

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Christian Submission to the Government

1 Peter 2:13-17

Part One

Governmental authority plays a big part in all of our lives. And it is not always easy to submit ourselves to laws we feel are unnecessary, counterproductive or simply plain wrong.

1) Unnecessary - There is currently a law that if you are riding a bike that you are required to wear a helmet. Have you looked around on the streets and observed if people are in fact abiding by that law? If you do I believe that you will see a large percentage of people do not believe that this law is very important and I would have to conclude unnecessary. Being forced to wear a helmet is simply a nuisance.

2) Counterproductive - The state of California has been required to provide certain basic services to illegal aliens such as health care and education to the children of these illegal aliens. The state of California recently voted to overturn this law and it is now being challenged in federal court. This law obviously was viewed as counter productive by a majority of citizens of the state of California.

3) Plain Wrong - The federal government since Roe Vs. Wade has allowed the practice of abortion. Many people feel that this is an immoral law especially amongst the Christian community of which we are part.

We are being effected by many different laws put into place by many different governmental agencies. If we are in fact going to live a life that is “excellent” among the Gentiles that will lead them to change their perception of us which we examined last week in **VV. 11-12**. We need to appreciate how we should respond to those authorities and the laws that they establish. This is why Peter begins to introduce for us the passage we will begin to study this morning. Let us read **1 Peter 2:13-17**.

This passage will very clearly teach us what we need to know about a proper response to authority. **IT BEGINS WITH A COMMAND.**

COMMAND

Notice the command that begins **V. 13** “**Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.**”

Why does he have to say this? Why does he have to make a point of this to the Christian community? Consider the situation that these readers were in. They were aliens. They were in the world but not of the world. And in addition to this they were being slandered and persecuted by foolish men. It would have been very easy for them to ignore all worldly systems. It would have been very easy for them simply to divorce themselves from the powers that be and insisted on living apart from the system that they were not a part of and in addition persecuted by.

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But Peter is not only telling them not to ignore them, but is giving them a very clear command and that is to submit to them. **“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.”**

The word submit is the word UPPATASSO. This is a military term which means to arrange in a military fashion under a military commander. Peter is telling them that they were to be as thorough and disciplined in their submission to their governmental authorities as a soldier would be to his commander. And what makes this submission all that remarkable is the fact that Peter is calling these Christians to do this even while they were in the midst of a hostile, godless, Christless, sinful, slandering society.

This obligation on the part of the righteous to submit to governing authorities is not a new concept. We find it clearly manifested in the Old Testament. Consider **Prov. 24:21** **“My son, fear the Lord and the king; Do not associate with those who are given to change.”**

Consider the plight of the Jewish exiles in the Babylonian captivity. How were they supposed to conduct themselves in the godless society that they found themselves living? Let us turn in our Bibles to **1 Chron. 29** and let us begin to read at **V. 4**, **“Thus says the Lord of hosts, The God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, (5) Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens, and eat their produce. (6) take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give our daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.”**

What is he in essence saying? He is telling them to blend in. He is not telling them to seek to change the place that they had been taken into exile but rather live in it as it is. In other words fear the king and don’t stir up trouble. Obey your leaders and their laws.

In fact it even gets more interesting. Let us continue to read **(7) And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.”** We are not only to obey the authorities and their laws blending into our society, but we are even to be praying for the welfare of the authorities that our ruling us even though they may be immoral and godless. The point is if they do well it is better for us.

It is not our responsibility to establish kingdoms and to dismantle kingdoms. This is the work of the Lord. And we can know when all is done and said the Lord will bless his people.

Certainly this was true of the Jews who were and in exile. Let us read **VV. 10-11** **“For thus says the Lord, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. (11) For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”** These Jewish exiles hope was not in the reformation of the society in which they lived it was in their future deliverance into the promised land. And so it is with us also. Our hope is not in centered in this world but rather in the world to come.

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There have been many protests, acts of civil disobedience, subversive attempts to overthrow governments in the name of Christianity. WE ARE NOT CALLED TO DO THIS.

Someone might ask what about the American Revolution. If we were living during that time period what would have been the right thing to do? The right thing to do is not even debatable. The right thing to have done would have been to have submitted ourselves to the laws of England and while doing so praying for the welfare of the British Empire. Are you saying that if you were living in that time period you would have not supported the revolution? And my answer to that question would have to be NO.

This is not a new message in the New Testament. **Romans 13:1** is very clear, “**Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.**” You might think that if a government was vile enough certainly we would not be required as Christians to submit ourselves to it and if that is our thinking we would be wrong. Do you see any exception in this verse. What makes this all the more poignant is the knowledge that Paul and Peter both lived in a world rule by Rome. This world was dominated by slavery. This world was dominated by the abuse of women. This world was dominated by the murder of children. Peter and Paul lived in a wretched, vile, godless society and they both were telling the church to be subject to the authorities.

This are no exceptions. The reason is very simple there is not a government that exists that has not be established by God. God is using both the good and the bad to accomplish his purposes and we need to back off and let God accomplish his work without us getting in the way.

MOTIVATION

Why should we do this? We should do this “**for the Lord’s sake.**”

1) IT IS WHAT HE HAS TOLD US TO DO

Jesus said, “If you love me you will obey me. No matter how upset I might be about this authority or that authority. No matter how upset I might be about this law or that law. The Lord has clearly instructed us concerning what he would have us to do and that is to “**submit to every human institution**” and for the Lord’s sake we need to do this. It is only right as the Lord’s loving servants that we would obey Him.

2) IT IS WHAT HE DID

We need not only to obey but we need to follow His example. Jesus called His disciples to follow Him and for the Lord’s sake we need to do this.

A very powerful passage is **1 Pet. 2:21** “**For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. (22) who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; (23) And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.**”

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Jesus lived under unjust and unrighteous authorities who eventually illegally and callously put Him to death on a cross. But during the course of his entire earthly life and ministry including the time of his trial He never attacked those who were in authority. Never led a protest. Never led civil disobedience. Never led a demonstration against Roman abuses. Never led a demonstration against the sins of Jewish leaders. Never led a demonstration against the sins of Gentile leaders. He only spoke of the kingdom of God. He called sinners to repent and to come to Him and enter His kingdom. And He simply kept entrusting Himself to the God who judges righteously.

We need for the Lord's sake to submit to every human institution. In order that we might obey Him, in order that we might follow his example, and we need to submit to every human institution in order that the Lord might be honor.

3) IT IS HONORING TO HIM

The Lord is honored when he is seen as the source of virtuous, gracious and peace making people. When the Christian community becomes identified with civil disobedience in order to accomplish their "righteous" agenda the Lord is dishonored.

It is sad to see Christians setting the example of civil disobedience. If we as the righteous oppose our God ordained authorities and the laws established by them what will the unrighteous do? We are contributing to the proper functioning of society as God as designed it. We would be contributing to a state of anarchy where authority is dismissed and treated as irrelevant in light of every individual's personal agenda. We need to treat the authorities and laws with respect.

CONCLUSION

HOW ARE WE TO RESPOND TO THE AUTHORITIES THAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED OVER US? WE ARE TO SUBMIT TO THEM? NOT SIMPLY TO THOSE THAT WE LIKE BUT TO ALL AUTHORITY. AND WHY SHOULD WE DO THIS? FOR THE LORD'S SAKE. SO THAT HE MIGHT BE OBEYED, FOLLOWED, AND HONORED.