

# Cornerstone Church

January 15, 2017

## Sermon Series: Practicing Our Readiness Drills for Christ's Return - Seeking God's Guidance from 1st and 2nd Peter

Today's Sermon: Keeping Our Conduct Honorable, Part One: Our Relationship to Civil Authorities

Today's Passage: 1 Peter 2:13-17

**Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.**

Introduction:

Main Point: The first area of honorable living among non-believers is how we conduct ourselves in relation to the state's authority over our lives. That relationship is to be (on our part) one of submission, respect, and beneficial.

Review

**Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.**

1. It is for the Lord's sake that we live obediently under the authority placed over us. **Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,**
  - Peter was very concerned about the reputation of the Lord among non-believers and that believers do everything in their power to enhance it and not detract from it.

- We can give Christ a bad name if we tend to want to live in isolation and always be super-critical of our government. Amish Christians do not make the best evangelists.
2. Living in submission to the governing authorities means obeying them as long as they do not conflict with a higher law, the law of God.
    - Be subject to = upotasso, upo= under, tasso = to place under. i.e. we are to place ourselves under their authority just as Paul said in Romans 13:1 **Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.**
    - In Peter's day that meant submitting to (and praying for) Emperor Nero! **1 Timothy 2:1-4 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
    - That submission meant paying taxes, obeying the laws of Rome, not fomenting rebellion, etc. but when God's laws superseded man's laws, man's laws had to be disobeyed and God's laws obeyed. **Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.**
  3. Submitting to governing authorities means doing so at all levels of government. **whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.**
    - Every level is divinely appointed and is instrumental in keeping order in society.
  4. God desires believers to be a visible blessing to society and not a curse and when they are, non-believers will admit that their false accusations are untrue and agree

that following Jesus is a good thing. - **For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people**

- Doing good is more than just obeying the laws of the land (that will hardly get anyone noticed).
  - It is also the value-added blessings church members bring to a community that enhances the well-being of that community (for the glory of God).
    - The biblical basis for tax exemptions of churches goes to the "social benefit" reason for exempting churches from taxation. See footnote below.<sup>1</sup>
5. Our genuine freedom in Christ is not an excuse to exercise that freedom in rebellious ways against God-ordained human governments. **Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.**
- Both Peter and Paul instructed believers that we are first and foremost free citizens of heaven but that truth does not deny our dual citizenship of earthly nations and their governments.
  - Evidently some churches and church members were taking their freedom too far and using that as an excuse to not obey the laws of the land.
  - Rather they should have been living as servants of God, which means sacrificing like God did and God wants us to for the welfare of the city and state we live in. **Jeremiah 29:7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.**

6. The sweet aroma of grace should emanate from every Christian household making non-believers attracted to the beauty of Christianity. - **Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.**

#### Application

1. Our American Republic is not the same as a Roman totalitarian dictatorship. It is O.K. to peaceably protest, speak out against injustices, protect the unborn etc. These are activities that would never be tolerated in ancient Rome.
2. We need to be asking ourselves how we can be a greater blessing to our community making Christianity more attractive to non-Christians.
3. We also need to evaluate our prayers and whether or not we are praying for our leaders on a regular basis as instructed.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/commentary-details/should-churches-be-tax-exempt>