

# *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

## **Christian Submission to the Government**

**1 Peter 2:13-17**

### **Part Three**

The world is full of sin. Our society is infected with evil. At every turn we see immorality and injustice. What are Christians to do in light of all of this?

What we want to do is remain very clear headed with the clear teachings of God's word forming the basis of our decision making especially when it comes to our relationship to governmental authorities who appear to us to be less than righteous and passing bad laws.

Peter in sharing with the Christians of Asia Minor gave them some very important instruction concerning this matter in **1 Pet. 2:13-17**. What have we learned so far?

We have learned first of all that no matter how immoral the government or the laws that government may enact we are to be submissive to that government ..... The only exception to that is when they would ask you to do something or not to do something which is clearly taught in God's Word. And we have also learned that we are to do this for the Lord's sake. We still have much more to learn let us again return back to the passage and look at the extent of this obedience.

#### EXTENT

**“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution.”** Not to just a few or even most but to **“every.”** This means that we are to be submissive “to every enterprise of men by which order is maintained.”

If we are in a work crew and we have a foreman over us directing our project we are to be submissive to him. If we are in the Boy Scouts and have a scout leader over us we are to be submissive to him. If we are in school and have a teacher over us we are to be submissive to him.

Leaders are necessary to maintain order and whatever leaders we may find ourselves under in whatever setting we find ourselves we are to be submitted to them.

The particular leaders that are in view in this passage our governmental leaders. Look at the next part of the verse ..... **“Whether to a king as the one in authority, (14) or to governors as sent by him.”** There is not a single governmental authority that we are not to be submissive too. This includes the very highest authority or the lowest governmental authorities.

THE HIGHEST GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES - Who is the **“king”** referring to? The word “king” is the Greek word “BASILEUS” means any king and not a specific king. We could understand it to mean the “highest authority” whoever that highest authority might be. At the time Peter was writing this epistle the highest authority for Peter was the Roman Caesar Nero. For us the ultimate governmental authority would be the federal government or Uncle Sam.

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THE LOWEST GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES - Not only are we to submit to the ultimate civil authority that is over us but to all lesser authorities. **“Whether to a king as the one in authority or to governors as sent by him.”** The word “governors” is the word HEGEMON and refers to rulers in general.

Failing to submit ourselves to these authorities which we have seen have been established by God is unacceptable. These entities have been established by God for certain very basic purposes and we need to respect their place of honor that God has given them. WHAT MIGHT BE THESE PURPOSES BE? TWO OF THOSE PURPOSES ARE LISTED FOR US HERE IN THIS VERSE.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE EVIL DOER - **“for the punishment of evil doers.”** The government is not simply to establish laws and take people to court in order to find out whether they are guilty or innocent of the crimes for which they have been accused. They are actually to do what? **“punish evil doers.”**

I am very disturbed by what I perceive to be the failure of our governmental authorities to fulfill their God ordained task. What is their task? **“the punishment of evil doers.”**

Is the government doing this? By what standard of measure can we measure the faithfulness of government in the execution of justice? I believe that the only standard of measure that can and should be used is the biblical standard of justice. And what is that standard of measure? **Exod. 21:23-25 “But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, (24) eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”** In other words the punishment should fit the crime nothing less and nothing more.

But someone here might say well what about the words of Jesus in **Mt. 5:38-42 “You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ (39) “But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”** Doesn’t this negate using the principle of an eye for an eye in our legal system? The answer is certainly not! Christ was not seeking to change the way justice was carried out by our legal system. Christ was rather seeking to encourage people in their interpersonal relationships from taking the law into their own hands. If you were to hit me I should not strike you back but this does not preclude the state from intervening and striking you. In fact if the state were to do anything less than this they would be failing to fulfill their God ordained purpose.

Our justice system doesn’t have to speak loudly in order to get the attention of our society, but they need to carry a big stick.

Consider **Romans 13:1-4 “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. (2) Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. (3) For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;**

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**(4) for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.**” Without a doubt the Apostle Paul recognized the righteous wielding of the sword by government in the punishment of evil doers even if that would mean the taking of a transgressors life.

To illustrate for you the problem that I presently believe is undermining the strength of society let us consider capital punishment. The scriptures are abundantly clear about the righteousness of capital punishment. Not only in the Mosaic Law in **Exod. 21:23; Lev. 24:20-21; Deut. 19:21** but even before the Mosaic Law was ever instituted. What were the instructions to Noah after the flood? **Deut. 9:6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.”** This is the clear teaching of God’s word. This is a righteous expression of justice. And yet what are the current statistics ..... I would like to take the statistics for the most current year that I had available to me. In 1992 there were 23,800 murders. In the same year there were only 31 executions. If we were evaluating justice on the basis of a biblical standard we would have to conclude that we are falling far short of what God would expect government to do.

Is this serious? I believe the government’s inability to act consistently to punish evil doers is breakdown in God ultimate design for how society should operate and we will suffer for this. **BUT THIS IS NOT THE ONLY EXPRESSION OF THE GOVERNMENT’S ROLE AS NOTED BY PETER.**

**THE PRAISE OF THOSE WHO DO RIGHT - “the praise of those who do right.”** This was the same emphasis that we found in **Romans 13:3 “For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority: Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.”** When was the last time you were praised by someone in a position of authority in our government for doing good? This certainly does not seem to be an emphasis within governmental agencies. And yet if people within governmental agencies could begin to see that the identification and praise of those who are doing good to be a part of their job description I would believe that not only would the recipients of the praise be blessed but even those who would be lavishing that praise would be blessed.

How is our government doing in their task? How is our government doing in the punishment of evil doers and praising those who are doing right? You already know how I feel about their performance. I believe that the government is doing poorly.

Does this give us license to disobey those authorities that God has placed over us? God forbid. We are to what? **“Submit ourselves 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.”**

Just as the government’s poor performance does not give us license to not submit to their authority neither can we allow the poor performance of government to distract us from our work. And again what is that work? We as the church are commanded to **“Go make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”**

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Just because the government may be doing poorly in respect to it's role does not give us license to become distracted from our role in order to straighten them out.

The only action that we are commanded to perform toward our governmental authorities other than to honor them by our submission is to pray for them. **1 Tim. 2:1-2 “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, (2) for kings and all who are in authority.”**

What should be the focal point of those prayers? **“in order that we might lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”** The very focal point of our prayers should be that the relationship between the governmental authorities and ourselves should not be an adversarial relationship. The Christian community cannot afford to be viewed by the pagan world as an antagonist. WHY?

### REASON

Let us look again at **V. 15 “For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”** The will of God is that we obey and submit ourselves to every institution. The will of God for us is to pray for those in authority living tranquil and quiet lives so that we may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

The word for “silence” (PHIMOO) means “to gag or to muzzle.” The will of God for us as his children is that by our submission, by the way we live we would muzzle, gag the mouth of **“foolish men.”** We as the messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ are easy targets. And yet by the way we live hopefully we will silence the critics of the Lord and our faith.

Much of what Christians are doing either by their acts of civil disobedience or the propensity for political activism which resorts to the public forum is making things worse. We need to be reminded of **Tit. 3:1-2 “Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed. (2) to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.” (And this above all else includes our leaders)** We have not been placed here in this world to provoke the authorities around us whoever they may be. We are to be viewed by the political establishment as supportive, peaceful, law abiding citizens.

And what should our attitude be as we do this?

### ATTITUDE

**“But do not use your freedom for a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.”** As Christians we are not earthbound. We are free in Christ. We have been freed by redemption. When we were bought from the slave market of sin we were set free from sin, Satan, condemnation, even the world and enslaved to God. **(Rom. 6:22; Gal. 5:13).** We are not free to do whatever we want we are freed to do what is right and what is right is to be submissive to all human institutions and to pray for them and to act in ways that work at cross purposes with these clear commands is using are “freedom” as a **“covering for evil.”**

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CONCLUSION

What is the conclusion of all this? Look at **V. 17** “**Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.**”

This morning I have shared my personal disappointment with you concerning our governmental authorities. My response to their failure I would hope would be twofold.

1) An even stronger commitment than ever before to my God given role as a disciple maker. Though others may fail such as our government may be doing presently yet I will be faithful to my God given role.

2) And secondly that I will continually hold up the authorities that God has set over me. Praying for their faithfulness in the task that God has given them and that they may be successful in that task helping us to lead quiet and tranquil lives free of war, mayhem, and murder.