

What reasons does Peter give in verses 13 and 15 for submitting to civil authorities? (It is not because of any inherent goodness in human government, but because of God’s sovereignty. We obey God’s will when we do so.)

What are some examples of “sinful desires” that keep us from honoring civil authorities?

When we consider Scripture as a whole, it’s clear that Peter isn’t advocating blind trust in government, as he himself disobeyed religious authorities according to Acts 5:27–32. Rather, his point is that we ought to prioritize obedience to God above our sinful desire to do things on our own terms. We obey because of our relationship with the Lord, not in spite of it. During the session, Kyle said, “As the world becomes increasingly hostile, the Church must become increasingly holy.”

In what ways do you see the world acting with hostility toward the Church? What would it look like for the Church to respond in a way that reflects holiness? How could you, specifically, respond to hostility in a way that reflects holiness?

As we learned in the session, Christians during Peter’s time were falsely accused of insurrection, atheism, incest, cannibalism, and other forms of immorality. Yet, they continued to faithfully obey God by serving, giving generously, and displaying kindness. Doing so disproved the prejudices of their accusers, even if it did not resolve their suffering.

How do you tend to respond when you are misunderstood by others? Based on your past experiences, what could you do differently in the future to demonstrate love and kindness, even in such injustice?

Again, our obedience is not a blind one. Sometimes, obeying God will mean disobeying civil authorities, but we should be wary of mistaking God’s will for our own sinful desires. As Kyle said, our guiding principle should be to follow the ruling authorities in our lives so long as their plans and policies do not oppose God’s will.

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Read more about how to discern God’s will in the following verses: Rom. 12:1–2; Heb. 1:1–2

How is God’s will described in Romans 12:2?

(“Good, pleasing, and perfect”)

How do we discern God’s will? (Through the renewing of our minds)

What is our primary way of having our minds renewed according to Hebrews 1:2? (Through what God has spoken to us in his Son)

When it comes to the idea of God’s will, we often over-spiritualize it looking for a burning bush or writing on the wall. The reality is that God has given us everything we need in his Word. Certainly, he is able to speak in miraculous ways, but he primarily and consistently speaks to us through his Word, which leads to the renewing of our minds and the discernment of his will.

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What are some examples of plans or policies that Christians might not be able to follow out of obedience to God?

In Acts 5:27–32, Peter provides us with an important example of faithfulness. Even in his disobedience, he remains respectful while maintaining his commitment to God. He does not disobey simply to rebel, but because his faithfulness to the Lord depended on it. That’s an important distinction that must be true of any and all of our own civil disobedience.

Now, let’s take a look at the other form of submission Peter discusses in this week’s passage. Someone read 1 Peter 2:18–25.

How do you react to Peter’s instructions to slaves? What emotions or questions does it prompt in you?

Many struggle with instructions like these, as they seem to condone the practice of slavery. But let’s be clear that nowhere does Scripture condone the oppressive practice of slavery—not even in these verses. Rather, the New Testament authors wrote with a different focus in mind. Rather than calling for revolutionary actions that would overthrow social systems, they concerned themselves primarily with the heart of Christians and their relationship with God. In other words, Peter’s primary concern is not with the transformation of society, but with the transformation of individuals within that society through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

How should this focus of prioritizing individual salvation and obedience over societal transformation shape the way you apply your faith to every day life?

Both personal and societal transformation is important, but Scripture tells us that the brokenness of the world does not begin with systems, but with the human heart. That’s why the focus starts with individuals. We can reorganize, legislate, and overhaul systems, but they’ll still be run by sinners. Only Christ can offer hope for lasting change and through our relationship with him we can choose faithfulness even in oppressive circumstances.

Kyle described biblical submission as a voluntary decision that flows from a joyful spirit. **Do you think of submission in this way? How should it influence the way you think about the impact of your individual faith on others?**

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