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1 Peter Bible Study (Hope In Hard Times) Miscellaneous

1 Peter 2:13-17, How To Be Christians In This Political Climate

👤 Brent Kercheville 📅 October 30, 2016

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Every four years seems to be filled with political anger and extreme statements. We hear things like if this candidate wins then I am moving to Canada. Or it is the end of the world if this politician wins. Or that our country is doomed and it is over is so and so becomes president. I have been alive enough to recognize that we hear these statements every four years. But I think it would be accurate to say that this might be the most emotionally charged and anger charged election we have had, at least in my lifetime. This anger has spilled over into the candidates behaviors this year, who will not even shake hands before or after each debate. Now all of this will come to a head next week on Tuesday when we have our election. Because of how politically charged this election cycle has been and how much hatred and anger has been expressed, not only by these candidates, but also by citizens of this country, there is going to be a lot of "us versus them" in that we won and they lost. But how is the Christian supposed to handle all of these things? In particular, I want us to consider how the Christian is supposed to behave on November 9, the day after the election. Turn to 1 Peter 2:13-17 and we will look at the directions given by our Lord through the apostle Peter.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. (1 Peter 2:13–17 ESV)

Submit (2:13-15)

God tells us that we must submit ourselves to every human institution. We must accept the authority of every human ruling power. That may seem hard to believe. I think it was hard to believe for the Christians in the first century. So the point is emphasized in verse 13: "Whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors...." God did not command this is a theoretical bubble where the rulers are Christians and they always do what is moral, right, and godly. Nero would have been the emperor of the Roman Empire at this time, who was renown for being immoral and egomaniacal. But even still, Christians are to be subject to every human institution. Rebelling against human authority is rebelling against God. God is at work through these rulers. Peter says this in verse 13: "As sent by him." These rulers are sent by him with a purpose. Now the intended purpose is that they would punish the evil and praise those who do good. But that is not how it always works out. The apostle Paul made the same point in Romans 13.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. (Romans 13:1–2 ESV)

This is where we practice our faith in God. We believe in a ruling God and that we subject ourselves to every human institution "for the Lord's sake." Now look at the argument that God presents to us by reading verse 15. "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people." We are told that we are doing good to put to silence the ignorance of the foolish. Doing good how? Notice that verse 15 connects back to what Peter wrote in verses 13-14. Submitting to these human institutions, emperors, and governors and doing good as subject to them is how we are silencing the ignorance of foolish people. We are not going to call Christianity into question by rebelling against human authorities. We will continue to do good in the face of political and governmental disagreement. We are not deluded into thinking that the right candidate would bring heaven to earth. Our concern is not the type of government or the candidate because we are called to submit no matter what the form of government is, what economic system we are under, and whoever is the president. Our concern is to shine light in the darkness. We have talked much about doing good in the face of evil,

turning the other cheek, and loving our enemies in the last few lessons. Please notice that we are doing good in the face of evil, even if the evil is the government that we are called to live under. We do good and silence the ignorance of foolish people. This means that we do not take sides when it comes to sin. Sin is sin and evil is evil and we will not soften that idea no matter what the government is, who the president is, or who the candidate is! Do we overlook the sins of some candidates because we like their other policies or do we equally condemn all sin upon all people regardless of whether we agree with the economic or social policies? We must shine as light in all places. We must do good even if we do not like who is ruling over us.

Live For God (2:16)

Peter continues in verse 16 that you have freedoms but those freedoms are not to be used as a cover for evil. No matter what we must live as God's servants. Our freedom is not to speak evil or do evil. We do not represent political parties. We represent Christ. We submit to these human institutions because of God's authority. We submit because we are servants of a higher king. We are free but not to act dishonorably toward God or toward the world. We must look at how our behavior regarding politics and submission to governments looks to the world. Listen to what Jesus says and does.

24 When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" 26 And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. 27 However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself." (Matthew 17:24–27 ESV)

Notice that Jesus makes a teaching point. Jesus makes the point to Peter and his disciples that he does not have to pay a tax to earthly rulers. Kings do not tax their sons. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is king over the earth. So Jesus says that the sons are free in verse 26. But notice in verse 27 that the point is not therefore we do not have to pay taxes. Listen carefully to verse 27. "However, not to give offense to them...." Jesus says that he could make a point right here but he is not going to give offense on this matter. This is what we are learning in Peter's letter. Live as people who are free but live as servants of God. Show God. Do not praise evil. Submit to the governing authorities. Submit to the emperor and to the governors. It is God's will that we submit and speak and act so that the glory of God is displayed. How we

speak and act regarding the government is not to cause people an offense. Submit to God. Submit to the government. Do good and silence the ignorance of the foolish through your good behavior.

Conclusion

So as we lead up to the election and in particular when we find out the results on Tuesday, November 8 and we go to work the next day or think about getting online to make some sort of comments about what has happened, whether we are joyful or disappointed, please obey what Peter tells us to do in verse 17.

(1) Honor everyone.

We do not call people idiots for their beliefs. We do not malign people for who they voted for or what they think about these issues in our country. That does not reflect the heart or the mouth of those who love Jesus. Who are we not to honor? Who is excluded from this command? Is your neighbor excluded? Is your co-worker excluded? Is anyone excluded? Honor everyone. Treat them with value and respect. There is no reason for us to not speak with kindness and respect for all people. Our hope is not in this world. Our hope is in God who rules over this earth and over this country.

(2) Love the brotherhood.

Notice in this context that we must not forget to love each other. We are Christians. We are not Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Libertarians, Green, or any other affiliation. We are Christians. We serve king Jesus. We desire God to be glorified through us and in our country regardless of who is governing over us.

(3) Fear God.

The fear, honor, and respect for God must be at the center of everything we say and do, particularly in a political climate like we have right now. Before you post something online, before you make a comment to your neighbor, before you say something to your co-worker, before you vote, before you do anything, ask yourself if this is going to show your fear for your Lord? We do not operate from a fear of others but from a fear of God.

(4) Honor the emperor.

Or to put this command in our language today: honor the president. We will honor the president because we do this for the Lord's sake. We honor the president because it is God's will. We honor the president because this is God's government. We honor the president because he or she is God's leader. We are God's servants and we serve a higher king, King Jesus. Please notice that we are not told to honor the emperor only when the emperor acts honorably or righteously. There was nothing that was very

honorably or righteously about Emperor Nero or any of the emperors that ruled over the Roman Empire for the next 400 years. This is how we look different. This is how Christians shine as lights. We are not wrapped up in politics so that we speak or act maliciously during such political season. We are citizens of heaven. This world is not our home. Jesus is our king. God is bringing about the rise and fall of rulers and the rise and fall of nations. We will look for the hand of God to be at work through whoever is in charge of our nations. We will submit. We will honor. We will yield. Look like a Christian. Speak like a Christian. Post like a Christian. Act like a Christian. Be a Christian.

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