

I Peter 2:13-17

- I. The command: subject yourself for the Lord's sake. (13-16)
 - A. Subject yourself to all human institutions. (13-15)
 1. Subject yourself. (13-14)
 - a. Subject yourself to every human institution because of the Lord. (13a)
 - Cf. Rom. 13:1-5; Titus 3:1; Eph. 5:21
 - 1) Subject yourself – it is a command, so it involves an act of the will, it is not automatic. We must subject ourselves voluntarily.
 - “Peter requires cooperation and compliance not because the state requires it, but ‘for the sake of the Lord’.” WBC p. 124
 - 2) To every social structure – lit. “every human creation,” i.e. human institution, social structure, human form of authority.
 - 3) Because of the Lord – first of all, because He has commanded it, also because we know that our submission is part of His greater plan, cf. v. 12, 15. Also because we are following in the footsteps of Jesus, cf. I Pet. 1:11, 2:21-23, Heb. 2:10, 5:7-8.
 - b. Specifically who to be subject to. (13b-14)
 - 1) To the king, who exercises authority over you. (13b)
 - 2) To the governor who is sent by him. (14)
 - “Peter continues to be specific as he brings his appeal closer to where his readers actually live. It is often easier to honor the emperor from a distance than to respect the authority of his local representatives.” WBC p. 125
 - a) To punish evildoers
 - b) To praise doers of good
 - (not just abstaining from doing evil, but positively doing good)
 - “Men join themselves together and agree to live under certain laws, so that the good man may have peace to do his work and go about his business and the evil man may be restrained and kept from his evil-doing. According to the New Testament life is meant by God to be an ordered business and the state is divinely appointed to provide and to maintain that order.” Barclay p. 205
 2. The reason: It is God's will (15) – cf. I Pet 3:17
 - a. By doing good – cf. Mt. 5:16
 - b. To silence the ignorance of foolish men – cf. I Pet. 2:12; 3:16
- B. Further explanations. (16)
 1. Subject yourself as free persons. (16a)
 - This is to be voluntary subjection, not mandatory, as a slave, this means that subjection may be subordinate to other, higher concerns.
 2. Specifically what it means to be a free person
 - a. Negatively – not using your freedom as a covering for evil deeds. (16b)
 - cf. Gal 5:1,13
 - This freedom is not unqualified, it comes with responsibilities
 - b. Positively – but as slaves to God. (16c)
 - cf. Acts 4:19; Rom. 6:16-22
 - “Christians are free from all that bound them in the past, but at the same time they are slaves of God committed to full and unqualified obedience” WBC p. 128
 - “Christian freedom is always conditioned by Christian responsibility. Christian responsibility is always conditioned by Christian love. Christian love is the reflection of God's love. And, therefore, Christian liberty can rightly be summed up in Augustine's

memorable phrase: 'Love God, and do what you like.' The Christian is free because he is the slave of God. Christian freedom does not mean being free to do as we like; it means being free to do as we ought." Barclay p. 207

Because Christians are slaves to God, they have responsibilities to the state, first to submit freely to good and just laws, even unpopular ones out of reverence to God. Christians are not to use their freedom in Christ to break just laws or as an excuse to neglect their duties to the state. Finally Christians have a higher loyalty to God and must promote justice and righteousness in the state and stand against injustice and unrighteousness of the state, realizing that they must do this in lawful ways if at all possible, and if it is necessary for conscious' sake to break unjust laws, realizing that they must be willing to pay the penalty for breaking these laws.

II. Summary of what to do. (17) cf. Matt. 5:43-48; Mt. 22:21

- A. Honor all men
- B. Love the brotherhood cf. I Pet. 1:22; Rom 12:10, Heb. 13:1; Jn 13:34
- C. Fear God cf. Prov. 1:7, 24:21
- D. Honor the King cf. Rom. 13:7

"The necessary stance of the Christian community is further described in vv. 16-17 with two corollary questions in mind: (1) What have the universal obligations of Christians to their fellow citizens to do with their particular obligations to one another? (2) What do their obligations to the emperor and civil magistrates have to do with their obligation to God? The answer follows in a terse four-part maxim in v. 17. The first two and the last two form pairs: respect is for everyone but love is for fellow believers – God deserves reverent fear while the emperor deserves respect." WBC p. 123.