

THE CHALLENGE TO EXCEL AS A CITIZEN

Intro: This part of 1 Peter builds on the exhortations found in 2:11-12. Though the call to follow the Lord is counter-cultural in its lifestyle, it is not rebellious to the proper order of society. Christians live revolutionary lives; but Christians are not revolutionaries! Instead they are to be the best citizens in their society.

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. (1 Pet. 2:13-16)

BE SUBJECT TO EVERY HUMAN INSTITUTION.

Submit yourselves...

Arrange yourself under the authority of government. To obey its laws and regulations

Christians should obey traffic regulations, sporting regulations, laws of taxation and licenses, as well as law relating to conduct between fellowman such a laws against stealing, murder, etc.

...For the Lord's sake

Civil government is ordained of God (Not to say that He approves of all that governments do).

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. (Rom. 13:1)

Its purpose is to punish evil-doers and praise those who do right.

Since the authority to punish evil and reward the good comes from God, because He Himself has ultimate authority to do those things, then we should obey it then "for the Lord's sake"; not merely to avoid penalty but because of conscience!

Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. (Rom. 13:5)

...To every human institution

Civil government is ordained of God; but its form is humanly devised. Every human arrangement should be respected or every human officer should be obeyed under the will of God. (Democratic, Republic, Monarchal, Communist)

In Peter's case the emperor was the infamous Nero; the governors were the men appointed by him to rule in the provinces.

Silence ignorance of foolish men!

For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. (1 Peter 2:15)

"Silence" means "muzzle" (Used of Jesus in rebuking the sea)

Peter acknowledges that unbelievers are ignorant of God and His people, and that this ignorance comes through in their speech.

USE YOUR FREEDOM AS A SERVANT OF GOD!

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. (1 Pet. 2:16)

As free men--i.e. not because you are slaves of men, but because the Lord has made us free.

A Christian is free from sin through the truth.

He does not obey the government because he is a slave of man, but because he is a servant of God!

Not using that freedom as a covering for wrongdoing or an excuse to do wrong but rather to do right, because we are servants of God. True liberty is not freedom to do as we please but to do as we ought!

Sometimes people confuse governmental "freedom" with true spiritual freedom. In this country we are "free" to:

Use profanity

Commit fornication and adultery

Marry contrary to God's law

Gamble

Promote religious error (To attend the church of one's choice though it may teach things contrary to the Bible)

Be irreligious

As Christians we are "free" only to do right. To continue in the truth!

We may use our governmental freedom to worship, to serve fellowman, to pray, teach others.

As free men we need to live in that freedom!

LIVE WITH REGARD FOR ALL PEOPLE!

Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. (1 Peter 2:17)

Foremost of all Peter stresses that being a Christian influences our behavior toward those both in heaven and on earth. We must be properly related to God and all humanity.

Honor all men!

Treat all men with the dignity and respect of one created by God (aorist imperatives conveying decisiveness).

Love the brotherhood! (Now present imperatives!)

Keep loving those who make up the family of God with the special love that grows out of our common salvation. Not that we are to love them exclusively!

Fear God!

Keep respecting the Lord!

Honor the king!

Keep honoring those who rule over us in government. Note the Christians commitment to obey rulers under the greater authority of God.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS AND APPLICATIONS:

Christians may participate in all the authorized functions of government in keeping with God's law (both rewarding and punishing).

Be in military and protect citizens to the extent that such warfare involves the proper application of the principles of morality and love the Bible teaches.

Be in government service. In doing so the Christian must serve by the principles of the word of God. (Policeman, judge, civil officer city or county government).

Christians may use all the liberties granted to them by law in keeping with God's law.

Use rights as citizens like Paul, Ac. 22:25; 25:11.

Serve on jury, vote.

Christians may not disobey government in all spheres because the government is wrong in one sphere!

Virtually the Roman Emperors were immoral and not very respectable as people. Yet they were the ruling authority of the times. Some have suggested that 1 Peter was written during the reign of Nero; yet, Christians are urged to pay taxes and give due honor to those in power. We must trust God to remove in His own way and time those governments that are corrupt and misuse authority! (cf. Dan. 2:21; 4:17; Ac. 17:26)

Christian may practice civil disobedience when God's law must be violated to obey civil law. Ac. 5:29

Conclusion: What kind of citizens are we? Christian must live in such a way that even when we are misunderstood and maligned our conduct causes the unbelieving person to see that we live with respect.