

God, Government, and Doing Good

1 Peter 2:13-17

Leader Discussion guide

Sermon Summary:

There are many ways people have interacted with their government. Some have used force to take over the government. Others have withdrawn and lived in isolation. God calls Christians to live among the world for the good of the world living a way of life that is “honorable.” Christians are to submit to the government and both recognize and yield to its authority because it honors the Lord and this honorable lifestyle is good for our witness. Christians understand that God has authority over the government, that we should not fear human government, and that we should instead, hope in God.

Illustrations Used:

- Peter in the garden cuts off the soldier’s ear
- Amish option of engaging with government
- Our church has to submit to labor laws
- Buying a used car, what price to record to DMV
- Nero the emperor
- Daniel to King Cyrus
- Ethiopian Government vs. Somalian Government
- PETD – Post-election traumatic disorder
- Woman Confronting African War Lord

Comprehension Questions:

1. Mark mentioned that some have tried to take over the government by force and others have withdrawn. What does 1 Peter 2:12 say God’s call is to the Christian? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these?
2. How should we respond to government?
3. Which governments does this apply to?
 - a. What about living under the rule of Nero?
 - b. Can you think of a time when the US government has forced you to do something against God or forbidden you to do something God commanded?
 - i. How does that shape your view of the US government?
4. Why should we respond to the government this way?

Application Questions:

1. How do we balance our conviction about policy with honoring the emperor?
2. What does it mean to honor the emperor?
 - a. How do we honor the emperor and disagree with him/her?
3. Are there ways that you have talked, posted on the internet, or in another way dishonored our government leaders?
 - a. If so, what would a person do to seek forgiveness?
 - b. What would a person do to change?

(More on the next page)

4. Mark said, “Those who tend to put their hope in the government, will be the ones who fear it the most.”
 - a. Why does this tend to be true?
 - b. Why can we put our hope in God and not fear the government?
 - i. What are practical ways to do this?

Extended Outline:

Context:

- Verses 9-10 Peter tells us who we are: chosen, holy, priests, God’s people.
- Verses 11-12 – This is where you live. Sojourners in a foreign land.
- So how should we live?
 - o 2 options people have tried:
 - **Take over.** Use force to make others conform.
 - **Illus:** Peter in the Garden – used sword to fight back.
 - **Withdraw:** the Amish option.
 - o God’s call: 2:12 – Live among the world, for the good of the world.
 - Don’t fight back and take over. Let your way of life be “honorable.”
 - See Matthew 5:16

Now Peter gives specific instruction on how to do this in hard situations – with government authorities that aren’t submitted to Christ (v13-17). While working in unjust work environments (v18-25). When your spouse doesn’t follow Christ (3:1-6).

In verses 13-17 we learn how we should respond to government, and why:

1. How should we respond to human government?

a. V13-14 – Be subject to

- i. Submission means we recognize the authority of the government, and yield to that authority.
- ii. This command represents a general truth, that is, what Christians should do in the vast majority of encounters with government.
- iii. **App:** Follow the laws of the government.
 1. **Illus:** This means as a church we submit to labor laws. Zoning laws. Building codes and permits.
- iv. If you are a businessman, you submit to regulations. As individuals when we fill out our taxes, we submit to the authority of the IRS.
- v. When we drive, we submit to the authority of the state.
 1. **Illus:** Buying a used car.

b. Which governments does this apply to?

- i. Just about all of them.
- ii. **Exp:** When he wrote these words, the government, and the emperor were not friendly to Christian faith or Christian living.

- iii. **Illus:** Nero was the emperor. He had his step-brother killed, as well as his mother and his wife. Somewhere around AD 63 Peter came to Rome. Things were already very hard for Christians. Nero blamed the fire of 64 on Christians, and things got worse.
 - iv. **The point:** Peter is not saying this only to Christians who live under Christian-friendly, moral government leaders.
- c. **V17 – honor the emperor**
- i. Treat him with honor and dignity, as a person, and as a position.
 - 1. **App:** This means don't label and smear. Don't name call.
 - ii. **App:** Do you honor President Trump? Do you honor Governor Brown in the way you talk? Did you honor the last president? In your words? In your home? On Facebook?
 - 1. **App:** If the person was in the room, would they feel like you were treating them with respect?
 - 2. **App:** When you disagree, do you talk in a way you would want your children to talk about you when they disagree?
 - iii. Honor doesn't mean we cannot disagree with the governing authorities. To honor is not to flatter. It is honoring to speak up when someone is in the wrong.
 - 1. But even when we disagree, a Christian does so in a way that still honors those we disagree with.
 - 2. **Illus:** Joseph with Pharaoh. Daniel said to Cyrus, "O King, live forever." Paul is sharing the gospel with Festus: Festus says, "you are out of your mind." Paul: "No, most excellent Festus."
 - iv. V17a - We are to honor all people.
 - 1. **App:** No person is a mere political punching bag. We can and should disagree. Let us do so respectfully, remember that this is a person, made-in-the image of God.

2. Why should we respond to government this way?

- a. **V13 - For the Lord's sake.** - Our submission to government is an expression of our submission to God.
 - i. We recognize God's authority behind human authority.
 - 1. Romans 13:1- God has ordained government for our good. Through it, human evil is restrained. 1 Peter 2:14.
 - ii. We don't submit because we agree with all their policies. And not because they are the highest authority. But because as Christians, we submit to God, and he has told us to submit to human governments.
 - 1. See verse 16 – Live as people who are free. We are free to live for God, and he calls us to submit to government. Only free people can submit.
- b. **For the sake of our witness.**
 - i. V12 - As sojourners, people speak against us Christians. What should we do? Fight back? No. Live well. Part of living well, is verse 13 – being good citizens.
 - ii. V15 – This is the will of God, that by doing good, you put them to silence. We show that the things they say aren't true. So when they say, Christians don't care about women, our conduct, puts that ignorance to

silence. When they say, Christians are hateful and bigoted, our good works put that to silence. They see our actions and for the good of society and the accusations don't stick.

3. Conclusion: Three implications:

a. Government authority is not absolute.

- i. God's authority is higher than government authority.
 1. Verse 14 – What do we do if the government tries to force us to do something God forbids, or if the government tells us not do something God commands? We disobey the government.
- ii. There is a long line of believers who have done this.
 1. **Illus:** Peter, Acts 5:29: "We must obey God rather than men."
- iii. Our government has major problems:
 1. Let us pray that these things will change.
 2. But let's also be grateful to live in a country where we are not forced to disobey God's word. And let's remember our brothers and sisters in Christ in places like Syria, Afghanistan, China, Somalia, etc.

b. We should not fear human government.

- i. **Illus:** Post-election traumatic disorder.
- ii. Verse 17 – Fear God. Honor the emperor.
 1. God is sovereign over the kingdoms of the earth. He is the King of Kings.
- iii. **App:** So don't be afraid. I would say the same thing to Christians in northern Nigeria; or in ISIS territory. See Luke 12:4-5
 1. **Illus:** Woman confronting an African War Lord.

c. App: Hope in God.

- i. Those who tend to put their hope in government, will be the ones who fear it the most.
- ii. Remember who you are:
 1. Chosen race, holy nation. Royal Priesthood. Christians are in with God, we don't need a seat at the table at the White House, or the statehouse.
- iii. Remember who they are:
 1. V17 - Honor the emperor – just another people.
 - a. They have an important role (verse 14). Government is important, but not ultimate. None will be perfect, and God's kingdom will never come through human govt.
- iv. **1 Peter 1:13** – Set your hope fully on the grace to be revealed. Let us live for that day, and to help prepare yourself and others for That day.