

## 1 Peter 2:16-17

*“How does the Christian respond in a culture where the American Civil Liberties Union and the Americans for the Separation of Church and State join the chorus of so many others where they have successfully educated a generation of Americans to believe that freedom of religion actually means freedom from Christian religion; freedom from any kind of Christian influence?” [Wayne Grudem; Politics]*

The lesson in verses 13-15 is this: live with the attitude of submission to just laws in such a way that the slander against you which include treason and sedition and an uncaring attitude toward those around you, will be silenced.

### 1. You are actually free!

No matter how restrictive or repressive the government or the culture may be, the believer has been assigned by God to live and serve, and don't ever forget we are actually the ones who are truly free.

How is it that the believer is the only one who is truly free? It is a different kind of freedom. The believer has been freed from condemnation and judgment and all the eternal penalties of sin:

- *We have been freed from sin (Romans 6:18)*
- *For He (Christ) rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13)*
- *And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (John 8:32)*
- *If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36)*

In **John 8:34-36** Jesus gave us the answer to how we are free and non-believers are not. Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.”* Non-believers are slaves to sin and believers are not because we belong to God as sons. Here are just a few verses that support this: **Matthew 20:36, John 1:12, Acts 17:29, Romans 8:14, Philippians 2:15, Galatians 3:26, 4:6; 1 John 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2**. We are called sons of God or children of God a total of 36 times in the New Testament!

### 2. Never use your freedom as a covering for evil

The word Peter uses for *“covering”* relates to a veil or a covering thrown over something that someone is trying to conceal. It also carries the idea of a mask.

#### The false teaching of freedom as a covering for evil:

- Christians are blessed – our sins don't matter
- Our sins are forgiven so we can sin all we desire and we're forgiven
- Gnostics and Nicolaitans – sin is committed in the body and doesn't affect our soul

**Galatians 5:13**, *“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh.”* The Apostle warned of false teachers in **2 Peter 2:19**, *“... promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.”*

Paul gives us a wise balance, *“All things are lawful, but not everything is beneficial” (1 Corinthians 6:12)*.

### 3. Believers have been freed only to be mastered by Christ

The word Peter uses for *“bondslave”* is more accurately rendered slave. This is the paradox of Christianity: we have been freed from the bondage of sin and death only to become the slave of Jesus Christ. But what a Master! This is actually the paradox of life for everyone. Everyone is under the mastery of something; everyone is a slave to whatever it is that demands from them their highest allegiance. The question is not, are you a slave? The question is, whose slave are you?

### 4. Show respect for everyone

Peter writes in verse 17, *“Honor all people”*<sup>7</sup> which literally mean all human beings. He isn't telling us to honor everything human beings do, but to show respect to all human beings.

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Why? Because we believe that every human being has been created in the image of God (*James 3:9*). The verb “honor” means to treat them as valuable. Humans are immortal creatures and we treat them, no matter who they are, with a sense of respect knowing that God has created humans according to His purposes and they have inherent worth and eternal value. Showing respect to others ought to be the reputation of a genuine Christian.

Jacob Presser in his book *The Destruction of Dutch Jews* quoted Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi leader, “*I shall leap in my grave [over the] thought; I have five million lives on my conscience [that] is to me a source of inordinate satisfaction.*” The cure for that will never be more education, or a new job; the cure will always be salvation and a new heart. Peter is saying, I want Christian citizens everywhere to demonstrate this new heart by showing respect for every human.

### 5. Love your church deeply

This term for “brotherhood” is found only twice in the New Testament and both times by the Apostle Peter. It is a term for all believers as a collective unity. This is often Peter’s term for the church. In the text; however, Peter broadens that to command us to show respect and kindness to every human being we encounter simply because they are created by God.

The verb Peter uses for love is “*agapao*” the deepest, most sincere and genuine form of commitment and covenant love.

### 6. Live in awe of God

To fear God is to revere God; to prioritize God, to love God so much you’re afraid to offend God. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways (*James 1:7*). Peter uses the present tense in this imperative command; it can be translated as don’t stop honoring people, and loving the brotherhood, or fearing God. Don’t stop putting God first.

#### Three characteristics of fearing God:

##### a. There is a hunger to read the word of God

*Psalm 112:1*, “*How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments.*” *Psalm 119:103*, “*How sweet are your words to my taste, yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth.*” We’re really not reverencing the Lord unless we’re reading His word.

##### b. There is a desire to apply the truth of the word of God

*Psalm 128:1*, “*Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways.*” *Proverbs 14:2*, “*He who walks in uprightness fears the Lord.*” In *1 John 2:3-5*, <sup>3</sup>“*By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.*” <sup>4</sup> *The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;* <sup>5</sup> *but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.*” John, called the beloved disciple of Jesus, speaks very strong words in this passage of Scripture. Put bluntly, if you don’t desire to apply God’s Word in your life you do not belong to God!

##### c. Confidence is placed in the word of God

*Psalm 147:11*, “*The Lord favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.*” David draws a relationship between fearing the Lord and waiting on the promises and provision of the Lord, even if they are long in coming. That’s what it means to fear the Lord.

### 7. Show respect for all in authority

Peter uses the same verb in verse 17 that he used earlier where he commanded us to “*honor all people.*” Peter is saying the emperor thinks he’s divine, in other words a god; however he’s really just another human being like the rest of us. Treat him with respect as well.

#### Application:

Remember that you are called by God to live a holy life. Spend time reviewing the scope of this calling and who it is that has called you. Examine your life for any areas that you have segregated from your calling. Identify sinful thoughts and habits that you need to confess and repent of. Find godly people who will keep you accountable in areas where you are weak.