

1. **Introduction:** Peter's message to believers in Asia Minor follows the theme that even though they face unfair circumstances of persecution for their faith, they are to demonstrate behavior characterized by respect in all relationships as they follow the example of Christ.
  - It is a pertinent message today as believers increasingly find themselves surrounded by people who are offended by the notion of a "religion" based on supernatural beings.
  - They tend to be even more offended by the moral constraints that accompany belief in Christ. The ruling belief is that "I" rightfully control my body and my mind. And "I" will not accept the notion that there is a God, a spiritual Being, to whom I belong and under whose control I exist.
  - Though the situation may appear bleak, believers are to be motivated by a living hope that in all things and all ways, God cares for each one, sees their earthly beginning and end, and works all things for the benefit of their future everlasting life in His presence.
  - Believers are sojourners and exiles in the world. Their true home is with Jesus in heaven. But for a time, they are separated from their true home but not from the obligation to be and behave as ones whose citizenship is in the holy place prepared for them.
  - Believers are to keep their conduct among unbelievers honorable, so that if they are accused of evildoing, that accusation will be false.
  - In the next few verses (2:13-17), Peter transitions to the topic of submission which is not likely anyone's favorite topic.
  - Peter begins by saying believers should submit to the authorities of government and other human institutions. That implies submission should be done with willing hearts.
  - When Peter wrote this letter, in view of the tenuous situation for Christians within the Roman Empire, that was a radical admonition.
  - The immediate reason for this admonition seems to have been to counter the accusation that Christians were begin disloyal to the emperor and loyal to a different king.
  - It was also claimed that believers were in general – difficult – a rebellious lot.
  - By openly demonstrating voluntary submission to government authority, perhaps believers would show they are indeed good citizens and not social rebels and misfits.
2. **Biblical Concept of Submission:** At this point we pause our study of 1 Peter to focus on the Biblical concept of submission to authority. We will return to Peter/s admonitions.

- The Greek word for “submission” is usually translated as “be subject to.” It is a military word that means to “place under rank” or “to be deferent to higher rank’s authority.”
  - The military operates as a system based on a hierarchy of authority or rank. Each higher rank has defined authority over lower ranks.
  - Authority is to flow and be applied from the top rank to the lowest in an orderly fashion.
  - An effective authority structure is essential to accomplish complex goals. Biblical submission is recognition of God’s authority over our lives.
3. **God’s Strategic Plan:** God has an overall purpose or strategy for people. Ultimately over a span of time of duration unknown to us, a holy nation, whose population is of a size that no man can number, composed of people from every tribe and tongue, is to be called, converted, sanctified, glorified and gathered to God. This strategic plan will be accomplished.
- To accomplish His strategic goal, God must enable the transformation of fallen people into a glorified people destined to live everlasting life in the presence of God.
  - Our Triune (one nature, 3 persons) God is in overall control. Within the Godhead there is equality of attributes and a unity of will, but there is a division of labor or function.
  - The Father purposes and plans, the Son carries out plans. The Father “sends,” the Son comes from the Father (Gal 4:4; Jn 3:16, 18; Jn 5:19).
  - The Father creates through the Son (Jn 1:3; 1Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of one substance or nature, having one will, and equal in all attributes.
  - Each of the 3 Persons of the Trinity is fully God. Since they are always of “one will,” it is not necessary to have authority structure within the Godhead.
  - The division of “function” is something the three Persons jointly will – their will being one and the same will. The Godhead willed the incarnation.
  - During His earthly incarnation, the Son had both His divine and a human nature. In His human nature, He had a human will which was totally submitted to the Father. In John’s gospel, Jesus says He does nothing He does not see the Father do.
  - He also said, “He and the Father are one.” If you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father.
  - Peter says, it is God’s will believers willingly submit to earthly authority as did Jesus.
4. **Authority on Earth:** What about the authority structure on earth? In Mt 28:18, Jesus says that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. To limit confusion, promote orderliness in human affairs, and allow complex tasks to be accomplished, God established an earthly hierarchical authority structure.

- Jesus has overall authority. He delegates authority to earthly governments, leaders of the church, heads of families, and by further delegation, authority is spread throughout society.
  - In the church, He appointed some to be Apostles, some prophets, some preachers of the Word, and others as teachers, elders, and deacons. Certain essential tasks in God's strategy appear impossible from a human perspective.
  - These seemingly impossible tasks are carried out by our Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
  - Such tasks include redemption, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. These are pivotal tactics whose success is essential for final achievement of the strategic goal.
  - We see, then, that a hierarchical authority structure is the way God chose to carry out His strategic goal of transforming a countless number of fallen people into people who have character like that of Christ, are holy and righteous as God is holy and righteous.
  - These transformed people will live everlasting lives in God's presence willingly doing God's will.
  - Fitting into our assigned position in the current authority structure and willingly submitting to those in authority over us is an essential part of working with Christ for victory.
  - If submission to earthly authorities means violating God's commands, believers must obey God. Now back to 1 Peter 2:13-17.
5. ***1 Peter 2:13-17: Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,<sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.<sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.<sup>16</sup> Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.<sup>16</sup> Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.***
- All believers live their earthly lives as exiles away from their true home with God. They are temporary residents of specific nations on earth but eternal citizens of heaven.
  - The culture believers are embedded in on earth is a culture of unbelief, a culture that embraces unbelieving philosophies, unbelieving ways of life, and an unsympathetic attitude toward believers.
  - Peter says believers are to live as servants of God (2:16). ***“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”***
  - These few words are easy to say but they require balancing things that are extraordinarily difficult to balance.

- Believers are to honor and respect all people regardless of their godless lifestyles or attitude of hate toward Christians. At the same time, we are to love our brethren in Christ unconditionally. We are to reverence God, obey His will as supreme, and must also honor the king no matter how evil .
  - The love we are to have for others is defined by seeking what is best for them. If they are violent and wicked, that may mean imprisoning them to protect others and themselves.
  - Without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the accomplishment of this conflicting array of requirements is an impossible task.
  - We are never to use our freedom in Christ to cover-up evil. As we strive to live according to these principles, we necessarily live in a state of significant tension between dishonoring Christ and dishonoring our government and its leaders.
6. **Summary 2:13-17:** Believers who are living in this world as exiles, as part of God’s overall strategy, have been called to be His ambassadors to unbelievers.
- In carrying out this role, Peter urges believers to engage in hopeful, honorable behavior despite opposition and/or persecution. At times we will be despised for our faith, but that does not eliminate our obligation.
  - In striving for honorable behavior, believers are to submit to the authority of civil government for the Lords’ sake (render civil obedience to Caesar).
  - We are to honor the government for what God intended it to be, not for what it is at any given time. Believers are to strive to be model citizens. God is the fount of all authority. Exercise of power on earth is by delegation of power from God whether recognized as such or not.
  - Receiving delegated power from God is accompanied by responsibility and accountability to God.
  - If government violates its ordained purpose, it may become necessary for believers to obey God even it places the believer in opposition to the government (Acts 5:24,29).
  - When Daniel and his three friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) refused to obey the king’s dietary regulations, they disobeyed the king’s law. However, the way they did it proved they honored the king and respected the authorities (Dan 1).
  - Peter and other Apostles faced a similar problem when, shortly after Pentecost, they were told to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4-5). They refused to obey, but they did not cause a rebellion or in any way question or deny the authority of the Sanhedrin. They submitted to the institution but refused to stop preaching. They showed respect to the Jewish leaders who opposed presenting the gospel.
7. **Next:** 1 Peter 2:18-25.