

## 6. Who is boss?

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It was a title for a popular sitcom on TV from a few years ago. It was about a manservant who tends to ignore his master, in this case - a lady, and becoming a quite bossy around the house.

One of the main sources of the teenager or even young people who constantly causing problems in this country and around the world, is that they have no idea of submission to the authorities over them. Whether the authority is their parents or school teachers or law enforcement, they think that they are hot stuff and they don't have to listen to anyone. It shows on their bumper sticker, "Challenge authority".

Actually, we cannot put the entire blame on them for not being submissive and being defiant to the authorities over them. Because our education system and even Christian psychology which jumped on the bandwagon of secular psychology, that promoted the importance of self-esteem.

In my understanding of the Word of God, there is no one who do not have self-esteem. If they didn't have any, they wouldn't worry about what others would think about them at all. Because they wouldn't know the difference. Even the so-called low self-esteem is nothing more than an expression of pride. Comparing themselves with someone who has different levels of skills or talents that they may not have, cause them to feel low and less than others. But they are actually using that to bring other people's attention to themselves.

These unsubmissive people not only turn their noses against the authorities over them, but also they go against what God shows to them. They are against God. But when they are against God, they are putting themselves under the authority of the satan. Because we are going to serve one or another: God or satan. Remember a Bob Dylan's song, "Serve somebody"? "You're gonna have to serve somebody."

### A. SUBMISSION TO THE AUTHORITY

*1Pet. 2:13-15 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men--*

It's important to understand the historical context of this command. The Roman Empire, throughout which the readers of 1 Peter were under the authority of the insane Nero, who was notorious for his wickedness and his cruelty to Christians.

The definition of 'submission' in Greek is 'hupotasso' [hoop-ot-as'-so]: to submit to one's control, to yield to one's admonition or advice, to obey, be subject. A Greek military term meaning "to arrange (troop divisions) in a military fashion under the command of a leader." In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden". The word 'hupotasso' is composed of two words 'tasso' meaning "to appoint, order, or arrange," and 'hupo' meaning "to place under or to subordinate." In this particular construction it conveys the idea of subjecting oneself or placing oneself under another.

The word 'submission' may not come in easy. Actually, it is very difficult. Because we all want what we want, when we want, and how we want at our wills. We want to be the bosses, not subordinates. In other words, we are selfish snobs.

Submission doesn't mean we buckle under by compromising our convictions or renouncing our faith. It does mean that we are to render unto Caesar the coin of civil obedience. It means we are not only to pray for those in authority, but to live honorably under their domain.

*1Tim. 2:1-2 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*

*Rom. 13:1-3 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.*

I met and heard some born-again Christians who think that we should not pay taxes to the U.S. government, since we are the citizens of heaven. Their concept is unbiblical and unlawful. If they continue on that avenue, they will end up in the place where they don't have to pay anything for room and board plus clothing. It would be their new home, a federal prison.

## **B. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

However, if the authority over us cross the line and dictate what we can preach in our pulpits or teach in our Christians schools, the Bible is very clear in defining our stands in Acts 4:5-20.

*Acts 4:19-20 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

Anti-abortion work is the case in point. The U.S. Supreme Court decided that it is OK to kill those over 30 million unborn babies for the sake of the convenience of grown ups. Yet, the supporters of the abortion are the ones who scream their heads off for animal rights and Green Earth Movement. Does it mean I am encouraging you guys to bomb the abortion clinic or shoot the abortion doctors or call names to the women who want to have abortion? Absolutely not. We ought to pray for those people, so that they may come to know Jesus. Then, they will stop.

## **C. SUBMISSION 101**

In v. 16-17, we find five commands from God through this former fisherman, Peter:

*1Pet. 2:16-17 (1) as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. (2) Honor all people. (3) Love the brotherhood. (4) Fear God. (5) Honor the king.*

You can sum up these five commands in two sentences that we are so familiar with yet we don't practice them well.

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself."*

*1Pet. 2:18-21 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

William Barclay sheds some historical light on slavery to illuminate the meaning of these verses:

*"In the time of the early church. . . there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire. . . It was by no means only menial tasks which were performed by slaves. Doctors, teachers, musicians, actors, secretaries, stewards were slaves. In fact, all the work of Rome was done by slaves. Roman attitude was that there was no point in being master of the world and doing one's own work. Let the slaves do that and let the citizens live in pampered idleness. The supply of slaves would never run out due to never ending conquering wars.*

*Slaves were not allowed to marry; but they cohabited; and the children born of such a partnership were the property of the master, not of the parents, just as the lambs born to the sheep belongs to the owner of the flock, and not to the sheep.*

*In Roman law a slave was not a person but a thing; and he had absolutely no legal rights whatsoever. For that reason there could be no such thing as justice where a slave was concerned. In regard to a slave, his master's will, and even his master's caprice, was the only law."*

It would have been easy for slaves who became Christians to think that their Christianity gave them the freedom to break with their masters. But this was not so.

There are no Christian slaves today, at least in the New Testament sense. But what Peter wrote does have application to employees. We are to be submissive to those who are over us, whether they are kind or unkind to us. Christian employees must never take advantage of Christian employers. Each worker should do a good day's work and honestly earn his pay.

It is the natural tendency of the human heart is to fight back against unfair and unreasonable treatment. But Peter's point is that seeking revenge for unjust suffering is a sign of self-appointed lordship over one's own affairs. If we call our Lord Jesus as our Master, we should leave everything including seemingly unfair treatment at His feet, so that He can take care of it according to His way and His time.

#### **D. THE EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW**

*1Pet. 2:22-25 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

Jesus made Himself as an example for us to follow. We cannot say what we go through under the authority over is too difficult for God to understand. He knows, because He was not only submissive to the earthly authority and even to death. Yet, because He trusted the Father who is the ultimate Authority over all, Jesus conquered the death and resurrected.

The captain of the ship looked into the dark night and saw faint lights in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message, "Alter your course 10 degrees south." Promptly a return message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north." The captain was angered; his command had been ignored. So he sent a second message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south—I am the captain of this ship" Soon another message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north—I am seaman third class." Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: "Alter your course 10 degrees south—I am an U S Navy destroyer." Then the reply came "Alter your course 10 degrees north—I am a lighthouse."

In the midst of our dark and foggy times, all sorts of voices are shouting orders into the night, telling us what to do, how to adjust our lives. Out of the darkness, one voice signals something quite opposite to the rest—something almost absurd. But the voice happens to be the Light of the world, and we ignore it at our peril.

## **E. APPLICATIONS**

### **1) We are to walk in purity and humility.**

Just because we are chosen by God, we should not have the attitude of spiritual snobs. It is not our spiritual standards made us to be chosen by God, but only by His grace, mercy and love, nothing else. So, it is the right thing for us to do all things in purity and humility.

### **2) We need to be submissive to our earthly bosses' at work.**

God is teaching us how to be submissive to the authorities over us, so that we may bring the glory to Him in action.