

Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 10/26/08
1 Peter 2: 13-25 **Hope In Submission**

Imagine getting a letter from Peter, the apostle of Jesus while you are in exile in a foreign land. In this letter he encourages you to stay close to the Triune character of God. He encourages you to have a purified heart and a good attitude toward people inside the church, as well as those outside the faith. He encourages you to get rid of all the worldly thoughts about those who have wronged you and to take on the nature of being Christ-like in all things.

When you get this letter, and as it is being read to the whole congregation, you begin to think of the attitude that you have toward the Emperor Nero, and those who have followed his orders to disperse all of the followers of Jesus in his little kingdom.

Given the insight from Peter's letter, you begin to seek forgiveness for all the malice and slander you have been guilty of when thinking or speaking of Nero. Trusting God, you begin to think that you have finally been set free from the bondage of hate. You begin to seek after God through diligent study of His Word, and you find peace, deep down inside you, as one of God's chosen people.

However, when you get to this passage, to verse 13 in particular, "*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men...*" you begin to determine that Peter has just crossed the line— he is taking us beyond our capacity to forgive those who have wronged us in such personal and horrible ways. We can no longer celebrate life with those we love, those who are so close to us in the body, because of Nero, who is so hateful toward God and His chosen people, the followers of Jesus.

The submission that God calls us to and that Peter is writing about to the scattered, fractured, frustrated followers of Jesus "for the Lord's sake" not our own. Peter and Paul both agree on this being beyond our ability, but necessary for the fullness of God's grace.

The apostle Paul, writing to the church at Ephesus tells them in **Ephesians 5:21**,

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Here as well, it is a servant-like, humble, conciliatory attitude toward others. In Ephesians this verse, grammatically refers back to being filled with the Holy Spirit. See verses 15-20: "Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peter's instruction to individuals in the church is that we "submit ourselves." This is a personal choice on the part of each one of us, to allow our character to become Christ-like. We don't submit because we have to, but because we have the freedom to do so, "for the Lord's sake" is our motivation to obey those in authority over us. Our obedience then, of doing God's will by "doing good" is our testimony to both believers and unbelievers, which silences the talk of foolish men, who think they know how we should act.

Verse 17 sums up our being Christ-like: *"Show proper respect to everyone; love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king."* With the elections coming up in a few days, and with the understanding that a good portion of this nation will be disappointed with the results, keep this verse in mind. We are to "fear God" who is the one who is the keeper of our souls, so we stand in awe of His great power, and we are to "honor the king" or those in authority over us.

Now, look at verse 21: *"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps."* The verses that come just before this calling help us understand how we are to live. The context of this calling in this passage is slavery and submitting to authority.

Peter mentions that we are called, to help us realize that in each situation we find ourselves, and in each relationship that we deal with, we face it in the truth of God's grace in our lives.

In biblical times, if slaves were to put their faith and trust in Jesus as Lord, it would immediately be necessary for them to utilize God's new found purpose for them. They would not stop being a slave because they had become a Christian; instead, they would begin to glorify God, by realizing that they are free to serve as only a believer can.

Each one of us as a believer is free from keeping the law in order to earn our salvation, but we are still to live in obedience to the laws governing our land. We do so because we are grateful for the salvation that has been so freely given to us. We live within God's Law, the Ten Commandments, and the Law to love our neighbor as ourselves, with the framework of those in authority over us, to avoid anarchy, and because it is God's will for us.

In order to know how to live in this world, we submit to Christ; we follow the example of Jesus, who suffered first, suffered for us, and said that we should walk in His steps. Not just in our suffering, but also in our response to having to submit to those in authority over us, that is our hope.

No matter what happens, as a result of our obedience, we follow Jesus who "entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly". What Jesus suffered on the cross at Calvary, for our personal salvation, forgiveness of sin, is the healing that we need for all of our wounds.

We are easily spooked by this world, like sheep, and it is very easy for us to take our eyes off of Jesus, which causes us to stray from our real purpose in life, to serve the Lord and others. When we find ourselves outside, looking in, we must return to the One who has called us out, set us apart, and given us real life, even in a world that is hostile to us.