

## Here/There—Authority

Authority is a part of our lives from the day we are born. Beginning with our parents we are always under someone's authority. Mom or dad tells their child what to do. The child doesn't want to do it, and so they whine and say, "Whyyyyy?" And mom or dad says, "Because. . . I said so." It's authority.

As you get older and finally get to leave the authority of your parents' for a few hours, then what happens? You're under the authority of teachers.

You finally graduate high school, you're 18 years old and you're a legal adult and you're like William Wallace in Braveheart— Freeeeedooooom!

But then real life hits you like an f5 tornado. You have professors, and bosses and landlords and the IRS. There's always some authority. No matter how high you climb or how far you go, there is always someone telling you what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and how much it's going to cost you.

Some of us have no problems with authority. We are quite comfortable with following the rules. You always stop behind the white line. You take a walk before bedtime because your Fitbit says you need 236 more steps, and you never, ever take more than 20 items through the express checkout. However, you did consider calling 911 on that person who had 27 items. It's all about authority.

Others of us have real problems with authority. Here are some sure signs you have authority issues. It was obvious early on, when you insisted on dressing yourself.

(Show Pictures)

You had a regular chair at the principal's office. The teacher didn't have to say anything. She just gave you the look and you knew where to go. You've taken the defensive driving safety course so many times you're on a first name basis with the instructor. You haven't just quit jobs because of your bosses; you've had bosses quit because of you. It's all about authority, and every one of us is under authority.

Peter spends quite a bit of time in 1 Peter 2 and 3 talking about authority. This question of authority is important for us as Christians, because we are a part of two worlds at once. We're in a series called *Here / There*. We live here, but our citizenship is there. God's Word translation says in 1 Peter 2:11 that we are "*foreigners and temporary residents in the world.*"

As Christians, this means our ultimate authority is There, but since we live here, we're under authority Here. As people who are under the authority of Jesus and God's Word, how should we respond to authority here?

Peter talks about how we as Christians respond to the authority of government. He talks about the workplace. He talks about authority in the home, and later in chapter 5, he talks about human authority in the church. This morning, we want to focus on the first part. What attitude should we have toward human authorities here on earth? It doesn't matter whether it's the city council, the county board of supervisors, the local sheriff, state government up in Jefferson City, or the authority we all love to complain about in Washington D.C. 1 Peter 2:13-17 says,

*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.*

## **I. Submit to Human Authorities**

First, Peter says we should submit ourselves to human authorities. Let's start with the submit part. That's not a very popular word today. Nobody writes songs about submitting to authority. No one organizes protest to encourage people to submit to authority.

The Greek word Peter uses here is a military term that has to do with the chain of command in a military unit. It means to place yourself under, to line up under. Peter is saying as Christians we are all soldiers under command, and so we need to place ourselves under authority.

A military unit works best when every soldier, sailor or airman follows the chain of command, obeys their orders and performs their duties as they drilled countless times to do. That's how the military can operate like a well-oiled machine. An army where every order is questioned, where every soldier does what they want regardless of orders is an army that's going to lose. You don't have to like your lieutenant, you don't have to agree with your lieutenant, but you have to do what he says.

Notice which human authorities he said we should submit to. Which ones? EVERY human authority. I did some real thorough study on the Greek word used here. Guess what *every* means? My Greek dictionary gives this definition, "all; any; total; whole; every kind of." Don't you hate it when the Bible does that? There's no escape hatch here; no loopholes.

Peter doesn't say submit only to "good" human authority. He doesn't say only those authorities you agree with, only those whose policies you support. Only the Republicans, or the Democrats. He says, "submit to...every human authority."

Even the bad ones. 1 Peter was most likely written around A.D. 64. Do you know who was emperor of Rome at that time? It was Nero. He was the first emperor to officially persecute the church. This guy was a first-rate twisted sicko. He tortured Christians for kicks and giggles.

If there was ever a human authority who should not be submitted to, it was Nero, but Peter meant what he said. Peter also practiced what he preached. Do you know Peter died? Peter was crucified upside down under the reign of emperor Nero.

## **II. Submit Because of Our Ultimate Authority.**

First, Peter says we should submit, and then he tells us why we should submit. Peter says that submitting to authority is something we do willingly of our own volition, not because we have to, not because Nero or any other authority deserves it, not because those in authority are always right, and not because we're going to get in trouble. That's not why Peter says we should submit to authority.

Why does he say we should submit? It's right there in verse 13, "for the Lord's sake."

No matter what authority we are under here on earth, there is always a greater authority. Chuck Swindoll tells the story of two California Highway Patrol officers doing some speed enforcement highway 15, not far from the Marine Corps Air Station in Miramar. One of the officers was using a hand-held radar device to check speeding vehicles approaching the crest of the hill. The officers were suddenly surprised when the radar gun began reading 500 mph. The officer attempted to reset the radar gun; it would not only not reset, it shut down.

Just then a deafening roar over the treetops revealed that the radar had in fact locked onto a United States Marine Corps F-18 hornet, which was engaged in low-flying exercises near the location. Back at the CHP headquarters the patrol captain fired off a complaint to the Marine Corps base commander for interfering with their authority in law enforcement. The reply came back in true USMC style;

Dear Sir;

Thank you for your letter. We can now complete the file on this incident. You may be interested to know that the tactical computer in the F-18 had detected the presence of, and subsequently locked onto, your hostile radar equipment and automatically sent a jamming signal back to it, which is why it was shut down.

Furthermore, an air to ground missile aboard the aircraft had also automatically locked onto your hostile equipment location.

Fortunately, the Marine pilot flying the hornet recognized the situation for what it was, quickly responded to the missile system alert, and was able to override the automated defense system before the missile was launched to destroy the hostile radar position.

Our pilot also suggests you cover your mouth while cussing at them, since the video systems in these jets are very high resolution. Sgt. Johnson, the officer holding the radar gun, should get to his dentist to check his left rear molar. It appears the filling is loose. Also, the snap is broken on his handgun holster.

Thank you for your concern. Semper Fideles

There is a higher authority. City hall is not the highest authority. The statehouse is not the highest authority. The White House or Capitol Hill are not the highest authorities. Even the Supreme Court is the not-so-quite-Supreme Court. We submit because of who sits on the throne of the universe. One day everyone, including every Nero, every Hitler, every Saddam Hussein, every Kim Jong Un, every Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi, every city clerk, every state trooper, and every one of us will have to answer to that authority. That is why we submit.

We submit because of Jesus. Because he is worthy. Because he deserves our allegiance. We submit not because the city or county government always knows its head from its backside. We submit not because Obama or Trump are worthy of our obedience. We don't submit because congress is so good at what they do. Far from it. We submit, because Jesus, our Lord and Savior asks us to.

### **III. The Purpose of Government**

After calling Christians to submit to the governing authorities, Peter then gives the purpose of human government. In verse 13, he says they are sent by God, *“to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.”* Government’s primary God-given purpose on earth is to establish order and they are to operate on the principle of justice. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 13:4, *“They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”*

God has placed two agencies on earth. They each have a different purpose and operate by a different power.

	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Principle</b>	<b>Power</b>
<b>Government</b>	Order	Justice	Force
<b>Church</b>	Salvation	Grace	Love

God has placed the civil authorities to provide social order. They are to punish evil and praise good. They are to operate on the principle of justice, and the power they have is the use of force. Paul writes in Romans that they bear the sword for a reason. Peter is saying we should give the government no reason to use their power of the sword against us.

The church, however, has been placed here for an entirely different purpose— salvation. The church operates on the principle of grace, and we are driven by the power of love.

I realize that sometimes the government does a very poor job at this. When the government doesn’t punish evil and doesn’t praise good, social order begins to fall apart. When this happens we can call the government out on this. We can speak truth to power, so long as we do it in a loving way. As Americans we have the right to participate in our own government in a way that Peter and Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century never had. We need to be wise stewards of that right.

It is true that when human government forgets its place and purpose, it does a great amount of harm, but it is also true that when the church forgets her place and purpose, it does even greater amounts of harm.

#### **IV. The Place of Christians**

So what is the place of Christians in the social order here on earth? What is the place of the church?

##### **A. Do Good**

First, we are to do good. Listen to what Peter says in vs. 15, *“For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.”*

We are to live our lives in a way that doesn’t open us up to accusation. We need to realize that so long as we live here we are living behind enemy lines. We are surrounded by an enemy that wants you to fail, that wants you as a follower of Jesus to fall flat on your face, to embarrass yourself, to embarrass the church, and to embarrass your Savior.

But when we devote ourselves to doing good, the enemy can’t find any way to level a charge at us. I love Daniel 6:4. Daniel found himself in a prominent position in an ungodly country, and all

the others were jealous of him. They hated Daniel and what he represented. They were looking for any reason, any excuse to attack Daniel, and here's what Daniel 6:4 says,

*The administrators and the satraps (provincial governor) tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.*

Jesus doesn't want anything getting in the way of your witness. He wants people to see the good news in your life, and how can they see that if what they see is stubbornness, rebellion, lip, and attitude? We submit because of who is in ultimate authority.

### **B. Be Free. . .with Limits**

Secondly, Peter says be free...with limits. Verse 16 says, *"Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves."* As Christians we have amazing freedom. Church should never be a stifling, stuffy, snobby place, because we have incredible freedom in Christ. I should also add that we have tremendous freedom as Americans. But we should never use our freedom whether it's our freedom in Christ, or our freedom as Americans to steamroll over others. Your freedom is never a license to the wrong thing, because we are always under God's authority.

### **C. Show Respect**

Thirdly, in verse 17 Peter says we are to show respect to whom...everyone! There's another one of those pesky every commands. Respect is the idea of showing honor. Respect a person's office, respect their position, respect the fact that God put them there, even if you don't respect all that they do. We also need to respect that every person we meet is created in the image of God. God loves them. Jesus died for them, and longs to have a relationship with them, and you may be the closest connection they to their Savior. Every person you meet is someone God can use to teach you a lesson, or God can use you to teach them a lesson. Show respect to everyone.

Do you respect and honor those in office, even those you didn't vote for? How about the people you work with? Your boss? Do you show them respect? How about those you live with? Kids, do you give honor to your parents? Husbands do you honor your wives. Wives do you respect your husbands? How about your social media? If we scrolled through your Facebook or Twitter up here this morning would we see posts filled with respect and honor, or would we see vitriol and rage?

What the world needs to see in us is not are not obnoxious Christians, but a people filled with the love of Christ.

Let me apply this to the church. There are three signs we need to be very intentional about putting up, even if they're not visible, they need to be very clear here at Son-Rise.

1. Everybody's welcome. And we mean everybody: believers, unbelievers, skeptics, cynics, straight, gay, single, married, rich, poor, down-and-out, up-and-out, ex-cons, current cons, addicted, sober, Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians and unaffiliated—everybody's welcome. It doesn't mean we agree with them, that we endorse them, or

support what they do. Here's why— That's how people felt around Jesus: welcome. People who were nothing like Jesus liked Jesus. He had a way of letting everyone who would listen to Him know that God is for them, with them, and the Kingdom of God is open to them.

2. Nobody's perfect. We aren't here because we are better than anyone. We all have our share of flops, fumbles and flaws. We all fall short and are in need of God's grace not only for the sins of our past but the sins we struggle with today and the sins we can't even see in ourselves. That's why Jesus came and died on a cross. We really believe the ground is level at the foot of the cross and all of us are spiritually broken, morally busted and badly in need of the unique hope that Jesus Christ offers.
3. Through Jesus, anything's possible. Jesus not only died, he rose again and by the power of his resurrection we can become what we could never be on our own. The grace of God meets us where we are as we are and makes it possible for us to go where only he can take us. Anyone can change by the power of God. That's why I preach the Gospel.

#### **D. Love Each Other**

Fourthly, we are to love each other. Verse 17 says, "*love the family of believers.*" The idea is that we are all on the same team. How often does do we fail to fight the enemy, because we are too busy fighting each other? Everyone here is on the same team. No one here is your enemy. Teams work when they work as a team.

Last year, the Antonio Brown, a star player for the Pittsburgh Steelers missed the crucial final season game against the archrival Cincinnati Bengals. He wasn't injured. They weren't saving him for the playoffs as this was a crucial game. Brown had gotten into a fight with Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger in practice earlier in the week, and then refused to practice with the team for the rest of the week. He showed up at the stadium on Sunday expecting to play, but the coach never put him in.

We are to love the family of believers. That doesn't mean we will all be best friends. It doesn't mean we'll always agree, but we must love each other. How can we ever submit to anyone in the world, if we can't submit to each other in Christ?

#### **E. Fear God**

Fifth, we are to fear God. This is having a healthy respect and reverence for God. This isn't a shrinking terror of God, but we should hold him in awe and wonder. We talked about this just a couple of weeks ago, so I won't spend time on it here this morning, other than to remind you that you have a choice between the fear of God and fear of everything else.

#### **F. Honor the Emperor**

Finally, he says honor the emperor. Even an emperor like Nero. These must have been very challenging words for Peter's readers in Rome. This goes beyond mere submission to giving honor. Show respect. If deference is to be shown, then show deference. If it is proper to bow, then bow. If you are to stand, stand. If you are to salute, then salute. Show whatever esteem is called for. Be the best citizens you can possibly be. You could cross out emperor and put the president, or the mayor, or the senator, you get the idea.

Honoring the president does not mean we must agree with everything he says or does, nor does it mean that we commend or condone it. It does not mean that we cannot speak up for truth and righteousness.

It does not mean that we cannot work within legal and respectful bounds to oppose unjust laws and to change misguided policies.

Submitting to authorities and honoring the president does not mean that we must obey laws that require us to disobey God. As Peter himself declared to the Jewish ruling council of the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:29, who'd ordered the apostles to not teach in Jesus' name, "We must obey God rather than people!" When human authority directly contradicts divine authority, we always obey God first.

But in everything else we submit to human authority, humbly, respectfully, honorably. Citizens of There must be the best citizens Here.

There is no human authority that can thwart the kingdom of God advancing within all nations.

There is no government or system on earth that can prevail against a humble and contrite heart that trusts in the sovereign power and loving wisdom of Jesus.

There is no darkness that the light of God's word can't permeate to make as bright as the noonday sun.

It is not our battle to fight. It's his. And so we submit to authority here, because we serve the highest authority there.