



Daily Devotional - 1 Peter Study

Week 3 - Day 2

Approaching God

Read Hosea 2:19-20,23 - *I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD. I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God.’*

Prayer: Yesterday we read 1 Peter 2:10 where Peter recalled this prophecy from Hosea 2 referring to God's gracious inclusion of the Gentiles for his saving purposes. Take some time to meditate on the wonder of God creating a new, and free people that transcends old divisions. Consider his love today as you begin your time, that he has chosen you for holiness. Take some time to thank God that holiness means not just being set apart *from* something (sin and its worldly systems) but being set apart *for* something - God himself and his glory.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - 1 Peter 2:13-17

Passage Introduction: Last week, we learned the importance of craving the milk of the Word. Peter urged us to restrain our appetites, to see ourselves as part of a living temple, and to recognize the great privilege as chosen people. He stressed the importance of living exemplary lives among the lost for the sake of the gospel. This week, Peter will begin explaining the nature of submission. Much of the next couple weeks will develop our understanding of what biblical submission is, to whom we are called to submit, and why submission is not the same as weakness. We begin with the call to submit to human institutions and earthly masters.

agathopoeio = the greek word for “doing good,” and is used 3x’s in Peter’s letter. It is used in this context to mean “good works or actions beyond that normally expected in a given situation,” which could be noted by the authorities, by one’s master, or by their husband. The same verb is used by Jesus in Luke 6:35 - “do good” even towards your enemies.

1 Peter 2:13-17 - **13** Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, 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. **15** For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. **16** Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. **17** Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words. What words or ideas are repeated, related, compared, contrasted?

Daily Study Questions

You may find it helpful to read through the commentary in “Resources for Further Study” at the end of today’s study to answer these questions.

Questions for Study

- What imperative commands does Peter give in this passage? Try to find at least 4 commands and list them out here:
- What reasons does Peter give for submitting ourselves to human authorities? What do you think this means? Try to paraphrase using your own words.
- The apostle Paul also spends some time on the topic of submission. Both he and Peter had more than their share of tense moments with those in governmental authority, even to the point of martyrdom. Look up Romans 13:1-7 and note what Paul adds to Peter’s thoughts on submission to governing authorities. What reason does he give for our submission?
- What do you learn about the character of God from this passage?

Questions for Meditation & Application

- Why do you think the idea of submission causes so much controversy inside and outside the church today? What negative stereotypes are associated with submissive people? How would you respond to the charge that submissiveness is a negative trait?
- How should “living as servants of God” affect the way we submit to others? What might be the principle behind submitting for “the sake of the Lord?” (vs. 13)

Close in Prayer:

Take a moment to examine your heart. What governing authority do you least want to submit to? The IRS? The President? Your neighborhood HOA? What comes to mind for you? What does your unwillingness to submit reveal about your heart in this area? Close by asking the Lord to soften your heart, so that your submission to human authority becomes an extension of your submission to Him.

Resources for Further Study

1 Peter chapter 2 notes

Commentary & Notes on 1 Peter 2:13-17

Textual Notes:

1 Pet. 2:13–14 - Christians are to be subject to every civil authority (cf. Rom. 13:1–7). To punish (Gk. *ekdikēsis*, “justice, punishment, retribution”) includes not just deterring evil but carrying out retribution against those who do evil (see note on Rom. 13:4). By contrast, governments are to praise or reward those who do good, thus encouraging more good behavior. Peter explains that, regardless of the type of government over us, we have a responsibility to earthly authorities. Though we are citizens of another kingdom serving another King, during the time of our exile on this earth we must submit ourselves to every governing authority placed over us by God. Why? Because this is the will of God.

1 Pet. 2:15 - The godly lives of believers will put to silence any false charges raised against them.

1 Pet. 2:16 - *Freedom* in Scripture is not a license to sin but expresses itself in devotion to what is good (cf. Gal. 5:13–14).

1 Pet. 2:17 - *everyone*. All people deserve the same honor and respect as the emperor. Only God is to be feared. Believers should have a tender love for each other as members of the same family.

Passage Summary:

Peter moves to a surprising and urgent application of the teaching he has just given. He has been emphasizing the status that Christians have as the people of God; they've been chosen by him and drawn into a privileged fellowship. They are priestly nation, the recipients of God's favor and grace. But why should Peter remind them of their status? To be sure, he would have them exercise their priesthood in praising the Lord who purchased them with his own blood; but he has another reason. He wants to prepare them for humble service and ministry. It is **because** they are God's royal people that they can be servants. The example of Jesus is already before Peter, although he does not yet mention it directly. Knowing who he was, and what he came to do, Jesus could subject himself to people. (John 13:3-4). He came to not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Called as children of the light, Christians are free. Their freedom, however, binds them to their calling. They are free in bondage to God. They know what it means to fear God in his presence. They are free to love their fellow Christians. The dark blindness of sinful selfishness is gone; they are free to love. They are also free to honor unbelievers as God's creatures, and to respect the role of authority given to each one.

These verses and the whole section that follows about submission is in direct antithesis to the spirit of the world, where every individual group demands its “rights” and understands liberty as freedom from responsibility. The apostle describes what is, for our time, a strange liberty. As Roberto Unger has pointed out, the liberal idea of liberty is bankrupt. (*Knowledge & Politics*)

Freedom in Christ to worship him as Lord does not preclude submission to earthly authorities. Rather, having been set free in Christ to trust him body and soul, we are now free to trust that

earthly authorities are only in place by his permission (see also Romans 13:1-7). When we sinfully rebel against earthly authorities, we unwittingly testify that our hope is in earthly things. Ironically enough, however, when we cling to Christ's sovereign lordship and eternal riches, we are free to submit to civil authorities, demonstrating that our hearts are not tuned to the world and its passing riches (Mark 12:17). In other passages the Bible will help believers consider how to deal with unlawful authorities, or those who may be lawfully opposed. Here, however, the focus is on honoring the government (even one that may be antagonistic to Christians) that maintains a society's order, thus becoming God's instrument for facilitating the testimony and progress of the gospel.

Peter believes that holding to the gospel will make us not problematic revolutionaries but humble and honorable citizens. This underscores yet another distinction between Christians and those who trust only in the things of this world and who consequently are always seeking power and privilege.

The overarching principle God has called Christians out of the world in order to serve him as his ambassadors, as his priests, declaring and displaying his rule so that those around us might come to "glorify God on the day of visitation" (2:9-12). But, at the same time, we are to "be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (v 13). The word translated "institution" is literally "creature"—but institution is a good translation, for Peter is not telling his readers that they are to submit to every person created by God. In fact, Peter is making a nuanced and crucial point about the nature of authority. In his day, the Roman emperor—the authority—was an object of worship. Thomas Schreiner explains Peter's point in using the word "creature": "*The emperor cult was popular in Asia Minor, and Christians doubtless felt social pressure to participate. Peter reminded his readers at the outset that rulers are merely creatures, created by God and existing under his lordship.*" (1, 2 Peter, Jude, page 128)

Peter is clear. The emperor is not divine, so he is not to be worshiped. No ruler is to be worshiped. Yet this practice of ruler-worship is not limited to the first century. Are we not worshiping a creature when we promote a particular leader (or party) as the answer to society's ills, the one who can inaugurate heaven on earth? Aren't we in danger of idolatry when we sacrifice time, money, and resources at the altar of a political party, but we won't sacrifice time, money, and resources to advance the gospel to the ends of the earth? And what does it say about us when we speak of a mere human as an evil power that rivals God, as though the wrong election result might well bring hell on earth? Just as J.C. Ryle said that "the best of men are only men at their very best" (Expository Thoughts: Matthew, page 209) so too, the worst of men are still only men at their very worst. Our leaders are mere human creatures like us, but as human creatures they bear God's image. They are to enjoy our submission (v 13) and our respect (v 17), but not our worship.

We are also free to influence government as earthly citizens. That may mean speaking for good policy and against bad policy. Often times, Christians have had to speak out against unjust policy. In democratically elected governments, Christians are free to influence government by voting during elections. We are not to deceive ourselves into thinking that if we only get the right candidate in office, then we can have "heaven on earth." There is only one new heavens and earth, and there is only one heavenly King, and his rule isn't subject to a majority vote. On the day of his return, he will establish a government that is righteous, just and peaceful. Until that day, we are to seek justice for those around us, to the degree that we are able and have influence.