

# Submission to Governments

## Part 1: Biblical Submission Series

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### I. Introduction

- a. Taking a break from our expository teaching through John. Chuck is recovering from illness today and will be traveling next week.
- b. I'd like to take a look at what the Bible teaches about authority and submission in various relationships that impact our daily lives:
  - i. Submission of mankind to Christ and God
  - ii. Submission of citizens to governments
  - iii. Submission of slaves to masters (employees to employers)
  - iv. Submission of wives to husbands
  - v. Submission of children to parents
  - vi. Submission of the church to its leaders
- c. Despite the fact that the Scriptures have much to say on these topics, there is much confusion even among Christians. Why?
  - i. Abuse of authority & hypocrisy
  - ii. Goes against our culture and very nature
  - iii. Lack of understanding of what the Bible actually teaches (people do not want to teach on this!)
  - iv. Result: we can begin absorbing the beliefs and attitudes of our culture, and our convictions become like that of the world around us – which may contradict what the Scriptures actually say.
- d. My goal: to lay out what the Scriptures teach so that we can wrestle with and make our own decisions on what God expects of us.
- e. Lots here, so today's lesson will focus on what the Bible teaches about **submission to our government**, including the government's authority over our lives as Christians and how we are to relate to our government.

### II. Peter's Interactions with His Government

- a. Let's make it real by looking at the life of Peter, the types of governments that ruled when he (and Jesus) were alive, and after Jesus' death as Peter proclaimed the Gospel.

**b. Matthew 17:24-31****i. Summary:**

1. Jesus realizes Peter's struggle: this is not fair! (Kings force us to pay taxes, but not their own children!)
2. Jesus says "lest we offend them", go and pay the tax.
3. God provides a coin from a fish. (we assume Peter obeyed!)

**ii. Key points / themes:**

1. 2 Kingdoms: The Son of God, the King of Kings, the Ruler of the Universe, subjects himself to the laws of the Romans.
2. Obeys, even though it is not fair (or if disagree).
  - a. We can relate in the United States. Many things many people disagree with our government. (speech, bumper stickers, Facebook/social media, news shows)
  - b. 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the Constitution allows free speech. And boy, do we hear it!
3. God provides as Peter obeys.

**c. Acts 12:1-5, 6-11****i. Summary:**

1. Peter has some more significant trouble with the government!
2. King Herod beheads James. Read from *Martyr's Mirror*, p. 73.
  - a. "This apostle lived only until the fourth year of the Emperor Claudius, at which time, Agabus had predicted, there should be a dearth throughout all the world....
  - b. "At that time Claudius charged Herod Agrippa to suppress the church of Christ. Then Herod laid his bloody hands on this apostle and, on the feast of the passover, put him in prison. Shortly afterwards he was sentenced to death, and executed with the sword, in Jerusalem. This occurred in the year forty-five after the birth of Christ. Acts 12:2.
  - c. "Clemens relates that the executioner, seeing his innocence, was converted to the Christian faith, and

died with him. According to the annotation of Eusebius Pamphilus, from Clemens Alexandrinus, the executioner was so moved on account of the death of James, that he professed himself to be a Christian; and so, as he states, both were led forth together to death. As they were led out, the executioner asked James to forgive him. James, after a little deliberation, said, 'Peace be with thee,' and kissed him. And thus both were beheaded...."

i. (Citing Euseb. lib. 2. cap. 9. ex Clem. Alexand. Also W. Baudart. Apophthegmat. lib. 1. page 4. from Joach. Camer. in vita Christi, page 42.)

ii. The executioner was converted!

3. Peter delivered to four squads of soldiers. Bound in chains, between two soldiers, and James was just beheaded!

4. Peter's turn to die?

5. Read **v. 6-11**: angels rescue him and deliver him from Herod.

ii. Peter's death

1. Many escapes from death, but Peter would finally be done in by the government: by a wicked king named Nero.

2. We can read about Nero in the *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 78-79. (See appendix.)

3. Peter eventually crucified upside down, *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 81.

iii. Key points:

1. In many places in the world, Christians are being hunted down, imprisoned, and killed. Not in the United States today. Maybe in the future. But certainly in many countries.

2. We have brothers and sisters who have these challenges in the Middle East.

3. How should they relate to their government? What authority do wicked governments have over the church? When should Christians obey? When should they resist?

### III. What Do the Scriptures Teach About Our Governments and Our Submission to Them?

- a. God establishes them and rules over earthly governments
  - i. God is able to bring governments / kings down and raise them up
    - 1. Nebuchadnezzar
      - a. King of Babylon, vast empire, during time of captivity of God's people.
      - b. Read **Daniel 4:1-18**
      - c. Daniel goes on and interprets: you o king are that glorious tree that will be hacked down to a stump!
      - d. "Seven years will bring this change upon you, until you know that the Most High rules over the kingdom of men, and will give it to whomever He will." (**Daniel 4:25b**)
      - e. Read **Daniel 4:28-37**
      - f. Wonderful story of a powerful king, who was eventually brought down to nothing, but shown mercy and would give praise and honor to God.
    - 2. Herod
      - a. So, on a set day Herod [the same who killed John and imprisoned Peter - da], arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man!' Then immediately an angel of the Lord stuck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God grew and multiplied." (**Acts 12:21-24**)
  - ii. All earthly authority comes from the Father. Read **John 19:1-11**
    - 1. Pilate frustrated: don't ignore me! Answer my question! Don't you understand the power I have over you? Ruler of this jurisdiction, soldiers under my command. I can kill you!
    - 2. "Jesus answered, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.'" (**John 19:11**)
  - iii. God will ultimately destroy all earthly authority and rule.

1. Read **1 Cor. 15:20-26**
  2. Jesus will deliver the Kingdom to God and at that time, he will put an end to all rule, authority and power on earth.
  3. Christ himself will reign.
- b. Satan is the Ruler of this world, including the world's governments
- i. "Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, 'All authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I will give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."'" (**Luke 4:5-8**)
  - ii. "Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." This He said, signifying by what death he would die." (**John 12:31-32**)
  - iii. "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." (**John 14:30**)
  - iv. Jesus withstood the temptation of the ruler of this world: Satan
    1. Earthly power, glory, and rule offered by Satan.
    2. Many people have not withstood this temptation.
    3. Come to power and rule with deception, moral compromise, killing, bribery, etc.
  - v. Wicked governments are not God's fault.
    1. Free choice. Rulers have rejected truth, God, and righteousness.
    2. Satan is behind the evil, the wickedness, even though God is ultimately in charge.
    3. **When governments do evil to us, we should never become bitter toward God.**
- c. We, as Christians, are to submit ourselves to the government.
- i. Read **1 Peter 2:11-17** (62-63 AD?)

1. This is written during reign of Nero, possibly before the worst of Nero, but Peter had certainly suffered significantly by this time. What would Peter write regarding the Christian's responsibilities toward a wicked king?
2. "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.**"
  - a. Submit ourselves – willingly without compulsion
  - b. Every ordinance
  - c. For the Lord's sake – obedience to our rulers and laws for Jesus' sake as He is ultimately over them and has put them or allowed them to be in place.
  - d. Why? Laws (often) punish evil and reward good, which is good.
3. "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men..."
  - a. Not a cultural teaching only for Peter's day.
  - b. The reason given for the teaching on submission to government authority is timeless. It is the will of God, then and always.
4. "Honor all people.... Fear God. Honor the king."
  - a. We should submit to our governments out of fear of God. This is a commandment.
  - b. We are to honor our king, rulers. (Do our social media posts, our conversations, our thoughts honor the king?)

ii. Read **Romans 13:1-7**

1. Paul writes this around 55-57 AD.
2. Had endured much suffering, including at the hands of the Romans. (example: **Acts 16:20-24**)
3. We must be subject to the governing authorities.
4. We resist them, we resist God who put them in place.

5. If resist, you will be judged accordingly.
  6. "For he is God's minister to you for good." (**vs. 4**)
  7. Obey not only out of fear of punishment (by the authorities) but "for conscience' sake."
- iii. Exceptions to submission: commanded to disobey God and Jesus' teaching
1. Daniel. Law passed to pray to no one but to the king.
    - a. "Now when Daniel learned that the decree was posted, he entered his house, where the windows facing Jerusalem were open to him in the upper rooms, and he knelt down on his kneed three times that day and prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he was doing before." (**Daniel 6:11**)
  2. Religious leaders throw Peter and apostles in prison for preaching. Angel rescues them and they return to preaching.
    - a. "'Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!' But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'" (**Acts 5:28-29**)
- iv. What does submission to our governments look like?
1. Submission and obedience (pay taxes, obey laws – all of them)
  2. Do not overthrow! (United States founded on rebellion)
  3. Honor our rulers. Do not trash, talk down, mock, complain about, etc.
  4. We pray for them.
    - a. "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. For this is good and acceptable in the sigh of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (**1 Timothy 2:1-4**)

- v. Early Christian views regarding the Roman kingdom and God's Kingdom, and their motivation to live righteous lives.
  - 1. Justin Martyr's 1<sup>st</sup> Apology – made to the Roman rulers, including the senate. This was a defense of the Christians who are being terribly persecuted; tells us why the Christians submit to the laws of the land.
  - 2. “When you hear that we seek a kingdom, you suppose – without making any inquiry – that we speak of a human kingdom. But that is not so. We are speaking of a kingdom that is with God. [John 18:36] That is why we so openly confess our faith when charged with being Christians, even though we know that death is the punishment for our confession. If we were looking for a human kingdom, we would simply deny our Christ in order to escape death. We would do our utmost to conceal the fact that we are Christians, so that we might live to attain such a human kingdom. But since our thoughts are not fixed on the present, we are not concerned when men kill us. We recognize that death is a debt that we must eventually pay anyway.
  - 3. “Please understand that Christians are your allies. For one thing, we help to promote peace and order. For example, we teach that it is impossible for anyone—the wicked or virtuous—to escape God's notice. We teach that every person will eventually receive everlasting punishment or everlasting salvation, according to the merits of his actions. [Matthew 25-31-46; John 5:28] If everyone believed this, no one would choose wickedness even for a short time, realizing that he would receive punishment of everlasting fire. Everyone would restrain himself and cloth himself with righteousness so he would obtain the good gifts of God and escape his punishments.
  - 4. “It's not the same, however, with human laws. Even though you impose laws and punish those who break them, people still commit crimes. That is because they know you are merely men and that it's quite possible to escape detection. However, if those same persons were convinced that nothing they did—in fact, nothing they even intended—could escape God's detection, they would by all means live virtuous lives in order to escape punishment.



5. “So you should be grateful for the message that Christians preach—unless, that is, you are afraid that all men will become righteous and you will no longer have anyone to punish....”
  - a. [Taken from *We Don't Speak Great Things – We Live Them*, p. 76-77, an excerpt of the *First Apology of Justin Martyr*, Scroll Publishing]
  - b. Question: What is Justin saying? Answer: We do good to all and avoid wickedness because we fear God.
- vi. These teachings are not cultural, not dependent on the times. These teachings are timeless.
- vii. We submit to good rulers; we submit to bad and wicked ones; and we do good to all in every situation.

#### IV. Final Words from Peter

- a. A man crucified upside down. Suffered to the very end. Faithful to our Lord.
- b. Commanded us to honor the king and obey the authorities.
- c. But what if the rulers are really wicked? Why should we obey? How do we deal with their terrible deeds?
- d. Read **1 Peter 3:13-17, 4:12-19**

**Appendix: *Martyr's Mirror*****THE FIRST PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS, UNDER NERO, ANNO 66**

When the Jews were deprived of their power, by the heathen, and their time was past, in which they had persecuted and slain the saints of God, the Lord God nevertheless suffered His church to be visited by the refining fire of persecution, namely, through the power of the heathen; of whom the Emperor Nero was the first tyrant.... This Nero, according to the testimony of Emperor Trajan, governed the monarchy of Rome in so laudable a manner during the first five years of his reign, that never an emperor had greater praise than he; for then he was so tenderhearted, that when he was asked to sign the death warrant, of a highwayman, he replied, "Oh, that I could not write I" signifying thereby his aversion to the killing of human beings....

But after the first five years he became so full of hatred, murder, and bloodshedding, that he seemed to delight in nothing more, than in killing, murdering, and fearfully torturing, not only malefactors, but even the saints of God who were praised even among their enemies for their Godfearing walk and conversation.

I will not mention the cruelties and tyrannies he exercised against his own friends; how he had his beloved son Britannicus -poisoned, and his own mother Agrippina cut open, to see the place where he had lain; how he had his faithful wife, Octavia, put to death with the sword, because she was barren; and Seneca, his faithful teacher, bled to death, and poisoned. We will only speak of the persecutions and unheard-of cruelties he practiced on the beloved friends of God, namely, the true Christians. To this end we will begin thus.

Once, desiring to see the burning of Troy represented by its equal, he caused the city of Rome to be set on fire, and ascended a certain tower without, where he, beholding it, began to sing, "Troy is on fire," ....

After this was done he cast the blame on the Christians, saying that they had done it; for, when the Romans, very much agitated on account of the immeasurable damage and the dire calamities which had sprung from this conflagration, began to murmur greatly, he, in order to shield himself, and to wreak his prejudiced hatred upon the Christians, put the whole blame on them....

For this reason there were proclaimed immediately, in the name of the Emperor, throughout the whole known world (then under the monarchy of the Romans), bloody decrees against the Christians, that they should everywhere be put to death. The contents of these decrees were as follows: "If any one confesses that he is a Christian, he shall be put to death, without further trial, as a convicted enemy of mankind." ....

Tertullian afterwards upbraided the Roman Senate, saying: "Read your own histories, and you will find, that Nero was the first who raged against this sect (so he calls the Christians), which then flourished the most in Rome." ...

In another place he says: "Nero was the first who stained with blood the rising Christian faith at Rome."

Shortly after this decree of Nero, a violent and unmerciful persecution of the Christians manifested itself in all the countries which were under the Roman dominion; which persecution lasted until the Emperor's death. The innocent Christians were accused not only of the burning of Rome, but also of every wickedness imaginable; that they might be tortured and put to death in the most awful manner. To this the Roman Tacitus (according to the translation of J. Gysius, and not that of Fenacolijs) refers, saying: "Then, Nero, in order to avert this report from himself, caused those called Christians by the common people, to be accused and exceedingly tormented. The author of this name is Christ, who was publicly put to death under the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate, the governor. Those who confessed that they were Christians, were first apprehended, and afterwards by making it known themselves a great multitude were all condemned, not so much on account of the conflagration, as of the hatred in which they were held by mankind. The taking of their lives was accompanied with much mockery; they were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and then torn to pieces by dogs; or nailed on crosses; or placed at stakes and burned; serving also as torches for the spectators, when the day was over."

Thus Tacitus, a Roman himself, has sufficiently confessed, in spite of himself, as J. Gysius writes, that the Christians were innocent of the burning of Rome, but that they notwithstanding had to suffer on account of their name.

Who the great multitudes were, that perished in those awful persecutions, confessing the name of Christ even unto death, is not stated in the histories of the fathers; however, we shall content ourselves therewith, that God remembers them, and that their names are written in the Book of Life. Nevertheless, we meet with some, though but few, names of such who suffered in that persecution in the reign of Nero, and sealed the truth of Christ with their blood and death; of these we shall speak in the proper place.

#### OF THE UNHEARD-OF CRUELITIES NERO PRACTICED IN SLAYING THE PIOUS CHRISTIANS

Touching the manner in which the Christians were tortured and killed at the time of Nero, A. Mellinus gives the following account from Tacitus and other Roman writers: namely, that four extremely cruel and unnatural kinds of torture were employed against the Christians.

Firstly, that they dressed them in the skins of tame and wild beasts, that they might be torn to pieces by dogs or other wild animals.

Secondly, that they, according to the example of their Saviour, were fastened alive on crosses, and that in many different ways.

Thirdly, that the innocent Christians were burned and smoked by the Romans, with torches and lamps, under the shoulders and on other tender parts of their naked bodies, after these had been cruelly lacerated with scourges or rods. This burning was done also with shavings and fagots, they (the Christians) being tied to stakes worth half a stiver. Therefore they called the Christians *sdrmenticii*, that is, fagot people, and *semisii*, that is, half stiver

people; because they stood fastened to half stiver stakes, and were thus burned with the slow fire of fagots.

Fourthly, that these miserable, accused Christian martyrs were used as candles, torches, or lanterns, to see by them at night.

Of those who were burned, some were tied or nailed to stakes, and held still by a hook driven through the throat, so that they could not move the head when the pitch, wax, tallow, and other inflammable substances were poured boiling over their heads, and set on fire, so that all the unctious matter of the human body flowing down made long, wide furrows in the sand of the theatre. And thus human beings were lighted as torches, and burned as lights for the wicked Romans at night.

Juvenal and Martial, both Roman poets, and Tertullian, state this in a different manner, namely, that the Romans wrapped them in a painful or burning mantle, which they, wound around their hands and feet, in order to melt the very marrow in their bones.

Furthermore, it is stated by A. Mellinus (from the aforementioned authors), concerning those mantles, that they were made of paper or linen, and, having been thickly coated with oil, pitch, wax, rosin, tallow, and sulphur, were wrapped around their whole body, and then set on fire.

For this spectacle Nero gave the use of his gardens, and appeared himself among the people in the garb of a charioteer, taking an active part in the Circusian games; himself standing in the circus, and, as charioteer, guiding a chariot.

These proceedings, according to the testimony of Tacitus, although it had the appearance that the Christians were punished as malefactors who had deserved the extremest penalty, nevertheless moved the people to compassion; for they understood well enough that the Christians were not exterminated for the good of the common weal, but simply to gratify the cruelty of one man, Nero.... [*Martyr's Mirror*, p. 78-79]

#### SIMON PETER, THE HOLY APOSTLE, CRUCIFIED WITH HIS HEAD DOWNWARD, UNDER EMPEROR NERO, A. D. 69

Simon jona, afterwards called Cephas in Syriac, but Petros or Petrus in Greek, was the brother of Andrew, a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, and a fisherman by occupation. He had his abode at Capernaum, with his wife's mother. His brother Andrew, who was a disciple of John, first brought him to Christ, and shortly afterwards he and his brother were called away from the fishery, to become fishers of men. Matt. 16:17; Mark 3:16; John 1:42; Matt. 4:18; John 1:44; Luke 4:31, 38; John 1:41, 42; Matt. 4:18,19.

He was diligently instructed by Christ, his Saviour, and made such progress therein, that he became the spokesman of all the apostles, being generally the most frank in asking and answering, as well as the most zealous for Christ, in order to prove to Him his love and

fidelity, although at times he manifested a certain rashness therein; on which occasions the Lord, like a father his child, faithfully instructed, and, whenever it was necessary, kindly reproved him. Matt. 16:16; John 6:68; Matt. 18:21; 14:31; John 18:10, 11.

The Lord loved him in a special manner, and permitted him, together with James and John, to witness His glory on Mount Tabor; of which He afterwards made mention to the chosen scattered strangers, saying, We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Matt. 17:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:16, 17....

But since he [Peter] was so excellent and worthy a man in his ministry, it pleased the Lord, that he should also be one of His martyrs, to seal the truth of His doctrine not only with the mouth, but also with his blood, yea, even with his death. This the Lord showed to him shortly before His departure from this world, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee. When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God" (John 21:18, 19).

This was verified in him, for shortly afterwards he and John, his fellow helper, were-brought before the Jewish council in Jerusalem, and severely threatened, to desist preaching in the name of Jesus; to which they both boldly replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19).

Afterwards he was again apprehended, together with the other apostles, but by night, miraculously delivered out of prison by an angel. Acts 5:19.

After that he was not only apprehended, but, together with the other apostles, scourged and commanded, that they should absolutely not preach in the name of the Lord Jesus; but they went away from the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Acts 5:40-42.

Afterwards King Herod stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And when he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further and apprehended Peter also, and put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. But in the night the angel of the Lord led him out, through the midst of the soldiers, so that he returned to the believers, who rejoiced greatly on account of him. Acts 12:1.

Finally there was fulfilled, according to the testimony of history, the prediction of Christ, that he should glorify God by his death; for while he was at Rome, he was sentenced by -the Emperor Nero to be crucified. But, esteeming himself unworthy to be crucified with his head upward, like his Saviour, he requested to be crucified with his head downward; which he easily obtained, for the tyrants were forthwith willing and ready to increase his pain.

This occurred, as is stated, after Peter had preached the Gospel for thirty-seven years, and when he was seventy years old.... [*Martyr's Mirror*, p. 81.]