

Speaker: Pastor Buster Brown

Today's Message: Elect Exiles and Supernatural Living: The Christian and Authority

Today's Text: I Peter 2:13-17

"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

Peter is making application in how to live out the reality of a biblical faith that is undergirded by understanding the tender mercies of the triune God (1:1-2:10). In this section, he deals with the subject of dealing with governmental authority. The main point of this text is that the believer should consistently do good in order to silence vain and silly accusations as they represent the gospel and pray for the salvation of those around them.

Understanding the Purpose of Government

"The purpose of civil government is briefly defined as to punish those who do wrong and praise those who do right." The word punishment involves the wrongdoer paying a penalty. What Peter expects governments to do is forbidden to people acting, not as representatives of government but, as individuals: they must not inflict retribution for wrong done to them (Romans 12:19-21; Matthew 5:38-48). By contrast, governments that fail to punish wrongdoers disobey God's purpose for their existence." **Wayne Grudem, I Peter**, p.120

The church was to continually do good in a hostile culture as they lived out their minority status because (1)they understood a kingly and ruling Lord watched over them, and (2) The Lord was building his church, in part through the attitudes and servant freedom of believers.

General Principles

- 1) We are to be good citizens for the Lord's sake, by submitting to every human institution, i.e. we honor the Father as we live in this way.
- 2) The Lord has given us human institutions for our flourishing.

Larger Catechism, Question 124

Q. Who are meant by father and mother in the fifth commandment?

A. By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church, or commonwealth.

- 3) Believers are called to be good citizens as we understand that government is to punish evil and reward good behavior.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" **Micah 6:8**

- 4) The main point of the text: We are to silence / restrain / muzzle the willful ignorance of foolish people by actively doing good deeds.
- 5) We live good lives by tangibly fleshing out the relational paradigm of verse 17.
 - Honor all men. (esteem/value)
 - Love our brothers and sisters. (take pleasure in them)
 - Fear God. (reverence/worship/hold in high esteem)
 - Honor the Emperor. (value/esteem)
- 6) True freedom is found in being a servant of the living God. (The more people cry “freedom” without any objective truth, the more they are enslaved to their desires and impulses.)

“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” **John 8:31-32**

“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,[a] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” **Romans 6:15-18**

- 7) Involvement in the democratic process of government is a great blessing but it becomes a burden when the “process” eclipses the weapons of the Christian’s armor.

“In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...”

Ephesians 6:16-18

QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the main point of the text?
- 2) Do you understand the “shock value” in hearing this passage read in A.D. 62 during the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-58)?
- 3) Why does the cry for “freedom”, apart from objective truth, lead to enslavement? (“The heart wants what it wants. There’s no logic to these things. You meet someone and you fall in love and that’s that.” —Woody Allen)
- 4) How can the blessing of our noble experiment in representative government become a burden? [Note the response of Thomas Aquinas (d. 1250) when Pope Innocent II said, “You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say, ‘silver and gold have I none.’” Thomas answered, “True, holy father but neither can she now say, ‘in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise and walk.’” (Acts 3:6)]
- 5) What are good works we can do before the watching world?