

THE RIGHT OF DISSENT

I Peter 2:13-17

July 5, 2009 Sunday am

INTRODUCTION

- A. Iranians went to the polls on June 12th to either reelect President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for another four years or choose his successor. The current president was reelected in a hotly contested race. Since the election, thousands of Iranians have protested in the streets demanding a recount. These have been the largest protests since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Police and a paramilitary group called the Basij have violently suppressed the protests, firing into crowds and using batons, pepper spray, and other weapons. The Iranian government has confirmed the deaths of twenty people during the protests, while unconfirmed reports by dissidents say that there have been nearly 250 deaths. Iranian authorities have closed universities in Tehran, blocked web sites, blocked cell phone transmissions and text messaging, and banned rallies.
- B. Do citizens have a right to protest their governments? Apparently, not in Iran or most other countries of the world, but what about America?
 - 1. The First Amendment to our Constitution guarantees our right to dissent:
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.
 - 2. In fact it was an act of dissent that eventually led to the American Revolution. It has been called the “Boston Tea Party” , which occurred on December 16, 1773.
- C. What about Christians? Do we have a right to dissent against our government?
 - 1. We look to the Bible to find our answer.
 - 2. Let’s see how the Apostle Peter answers this question in our text.

I. ACCORDING TO PETER, CHRISTIANS ARE TO SUBMIT TO THEIR GOVERNMENT, NOT DISSENT AGAINST IT.

- A. This is what he says—13a.
 - ¹³ **Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men ...**
 - 1. “Submit” means “to be subject to”.
 - 2. Peter suggests other areas in our lives where Christians should submit.
2:18—submit to our employer.
 - ¹⁸ **Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.**
 - 3:1—submit to our spouses, mutually according to Ephesians 5:21.
 - ¹ **Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands...**
 - Eph 5:21-- ¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ...**
 - 5:5—submit to our elders.
 - ⁵ **Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because**
- B. In verses 13-14, Peter calls Christians to be submissive to their government—13b-14.
...to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.
 - 1. This refers to anyone in authority over us.
 - 2. This includes elected officials, police, teachers, etc.

C. The Apostle Paul says the same thing—Romans 13:1.

¹ Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God

1. Christians, then are to be submissive to our governments.
2. But this isn't easy to do. It would be helpful to know why.

II. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS SUBMIT TO THEIR GOVERNMENTS?

A. First, Peter says because it's God's will—15a.

¹⁵ For it is God's will.....

1. 2:13a says this too.

¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake

2. Sometimes parents say the same thing to their children: "Because I said so"!

B. Second, Peter says because it demonstrates that Christians are good citizens—15.

¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men

C. Third, Paul says because governments are appointed by God.

¹ Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God

1. Of course, not all governments are appointed by God, i.e. Nazi's.
2. There are also exceptions to the submission rule.

III. THERE IS ONE EXCEPTION TO THE SUBMISSION RULE FOR CHRISTIANS.

A. Christians are not required to obey their government if it tries to force us to disobey God.

B. We see examples of this in the book of Acts.

Acts 4:18-20---¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. ²⁰ For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 5:27-29--²⁷ Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." ²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!

CONCLUSION

A. We probably will never demonstrate in the street against our government, as the Iranians are doing.

B. Instead, we should....

1. Thank God we live in a country where we could dissent if we needed to.
2. But we choose to submit to our government so long as it never asks us to disobey God.