

1 Peter 2:13-15

Peter brings to our attention the Christian's responsibilities to government. Because of persecution of Christians this portion of Peter's letter would have been shocking to believers.

Verse 12 provides the context for verse 13 which informs the believer to demonstrate excellent behavior to his culture, excellent work ethic, and a personal life of integrity so that the slander against him won't be able to stand. Some of those good works are going to spill over into what it means to be a good citizen.

The larger context in verses 13-15 is what every believer grapples with in every generation: how do I respond, interact and even influence my governmental authority? Do we abandon politics and government entirely, emphasizing the preaching of the gospel to the exclusion of any kind of attempt to influence governmental institutions? If so, we overlook Scripture and biblical political leaders such as Daniel, Joseph, and William Wilberforce, a member of British Parliament, that brought an end to slavery in England. These men were appointed by God.

Romans 13:1-2,¹ *“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.”*² *Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.”*

St. Augustine, the early church theologian from the 4th century, wrote that believers who served in governmental positions were, *“blessings bestowed upon mankind.”* [Charles Colson; *God & Government*]

Wilberforce wrote to John Newton questioning whether he should stay in politics, Newton answered in a letter, *“Stay at your post and do not give up the work, for you have been placed there by God.”* [Karen Swallow Prior, *Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More*]

“The mission of the church is not to set up to officially influence governmental forms of education, or the world at large in areas of law or medicine or industry. But it is the mission of individuals within the church to accept their post where God has placed them to bring their Christian character and conscience and Biblical conviction to bear upon their world of education and medicine and science and law and government.” [Wayne Grudem; *Politics*]

Allen Blair says of our current national debt we're leaving for the next generation, *“It's no wonder babies are crying when they're born. We need men and women who love Christ first and foremost, but who, like William Wilberforce, accept their post in politics as God's assignment. Those who will love Christ enough to introduce Him wisely and winsomely into their business, their school, their post, their classroom, and into every phase of life.”* [Allen Blair; *Living Peacefully*]

Verse 13 – *“Submit yourselves”* literally means, to place yourselves in an attitude and posture of submission, it is a military term referring to lining up in rank and file under a commanding officer. Within the context of this verse Peter's words carry a sense of urgency.

Submission is easier for the Christian when we maintain a higher perspective; we see above politics. We know ultimately that God is in control and God's purposes are being fulfilled; and we're simply called to demonstrate good works by continuing to do our best and literally help our world around us by providing truth and wisdom and grace (**Rom. 13:1-2**).

Verse 13 starts at the top, (the King) and adds in verse 14 (the governors). Any official representing the emperor, was also to be submitted to.

Just because someone is ultimately appointed by God doesn't mean they don't need correcting or challenging:

- John the Baptist challenged governor Herod for his adulterous marriage to his sister-in-law (**Luke 3:19**)
- Jesus Christ delivered that higher perspective that Peter mentions to Pontius Pilate, *“You . . . have no authority over me unless it has been given to you from above”* (**John 19:11**)
- Governor Felix attempted to bribe Paul; Paul talked to him about *“righteousness and the coming judgment.”* (**Acts 24:25**)

Paul tells Christians to pay their taxes honestly and completely, *“Render tax to all that is due them”* (**Romans 13:7**).

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Verse 14 – *for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.*” The idea that morality can’t be legislated is a myth. All legislation is driven by an internal moral compass regarding the value of life and right and wrong. “*To punish and / or to praise*” is the signature intention of God’s design for those in authority.

The word “*punish*” in the Greek language means, “*the inflicting of just punishment on the one who has harmed another.*” The governing authority is actually commissioned by God to hand out penalties and to punish those who violate just laws. This effectively shatters the ideology that God isn’t interested in anything other than reforming the criminal and protecting society from further crimes.

Governments are also given the responsibility to “*praise*” those who do what is right. The word Peter uses here can be translated, “commending” or “recognizing.”

1. We are to obey the Lord’s direction

Verse 15 “*For such is the will of God.*” We are to recognize that ultimately God placed kings and governors in power for His purposes. The key to understanding this is ... most often God does not explain Himself.

An early church father named Blind, living within a generation of Peter’s writings, said this about verse 15, “*We should not be worried if they [government authorities] do not act in the way appointed by God, because He is in charge of them and will judge them accordingly.*”

2. We are to silence the Lord’s opposition by doing good deeds

Christians were being slandered as treasonous to the Emperor; it was said that they were planning a seditious overthrow of the government. The Apostle Peter recommends that how to silence that is by showing respect for the King and the government.

The word translated “*silence*” literally means “*muzzle*.” This could be written “*you muzzle the ignorance of foolish men.*” This doesn’t mean the critics are uneducated. This is a reference to willful, hostile rejection of the truth. **Romans 2:15** tells us that God has written the truth of the law in their heart.

How do you silence the vicious, hostile, biting slander of people who are repressing the truth? Not by barking louder or by snapping harder, or biting back. “*Never argue with an ignorant person, because they will beat you up with experience.*” [Author unknown]

Peter is telling us if we are to silence our critics, it will not be by self-defense, but through humble well-doing, responding with excellent behavior, good deeds, and respectful attitudes toward the office of authority, which we know is ultimately under the authority of our God.

Application:

In what specific situations I have failed to live humbly, with good deeds, and excellent behavior that would silence those who would slander me?

What are the behaviors that signify my failure?

I will read **1 Peter 2:11-15** daily and analyze my actions to determine the changes I need to make to comply with **1 Peter 2:11-15**.