

Submission to Civil Authority, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:13c-17

Code: 60-25

Well let's open our Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 2, 1 Peter 2:11 to 20 is our text and we're talking about silencing the critics...silencing the critics. You will notice that we have begun this look at this wonderful chapter in verse 11 with a discussion of verses 11 and 12, we are now in a discussion of verses 13 through 17, it's the second paragraph of this larger passage. But the whole text, from verse 11 through 20, is about how we as believers are to live in order to eliminate criticism, how we are to live in order to eliminate the criticism that the world wants to throw at us. The key statement here, we have already noted, it's in verse 15, it says, "For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." It's amazing how the critics of Christianity are silenced by a righteous life. That is the greatest platform and foundation for evangelistic ministry. The life that you live and the life that I live is crucial to the effect of our message.

By way of an illustration as we embark again on this wonderful text, turn with me to the sixth chapter of Acts and I want to reintroduce to you a very familiar name and a very familiar man. Acts chapter 6 and verse 8 says this, "And Stephen...who was introduced in verse 5 as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and now it says...And Stephen, full of grace and power." Now that's quite a man, full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, verse 5, now full of grace, full of power. "And he was performing great wonders and signs among the people." He had the miraculous capability that God gave to those in that early time. "This great unusual man of God was a powerful speaker," verse 10, "The people were unable to cope with the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking. So they secretly induced men to say falsely against him, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God and they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes and they came upon him and dragged him away and brought him before the counsel. And they put forward false witnesses who said, This man incessantly speaks against this holy place, that is the temple, and the Lord, for we have heard him say that this Nazarene Jesus will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us. And fixing their gaze on him in all of that hostility and hatred, all who were sitting in the counsel saw his face like the face of an angel."

What an amazing reaction to the circumstances that he found himself in. Then in chapter 7, the trial begins, the trumped up false trial, and the high priest said, "Are these things so?" And starting at verse 2 he launched in to a sermon that goes all the way to verse 50. It was a simple question, it was a complex answer. Stephen being full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, full of grace, full of power, being a gifted preacher and speaker, full of wisdom, launched an inspired message and he closes it in verse 51, "You men who are stiff necked and uncircumcised in your heart and ears are always resisting the

Holy Spirit. You are doing just as your fathers did which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute and they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the righteous one whose betrayers and murderers you have now become, you who received the law as ordained by angels and yet did not keep it." A very confrontive evangelistic message. And when they heard it they were already furious, they were already vitriolic, they were already vengeful and now it was escalated. They were cut to the quick. They began gnashing their teeth, they were so furious they literally physically began to grind their jaws and their teeth together out of fury.

But, verse 55 says, "Being full of the Holy Spirit he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Now wonder he had the face of an angel. "They cried out with a loud voice and covered their ears." Why? They thought this was blasphemy. "They rushed on him with one impulse, and when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul." How interesting. "And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. And having said this, he fell asleep." Chapter 8 verse 1 says, and it should be the last verse of chapter 7, "And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death."

You say, "What's the significance of that?" Just this, I believe that the way Stephen died had an idelible affect on Saul. I believe the patient trusting dynamic powerful forgiving way in which Stephen endured that execution of injustice was a factor in the conversion of the Apostle Paul. Talk about an unjust death...a man who was as much a man of integrity as any man in the world at that time, stoned to death for no reason. And though he dies an unjust death, there's no protest, no vengeance, no seeking retribution, no retaliation, no anger, just forgiveness and he commits himself to the Lord. There's no doubt in my mind that Saul never forgot the angelic face, the forgiving heart, the power of the person of Stephen. It must have been something like the death of the Lord Jesus Christ of whom Peter writes in this very same chapter, 1 Peter chapter 2, that while He was reviled, verse 23, He did not revile in return, while suffering he uttered no threats but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. You remember that Jesus was dying on the cross also an unjust death, also through false accusation, false witnesses and the violent hatred of men and He too in the midst of all that injustice and murder perpetrated against Himself bore it without retaliation, bore it without vengeance, bore it quietly, patiently, and with forgiveness in His heart saying, "Father, forgive them they know not what they do," and I am also convinced that it was the amazing forgiveness of Christ, the quiet patient way in which He bore the murder of Himself unjustly which was part of the reason why the centurion and others said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

You see, as much as what Stephen said it was what he was that was so powerful. As much as what Christ taught, it was what He was that was so powerful...now mark this...particularly in a situation of injustice and even murder. You see, how a believer reacts to the world's violence, to the world's injustice, to the world's persecution, to the world's perpetration of murder is a definite key as to how

the world will react to that Christian's message. The platform that we establish by the quality of our living in the direst kind of circumstance is crucial to the impact of our testimony. Thus we go right back to 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 15, it is the will of God that by doing right in every situation, and that means right deeds, right words, right thoughts, right attitudes, in any circumstance you will silence the ignorance of foolish men. That is the foundation of our witness...the character of our lives.

Now Peter has drawn us in to three categories by which Christians are defined in the world. Verses 11 and 12 tell us we are aliens. Verses 13 to 17 tell us we are citizens. And verses 18 to 20, we are servants. We've already studied the fact that we are aliens. We are aliens in the world. We are strangers in this world. We live above the world. We belong to a different dimension of life. We are not part of the world, though we are in the world.

But in order to balance that verse 13 then introduces the subject of citizenship. You see, if we think we are aliens and that's all we are, then we will not feel subject to any of the laws of this world, we'll feel we're above and we are hostile to the world. And we can live any way we want. Not so. Yes we are aliens, yes we are not of the world but we are in the world and though we are aliens to the world we must live as citizens in the world. And so beginning in verse 13 as we noted last time, he begins to describe to us the factors of our citizenship. First of all, you remember the command in verse 13..."submit yourselves." A very general spiritual principle for all social structure designed by God, submit yourselves. We remember Romans 13 as a comparative passage and you remember well what the Apostle Paul says there, he notes for us that all the powers that exist in the human realm are designed by God. In fact he says it explicitly, let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. Human government and human authority is established by God, all of it is, and when you violate it you will receive the condemnation of God.

So the command is very simple...submit yourselves...submit yourselves. That's the general spiritual principle for behavior in a society in which we live as Christians. We saw secondly the motive...why are we to do that, verse 13, "For the Lord's sake." Because of the Lord, because our testimony for Christ is more important than anything else, that's the most important thing of all. For the Lord's sake we submit so that we do not bring reproach upon Him, so that we do not scandalize His holy name, so that we do not detract from His righteous requirements. That's why in Romans 13:5 it says it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath...that's the negative, God will judge you if you're not...but also for conscience's sake, because you want to do what's right to honor God. You remember Jesus' conversation recorded in Matthew with the disciples and Jesus said, "Who pays taxes, the sons of the kings or the servants?" And they said, "Well, the son is not going to pay taxes to his father, it's the servants. And Jesus said that's right. But in spite of that we don't want to offend them so even though...implied...I'm the Son of the God who made all the rules, I'm going to pay My taxes, and so shall you." And since they didn't have any tax money, He caught a fish with tax money

in its mouth so they could pay their taxes.

Jesus was, in effect, saying, "I'm the Son of God, I don't have to live according to the system, I'm an alien. But on the other hand, as long as I'm here I'm a citizen and I don't want to offend so I'll do what's required." And the motive for us then is we want to do what honors God. We don't want to be known as those who are civilly disobedient, we don't want to be known as those who because we believe we are alien to this society and live on another level are therefore disrespectful of human institutions and do not regard ourselves as those who have to object ourselves to them, quite the contrary. Because that would be reproach on Christ. The world defines goodness, righteousness and proper conduct by how you respond to the law and as we respond properly to the law, we demonstrate even that kind of goodness, righteousness and proper conduct which they can then perceive. And that will lead them to understand in our lives a deeper kind of righteousness, that which only God can provide.

So, the command: to submit...the reason: for the Lord's sake. How you conduct yourself can either be a glory and an honor to Christ or a dishonor. To say you're a Christian and the righteousness of Christ is upon you and then conduct yourself in civil disobedience is to send very confusing signals to the society in which you live. They can't sort that out because if we say that the Lord has made us good, the Lord has given us excellence, the Lord has transformed us into creatures of light, the Lord has called us to godly conduct and then we disobey the law, which to them is the standard of righteousness, they become very confused about what our Lord has said, who our Lord is and whether or not we even belong to such a Lord.

Now let's go to the third point and we'll pick up where we left off. The command, the motive, the third thing Peter talks about is the extent, and that's the question that's always asked...okay, we're supposed to submit, but to what extent? Very interesting, verse 13, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake...here it comes...to every human institution." Now we'll stop at that point. He could have said "most human institutions," he could have said "the majority," he could have said, "all but a few that you don't think are sensible," he just said "every human institution."

Now what does he mean by this? Well there are a lot of ways to translate, as I'll point out in a moment. But basically what it means is that every enterprise of man on earth by which he seeks to maintain order in society...that's the idea. To every one of them we are to submit. They are the systems by which man can live peaceably on the earth.

Now let me give you a little deeper understanding, okay? In biblical Greek the term here from the Greek verb ktizo is used, now listen carefully, is used in Scripture exclusively of the products and activities and enterprises of God, not man. Okay? Very important to note. The term here is never used in the New Testament of any enterprise of man, always the enterprises of God. It is even translated, ktisis, the noun form, creation which is totally an enterprise of God, it is so translated in

Mark 13:19. It is also translated "creature" in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," that's totally the work of God. So what you have here in its biblical usage is a term that always refers to something that God has done. Then the question comes: how is it thus used here to speak of human institutions? Very simply, because human institutions are designed by whom? By God...and you're right back to Romans 13, the powers that be are ordained of God, Romans 13:1. Civil government is the work of God.

So, we could translate this in this way...look back to verse 13..."Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every God-ordained human institution...Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every God-ordained human institution." Now that means, beloved, that God has designed the human institutions, God has established them for the control of man in society and social relationships, and here we have a very general statement that blankets everything...every institution designed by God for man.

You say, "Yeah, but every?" That's what it says...every. You say, "Yeah but we have some bad judges, there are some judges that make some bad decisions." That's right. You want to know something? Ours is not the first set of bad judges. Are you ready for a little history? Go back to Isaiah chapter 3, it says in verse 1, "For behold the Lord God of host is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water." God's going to provide no water and no bread for you, is going to judge you, that's very severe. Why is He going to do that? He's going to judge the mighty man and the warrior, verse 2, He's going to judge the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder. In other words, He's going to judge them all. He goes down through a long list. Why? Verse 8, "For Jerusalem has stumbled, Judah has fallen, because their speech and their actions are against the Lord, to rebel against His glorious presence." Hey, this isn't the first time there have been bad judges, this isn't the first time there have been bad leaders. But who judges them? Who judges them? God judges them.

Look at Daniel chapter 9, just another illustration, there are a number of them...verse 12, Daniel 9:12, God is again going to judge, the curse is on us, verse 11 says, thus he confirmed his words which he had spoken against us and against our judges who judged us to bring us into great calamity. And again Daniel points out the fact that there were unjust judges, unfair judges in the society in which he was living with the people in captivity. This is not anything new. This is not anything unusual.

Micah, the minor prophet, chapter 7 verse 2, "The godly person has perished from the land and there is no upright person among men, all of them lie and wait for blood shed, each of them hunts the other with a net." This is a terribly vicious society, murderous. "Concerning evil, both hands do it well." They're just doing it with both hands. "The prince asks, also the judge for a bribe." And he goes on to speak judgment against this society. All the way down, verse 9, which talks about a proper pleading of a case in executing of justice. And the point is there have always been bad judges and God is always called in to execute proper justice.

Paul certainly lived in a day when judges were bad when he wrote Romans 13. Peter certainly lived in a day when judges were bad when he wrote 1 Peter, after all some of the bad judges were holding court against the Christians who were being persecuted. And may I note for you please? Peter was the execution victim of somebody's bad judgment.

But not withstanding all of that reality in human life, the focus of Scripture is to be subject to the powers that be because they are ordained of God. And you must allow God to be sovereign because He is in ruling as He chooses. Robert Culver has written a very important book called *Toward a Biblical View of Civil Government*. And in it he says this, "Church men whose Christian activism has taken mainly to placarding, marching, protesting and shouting might well observe the author of these verses...namely Paul...first at prayer, then in counsel with his friends and after that preaching in the homes and marketplaces. When Paul came to be heard by the mighty, it was to defend his action as a preacher of the way to heaven," end quote.

You see, if we are to be persecuted and if we are to be incarcerated, it must be because we have been preachers of righteousness, not defiers of the law. You say, "Well, now wait a minute, let's go back to this verse. It says again that we are to be submitting ourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Well just what does he mean?" Well let's go a little further in verse 13, "Whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him...that is by the king...for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right." What he's simply saying is the leadership at any level. The king was the one in authority, basileus, and this mean any king. Just to put it in perspective again, Peter would have to live this out and die under the reign of terror of a maniac by the name of Nero. But even Nero was ordained of God in a role, he was not a man of God, he was not a righteous man, he was put in to society by God to function in a form of control by which society could carry out normal conduct. And even if it was Nero, even if it was the king, or whether he says to governors, that would be all the officials under the king, whether you're talking about the highest level of rulership or a lower level, and this includes pagan nations, pagan kings, pagan governors.

You see, they've all been sent by God basically for one purpose, note it in verse 14, "To punish evildoers and reward people who do right." Let me give you something very important. That is the primary function of government, did you hear that? Now I don't want to launch off and give you all my theories of government. The Bible clearly says that the function of government, the function of government is to punish people who violate law and to reward those who keep it. All the rest of the stuff goes beyond the basic definition. I think the reason that I feel so sad about the government that governs our United States and the state of California in which I live is the fact that both governments, federal and state, have slackened terribly in the matter of proper punishment for evildoers and proper reward for those who do right and are spending a fortune to say nothing of an unbelievable amount of energy in things that are peripheral to the role of government.

In Romans 13 again, the same thing, what are rulers for? Very simple, it says in Romans 13 that rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior but for evil. Why are rulers there? To punish evil behavior and to reward good behavior. It's the same statement, just in different words. Let me tell you something. Since the normal general basic formative foundation of government by biblical definition is to punish evildoers and reward those who do well, government is never more clearly defined than when it appears in the role of the police. Okay? Never more clearly defined. It is then that they are the ministers of God, Romans 13 says, who do not bear the sword for nothing. They carry a sword for punishment. And I might hasten to add, swords aren't used for spanking people, the punishment is fatal. God has given civil government the power to punish evildoers. And I say again, one of the sad things that you see happening in America is government spending its time and money and energy operating in all kinds of other venues and not properly carrying on the function of punishing the evil and rewarding the righteous. And as a result, you and I are in the process of watching the death of a nation.

When we go back to Matthew we find these very same things in the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Because the Lord Jesus was very very clear when He quoted the Old Testament in verse 38 of Matthew 5, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And, of course, they had taken that in the realm of personal vengeance. But that's not what the Old Testament law required. When God in the Old Testament said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, He wasn't saying if somebody punches your eye out you punch theirs out, if somebody knocks your tooth out you knock theirs out. What He was saying is that is not the role of people, that is the role of government...a proper retribution, not personal vengeance...not personal vengeance.

And when Peter took out his sword, Jesus said to him...remember he in the garden, he was going to start to fight the people who came to take Jesus...was that a just cause? Were they just in coming to take Jesus? No. What were they going to do with Him? They were going to murder the perfect person, murder one who was totally innocent. Did Jesus want a protest out of His followers? Did He want them to lie down? Did He want them to fight back? No, He recognized that the powers that be were ordained of God and He simply said to Peter a very important statement, He said, "You live by the sword, you use that sword and you'll...what?...you'll die by the sword." What was He saying? He wasn't saying...Oh, hey, you swing that sword, boy, and you're liable to get somebody to swing it back. No. He is saying you take a life, Peter, and I will affirm the right of this government to take your life. He was affirming capital punishment as a proper extension of civil authority. "Peter, you use that sword and I affirm by God-ordained law you will die by the sword." You can't murder, even for a just cause. You cannot take the law into your own hands. The powers that be are ordained of God and Jesus went to the cross knowing that He would be unjustly murdered without retaliation simply committing Himself to God knowing that God is the one that works the vengeance. You do not step outside the God-ordained parameters of proper conduct.

It is then our God-ordained duty to respond to the powers and the authorities. They are there to punish evildoers and to reward those who do well. I might also add, this is a little footnote, I wish the government was more involved aggressively in the proper recognition of meritorious citizenship. I wish it would begin to function in that way because that's what it says right here. They should be...they should be praising those who do right. But what have we seen systematically in our society? A decline in that where now we are more concerned with the rights of the criminal than we are almost anybody else. The same principle is found back in Romans 13 again. It says there, "Do good and you will have praise from them." Since when? Since when has the government praised those who do good? Have a riot and they'll show up, have a church service and do good, nobody will bother with you. We don't reward those kind of people anymore. That's sad. But nonetheless, government is ordained of God, it is the God-ordained duty of civil power to keep peace by avenging the lawless and by honoring the law abiding.

You say, "Well...so we are to submit to the law." That's right. You say, "Well, but it isn't right?" That's not your problem, that's not your job. God is still on the throne. He knows what He's doing. He is still in charge. For the sake of the testimony of Jesus Christ and your witness, abide by the law. You say, "But we want change, we want change." Then take out your spiritual weapons, not fleshly ones, and fight with the proclamation of the Word of God and with prayer. And I have no problem with those things. I have no problem with a prayer vigil outside of an abortion clinic. I have no problem with people lining the sidewalks and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. But not civil disobedience against the government ordained by God. As we said last week, you stoop to use their weapons, you're going to lose because you're fighting on the wrong level.

So the command is clear. The motive is clear. The extent is clear. How about the reason? Verse 15, the reason...why does God want us to behave this way? We said it, "For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." Why should we do this? You say, "It's the will of God." Now listen to me, is that basic? People say, "Oh, I wish I knew the will of God." Here it is. It's right here. What does God want from me, what is the will of God? The will of God is that you obey, submitting yourself for the Lord's sake to every human institution. That's the will of God. The will of God is that you submit.

Why? Well every child asks that. Why? That by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. The word "silence" is to gag, muzzle, restrain, strong word, it means to stop the mouth so there's nothing to say, just gag them. Doing right literally in the Greek is the well doing. So the will of God is that by nobility, by dignity and well doing and righteous conduct and good citizenship, you gag the critics. Hey, do you realize right now that much of what Christians are doing is simply making things worse? The critics are finding more and more to criticize us for. But we are to silence the ignorance.

By the way, a note about the word "ignorance," agnosian, it means more than ignorance, if it's just ignorance it would be the word agnoia. Agnoia simply means a lack of knowledge...a lack of knowledge. But the word here, agnosian means willful hostile rejection of the truth. It's a stronger term. You see, with these people who criticize Christianity, it isn't just lack of knowledge, it's hostility. It's willful hostility. It's a settled incapacity for judging rightly and a hostility. Furthermore, they're not only ignorant, they're foolish, that means senseless, without reason. The term expresses the lack of mental sanity. It speaks of reckless thinking, they're reckless, insane, senseless, ignorant, willful rejecters of the truth. And they're going to attack and attack and attack and attack the gospel.

How do we muzzle them? Good citizenship, noble character, impeccable conduct, virtuous life, it will silence the mindless ignorantly motivated critics of the Lord and of the faith. It's the purity of life they find so hard to deal with. Look at Titus 3, this is so good. Titus 3, Paul writes to Titus, he says, now Titus is over on Crete and he's got all these churches on Crete where he's ordaining elders in every place, and he says, Now, Titus, I've got to tell you one thing in this last chapter, this is sort of a parting shot, verse 1, "Titus, remind them to be...what?...subject to...what?...rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed." Now Titus is on a pagan island. He says remind the Christians no matter what happens, no matter how hostile, how malignant, be subject to rulers, authorities, be obedient, be ready for every good deed...listen to this...to malign no one. Don't you ever malign someone..no matter who they are. Don't you be contentious, you be gentle and you show every consideration for all men. We also once were...what?...foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in evil, envy, hateful, hating one another. Have you forgotten where you came from? Do you remember the mindless senseless wicked deception you were under? Submit yourselves. Be obedient. Be ready to do every good deed. Don't malign anybody, don't be contentious. Boy, that alone would stop a lot of stuff going on, wouldn't it? Be gentle, show every consideration for all men because you used to be just like them, just as foolish. And the only difference is verse 4, "The kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared and He saved you." So don't be too hard on them.

So, Paul says...ah to Titus...Hey, you remind them cause when heat goes up against the church, we don't want anybody retaliating. You'll muzzle them by your uncontentious gentle gracious obedient compliant character.

Can I remind you that if you're going to be an elder in the church, according to Titus 1:6, you must be someone who is not accused of dissipation or rebellion...or rebellion? A rebellious person has no place in a position of spiritual leadership, none whatsoever. First Timothy 3:7, here's another qualification for an elder, "He must have a good reputation with those outside the church." Isn't that interesting? And that's going to come from how you conduct yourself as a citizen. It's that impeccable virtuous quality and character of your life in the community that makes the case. It gags the critics and it makes Christianity believable and it honors the Lord. You understand all this? Pretty basic.

So, the command, the motive, the extent, the reason...number five, the attitude. Huh, this is basic...the attitude. Verse 16, "Hey, act as free men, but do not use your freedom as a covering for evil but use it as bondslaves of God." That is a marvelous statement of sheer divine genius. I could preach a whole series of sermons on that verse. I won't, I could. You know that, I could preach a whole series of sermons on anything. Look at that first statement...Act as free men...what a statement. Act as free men. Yeah, you're free from the world, you're free from Satan, you're not earthbound, you're free in Christ...that's what he's saying...you're free, you've been freed by redemption. Oh what a great idea...great thought. In fact, verse 18 of chapter 1, you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. So you've been set free, I'm free. And we could tell you all kinds of Bible passages that talk about that...sure we're free in Christ, free from sin, free from Satan, free from condemnation, free from the world.

But, he says don't you dare use your freedom as a covering for evil. In other words, don't let liberty easily become license. The idea here is a veil or a mask. Don't put on the mask of freedom to cover really what is nothing but wickedness. In other words, Christian freedom is never to be used to cover ungodly license and ungodly license is violating the law of God. And don't you put on some mask that says...Well, we're free in Christ, we're of another dimension, we're going to live apart from the law of man, we're above the law of man, we'll live like we want. That is merely a mask of freedom covering your evil. And your evil springs out of vengeance, retaliation, bitterness, hostility and disobedience.

The word evil is kakia, it means baseness. Do not think because you're free you can put on the little mask of Christian freedom, free in Christ, not bound to the world, live any way you want, that's nothing but a mask over evil. If you were truly righteous you would conform to God's Word because it says your freedom should be used as a bonds slave of God.

Somebody would say...I've heard people say it...I know several people who have said to me, "I don't pay my taxes." I said, "What do you mean you don't pay your taxes?" "I'm not a citizen of this world." One man told me he hadn't paid taxes in 25 years. Why? "I'm not a citizen of this world. I don't have to pay my taxes. I don't have to obey speed laws. I'm a heavenly person." Yeah, well you keep driving like that and you will be a heavenly person. "I don't care what it says about trespass." I don't have to mess with trespass laws, I don't live in this world, it's all my Father's place any way. Every...every time I see a trespass sign, it irritates me, a guy says...what do you mean, trespass, that's not yours that's God's and all that's God's is mine. I don't have to mess with civil law, criminal law, I'm above all that. I'm free." No you're not. Yeah you're free in one sense, and it's this sense, you're free to be a bonds slave. You're free to serve God.

If you remember 1 Corinthians 7:22, "For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's free man, likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave." You're free but you're free to be the slave of Christ...what a wonderful freedom...what a wonderful freedom. Bonds slave, that's the lowest level of

servitude. See, our freedom is not to do what's wrong, our freedom is for the first time to do what's right. Freedom to serve God. Romans 6:22 talks about that freedom, 1 Corinthians 7:21 to 23 talks about that freedom, Galatians 5:13 talks about that freedom. So the point is this, that our citizenship in heaven, our freedom in Christ, our belonging to the Kingdom of God does not allow us to abuse the standards God has established for us on earth. That kind of license is only a covering for evil. And I'll tell you, when I see people come who want to lead everybody in some kind of disobedience, I see a mask of spiritual freedom covering a heart of disobedience. A rebellious person always claiming freedom in Christ is using that to cover his desire for sin. We have freedom, to be the bondslaves of God. What a freedom that is, right?

The last point, he gave us the command, the motive, the extent, the reason, the attitude for our conduct as Christian citizens and he closes with the application. He sums it all up in verse 17, rapid fire, real simple. "Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." That's it. There's your citizenship theology. Four dimensions of life. Here they are. Honor all men. You say, "What does that mean?" You don't mean you can't understand that, do you? Honor all men. Who are all men? All men. The widest general humanitarian sphere, just seem...honor all men. All men have the image of God in them, to some degree they are due some honor universally. And, of course, there were slaves in the Roman Empire, people saw them as non-persons with no rights. And what Peter is saying is...Hey, that doesn't belong to a Christian, you don't treat anybody that way...you don't treat anybody that way, any color, any race, anybody that way...honor all men, every kind of person, every variety of person deserves honor and respect, whether high or low, on the authority letter, high or low on the strata of society, everybody is worthy to be honored as created in the image of God.

Now there is different levels of honor for different levels of social structure but all men are to be honored. And, Christians, we ought to be leading the parade to honor all men to the level of honor that they deserve. That doesn't mean we agree with everything they do. That doesn't mean we like everything they do. That doesn't mean that we have respect for anything they do. But as Christians we want to show that we have a proper respect for that person is the creation of God. And I know you say to yourself, "Why did He do that one?" That's His choice. Honor all men.

Second application, love the brotherhood. Who is that? That's us. That's easy, we're so lovable. Love the brotherhood. Honor all men, love the brotherhood. And those come together, isn't that good? Now we say...love the brotherhood...oh, amen, love the brother...big time thing, but it's put right alongside honor all men which has equal weight in this text.

Third principle, fear God...fear God. When you fear God you say, "God, I have a healthy enough fear of You that I'm going to do what You said is right even though I don't understand what's going on, but I'm going to leave it to You to fix it up in the time when You're ready." God designed your role as a citizen in the world and you better fear Him enough to understand the repercussions of your disobedience and leave the solutions with Him.

Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God and finally...what?...honor the king. And you're right back to where we started back in verse 13...honor the king. That's back to the issue. Show respect for whoever the ruling reigning source of authority is. In our case it's not a king, it's a combination of several entities, but we are to honor the leadership.

That takes us back to Proverbs 24:21, "My son, fear the Lord and the king." And I love this next line. "Do not associate with those who are given to change for their calamity will rise suddenly. And who knows the ruin that comes from both of them." Did you hear that? Let me read it again, Proverbs 24:21 to 22, "My son, fear the Lord and the king." That's good. "Do not associate with those who are given to change, the rebels, for their calamity will rise suddenly...and I love this next one...and who knows the ruin that comes from both of them." What do you mean "both of them?" God and the king. Better honor the king.

Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. That's the application of the principles of citizenship. I like to call it "evangelistic citizenship." May God help us to be that kind of citizen. Will you bow your heads with me?

Father, we thank You for this call tonight. So clear. We pray that we might be all that You want us to be for Your sake. Amen.

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