians:

They do not worship strange gods, and they go their way in all modesty and
 cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them; and they love one
 another, and from widows they do not turn away their esteem; and they

³ J. C. Ryle, Expository thoughts: Matthew. P. 209

deliver the orphan from him who treats him harshly. And he, who has, gives to him who has not, without boasting. And when they see a stranger, they take him in to their homes and rejoice over him as a very brother; for they do not call them brethren after the flesh, but brethren after the spirit and in God. And whenever one of their poor passes from the world, each one of them according to his ability gives heed to him and carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah, all of them anxiously minister to his necessity, and if it is possible to redeem him they set him free. And if there is among them any that is poor and needy, and if they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to supply to the needy their lack of food. They observe the precepts of their Messiah with much care, living justly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and every hour they give thanks and praise to God for His loving-kindnesses toward them; and for their food and their drink they offer thanksgiving to Him. And if any righteous man among them passes from the world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God; and they escort his body as if he were setting out from one place to another near. And when a child has been born to one of them, they give thanks to God; and if moreover it happens to die in childhood, they give thanks to God the more, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And further if they see that any one of them dies in his ungodliness or in his sins, for him they grieve bitterly, and sorrow as for one who goes to meet his doom.⁴

The early church were witnesses for Christ by their love and good works. Christians are called to trust God and live a new way of life?

III. Live in Freedom

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. (v. 16).

No matter what we are free to do, we must ask severe questions:

1. If a non-believer saw me would it affect my testimony for Christ?
If you are a Christian and live a worldly life, the world will run away from

⁴ *The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher*, Translated from the Syriac Version by D. M. KAY, B.Sc., B.D., ASSISTANT TO THE PROFESSOR OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

- you and the gospel. Being just like them, we'll have nothing to say.
2. If a weaker believer saw you in your liberty doing what he was not free to do would you be the cause of him stumbling into old habits and sins?
(1 Cor. 8:9) "...take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak"

(Rom. 14:13) "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this - not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way..."

3. **Freedom isn't the right to do what we want, but the power to do as we ought.** Therefore, with liberty comes responsibility.

Paul wrote,

"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (Gal. 5:13).

Peter asks, "How can I best serve God and others with my liberty?"
What opportunity does my freedom in Christ open up?

IV. Show Respect to others - Application

Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.
(V. 17)

This is a general four-part statement on how to be a positive witness to the world.

1. **Honor:** Humans bear God's image, so they are to be honored.
Treat others with respect. --Golden Rule!
If these saints treated the authorities that were persecuting them with respect, then how should we show honor and respect to our political leaders?
2. **Love:** Love other Christians unselfishly
3. **Fear God** as Creator Sustainer and coming Judge
God is always watching, listening and waiting for our best responses.
4. **Honor all in authority** with obedience as those placed by God.
Note Position Vs. Personality
Pray for them (1 Tim 2:1-2) and Speak well of them. (Dan. 4:16; 5:19)