

More than once, I've observed children playing, or maybe not even playing – I've seen them do it in the class room... And one child might give an instruction to another child, "Do this.",,, and straight away, the other kid retaliates, "You're the boss of me" ...

Ever heard that???

And many people carry that attitude over into their adulthood – *"You're not the boss of me" ...*

But I'm going to say it quite bluntly, "The Lord **has** appointed 'bosses' over us". He's appointed people to:

- rule us;
- govern us;
- He's given people **authority** (over us)....

And a lot of the time, the people in these positions of authority, don't happen to be Christians, and they don't happen to be moral people.... And yet we **submit** to them, for the Lord's sake.

Righto. Tough message this one. Well, it's going to be tough for me, and it might be tough for some of you, but not so tough for others.

- Some of you (Like my wife for instance – Robyn – Rules girl), are naturally very compliant sorts of people – if that's the rule (no matter how silly/onerous it might be) – if it's the rule, it's the rule...
- Others of you (Like me for instance) are naturally very rebellious... And rules for rules sake – forget it... And

if you can't see a good reason for that rule – “*You're not the boss of me* – I'm not going to keep your stupid rules”...

- And then of course, others of you will be somewhere in between..

Righto, we're in a section of Peter's letter, where he's been reminding us that we are sojourners and exiles. This land, is not our home – we're just passing through. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God. And a couple of weeks ago, we were talking about how “**as** citizens of the Kingdom of God, we are at war with the passions of the flesh.”

Even as Christians, we have an inner battle – an inner struggle. We have the passions of the flesh, urging us to do stuff that is contrary to the Spirit... And then there's the Holy Spirit, urging us to live as citizens of the Kingdom of God, and to do the right thing...

And now, over the next few weeks, we're going to see a few specific situations of how the passions of the flesh wage war against our soul. And today's example, is probably a bit of a surprise: It's how we relate to those who are the boss of us...

A few weeks ago, we talked about the pride of man, and man's ultimate rejection of God because “I want to do it my way”... I think I used the word “Self-determination”... We don't want anyone telling us what we have to do, and that's why man rejects God.

And it's this very same "Pride of man" and desire for self-determination that also rejects authority. "*You're not the boss of me*"...

Who are you to tell me:

- I have to pay tax;
- I'm not allowed to clear the trees on my own farm;
- I'm not allowed to own a certain gun;
- Why should I have to pay registration to drive my vehicle;
- Why do you make it a rule that I have to put a seatbelt on?
- Maybe we won't even start talking about the DOT and their silly rules... *I've only got ½ hour to get home, and you're telling me I have to stop and have a sleep for a few hours...*

And let's think about the Covid shutdowns:

- Who are you to ban me from visiting my friends; or even open my business...

Do you know what this is? This is the "Pride of man" and the desire for self-determination that rejects authority. "*You're not the boss of me*"...

It's part of the fallen human condition.

And if we take this prideful attitude to its extreme, we come to (what's called) anarchism. (You've seen protest movements "A" painted in the circle) It's the symbol for anarchy. And (contrary to what anarchy looks like in reality), anarchists

(socialist movement) seriously believe that the world would be a better place without nations/states/authorities who we have to obey (all live at peace together)...

Now of course, we know that's utter nonsense. But the standard anarchist slogan is "*Neither God nor master!*"... In other words, "*You're not the boss of me*"...

Righto, now the pride of man and the passions of the flesh, within me, are saying "Michael, you don't have to respect authority." But God's word to us today, is "**Oh, Yes you do.**"...

But sometimes we like to spiritualise our rebellion against authority, and make it sound like we're on God's mission, when we disrespect the authorities, and don't obey the rules of the land. Now, in a very few cases that is true. There **are** limits to the authority of our rulers... And we're going to talk more about those limits, a bit later in the message.

So let's turn to :

V¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

Now, there's a bit of controversy, over this verse, about how best to translate the original Greek, into English.

ESV: ¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution

NIV: to every authority instituted among men

KJV: ¹³ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man (command/Law)

But the **literal** translation of the Original Greek actually says

YLT: ¹³ Be subject, then, to every human creation [human creature; human beingⁱⁱ(New International Commentary)], because of the Lord, whether to a king, as the highest, ¹⁴whether to governors....

The Greek word in question is: κτίσει (ktisei) , which means “creation”...

And so, the differences in translations comes because “Is it referring to God’s human creations? Or to what humans create?” And so, is it referring to **people** and here in these verses (particularly) “people in authority”, or is it referring to the institutions themselves...

And to figure this out, we need to look at it in its context. In the immediate (and extended) context, Peter’s not actually talking about “institutions” – he’s talking about “People” (humans) (and specifically in this paragraph today, he’s talking about humans in authority) – The Emperor; The Governors... Be subject to these **people**...

But you might say to me, “Michael, they could represent institutions”... Yeah, they could, But this is where our habit of chopping the Bible up into little pieces, becomes a problem for us:

When we read on, this is what we discover:

- V13 literally says “Be subject to every human Creation”
- And then it lists the highest of these “The Emperor”
- V14 The Governors;
- V17 ¹⁷ Honour everyone (still talking about people)
- V18 (next week) ¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters

Alright, he’s carrying on the examples of how we don’t put ourselves above others...

And then it goes on into chapter 3

- **3 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands**
- And then in V7, husbands are told to show honour to the woman

You see, Peter is ripping away from us, the self-righteous; self-centred; self-serving passion of the flesh, that makes us want to be our own master (“*You’re not the boss of me*”), and he’s replacing it with the way of Jesus.

I bet-ya Peter remembered very well, what Jesus said (when he and the other disciples were arguing among themselves):

Mark 10:42–45 (ESV)

⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Luke 14:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Some Christians feel "That's just within the Christian fellowship – "I don't have to submit to anyone else – *they're not the boss of me.*" but Peter's showing us that we **do** have to submit to other people, and he gives examples:
And let me translate them into examples for us:

- Submit to The Prime Minister;
- Submit The Premier & the officials & police;
- Honour Everyone;
- Submit to your employer;
- Submit to your husband; and
- And in the same way, Husbands, honour your wife;

The passions of the flesh, are what we have to battle against, and it's the passions of the flesh that don't want to submit...

Oh, you wretched preacher!!!

Now, I've said this before, and I'm going to say it over and over again (I'm sure), that most of the time, when I'm preaching and teaching from God's word, I'm preaching at myself., and you guys just get to listen in... And I am deeply challenged and confronted with today's Bible reading...

And you know what, the passions of the flesh make us want to pick and choose which bits of God's word, we want to pay attention to:

- I bet there's some employers hearing this today, and agreeing whole-heartedly "Yeah, employees, be subject to your employer for Jesus;
- But those same employers are probably not so keen on that bit about Be subject to the rulers; or
- Honour everyone (honour your employee)
- And there's probably some husbands who are quite keen on their wives submitting to them;
- But not so keen on them (in the same way) honouring their wives.

But here's the thing, as disciples of Jesus, we are to have an attitude of submission, and to not seek to 'lord it over' anybody else...

And what Peter's showing his readers, is "Not that they submit to Caesar because Caesar is Lord – They submit to Caesar, because **Jesus** is Lord.

- V¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake....
- V¹⁵ For this is the will of God
- V¹⁶ living as servants of God.
- V17 Fear God.

Our submission to one another – our submission (even to non-Christians), and the honour that we give to **every human being**, is the will of God and it's for the Lord's sake....

And so, a general characteristic of living as citizens of the Kingdom of God, is submitting...

Does that grate on anyone? Come on, be honest,, It grates on me... And that's the thing about the Gospel – it challenges us so much, in 'who we are' and 'how we function'...

And you know, for me, this was so much a part of who I was, that to become a citizen of the Kingdom of God, I had to be born again... And yet still, the passions of the flesh make it hard for me to submit, ,, and it still grates on me... What am I to do???

- Recognise that this is a passion of the flesh for me (not the passion of the Spirit);
- Abstain from the passions of the flesh;
- Not lord-it-over others
- submit...

It's confronting, isn't it...

Alright, so:

Are there ever times, when we should **not** submit to those in authority???

Yes, there are. Remember, it's not about "submitting to those in authority over us because they are Lord" – we submit to them because **Jesus** is Lord.

And so, if anyone ever instructs us to do something which is contrary to a commandment of God,,,,, to honour the Lord, we do not follow that instruction...

But let me be really clear here: And I can speak from my own personal experience: **Beware**, because the passions of the flesh, are trying to convince me, that it's OK to despise authority... And so I have to be really careful that it's not the passions of the flesh I'm listening to.

Peter said V¹⁶ **Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.** Alright, so let's remember, that the general principal of Godly living (**living as servants of God**) means that we **do** submit to the authorities...

And so, let's beware, that we don't use the freedom we have in Christ, as a coverup for evil... What evil is he talking about? The evil inclination that is trying to convince me to rebel against authority and say "*You're not the boss of me*"...

Alright, so in some cases, it is right to **not** submit to those in authority... But we're not talking about some kind of abstract, distant linking of us supporting evil – we're talking about a direct, personal involvement... I think it'll be easiest if I give a few examples:

- If the government instructed us (Daniel) to worship other gods, as disciples of Jesus, we **must** disobey them... But as we disobey, be prepared for the consequences (fine/jail/execution)

Alright, disobeying those in authority (for the sake of Jesus) will usually involve a cost.

- If anyone asks you to lie for them (friend; family; employer; Gov. Official), you must not lie for them (for the sake of Jesus).
- With Queensland's current abortion laws, Qld doctors are compelled (under the legislation) to refer anyone who requests an abortion, to another doctor who will do it. And yet, as a disciple of Jesus, many feel they must not.
- Civil celebrants who conduct marriages, are not allowed to refuse to marry same-sex couples... And yet Christians must refuse...
- If a Christian teacher is instructed to teach children anti-Jesus propaganda, that Christian teacher must refuse...

Those examples would require a direct personal participation.

But then there's other 'more abstract' and 'removed' situations, where people like to rebel... And I'm pretty certain that these examples are examples of using our freedom as a cover-up for evil.

- Some people refuse to pay tax, because their tax dollar might get used for ungodly purposes.
- Some people refuse to submit information, because they feel the government may one day use that information against them (or against Christians)...

Do you know what??? So what if they do!!!... Are you ashamed for the Government to know that you're a Christian??? We think our government's bad??? There are Christians in our parliament. Our Prime Minister is a Christian.

Do you know what kinds of leaders Peter had (and the people he was writing to)? Their leader (Emperor) burned Christians as garden lighting; He dressed Christians up in the skins of wild animals and set his hunting dogs onto them... And Peter says ¹³ **Be subject for the Lord's sake to ... the emperor ... Honour the emperor**

The Apostle Paul told us to pay our taxes... Even to a leader who funded his military to kill Christians??? Yeah. That was the leader he had...

You see, we don't rebel against the authorities to protect our own skins. And we don't rebel against the authorities to pad our own bank accounts. And we don't rebel against the

authorities as a cover-up for evil – the evil of the attitude
“You’re not the boss of me”...

And in the rare times when it **is** right to rebel against authority (for the sake of Jesus), be aware that there is a physical cost to that.

You know, some people get all worried, “We’re getting into the end times – Christians are going to be targeted, and we can’t let the ‘powers that be’ get away with this” ...

But do you know what Jesus said when he talked about these times???

Revelation 13:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive,
to captivity he goes;
if anyone is to be slain with the sword,
with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Wasn’t a call to arms/rebellion... endurance and faith

Even when it comes to resisting the Beast (the most evil of world rulers) (at the end of time), we don’t resist him by fighting/disobedience... We hold on to the faith we have in Jesus, and we do not worship the beast. That’s all that’s required...

And if we must go to jail (for our faith in Christ), that’s what will happen. If we must be executed for our faith in Christ,

then that's what will happen... It's a picture of submission, isn't it...

We've just gone through a few big weeks of elections (hey). ... QLD elections... US elections...

And in the adversarial climate that democracy produces, it can be really hard to submit to the authorities that get elected (if they're the ones we didn't vote for)... But the people who rule over us (no matter how bad they might seem), have been appointed by God to carry out law and order and to administer our land (to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good). They're not always so good at that, but that's their role.

And it is the will of God that we submit to these leaders. Why? – to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

That's an interesting statement, isn't it... A couple of weeks ago, we talked about how sometimes Christians get painted as the baddies... And to be quite frank, some of the comments coming out in the US don't help that image - talk about "We Christians taking up arms against the Government etc..."...

But it's also bubbling under the surface here at home: Within the church, there's a whole sub-culture of people who are really fixated on claims:

- *of Government control of the masses; and*
- *how the government's tracking Christians so they can persecute us in the future*

— and they're more focused on these possibilities, than they are the Gospel... And what does this focus do? It fuels

the passion of the flesh to rebel against the Government/authorities, when the Spirit says “Submit”..

And people see this sub-culture within the Christian church, bubbling away, and to their mind, it confirms their perspective that all Christians are crazies, and I won't have a bar of it...

But when we submit (as God's Word demands) – even to an ungodly leader, that silences the accusations... This is God's will.

Alright, the focus today, has been on ‘submitting to our leaders’. But the overall theme, which began today, and will extend over the next few weeks, is to **Honour everyone**.

The challenge to me, is don't have the attitude

- “*You're not the boss of me*”
- “I'm the boss of you”...

¹⁷ Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

Let's pray:

Lord, sometimes it's really hard to submit.

We want to be the strong ones;

We want to be ones who dominate;

Or we might want to be the heroes who step up and save;

But Lord, Your word today, is unambiguous.
It cannot be misunderstood,,,
Your will, is for us to submit...

And it grates on us Lord, to submit to the ungodly,
But this is Your will.

And so Lord,
We ask that You would change our hearts,
So that it doesn't grate on us,
But we would willingly submit to authority,
For Your glory.

Lord, we ask that by Your Holy Spirit,
You would help us to win the battle against the flesh.
Help us to be able to tell the difference between
The passions of the flesh
And the passions of the Spirit.

And to recognise that the Spirit is urging us to submit;
And the flesh is urging us to disrespect and to rebel.

And Lord, may the honour and respect we give to
others,
Be because of the honour and respect we have for you.

Amen.

ⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism_and_religion

ⁱⁱ Davids Peter H. 1990. *The New International Commentary of the New Testament – The First Epistle of Peter*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids