

FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY: 1 PETER 2:13-25

TOBY SUMPTER

TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH - MOSCOW, ID

A.D. JANUARY 10, 2010

INTRODUCTION

I Peter insists that the Christian Church is the new Israel (1:2, 19, 2:9-10), the new temple (1:7, 18, 2:4), the new priesthood (1:16, 2:4, 9), and as such is God's heavenly colony in the world (1:1, 17, 2:11). They are the new "house" of God, and therefore, they are called to be this priestly people for all.

SUBMISSION FOR THE LORD'S SAKE

Peter says that Christians ought to submit to "every human creature" (2:13). These "creatures" may include kings (like Caesar Augustus or Nero) and governors (like Pilot) who render "justice" (2:13-14) as well as masters (2:18), and husbands (3:1), and ultimately this submissive honor applies to everyone (2:17, 3:8). The center of this section is the example of Christ (2:21-25) with particularly weak members of society highlighted as role models (slaves and wives). Peter says that we ought to submit "because of the Lord" (2:13, cf. Mt. 17:26). This is the will of God so that we might be free "servants of God" (2:15-16). Priests are the servants of God (cf. 2:5, 9), and therefore disobedience is a form of slavery to some Pharaoh. Thus, this kind of submission is also subversive. Obedience to the Lord, as slaves of God implies that all human authorities are not absolute. They are "creatures," and Peter says that "doing good" is a kind of weapon. It silences foolish men (2:15, cf. 2:12). Therefore, we seek to honor all people with the love of the brothers and the fear of God at the center (2:17).

SUBMISSION FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

This means that household servants should submit to their masters, and Peter says that this requirement holds whether the master is good or harsh (2:18). The closest analogy we have to this in our day is the employer/employee relationship, parents and kids would also fit here. So how much more so ought we to submit? We are to submit because our obedience is before God, and this means that we may also resist with a good conscience when the Lord requires it (2:19). But this is different than disobeying because we disagree or feel mistreated. Suffering for faults is not special, but suffering for doing good commends you to the Master of all masters (2:20). And Peter says that we are called to suffer for doing good (2:21).

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

Peter says this calling is grounded in the person and work of Christ (2:21). He left us an example, an example that accomplishes its own replication in us. Notice the parallels: His submissive suffering (and silence) for doing good (before Pilot, cf. 2:14) and bearing our sins in His body (2:22-24) accomplishes our dying to sin and living to righteousness (2:24). What is living to righteousness? Suffering for doing good; for by His stripes we are healed (2:24). "His stripes" heal us in two ways: they heal us by taking our sins away at the cross, but the implication is also that as we suffer for doing good, our wounds are identified with His wounds (2 Cor. 1:5, Col. 1:24). This is how suffering for doing good is a weapon. In the care of our Shepherd and Overseer, the Judge who judges justly, our Christ-like silence silences fools (2:23, 25, cf. 2:12). And notice Peter's qualification of the notion of justice (compare 2:22-25 with 2:14).

CONCLUSION & APPLICATION

We frequently want an evangelism that is sexy. Maybe we don't go in for movie screens and strobe lights and whatever else is hip and trendy, but we can wish for our own form of cool with robes or kneeling or by simple negation (we're so not like that). But Peter says our Master is the Lord Jesus and to Him we must answer. Do our lives manifest that kind of freedom and confidence? Do our families? Does our church? Jesus was able to submit because he came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. The submissiveness that Peter calls us to is for the fulfillment of the mission of Jesus.



PUBLISHED BY: CANON PRESS • P.O. BOX 8729 • 205 E. 5TH ST. • MOSCOW, ID 83843
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