

## Series: Hope for Difficult Times

VBC

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1 Peter 2:13-17

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### “How to Make the Best of It”

#### INTRO

I admit it—for a fourth season, I am hooked on 24

- rooting for the anti-hero—Jack Bauer
- I especially like the parts where he goes rogue, goes above the law
- defies his superiors, the Congress, the FBI, the CIA, the President—
- terrorizing terrorists

I don't know what explains that

- I'm sure part of it is that I have been a rebel from birth
- but then—so have all of you
- Americans revel in their defiance—we're a nation built upon Boston Tea Parties
- some of us are the product of the 60's—that gloried in throwing chairs into the windows of administration buildings

- we live to elect leaders so we can shoot them down
- make laws so that we can break them
- which makes the words of 1 Peter 2:13-17 needful (read)

- Peter uses strong, all encompassing words to make his point
- lit “arrange yourselves under” every “human creature”
- a command so wide in scope it leaves no exceptions
- he is telling us that submission, deference should characterize our lives at every level, beginning with—

- a. all governing systems—from the highest to the lowest levels—  
verses 13-17
- b. authorities in the workplace—2:18f
- c. leadership in the home—3:1f

- and while it might make us uneasy
- imagine what it must have been like to read these words in the context of the first century church
- where Rome was in charge
- and its military machine was ruthless and efficient, punishing rebellion with cold brutality
- taxes were excessive—levied to pay for the privileges of being part of the empire

-emperor cult was the fastest growing religion—the emperor claiming the title—son of god  
-and state sponsored persecution was in its initial stages

-Peter's words had to be unnerving-so let's look at two basic questions—

## 1. WHY SUBMIT?

Peter gives at least four reasons—

### a. WE SUBMIT BECAUSE SUBMISSION MARKED THE LIFE OF JESUS—verse 13

-we don't submit because institutions tell us to—it is not because authority forces us to

-Peter gives the theological basis right from the start—we submit “because of the Lord”

-every time Peter makes an appeal like this—he goes back to Christ as our reference point

-we submit—because He submitted

-it is an act of followership

-when He was insulted, threatened—He entrusted Himself to His Father—verses 22-23

-He could have seized political power over all the kingdoms—even at the start

-could have encouraged His disciples to wield their swords

-could have defied Pilate—could have told Rome where it could go

-but He didn't—for He was accomplishing something higher—and so are we

### b. WE SUBMIT BECAUSE GOD HAS ESTABLISHED HUMAN INSTITUTIONS—verse 14

-behind a king who sends a governor is God—who sends a king

-behind every human institution-be it the government in Washington or the mayor's office in Portland, or city hall in Beaverton is the One who established them

-hence Paul writes—“Submit to the governing authorities—for *there is no authority except that which God has established*” —Romans 13:1

-it is God who ordains rulers to manage, order society, bring a measure of justice to the world

-restrain evil, punish evil doers and praise what is right

-the world may think it wields control

-but it only legislates what God allows

-this is God's kingdom

- Pro 8:15—"by Me kings reign"
- Pro 21:1-the king's heart is like channels of water—He turns it whichever way He wills
- kings may be impressed with their power—but the nations are but a drop in the bucket, the world's kings and kingdoms are as nothing—Isa 40

- when Jesus came He declared—"The time is fulfilled, the kingdom is near" —Mark 1:15

- i.e. "Time's up—the King is here"

- the One who would declare— "all authority in heaven and earth has been entrusted to Me"-Matt 28:18

Point—why do we submit?

- because there is no authority over us He has not, in His sovereign will, allowed to be there

- so we can respond as Jesus did to Pilate—who declared—"Don't you realize I have the power?"

- "you have no authority unless it were given to you" —John 19:11

- hence—when we submit—we're ultimately submitting to God—and when we rebel—we're rebelling against Him

c. WE SUBMIT IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION OF ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM—verse 15

- this is what Peter keeps coming back to

- submission isn't about conformity or capitulation—or just keeping the peace

- it's about a strategy—it's all part of our mission—to get in step with a God who loves the world and is calling it back to Himself

- and calls us to work with Him in this mission of redemption—changing hearts

- and that means that we maintain a good conduct, build credibility, live a radically different life that muzzles the ignorant—verse 15

- silences the slanderer—verse 12

- puts to shame the malicious—3:16

- when we submit—when we carry out His will to follow the laws, honor those in authority

- we show we are different

- that our lives are not about cynicism and criticism

- retaliation, getting control, striving for power, aiming to get authority over others

- the world may—in its coarseness—dishonor, debase, degrade its leaders—*but not us!*

- for the sake of the gospel—the advancement of God’s kingdom
- we are called to show deference, esteem, honor, humility, submission
- “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world— but they are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses” —2 Corinthians 10:4

- does it accomplish anything?
- consider this—what if Rome—that eventually became a force for God’s kingdom—was conquered by a submissive spirit
- whose weapons were not of this world?
- what if Constantine’s radical shift to Christ was the result of a faithful church living out these words?
- for one by one—people in high places came to Christ
- it is said that two of the Emperors’ wives were impressed with the community of grace
- and Constantine may have been the last domino to fall

- what if this is how we will win this world?

- d. WE SUBMIT BECAUSE IT IS THE WILL OF GOD—verse 15
  - what Peter declares to be God’s will is repeated in other places
  - Romans 13:1— “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities”
  - Titus 3:1— “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities. To be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men”

- it is how we make the best of it—the best of this world

## 2. WHAT DOES THIS PRACTICALLY MEAN?

- what does submission look like?

### a. WHAT SUBMISSION DOESN’T MEAN

- Scripture as a whole affirms that it doesn’t mean blind obedience
- there are parameters to submission
- we submit right up to the point obedience to a head would entail disobedience to God
- we cannot follow one into sin

- if the state forbids what God commands—we must yield to God
- though we are free in Christ—we are subjects of God—verse 16

So-if the state forbids saving lives—our submission to Him means we save lives—cf Moses' parents—Exodus 1:17

-if the state forbids us to declare God's truth—our submission to God means we must proclaim His word—for He commands us to be His witnesses—Acts 1:8

-it was Peter who stood defiantly to declare—"We must obey God rather than men!" Acts 5:29

-if the state forbids worship and prayer—following the model of Daniel—we worship and pray—Daniel 3, 6

Point – there will be times that call for *dissident discipleship*

-submission of a different sort—submission to punishment, to fines, to imprisonment if it comes to that for being obedient to God

## b. WHAT SUBMISSION MEANS

### i. Doing good—verse 15

-exhibiting the kind of behavior that minimizes slander—silencing charges

-doing good means doing what is good for this world—

speaking out when leaders lead well—*and when they don't*

-we have this responsibility to call them to their God-given task—to promote justice and compassion and order--and then help make it so

-be it acts of mercy, education, medical care

-and if they don't--declare consequences like Elijah

### ii. Honoring and respecting those in authority—verse 17

-give each relationship its due—

-to fellow brothers and sisters—love

-to God-reverence and fear

-to those in authority-honor

-which means we avoid the tone of dishonor that so characterizes our age

-I fear too many fill their time with voices like Savage and

Limbaugh—which leads to a different spirit

-one of cynicism, degrading, trivializing, belittling

### iii. Praying regularly for all in authority over us

-I Timothy 2:2— "Pray for kings and all in authority—that we might live peaceable, quiet lives"

-words that reflect those of Jeremiah to God's people who also lived in exile—

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare" —Jeremiah 29:7

- so pray—but make them strong, powerful prayers
- that God will use them to bring His wise healing order into the world-now
- that He will grant them wisdom to make shrewd decisions
- that when they make unethical decisions—that dishonor God
- that God would bring them to repentance

I admire our President—but I am grieved when he lifts bans on abortion funding—and therefore authorizes the destruction of life

- I pray that when he choose to make decisions based on politics rather than faith—his life will be shaken

- if he lifts the ban tomorrow on stem cell research—I pray he has thought this carefully through

- not from a political—but from a theological standpoint

- that's what I mean

## CONCLUSION

What is God calling us to in this text?

- a different people than we have been