Lesson 4 – 1 Peter 2:13-25 Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good! Romans 12:21
English Standard Version (ESV) Bethel Bible Resources

(13) Be subject --- for the Lord's sake --- to every human institution, whether it be the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by Him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God --- that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but livings as servants of God.

(17) 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. For this is a gracious thing, when --- mindful of God --- one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 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.

(21) 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. 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. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Think on these things:

1) Why should we be "subject to" or obedient to national, state and local governments (v. 13)? In a broad, simplistic way, what is the purpose of governments explained here in v. 14?

   Government brings structure (rules) to communities of people choosing to live in proximity of each other, while providing for public safety, utilities, sanitation, etc…. Unless directed to sin (against biblical teachings), Christians are to support and obey these human institutions, and also to pay taxes in support. Here, Peter says government exists to arrest wrong-doers and allow good citizens to prosper. When people are allowed to make and follow their own rules, society is chaotic.

2) Is this always true? Keep in mind that Rome was persecuting Christians at this time (bad gov't, good people…) --- and still Peter tells Christians to obey the government! What exceptions do we find to this principle in Exodus 1:16-22 and Acts 4:18-20?

   No, many governments suffer from human nature failings at various levels, and government can become oppressive and abusive. For example, in Exodus Pharoah directed midwives to murder all male babies born to the Jews; they refused to comply. In Acts, the religious leaders told the disciples to "shut up" and stop teaching about Jesus. Again, they declined to comply.

3) What is "God's Will" in this matter from v. 15? In your opinion, are Christians successfully doing this in our country? Do you think we need to do better with the slogan to "love the sinner while hating the sin?"

   God's Will is that by doing good we Christians silence the attacks of foolish (non-believing) people. In America (an opinion…) we have seen scandal after scandal in recent decades that undermines the integrity of faith. Non-believers are more skeptical about "religious" folk who don't share their values. Firm Christian convictions can lead to adversarial positions with

certain societal groups. "Loving the sinner while hating the sin" means we should share the Gospel with all folks in need of salvation, including welcoming them into our churches --- but we don't need to condone or embrace their sinfulness (e.g., homosexuality) and allow them positions of leadership or influence in our churches and denominations. Try to reach them, yes, but don't compromise the righteousness of God as clearly taught in scripture.

4) V. 16 is a key verse to this week's lesson: Live as people who are free! However, the phrases that follow in the verse are disturbing. While Christians study and should live by the Bible, what is the warning issued here? There must be a reason for this. What is the word for this kind of sin? What is the goal of living in God's freedom?

Don't live sinfully and abuse or take advantage of others under the cover-up of "Christian freedom." This sinful behavior could be hypocritical, compromising and/or predatory. Living in God's freedom should release us to be better servants of God to others.

5) V. 17: Who are we to honor? Who are we to love? Who are we to fear? This makes a good life creed! Consider Jesus' words in John 13:33-35.

We are to honor EVERYONE, including our national leader (EMPEROR); love our fellow church members (BROTHERHOOD), and fear GOD. Jesus said loving one another identifies us as His disciples. As the book "Purpose Driven Life" begins, "It's not about <u>you….</u>"

6) Let's view the servant-master discussion (vs. 18-20) as employee-supervisor today. How should we respond to our supervisors if they are good and fair? If they are bad and unfair? In vs. 19 and 20, Peter says being in subjection to supervisors is what?

Whether good and fair or bad and unfair, we are to follow their directions and show respect. This action is considered showing 'grace' to them.

7) When is suffering and hardship as a Christian an admirable thing (v. 19)? When is it not admirable for a Christian (v. 20)?

It is admirable to suffer unjustly when we have done the right thing, but it is simply consequence when we are punished for wrongful behavior.

8) In the example of Jesus (vs. 21-23), what do you find hardest to emulate in your own life?

Opinion Q – Perhaps not being 'mouthy', or stepping back for God to address unfairness.

9) Why did Jesus die for you, and how are you healed, i.e., forgiven and restored (v. 24)? Turning to Jesus and accepting His work on our behalf ends our "straying" from God. With regard to our saved souls, what is Jesus' role today (v. 25)?

Jesus died for me that I may 'die' to sin and live righteously. By His wounds I receive healing. Today He shepherds (cares for) and oversees (helps guard) my soul.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: