

Book	1-Peter
Study	Study 9
Topic	The Freedom of Submission
Reference	1 Peter 2:13-25
Date	12 June 2019
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Today we will do living in submission, as a result. This is an action or entailment of being the chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, a purpose to proclaim his excellencies and we do that by living in submission to authorities, to each other, to cruel masters and within marriage. When we do all that, it basically reflects who we are,

That they may see our good deeds and glorify God in the day of visitation.

So today, we will talk about something, most people don't like to talk about. It is called submission and servanthood. The word 'submission' is not liked at all in our world. It is not liked in the context of marriage, workplace, because we are all use to trying to get ahead of one another. We've got all sorts of governments and government suddenly become tyrants, dictators, empires, everybody is trying to get ahead, nobody is trying to be a servant. Even they come into government, they thought they had a change of the heart, the suddenly will change.

Mahathir recently is not really listening to many people, just going back to his old ways of being a little bit of a tyrant, you know, power leads the way. And people fightback against that all over the world. Here we have the ladies who are now marching forward. They don't like to be oppressed by men. So, all over the world, you have got this problem of oppression and then you have got counter rebellion. So, it is a big struggle. All of us experience that. Office politics is one of them, but when we come to Christian lives, we are going to talk about submission, which is completely counter to everything which you've been brought up with. Let's look at the passage. It tells us,

1 Peter 2:13-17 (ESV) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

So here, we are talking about submission and the secret to submission is, you say, he says in verse 16. The reason why we can actually submit is because compared to

everybody else in the world we are actually free. In fact, Martin Luther was the one who says,

A Christian is a perfect free lord of all subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant subject to all.

There is the paradox. It is called a Freedom of Submission. So, is it a contradiction of terms? Peter is telling us, you are supposed to live as free people and yet we are supposed to live as servants, I mean this is basically an oxymoron, isn't it? How can you do that? Basically, it is the fact that we can live as free people simply because we are servants of God.

We need a biblical understanding of what freedom is. Now if you ask the average guy on the street, what is freedom, the average guy will tell you, the more options I have in life, the more free I am. In cultural terms, freedom is defined negatively. Freedom from constraints or restrictions. You know, you are free to do whatever you want. You are absolutely free, you probably could run through this church totally naked and nobody will say anything, right. If you are absolutely free, I mean in that definition. But there is no such thing as negative freedom because Paul says

Romans 6:20-22 (ESV) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life

Paul is saying, you know, you are either a slave of sin or you are slave of God. There is absolutely no in between. Greek philosopher Euripides says,
No one is truly free, they are a slave to wealth, fortune, the law or other people restraining from acting according to their will

It is actually right. Euripides is not a Christian. Right out from the early Greek culture, he realized that no one is absolutely free. You remember the chap in Lord of the Rings, Gollum. He was so thin, because once he gets the ring and he calls the ring 'precious', the whole day he stares at the ring, he doesn't eat breakfast, lunch or dinner. He participates in this new tangle intermittent fasting, to lose all the fat. So the whole thing dazzles him, captures his imagination and that's all he is focused on. You ask Gollum, "are you free". He will say, "yeah, I am free, because I am free to hold the ring". But actually he is not free. The ring has him mesmerized.

Ray Rice is a famous football linebacker and what he did couple of years ago was caught on video. He had a fit of rage, he punched his girlfriend, Janay Palmer, knocked her unconscious in the lift and the stupid woman still married him and they were like thousands and thousands of people who tweeted messages saying, why you stupid woman did that and this is what she replied,

"If your intentions were to hurt us, embarrass us, make us feel alone, take all happiness away, you've succeeded on so many levels. Just know we will continue to grow & show the world what real love is!"

Why does she stay with a man like that? Do you remember this show, Oliver Twist? Bill Sykes was a nasty fellow who looks after all those orphans and abuses them and he has got a prostitute who is his girlfriend or live-in. Her name is Nancy Sykes and he beats her regularly and yet she doesn't leave him and he says,

"I know that he needs me and as long as he needs me I know where I must be and I will cling on steadfastly as long as he needs me "

It doesn't matter how many times he beat her up, as long as he needs me I will be there. Leslie Morgan Steiner wrote a book called 'Crazy Love'. She was beaten as a wife and abused. She shares her testimony and she says these words,

I didn't know he was abusing me. Even though he held those loaded guns to my head, pushed me down stairs, threatened to kill our dog, pulled the key out of the car ignition as I drove down the highway, poured coffee grinds on my head as a dressed for a job interview, I never once thought of myself as a battered wife. Instead I was a very strong woman in love with a deeply troubled man, and I was the only person on earth who could help [him] face his demons."

Why does she stay with a man who puts a loaded gun to her head? Simply because on occasion he makes her feel wanted and needed and she needs that. And she says,

"..once an abuser has made the victim feel special, he or she isolates him or her. Only then does the abuser introduce the threat of violence"

So the gun doesn't come out first. He makes you feel especial and then the guns come out. So that's the psychology. In fact, Craig Malkin, a psychologist from Harvard Medical School writes,

"The person being abused is focused on the positive and waiting for the next positive. There's a psychological effect like gambling: the moments of tenderness and intimacy are unpredictable, but they are so intense and fulfilling that the victim winds up staying in the hopes that a moment like that will happen again."

Completely the same thing as gambling. In gambling, one day you win jackpot and you are real high but the 25000 other times when you loose the money it is okay. As long, you are waiting for that one moment and so people stay. So in a sense that these women are abused, and they don't mind being abused because they are living for that one special moment, so therefore they can't let go. It is actually the loss of freedom, it is slavery but it is voluntary. So any commitment brings restrictions. Every commitment to any particular job also brings commitment. So therefore freedom is the choosing the right pair of handcuffs. Because once you are in a relationship, you are no longer free.

Biblical freedom is finding the liberating restrictions. I mean, fair enough, everyone has got to be restricted somehow in life. Nobody is totally free. So you find the proper restrictions. Imagine you having a burger in hand. You've got choices. One, decide what restrictions best fit for your design. Now you can have diet. So diet is a restriction, cannot eat this or that. So it is a restriction. You actually voluntarily restrict yourself. Or you can have no restriction, whatever diet you want to eat, whatever burger you want to eat, but with this has no restriction, is there complete freedom. Because if you do that, you will get a stroke and a heart attack and then you will be restricted to the wheelchair and the medicine and the expensive doctors.

So is that complete freedom? Yes it is a freedom in a sense that you can eat as you like but when you get your stroke then you will be handcuffed to the doctor or to the wheelchair. So you are actually restricting yourself as it were. Now if you actually restricted yourself in a diet then you are free to live longer and freedom to move as long as the car does not run you over or something unfortunate happen. So therefore basically what is freedom. Freedom is finding the liberating. We all have restrictions in life but you got to find the one that is most fitting to your particular design and we are supposed to live as aliens and strangers and were asked to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which is basically epithumias, which is over desires. Which is our desires for safety, comfort, love, food, security and work, but when we are actually of the flesh, we have to get all this, overly desire in terms of comfort, safety, love and food. So this is the problem with us. So when we are actually in Christ, we abstain, we fight these desires.

1 Peter 2:16-17 (ESV) Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17

So therefore the true liberating restrictions come from being servants of God. So that's the secret. Just like a car, if you bought a recent hybrid or Toyota car or Honda, it come with a manual. You are free as you paid for the car, you can go anywhere and anyhow you like. You can put juice instead of Petrol inside. But will your car work well? It won't. So the car comes with a manual. You must follow the manual to get best results. So liberating restriction is found in submitting to true authority. So authority is important. In UK, they have found that a whole generation of young people, because the parents are failed to exert authority, they breed them into youngsters with no respect for anyone. So there is a study done by Eric Sigmund, looking at 150 studies together and his conclusion was,

'Authority is a basic health requirement in children's lives.'

And the consequences are measurable – Britain now has the highest rates of child depression, child-on-child murder, underage pregnancy, obesity, violent and antisocial behaviour and pre-teen alcoholism since records began.'

So the average British teenager things, I have freedom. So our freedom, I don't obey my mother, brother or sister, I do whatever I like but they wind up being incarcerated, murdered or so fat they cannot move or stuck with a baby underage pregnancy. Authority is important. Now the nature of human authority.

1 Peter 2:13-17 (ESV) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

The nature of human authority, we need to understand a little bit. Rousseau, the French philosopher said,

"The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master unless he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty"

Human authority is the only authority that people give you. Now if you look at the king. He has two facets. One is power, which is the ability to make others do things. The other one is legitimacy, which is acceptance of the power by those who obey it that means morally valid. You combine those two things then you have got authority or legitimate power. You have to have both in order to operate in the world. So the legitimate power or authority is the means through which one can influence the behavior of other people. So all governments must have these two things.

There are three criteria for legitimacy.

- You must have power must be exercised according to rules
- Rules must be justified in terms of shared beliefs of government and the governed
- Must be demonstrated by the expression of consent on the part of the governed

For example, when the Japanese took over Malaysia, they have power, but they don't have legitimacy. If you actually have governments and law's power, because of no legitimacy, Egypt Mubarak, Gaddafi, they have power but no legitimacy. Those in Venezuela today, Nicholas Maduro has power but no legitimacy, Juan Guaido, the head of the assembly has legitimacy but no power. So either way you have a bit of a stalemate.

Recently Mahathir appoints Latheefa Koya as MACC chief and everybody gets upset. Lim Kit Siang comes out and says, it is constitutionally correct but politically wrong. What he is saying is that, yes Mahathir has the power to do such things, but not the legitimacy because in his manifesto for the election he promised that he will be chosen by a select committee. So again, you can have the power but no legitimacy as it were. So the rightful authority is a man-made thing, within our own midst but when we struggle, how do we actually respond to rulers and other people

in life. If they are good, powerful, strong, beautiful, they are useful to you, you will then bow down to them or you will not.

God's authority is actually behind human authority. He says,

1 Peter 2:13-17 (ESV) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, ...

God takes away that transactional relationship between the person whom we are treating, whom you treat based on who he is to you, okay. And he says, behind every authority is actually God.

1 Peter 2:18 (ESV) Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

How can you do that? So there is a paradigm shift. We respond to people based on the fact, they are powerful, they are good, they are strong and beautiful and all that, but if Peter is saying,

1 Peter 2:16 (ESV) Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Which means instead of responding to them because they have the power, you actually respond to them based on the fact that you respect God. You actually take this person out of the equation and then you respect them because they are made in the image of God or the authority given by God whether is emperor, husband or master. That is the only way we can treat people. Otherwise, when you look at somebody, what kind of stupid leader is that and then you don't have respect for that leader. Because we always treat each other based on that person's merit. Or how the person treats you then you treat him. If he treats you well, you treat him well and that makes it very difficult because in life we are all sinners. So how can you treat anybody well, because everybody will treat you badly and you will treat people badly or even, they treat you well, they treat you well for a reason to get something from you. Nobody treats you well based on the fact that you are so. Maybe they treat you well because you are so beautiful, you are so rich, you are so powerful but everybody has got an angle. That's how people are treated.

So we live in an unfair world where people oppress each other and people rebel against each other. It is always because we are treating each other based on the other person's merit. And so when life is unfair, we tend to shift our loyalties. That happens to all of us. How can we serve a boss who basically tortures us, a boss who cheats, who lies and so therefore we try to sabotage him, we don't work quite as hard and we are trapped in that. What Peter is trying to say is that, we need to

take these people out of the equation and respond to them based on how we worship God, because we are free.

We are no longer enslaved to respond to people based on what they can do for us. We take them out of the equation. Paul writes,

Romans 13:1-2 (ESV) Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

So even behind, even if your leader has legitimacy or no legitimacy or power, etc., it doesn't matter. The person is subject to the governing authority because this authority is instituted by God.

Romans 13:5-7 (ESV) Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

- True liberty is the freedom to do what is right
- Hence only the servants of God are truly free

There are four commandments to servanthood here. You can see

1 Peter 2:17 (ESV) Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. 18 Servants be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly

So first thing is, we are supposed to honor everybody. Honoring someone is treating them with your deeds and your words as worthy of your service. Now here is a very difficult thing. We are asked to honor everybody, which means we have to do the right thing, but you don't have to do it in such a way where you abuse the person. Why? Because every person is made in the image of God. So therefore, there is justice but there is also the way we treat each other, it should be treated with honor.

Here you have to honor everyone and in the bottom it says, honor the emperor. It doesn't seem to have any difference. In fact, the crown prince of Johor said these words,

"An eagle and a sparrow fly at different heights, adding that everyone should know his place in society.... only the Johor royalty was worthy to wear Baju Melayu Teluk Belanga with black pants".

So when you go to Johor, better not wear black pants, only the eagles can wear black pants, the rest of us are sparrows, you only wear other colours. He got a terrible response and Malaysian Chronicle wrote,

Johor Crown Prince Tmj Gets Tongue-Lashing Of His Life On Social Media: 'This Is 21st Century Malaysia ... And In Case You Have Forgotten, In Islam We Are All Equal – Just People, No Class System

It is true, we honor everyone, we don't treat them different and that takes away this transactional nature of our relationship. And even the people who work for us. The saddest case was Adelina Lisau who is an Indonesia. Her employer beat her. She died the next day after got beaten up. Why was Adelina Lisau treated in such a way, because we have two million migrant workers in this country and we treat them like crap because we think migrant people are less than human beings.

The Bible tells us to treat everyone with honor, irrespective, irregardless of their value to you, maybe they are your enemies, maybe they haven't done you right but the command is to honor every single person. Here is 1 Timothy 6 and it says

1 Tim 6:1 Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor,

1 Corinthians 12:22-23 (ESV) On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,

So there is a recognition, there are parts of this body in our church that our less honorable, maybe they don't have a better paying job like yours, maybe they don't come from a privileged background like you with a silver spoon, but you treat them with greater honor. So we need to treat everyone with respect and dignity irregardless of stature or sin because they are made in the image of God. We all have to learn this. A lot of times I scold my nurses because they do the wrong thing, but this is wrong, even though they do the wrong thing you are not entitled to berate them. They can be corrected but you are not entitled to berate them. It is a lesson that we all have to learn and we struggle. We have to treat other people better than they deserve. We have to love the brotherhood. Now this is different,

There is everybody else and the priority of the family of God. All human beings should be respected but there is a special bond between fellow believers. Believers in this church starting and then believers outside the church as long as they are believers. We are to treat each one as if they are actual family. Now in family, you have got no choice. Even though you don't like your brother or sister, it doesn't matter they are still your siblings. No matter what he has done to you, when you

come after all your fighting, you come back together, you are still one family and that's the same thing with the Christian family. In fact 1 John 5 says

1 John 5:1 (ESV) Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

If you are born again, if you love the father you must love the son. If we are to love the father, we love whoever is born of him and no matter whether the person deserve it or don't deserve it, that's a commandment, that is evidence of our nature.

How do we love them, they are so difficult people to love?

There are three things, which will be useful for you, how you learn to love people.

1. When you look at them, no matter how imperfect they are still the children of God
2. Look for evidences of grace in their flawed lives. So when you look at someone, you look for all the redeeming factors.
3. We too were once cut off without mercy and hope.

Now if you remember all these three things, then it is a lot easier to love when we put this in perspective.

We are supposed to fear God and honor the emperor

So God alone is to be feared, as he alone determines the existence and nonexistence, the emperor does not get blanket approval nor ultimate reverence from you. Now the famous Russian philosopher, *Alexander Solzhenitsyn* says, in communist countries and Western countries, he talk about this idea of authority. In Western countries the basis of authority is basically personal needs. In communist countries, the basis of authority is basically the state. That's why today, you have huge demonstrations. So that's the basis of their authority and either one will cause chaos in the end. There is no perfect system. Basically, we are to live as people who are free, but yet we are servants of God, which means there is authority above the authority, the government does not enjoy.

We are to fear God, there is a tension. The tension when you live in society are two. On one hand, we are to subject to every human institution whether it be to emperor as supreme or governor sent by him and on the other hand we are also to honor the emperor. So on one hand, we got to follow, on the other hand it says be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. The will of God is that we do good and

live as people who are free but servants of God. We have to fear God. There is a tension between the two. The government even though has authority does not have carte blanche. Our servanthood has a purpose. Jeremiah says,

Jeremiah 29:7 (ESV) But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

We seek the welfare by applying the rules of God, because not all human authority is correct. So we are to submit in an unfair world.

1 Peter 2:18-20 (ESV) Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. 19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God

Which means basically the one gracious thing is basically this one who has God's favor and when you suffer, you suffer being mindful of God means you are confident that God will ultimately right all wrongs and enable you to submit to unjust people. So therefore when you are actually having an employer who treats you badly, who tricks you, promises you the promotion but, you know, snakes you and give you demotion, we actually tolerate that because we are actually serving God and remembering that God will actually reward you in the end because he will be one who will correct all the wrongs.

Servanthood is difficult but we are actually called to it. It says,

1 Peter 2:21 (ESV) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

So servanthood is a calling. If you want to be a Christian then you have to be committed to a life of servanthood. The essence of the identity is the willingness to suffer unjustly and how do we do that. Well it says,

1 Peter 2:21-25 (ESV) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body

on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

We are now free, because Christ died for you. Because he paid for our sins, that we might die to sin and life to righteousness. The only way we can actually be totally free is that if our sins are paid for. That is the most important thing. If the sins are not paid for, you cannot be completely free. You will be continually addicted and the reason why a Christian is totally free is because of what Christ has done and the way in which he done it totally innocent and yet unjustly crucified. That was the paradigm of his life. So when we as Christians, we actually live like Christ, which means you live an innocent just and honest life and, in the end, we will be treated unjustly, just like him. It is a fact, but it is okay, you know why, because all our sins have been forgiven.

Every debt that somebody owns to you is already paid by Christ in full. So therefore how can we treat people with less than honor. So we need to see this spiritual value. When you see that, you are completely free to treat each other well, otherwise when you look at a person with what they deserve, we always treat them better than they deserve because Jesus Christ has freed us by paying all the debt in our lives.

As Christians, we are able to be Iron Man and take all the punishment, take all the blows that the world can give us, you know, why, because right in our heart we actually have the image of God. God has a plan that you are not a mistake. Jesus Christ died for our sin. We are all paid off. The spirit dwells within. We are going through a renovation project and we are destined for glory. We are a chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, special possession. Every time you have been badly treated, you look into this power and that power gives you the ability to become a servant. The only way you cannot be a servant is to look through all that God has given you and that will keep you alive. So we live as servant lifestyle. True servant will affirm others and not be self-absorbed.

- Compliments accurate not flattery
- Finds best in people and brings it out
- What you could be-hope
- Listens to others
- Covers for people instead of focus on faults

Being a servant is a choice. Let me end with a true story of an elderly lady, who actually was the aunty of a very famous evangelist who was lying on her death bed in 1740s and she actually was a very poor woman and so all the relatives were gathering around her bed and as we are gathering around the bed, she was like comatose and they started talking, she is very poor, her husband died a few years ago, left her some money but she cannot keep the money, she is always being nice to people. They make use of her and she winds up in debt, poor, hardly got anything to eat. Life has really served her lemons and now poor thing, lying in bed, dying of cancer. Even though she was so kind to everyone, she is dying of cancer. The woman was listening to this and she suddenly stood up and she said,

"Who calls me poor ..I am rich and soon I shall stand before Him bold as a lion"

She collapsed and died. How could she do that? She could only be kind and live with a servant heart because in her heart she realized that I am rich, I will stand before him bold as a lion. The only way you could live a life of sacrifice. The only way you could live a servant's life is you believe that you are rich and not poor. That everything you give away is a plus for you, not a loss for you and then you can be bold and you come back to live with Jesus Christ for ever and ever again.

So our challenge tonight is a very-very-very difficult challenge and it is to learn to give up ourselves and learn to love and honor each other.