

Date: 05.07.2020

Time: 6pm

Service taken by: Rev Gavino Fioretti

Psalm: Psalm 96:1-7

Reading: 1 Peter 2:13-21

Outline: Submission to authorities

a) Introduction

1. Civil authorities

2. Working authorities

3. Divine authority

Submission to authorities

- **Introduction**

Peter has moved from speaking about relationships within Christian church, to the Christian's relationships with and within the world. We're to proclaim with our conduct and words the greatness of God.

The theme in this section is our relationship with authorities; how we should behave towards them. The idea of subjection or submission doesn't appeal in any generation, but especially today when the idea of authority is rejected; this shows in attitudes to the government, police, work superiors and parents. But we as Christians are a people under authority.

1) Civil authorities

God-given purpose: We are under civil authorities. God explains why we are subject to them. The civil authorities' purpose is to punish the evil people and to praise those who are good. These authorities have the ability to punish you or to praise you – this is what God wills. God has a purpose in giving us a government and parliament. Though there might be things we are deeply unhappy with, we should be thankful we're not living in a time or a place where there is anarchy. We should be thankful that there is a stable government, that there are laws which even those in authority need to obey and abide by. We need people to govern us and who will punish what is wrong and reward what is right.

God-given right: Civil authorities have rights – they have to be obeyed. In the days of Peter, these were evil and corrupt authorities who were persecutors of the church. God's given us authorities for

a purpose. It's important that we obey and keep laws even if we fail to understand them. Authorities have a right to impose laws on the people and we've a duty to obey.

God-given limitations: Their authority is limited by God. Our obedience to civil authorities is limited and qualified by our allegiance to Christ. We can obey them only if what they're asking is within the will of God. There might be consequences for disobedience, but our allegiance is still with Christ. God is higher than the civil authorities. The power of the civil authorities is limited by God's will and His authority. God comes first and our allegiance is first and foremost to Him. We obey God, even if that means disobeying man.

Verse 15 tells us if you respect people in authority, you are honouring God as you're giving no arguments to those who are against you. We are to evangelise not just with our words, but also with our actions. As Christians, we have a responsibility towards the civil authority and should be careful in doing what's required by the state if in accordance with God's will.

2) Working authorities

Peter speaks about servants who are to be subject to masters with all respect.

The command of God: A consequence of sin is rebellion within families and within society. But we're commanded by God to respect those in authority over us, including those in the workplace.

Mindful of God: Not all masters are good – they can be unjust and won't treat you fairly, but we're to be subject to them too. We're to be mindful of God and to remember that you're a child of God and His servant – you have responsibilities and privileges. Don't look at your earthly master as your ultimate master – you are not a servant of man, but of God. Carry out your duties as an act of obedience to God, rather than to man. We have to be mindful of God to be able to deal with being treated unfairly. To respect those who treat us unfairly is possible only by remembering God and remembering that you're under His authority.

Sight of God: If you are treated unjustly in work, remember that your endurance and perseverance in suffering is a precious thing in the sight of God. God is aware and takes notice of your suffering and how you're being treated. God is pleased when His people are willing to endure suffering in their service to God. When we obey those who are over us, this is something that pleases God.

The Son of God: We're given the example of Jesus to follow. He is the example to follow when we suffer at the hands of those over us. Jesus was treated unjustly. He left us an example and we should follow His steps when we suffer. This is difficult, because this goes against human nature, but we have the Spirit of God in us. The same Spirit that enabled Jesus to honour God to death, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is the same Spirit that is within us. It is not natural when we're accused falsely, or when evil things are said or done against us to respond with good, but this is the example set before us by Jesus. We seek the Lord's justice, not our own revenge. We must like the psalmists, and as Jesus, put things in God's hands. Like Jesus, we should be willing to endure suffering – this is a precious thing in God's sight.

3) Divine authority

We're under God's authority.

God's will: The will of God is for the evil to have no points of argument to raise against the church. Don't cause shame to come on God's name or on His church. Our conduct must be pure. Our behaviour is not to be motivated just to avoid punishment. There's a higher purpose – we're to follow God because we're under His authority.

God's servants: You are free, but not to do what you like. You're free to honour and live for God by His grace and in His Spirit's power. Before, we were unable to please Him, but now we can in His power. This is not appealing to many. But if you don't take Jesus as King, you don't take Him as Saviour – you take the whole of Christ or none of Christ. Even if authorities over us are bad, God who is over them is good.

God's honour: Our behaviour reflects on God's name. When people reject the church, they reject God with it – many are put off from seeking Christ by Christians' conduct they have seen. We are God's servants. If we obey Him carefully, we're His witnesses. Above everyone else in authority in this world is God. We're under the authority of a good Master and Father. May He enable us to be faithful servants and to do all that He commands us to do.