

When Obedience to God Comes First

A Bible Study on Submission to Authority

Reflections Prayer, Repentance and the Spiritual Life 11 June 2026

Peter wrote his first epistle at a time when many Jews were calling for rebellion against Roman rule. The prevailing mood was one of resistance and confrontation. Yet Peter offered a remarkably different perspective. Instead of seeking power, or engaging in revolt, he urged believers to submit to governing authorities, and to devote themselves to the welfare of others. This instruction was all the more striking given that the Roman Emperor of the day was very probably Nero, a ruler far from being any model of righteousness.

However, Peter did not advocate blind obedience. Submission to human authority was to be exercised "for the Lord's sake." Whenever obedience to earthly rulers conflicted with faithfulness to God and the proclamation of the Gospel, believers were to stand firm, even at personal cost — as the apostles themselves demonstrated, when they refused to be silenced by the authorities. Nevertheless, where the Gospel was not compromised, Christians were called to respect and to co-operate with those entrusted with governance, recognising that God uses civil authority to uphold justice and order.

Peter reminds us that the freedom we enjoy in Christ is not freedom from all authority, but freedom from the bondage of sin, so that we may serve God wholeheartedly. As followers of Christ, we ought to be known for our respect, kindness, and integrity towards all people. We are called, first, to fear God, and, within that reverence, to honour those placed in positions of authority. By living in this manner, we ensure that nothing in our conduct hinders the mission and witness that the Lord Jesus has entrusted to us.

In an age marked by division, criticism, and rebellion against authority, Peter's words challenge us to balance courage with humility, conviction with respect, and faithfulness to God with responsible citizenship.