

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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KEEP LOVING. KEEP FEARING. KEEP HONORING.

1 Peter 2:13-17

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Here are the three points to my message.

- Keep loving the church.
- Keeping fearing the Lord.
- Keep honoring all earthly authority.

**INTRODUCTION:** As we continue our study through First Peter, let's remember that this letter was written to persecuted and isolated Christians. They landed this role by behaving differently than the society around them. Notice what the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:18: *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

This was true of the exiled Christians that Peter was writing to. Foolish they were thought to be, but far from foolish they were.

The section we are going to focus on today is not only a challenge, but an encouragement from Peter to the exiled Christians. Often, we can confuse how we should apply certain scripture to our lives. However, Peter's message is incredibly timely, as our political and social situation is so turbulent.

Last week, we discussed Christian growth and behavior amidst a pagan society. Today, we will expand on this discussion of behavior by diving into how Peter calls Christians to respond to authority. He explains what their attitudes should be and why. Refreshingly, his message is simple but is something that is tempting to overcomplicate.

We're going to work through this passage backwards, but let's read the text in its entirety first.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 2:13-17

*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup>or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. <sup>15</sup>For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. <sup>16</sup>Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. <sup>17</sup>Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.*

Though we will focus on this entire selection, I want us to first recognize Verse 17, the verse that guides my message today:

*Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.*

Four verbs requiring action: Respect. Love. Fear. And honor.

## **THE CHURCH SHOULD KEEP LOVING THE CHURCH**

**EXPLANATION:** Goodness, how Christians have complicated this message throughout history! "*Love the family of believers,*" is preceded by "*Show proper respect to everyone.*" This isn't to say that one command is less vital than the other but should serve as a reminder that we are to do more than just love and entertain those we agree with.

The beginning of Verse 17 clearly says "*Show proper respect to EVERYONE.*"

**APPLICATION:** This means the neighbor you do not like, the family member at Thanksgiving that has entirely different political views than the rest of the family, the gay co-worker, the Fake News Facebook Fraternity, the president you may or may not agree with.

Ask yourself: Who does God disrespect?

We are to respect everyone, as our model in Christ does not exclude anyone. The Bible, God's living word, says without hesitation or condition, to show proper respect to everyone.

This may seem challenging, but consider this: as difficult as it may seem to show respect to everyone, regardless of their circumstance, how challenging is it to love the family of believers as Peter mentions?

At first, we may think this is easy, as we gather together virtually or physically multiple times per week. Yet, how often have we struggled to love our brother or sister in Christ through their battles with sin, with sickness, with mental health, or with their basic needs?

For any that may not know, the type of "love" mentioned in Verse 17 is "agape" love -- an unconditional love. It supersedes brotherly love but suggests that we should strive to love the body of Christ as Christ loves the body.

As Christians, we hold each other to a higher standard than those in the world around us. It is incredibly tempting to forfeit that agape love that Peter mentions in Verse 17, when a member of the body fails to live up to the standard we have memorialized. Yet, Peter's simple words are clear: Respect everyone. Unconditionally love the family of believers.

Not only should Christians continue loving other brothers and sisters in Christ, but...

## **THE CHURCH SHOULD KEEP FEARING THE LORD**

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 2:16

*Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves.*

**EXPLANATION:** The word “slave” clearly has a negative connotation. We can’t overlook its current and recent meaning within American history, but we have to remember that the word mentioned here in scripture is not indicative of a slavery situation with a broken human as a master.

Instead, it’s about people giving sole ownership of their lives to God.

The word used for slave here is the Greek word *doulos* (doo’-los). While it does mean enslaved to another, it does not have the same derogatory denotation as the English word rightly has today. Instead, it is used with the highest dignity in the New Testament -- namely believers who willingly live under Christ’s authority as His devoted followers.

Matthew 6:24, which is often used to condemn the love of money, holds a much greater meaning. Jesus says, in his Sermon on the Mount:

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 6:24

*No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

**APPLICATION:** Here, Matthew emphasizes the servant’s devotion to his master. Insert any other object or person in place of the word money. What master do you serve?

- Is it God or church involvement?
- Is it God or security?
- Is it God or pleasure?
- Is it God or your spouse?

Don’t hear the wrong thing...you can serve others, you *should* serve others, but you cannot serve any other *Master* besides the Lord and truly experience freedom.

We are called to live as free people.

Charles Spurgeon explains this freedom in Christ in a way that helps us contextualize this idea of being a slave to Christ. He explains that living as a free people means to be “free in yourselves, free in your conscience, [and] free in your mind and heart.” He explains that, as Christians, we possess a freedom that others may claim, but do not know.

There are no others under heaven so free as God’s servants.

In the historical context of slavery, the slave is not free because his master does not grant the slave freedom. It is a limited, tainted, and authoritarian system that holds freedom at an unreachable height, constantly controlled by a corrupt master.

Instead, we are to revere our master, not resent Him. The word fear in this text, with the root word *phobos*, means to revere or show respect. Not only do we respect and love our Master, but we are respected and loved by Him.

You see, slavery to Christ *is* freedom. By being unified with Christ, we are bestowed the freedom that Spurgeon mentions because the freedom of Christ comes when we are unified with Him.

Moving to my next point... knowing our ultimate freedom in Christ...

## **THE CHURCH SHOULD KEEP HONORING ALL EARTHLY AUTHORITY**

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 2:13-15

*Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, <sup>14</sup>or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. <sup>15</sup>For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.*

**APPLICATION:** With every new election, every new media craze, and every prominent headline, there will be disagreement. Do not get caught up in being right. We are FREED from that obligation.

Our witness is not about making people listen to us, assuming power, or making snide remarks in hopes to “plant a seed” or win an argument. Instead, it is to move, work, lead, serve, and speak in a way that displays our allegiance to Christ.

In doing so, we must be aware of the accusations that society places on Christians, just as Peter warned the exiled believers living amidst a pagan society. Because the victory already belongs to God, and we are freed through Him, we are, “*for the Lord’s sake,*” as Peter writes, to submit ourselves to every human authority.

We can be confident that our submission is not an invitation to be manipulated, walked on, or abused. Instead, we are to habitually value authority because God is in control.

Paul bluntly echoes this thought in Romans when he reminds us...

**SCRIPTURE:** Romans 13:1-2

*Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup>Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*

**EXPLANATION:** Pilate was assured by Christ Himself that the power which he was about to exercise was only by divine permission (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary). Look at what Jesus said to Pilate, as he faced the crowd before his crucifixion.

**SCRIPTURE:** John 19:11

*Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.”*

**APPLICATION:** So are we to submit to the laws and leaders of the land, agreeing with any unrighteousness for the Lord’s sake?

Hear me when I say this: No. Never allow obedience to earthly statutes to overshadow your obedience to Christ, God's word, and the Holy Spirit's direction.

Terry Ellis, a commentator and fellow pastor in Alabama, helps us understand by explaining that this authority addressed in First Peter is not a reference to each individual law, but to the institutions that make and enforce the laws. In other words, he says, "it is possible to submit to the institutions and still disobey the laws."

**EXPLANATION:** It sounds problematic, but look throughout Scripture:

- In Daniel 1, Daniel and his three friends refused to obey the king's dietary regulations, but did so in a way that brought glory to God and also respected the authorities.
- See Peter and the apostles after Pentecost (Acts 4-5). They showed respect to their leaders but continued to preach the Gospel despite government push-back.
- In both of these situations, these believers promoted God's cause: to unify His people with Himself. There are countless others.

**APPLICATION:** Additionally, as Ellis mentions, this passage indicates that we are called to take a firm stand against injustice.

But, by the example of faithful believers throughout Scripture and Christ himself, we should do so (1) with grace for all involved, (2) in support of upstanding government systems, (3) and in rejection of injustice.

So, how can we practice Christian submission?

We must first recognize and rest in the fact that our ultimate submission is to God and it yields true freedom. People, we can submit to authority, no problem, because our first and ultimate submission is to Christ. Work to respect everyone. Seek to unconditionally love the family of God, and stand in awe of the freedom that Christ has given us, as His children.

I encourage everyone listening who is struggling to respect a certain part of society, who hates or feels hated by someone in the family of God, or who is constantly in turmoil over local or national leadership to seek the Lord in prayer. As Christians, we have discernment. Pray for the awareness to identify the ways in which you fail to promote God's cause. Pray for the opportunity to respect others, love others, and honor others in the ways that God commands.

**INVITATION:** If you've not accepted Christ as your savior and do not know the freedom I've discussed today, I encourage you to repent of your sin, believe that God raised Christ from the dead, and to trust him, and no one else, as your ultimate authority.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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