

LIVING IN THE WORLD

1 PETER 2:14-25

The [Department of Homeland Security](#), [TSA](#), and the [FBI](#) have joined forces to compile a “[watch list](#).” It’s a list of *suspected terrorists* and *suspicious individuals*. Board a plane and TSA screeners will check your name against the list. TSA takes its job seriously. No stone goes unturned.

They’re watching... just ask 8 year old, Mikey Hicks, a New Jersey Cub Scout. Every time Mikey walks onto an airplane he gets padded down by TSA agents. The first time it happened, little Mikey was just 2 years old.

More recently the Hicks boarded a vacation flight to the Bahamas, but Mikey was detained. Supervisors were called in. Little Mikey was subjected to several passes of the X-ray wand. It was disturbing to the whole family...

Mikey’s mom commented, “[Up your arms, down your arms, up your crotch – someone is patting your 8 year-old down like he’s a criminal. A terrorist can blow up his underwear and not get caught. But my 8 year-old can’t walk through security without being frisked.](#)” *I think I’d also be upset!*

With over 13,500 names on the TSA watch list, apparently the name “*Mikey Hicks*” sends up a red flag. It’s pretty obvious the government doesn’t profile passengers - not too many terrorists are second graders.

It's odd an 8 year-old Cub Scout is on the Federal Government's "watch list." But if you're a Christian, you're also on a *watch list*. You're listed on "the world's watch list." And it's not just at issue when you board a plane...

Follow Jesus and your life will be scrutinized. At home, at work, at school, at play - the world watches. *Every day you're being padded down.*

People have ways of *frisking without touching* – they needle you to hear what you'll say – they egg you on to see how far you'll go - they push your button to see how you'll react... Welcome to life between the crosshairs.

Decide to live a Christian life and your days of moving under the radar are over. A witness for Jesus is going to attract some heavy scrutiny...

Inquiring minds want to know... *and here's why? As a Christian we claim to have spiritual power - a relationship with Jesus – we know God!*

Deep down inside most people long for the same experience - that's why they're going to examine our lives for evidence that we're telling the truth? If people like how we *act* they'll want to know what makes us *tick!*

Here's a memorable quote: "Most people who become a Christian do so because they know another Christian; whereas most people who don't become a Christian do so because they know another Christian." Christianity's *strongest endorsement* and *biggest deterrent* are Christians.

In 1 Peter 2 we've learned that God has made us living stones. He's given us a life that's animated by Jesus, and rock-solid, and durable.

Now He wants us to build our lives on the rock. And Jesus is the cornerstone - He's the lynchpin of every area of my life. It's all connected.

How I do *family, parenting, marriage, sex, career, money, play, school, food, friends...* it all leans on the cornerstone. Jesus is the foundation and inspiration of all I am and do. I stack my life on Him. He's crucial. Pull Him out of my life and it crumbles like a house of cards. Jesus is the keystone!

Today is our third week in chapter 2. In week 1, Peter said we're made **living stones**. Week 2, we're **living on the Rock**. Now week 3, Peter teaches us that we're also **living in the world** – *on display to the world*.

He writes verse 12, “**having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.**” We're on *the world's watch list*, and Jesus wants His followers - in thought, in word, and in deed – to live in such a way that even our doubters will glorify God.

1 Peter teaches us that how we live life matters. And he addresses our conduct in three venues – **as citizens, as servants**, and **as spouses**. The rest of chapter 2 is about good citizenship - and then good servant-hood.

And here's the key principle, verse 13, **“Therefore submit yourselves...”**

When it comes to human interactions the operative word for a Christian is **“submit.”** *Citizens should submit to the government. Servants or employees should submit to their masters or bosses. Wives should submit to their husbands - and even husbands should submit to their wives...*

Understand the virtue of submission derives from deep within the very nature of God. The Triune God exists in submission. The Father, Son, and Spirit are in submission to one another. The Son does the will of the Father. The Spirit testifies of the Son. All three are in total and perfect submission.

To exhibit an attitude of submission is to reflect the image of God.

The Greek word translated **“submit”** is **“hupotasso.”** It means **“to arrange under.”** Submission is the opposite of an independent life. It's an attitude and lifestyle that accommodates and cooperates with other people.

Christians are *others-centered!* Jesus died because He loves people. And His love will cause us to arrange our lives around the needs of others.

Rather than a *“my way or the highway”* kind of person, a Christian is willing to take a *step back* - or *step down* - to let someone else *step up*.

A Christian doesn't always have to beat out the other guy – or be in charge – or come in first. His desires accommodate other people's needs.

Here's a quiz... *Is your approach to life more cooperative or combative?*

Sometimes we think submission is the antithesis of leadership - not so.

Even Christian leaders should have a submissive bend. Don't *give orders* until you learn to *take orders*. Rather than self-promotion, the goal of true leadership is serving others. *Godly leadership is servant leadership.*

A Christian should submit, but submit to whom? Peter says, *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake...”* Not only are we under God's law, we're also supposed to submit to the laws of the land.

One translation renders the word *“ordinance”* as *“human institution.”* Another uses the phrase, *“human authorities.”* The point is followers of Jesus should submit to anybody who occupies a position of authority...

Emperor, president, senator, governor, commissioner, judge, policeman, building inspector, teacher, coach, neighborhood association, parents...

And because I mentioned them last, doesn't mean parents are least important. If you live *under your parent's roof* you're *under their authority.*

Before I go further let me acknowledge that the concepts of authority and submission are viewed with distain by most of today's Americans...

Americans are trained to question *everything* and *everyone*. We've seen so few examples of servant leadership we're suspicious of anyone who aspires to a position of authority. We assume they'll use it selfishly.

Americans are also pretty arrogant. Ever notice that all talk show callers think they know more than the President... every employee does a better job than his boss... every teenager is smarter than his parents? *It's pride!*

Tragically, here's the All-American trait that hinders us... *rebellion to authority is in our DNA*. Our nation was born in rebellion. We rebel from time to time just to stay in practice in case a real revolution is ever needed.

Surely there are times when rebellion against authority is necessary. *And the Bible is crystal clear in defining legitimate **civil disobedience**.*

When direct obedience to human authority causes us to disobey God's authority then rebellion is appropriate... When the Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the male babies – or when the Jewish Sanhedrin ordered Peter and John not to preach any more in Jesus' name.

These were both examples of the proper occasion to disobey human authority. As Peter put it, *“We ought to obey God, rather than men.”*

When Corrie Ten Boom hid Jews in her attic in defiance of the Nazis... when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in the front of the bus for a white passenger... when an employee goes against the orders of his boss and refuses to lie to sell a product... when a Muslim teenager chooses to become a Christian, even though it's forbidden by her parents to do so...

These are all examples of appropriate disobedience to authority.

Yet here's the deal... This coming week very few of us will have to choose between *obedience to God* and *obedience to man*. 99% of the time our lives are conflict free - *obeying God* and *obeying man* are congruent.

Pay your taxes... drive the speed limit... limit your lunch to an hour... do the homework your teacher assigns... if your boss has an opinion about what you're doing pay attention... if dad says be home by 11:30, be home by 11:30... don't buck the authority God places in your life – rather *submit*.

Peter says, “*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.*” Notice, Peter says that government was sent to us by God!

The Book Club, and the Jaycees, and the Dugout Club are all human inventions. God created three institutions –

and only three... **Marriage and Family – the Church – and Human Government** - were all God's idea.

Earlier in verse 9 Peter calls us a “**holy nation.**” We're citizens of heaven, but we're also citizens of the United States. Evangelist DL Moody summed up his views on Christian citizenship in a sentence... “**Heaven is my home, but I vote in Cook County, Illinois.**” We're citizens *in heaven and on earth.*

And according to verse 14, human government has two purposes: “**for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.**”

Every government has a mission – ***punish evil and praise good.***

Next time you turn a corner and see a motorcycle cop sitting on his bike pointing his radar gun directly at you... according to Peter, God put him there. God created government to keep order – to punish the law breakers.

We all know about government's efforts to punish – but recently I read about a novel police tactic being practiced in South Windsor, Connecticut.

Traffic cops are pulling cars over and giving out tickets. But the tickets read, “**Your driving was great, and we appreciate it!**” The police pass out \$2 rewards for obeying the speed limit - wearing seat-belts - using turn signals - the proper use of child safety seats. They're also ***praising good.***

Carl Lomax, a resident of South Windsor, said, “You’re always nervous when you see the police lights come on. It takes a second or two to adjust to the officer saying, ‘Thanks a lot for obeying the law.’ It’s about the last thing you’d expect.” Wow, I hope this catches on in Gwinnett and Snellville. *Keeping the peace with a little positive reinforcement?* Let’s give it a try!

Peter goes on to say in verse 15, “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.”

As a Christian I’m free from the opinions and judgments of men. Since I’m accepted by God I don’t need anyone else’s approval! Yet some Christians use this freedom as an excuse to live a careless, reckless life.

I might not need your approval, but as representative of Jesus I need to care about the impression I create. My life should be an ad for godliness.

This is why a Christian needs to be a more conscientious citizen – a nicer neighbor – a better person. By caring about what other folks think I can shut up the critic – and add to the common good – and glorify God.

Verse 17 tells us, “Honor all people.”

In a “*Guidepost*” article Joann Jones writes of an experience she had in nursing school, “During my second year our professor gave us a pop quiz. I breezed through the questions until I read the last one... “*What is the first*

name of the woman who cleans the school?” Surely this was some kind of joke. I’d seen the cleaning woman, but how would I know her name?

I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank.

Before class ended, a student asked if the last question counted toward our grade. The professor replied, *“Absolutely, in your career you’ll meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and ask their name.”* Joann wrote, “I’ve never forgotten that lesson. I also learned our cleaning woman’s name, Dorothy.”

Do you **“honor all people?”** Every person you’ll ever lay eyes on in your lifetime was made in God’s image, and purchased by the blood of Jesus.

That makes everybody you meet worthy of your honor and respect.

Even the obnoxious and frustrating people in your life have a story. There’re reasons people do what they do – and if you understood their particular reasons you might be a lot more compassionate toward them.

Peter adds, **“Love the brotherhood.”** When you become a Christian you get God as your Father *AND me as your brother.* We’re members of God’s family. Black, white, red, yellow – legal, illegal – employed, unemployed, and under-employed – we all live in the same *hood* – **“the brotherhood!”**

I'm sure you've heard the old saying, "You can choose your friends, but not your family." That's true even when it comes to your spiritual family.

I'm afraid some of you are spiritual teenagers. You're embarrassed by the rest of the family of God. We're not cool enough for your friends. You avoid us. You rush out after church so you won't be seen with us in public.

Here's a great suggestion, rather than grumble and complain about your brothers and sisters in Christ – rather than shop around to find a Church more fitting to your social standing - rather than fuss with fellow church members... try this, "Love the brotherhood." *They might just love you back!*

Then Peter writes, "Fear God..." Respect and reverence God's authority above all others. *All authority is derived from God's authority.* He gives sanction to human authority... kings, parents, police, husbands, pastors...

In submitting to any form of authority our first priority is to "Fear God."

Then Peter writes, "Honor the king." In our case, *Uncle Sam* can use some *Christian brothers*. This includes: *honest tax returns, keeping up your emissions, driving 55, adhering to the building codes, watering your lawn on only the days allowed, pulling over for a fire truck, thanking a soldier...*

These are all ways that in our day and land we can "Honor the king."

And understand it's easier today than it was in Peter's situation. The king of Rome in 60 AD was the evil tyrant, Nero. He was godless, lewd, and barbaric – a madman drunk on power... And he hated the Christians.

He dipped us in wax and used us as human torches. He fed us to the lions. He led us into the arena to be slaughtered for sport by the gladiators.

Nero was a *dishonorable* fellow, yet Peter says of him, *“Honor the king.”*

Peter would tell us, if you can't honor the king's character at least respect the uniform – honor his position. Remember, Peter said this about the man who would end up ordering his crucifixion... And I suppose, if Peter could honor Nero, we can find some honor for our elected leaders.

In verse 18 the operative word is still *“submit”* but now Peter applies it to *servants and masters* – or in our case, *employees and bosses*.

“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.” A Christian employee is a servant.

Jesus told His disciples, *“The greatest among you is the servant of all.”*

A Christian at work needs to be as good, and faithful, and effective an employee as possible - *regardless of what kind of boss oversees his work.*

If you've got a crabby, mean-spirited boss, who tries to make your life miserable - *then it's your option to leave and find another job*. But as a Christian it's not an option to slough-off - and put out a half-hearted effort.

In Peter's day employees didn't have the option to jump from job to job. Workers were often indentured servants – sometimes they were slaves.

In OT Israel and in the Roman Empire of Peter's day slavery was not the same institution it became in the 18th and 19th centuries. Later slavery targeted free Africans who were violently stolen from their families and taken overseas. They and their ancestors became another man's property.

This was an abomination, and I have no doubt if this type of slavery was common in the first century, NT writers would've spoken in opposition.

But in ancient times slavery often had a redeeming purpose. Rather than racially targeted this form of slavery was a financial vehicle. It was a form of bankruptcy - a means for a poor man to work off his debts. He could sale himself into slavery until he became solvent. Often he did better working for his master than he did on his own and chose to remain a slave.

Historian Murray Harris says that Greek and Roman slaves were often more educated than their masters, and were never segregated from society. Race had little to do with it, and the period of slavery was often not long.

Slaves would *participate in*, and *contribute to*, the culture at large.

Again, they were more like employees than what we think of as slaves – and as Christians it was their calling to be faithful and diligent servants.

He writes verse 19, “**For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.**” This can happen in a fallen world - *a child of God can get a raw deal*. Christians are not immune!

You can do good - be faithful - and still be treated spitefully. Someone might be jealous of you, or you could be persecuted for Jesus’ sake.

I’ll never forget walking to my car in the church parking lot to find that it had been shelled with raw eggs. I was in the church building teaching the Word and serving the Lord – while someone drove through the parking lot and egged my car. *I immediately started trying to figure out who it was...*

Where had Pastor James been all day? What did I do to upset the secretaries? Who had a grievance? Finally I concluded I’d just suffered wrongfully. I’d been persecuted for Jesus’ sake. Someone got angry at the message and took it out on the messenger. They egged the postman.

On my way home that night I drove through the carwash at the BP to clean off the egg. When I realized the vandals had cost me \$5 I started to cop an attitude. “God, here I am serving you, and it costs me 5 bucks...”

And at that exact moment, guess who came on the radio? *I did!* It was one of the 30 second spots we did that highlighted one of the 8 Beatitudes.

And guess which beatitude turned up in the rotation? Matthew 5:10, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake... Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...” It was wild! I was reminding myself to rejoice over a heavenly reward! I never thought God would allow me to have a radio ministry – *so I could minister to me!*

The story did have a happy ending. The person who threw the eggs eventually came forward and apologized. Today, I consider them a friend.

Yet the lesson I learned is true! There are times when God allows His kids to “endure grief” and “suffer wrongfully.” And it’s not our fault! We’re trying to do good and serving God - and it comes back to bite us. We can get hurt while doing good. We’re tempted to throw in the towel. Who needs the hassle?

For a pastor this is an occupational hazard. It happens often. But it also happens to all Christians. If it hasn’t already, it’ll eventually happen to you.

And when it does, listen to Peter's logic... "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God."

Here's a distinction. There is a huge difference between suffering for righteousness' sake, or for Jesus' sake – and suffering for being a jerk.

I know Christians who are self-righteous, and pompous, and prideful, and unloving – and their co-workers or neighbors laugh at them. "*What hypocrites!*" Yet the slight or insult causes the hypocrite to stick out his or her chest even further, and claim they're being persecuted for Jesus' sake.

Christianity takes a black-eye when a hypocritical Christian sulks about like they're a martyr – when they're really just a dweeb. *Rejoice* if you're persecuted for being a saint. *Repent* if you're persecuted for being a snob.

Verse 21, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; (here he quotes Isaiah 53:9) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;" Here's the example Jesus left us – He was a shock absorber.

Jesus allowed the rage to end with Him. The world we live in specializes in swapping insult for insult. Have you noticed *we live in an angry world?*

The boss takes out his angst on ole Joe, and slaps him down. Joe comes home and verbally slaps around his kids. His boys go out and start slapping the neighbor's kids. The whole world ends up plain slap-happy.

Hatred passes from person to person... *until it comes to a Christian!*

We've been called to imitate our Lord Jesus. When He was reviled and insulted, He didn't revile in return... When Jesus was slapped, He refused to slap back... When He suffered He didn't threaten to retaliate...

Jesus absorbed the angst. When the frustration of sin and the *fall out* from a *fallen world* reverberated back at Jesus in the form of the cross...

Jesus returned love for hate. He absorbed the slaps. Rather than respond with the back of His hand, Jesus extended an outstretched hand.

Jesus showed mercy to the merciless. *As His disciples so should we!*

If you're being slapped around by people or circumstances I'm not suggesting that you just suck it up and invite a bloody nose. To the contrary, it's time to fight back! But not as a slapper - go for the knock out.

When the world slaps at you, deck them with love. Fight evil with good.

Weak people have to retaliate to show their strength. But real strength absorbs the blow and transforms its

impact into the opposite response – *Jesus retaliated in love...* And He's calling His followers to do the same.

On the cross Jesus was a shock absorber, but that's not all He did. He generated some shockwaves of His own. Verse 24 adds "(Jesus) **Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness...**" Today, the popular treatment for addictive behavior is a 12 step program. But God has a one-step plan - *the cross!*

On the cross Jesus put an end to sin. He bore our sin in His own body.

But notice it's not the sin that dies. We pray God kills the fleshy lust – the out-of-control desire that torments us. But it's not the sin that dies, we die to the sin. God changes us. **Sin isn't any less attractive to a Christian. But when a person becomes a Christian they're less attracted to the sin.**

In the temptation situation we want God to remove the temptation or make it less tempting. We're focused on the wrong end of the temptation.

God's solution is to purify me - change my identity and my desires. As Peter puts it, we've "**died to sins,**" so we can "**live for righteousness.**"

The more I'm focused on who I am in Christ – and what Jesus did for me - the stronger my identity grows – righteous desires begin to replace unrighteous ones. *The cross is the cure-all. It's God's one step approach.*

Peter even reminds us, “By (His) stripes you were healed.” The blows absorbed in Jesus’ body have become the antidote for sin and sickness.

Understand how a vaccine works? It’s a weakened form of the germ itself. The body fights against the vaccine and builds up immunity in preparation for contracting the actual disease. This is how healing works...

Sin’s pain and suffering was absorbed by the body of Jesus as if it were a vaccine. The *hurt inflicted on Jesus creates healing through Jesus. Pain absorbed is now love released... His wounds produce our well-being...*

The chapter closes, “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” Sheep are notoriously dumb! They will follow each other over a cliff if you allow them.

And we like dumb sheep - lost our way and went astray. Thankfully, Jesus found us. Now He’s “*the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.*”

This all means you’re on a “watch list.” The world is watching. They’re scrutinizing your life. They want to find evidence for God’s involvement...

When you submit to a human authority you point to God’s authority... By honoring people you fear the Lord... By working hard, you prove you serve a higher Boss... By enduring unfair treatment you represent a Savior who

died unjustly... You're on a watch list - make sure folks see Jesus in you!

But you're also on "another watch list" – for the Shepherd of our soul has His sights on you. The Overseer watches you – not to pick you apart, but to pick you up. Not to analyze or scrutinize, but to save and heal.

Both God and man are watching you... Let's live in submission to both!