

# Sermon: Use Your Freedom Wisely

Text: [I Peter 2:13-17 ESV](#)

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February 20, 2022

**Introduction:** This section in [I Peter](#) springboards off of the last verse we read from our text last week: [I Peter 2:12 ESV](#) <sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

So our conduct among outsiders is to bring glory to our God. As we go deeper into this section through the end of [chapter 3](#) we are going to be looking at potentially God-honoring relationships for Christians. From the beginning when Jesus insists that we are to love each other, he includes our enemies. This is to be a living example of how God loves us, and this is not just with words. Love in the New Testament is defined by action. John Nugent in his book, *Endangered Gospel*, p. 97, shares that love is not just about language, but something we do, a language of acting. “When New Testament authors talk about how we care for unbelievers - beyond witnessing to them - they prefer language of acting nobly ([Rom 12:17](#)), extending goodness ([Rom 12:21](#); [Gal 6:10](#); [I Thess 5:15](#)), acting wisely ([Col 4:5-6](#)), living quietly ([I Thess 4:11](#)), behaving properly ([I Thess 4:12](#)), being gentle and courteous ([Titus 3:2](#)), and *here in our text* - showing honor ([I Pet 2:12, 17](#)).”

So, let’s look at today’s text as we begin a journey that will take us through [chapter 3](#) and how Christians should live in a world that is not their home.

## [I Peter 2:13-17 ESV](#)

## Submission to Authority

<sup>13</sup> Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,[a] whether it be to the emperor[b] as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. <sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. <sup>16</sup> Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants[c] of God. <sup>17</sup> Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

## Footnotes:

[a] [1 Peter 2:13](#) Or every institution ordained for people

[b] [1 Peter 2:13](#) Or king; also verse 17

[c] [1 Peter 2:16](#) For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*,

## **I. Submission Is Required by God's People.**

Submit/submission is not a bad word...in fact, it accomplishes God's purposes. Submitting correctly is for the Lord's sake (v.13).

Wives are to submit to husbands, Children to their parents, and even in biblical times, slaves to masters. The Church (the Body of Christ) is to submit to Christ, the Head of the Church.

Just an aside here - submission does not say anything about personal worth or position especially when done voluntarily. It is a sign of love and respect.

Even Jesus submitted to his earthly parents as children today should also do. **Luke 2:51 ESV** <sup>51</sup> And he (Jesus) went down with them (his parents) and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

Jesus submitted to the will of God as we also must do. None of this diminished Jesus' value. **I Corinthians 15:28 ESV** <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

Submission and being subjected is talked about in terms of intimacy when combined with holiness. **James 4:7-10 ESV** <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

### **A. relating to government authorities**

In fact, the government is in place because God has chosen to use this man-made instrument to provide both justice and peace in society. **Romans 13:1 ESV** <sup>1</sup> 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.

You say, you don't understand this in light of whom we have in government over us. It used to be Trump, now Biden. Can you imagine how Christians struggle with these biblical texts about submission in repressive regimes like Russia or China, or in Islamic-controlled areas?

In Peter's time the emperor (lit. *king*) in charge was Nero. Both the Apostles Peter and Paul were martyred for their faith during the horrific reign of Nero. Rome burned and Christians were blamed by Nero. Nero would use Christians as bait for wild animals in the arenas just for sport and amusement, and he sometimes would dip Christians in pitch and set fire to them while they were alive to provide lighting in his gardens.

**In the future we as Christians may need to resist our government if it would require we violate God's laws. I believe there is a time coming where our voices will not be welcome at all and there will be punishment for anyone who speaks God's truth to our post-Christian culture.**

**The principle is this: Christians should obey our government except when we are asked to sin or violate our conscience based on God's Word.**

**In the context of any government violating the laws and values of God we hear this: "Anyone who is still afraid of people is not afraid of God. Anyone who fears God is no longer afraid of people" - Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

**Submission is required by God's people...**

**As long as [verse 14](#) is not reversed. i.e., if the government were to punish those who do good and praise those who are evil, we are:**

**B. to provide a good witness (action speaks louder than words)**

**A way we can provide a good witness is by obeying the law. Traffic laws are sometimes difficult. If you're travelling down I-75 or I-77 or I-95, it is easy to get caught up in the flow of traffic and exceed the lawful speed limit, but it is the law. Ministers are sometimes guilty here - or so I have heard.**

**There was one minister who got stopped for speeding. He told the officer that he was on the Lord's business. The officer replied, "I read the same Bible. It says to go out into the highways and bring them in--and that's what I'm doing."**

**Another minister, pressed for time and not finding a parking space, parked in a "no parking" zone and put a note on his windshield: "I have circled the block 10 times. I have an appointment to keep. "Forgive us our trespasses." When he returned, he found a citation along with this note: "I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I lose my job. Lead us not into temptation." Submission means obeying the law.**

**Many of our civil laws are based on principles founded in God's Law given to the people of Israel from Mount Sinai. Murder is still wrong in most circles unless we are talking about euthanasia (a good death) or abortion some think. Stealing is wrong, yet people try to justify it based on race or socio-economic condition. Sexual immorality and infidelity are winked at -- well, until it impacts *your* marriage or *your* family. We, as Christians, are being bombarded with images and sounds seeking our approval for lifestyles that in times past would have cost a person their freedom and maybe even their lives.**

**Love for others has gotten twisted to be anything that doesn't inconvenience me. I certainly am not going to sacrifice my time, money, or life for anyone else.**

Christians must be different and provide godly examples!

## II. God's People Will Not Abuse Their Freedom (verse 16).

Freedom cannot be used to cover up evil or practice evil. No one is free to do anything and everything they wish. There is an accounting for how we live and for Whom.

### A. and then be associated with evil

Freedom does not mean license. "I somewhat agree with John Calvin, who states that the only command given to Christians is to obey and suffer, so we should be hesitant to think that God has entrusted the revolutionary task to us (*Institutes* [Westminster Press], IV:XX:31). And yet at the same time, we are responsible to speak out against evil, whether it be practiced by rulers or other citizens. - quoted from Steven Cole

**Or even by the church.**

By CNA Staff

Helsinki, Finland, Jan 18, 2022 / 03:15 am

A former government minister facing jail after tweeting a Bible verse said that her trial next week will be a test of religious freedom.

Päivi Räsänen, a physician and mother of five, explained that she had a "calm mind" ahead of the criminal trial beginning on Jan. 24.

"I trust that we still live in a democracy, and we have our constitution and international agreements that guarantee our freedom of speech and religion," said Räsänen, *who was* Finland's interior minister from 2011 to 2015.

In this recent news article coming out of Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was sponsoring a Gay Pride event and one of the church's members is now in court facing possible fines and 2 years in prison because she had the audacity to quote [Romans 1:24-27 ESV](#) <sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

**The Bible is not hate speech, but a love letter...**

Freedom carries responsibility for those of us who are Christians.

**Galatians 5:13-14 ESV** <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

God’s people will not abuse their freedom

B. but retain their new status (servants, slaves) and Master

Once we become a Christian (a new creature in Christ) we exchange masters. No longer do we just serve ourselves. Now, we serve God and his will - loving others in the way we are loved by Him.

When there is a conflict between the government and God’s will, God’s desire for his creation must take priority. We are His servants first.

Must we always obey the government? Is this commanded-by-God submission “unconditional,” i.e., no exceptions? NO!

In **Exodus 1:17 ESV** <sup>17</sup> But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. (Moses survived because of this refusal to obey government demands that were immoral. See **Hebrews 11:23**)

In the Old Testament book of **Daniel 3:13-18, 6:10-24** we read that God’s servants refused to worship false gods.

In the early days of the Church being established there were attempts to silence the Gospel, but Christians could not in good conscience stay quiet or be silenced. **Acts 4:18-20 ESV** <sup>18</sup> So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, <sup>20</sup> for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

**Acts 5:27-29 ESV** <sup>27</sup> And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.

### III. God’s People Will Live Respectful Lives (verse 17).

All people are born with the image of God. Not all follow this imprinted nature, but we should treat everyone with love, and respect their role in this life and value them because of that position God has ordained.

## Here in **verse 17** God gives us commands to obey. **We honor God:**

### A. by honoring everyone

Everyone has worth in God's eyes. Jesus died to offer *everyone* salvation, not just the elect. That is what he thought you were worth.

Do we honor/value people (τιμαω) for how we might serve them and thus God's purposes? Do we witness to them? Or do we see them as commodities to be consumed or tools to be used for our personal gain and advantage?

### B. by loving the brotherhood

Every person in the Body of Christ is important and to be loved like Christ loves us!

In a world that is so divisive, full of hate and violence, isn't it great to be able to experience peace (shalom) with God's people - to feel valued and honored in the community we call the Church?

And doesn't this kind of environment aid the Church in her mission to evangelize the lost? Everything we do is to be a witness/picture of Whom we serve, follow and believe.

**Psalm 133:1 ESV** A Song of Ascents. Of David.

**1** Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

### C. by honoring those in authority over us

We do this again to honor God. This serves God's purposes!

In this example of the emperor (king) or governor and the like, we value and honor them as they serve the purpose of our King. We must always respect the office, And even when there is utter failure by the officeholder, we are still obliged to pray for him/her. Paul says something similar to **v. 17** in our text. **I Timothy 2:1-2 ESV** **1** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, **2** for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

### D. by fearing (reverencing) God

The fear of the Lord...

**Proverbs 1:7 ESV** **7** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Chuck Colson is quoted saying in regard to justice, “Without ultimate justice, people’s sense of moral obligation dissolves; social bonds are broken. People who have no fear of God soon have no fear of man, and no respect for human laws and authority.”**

**But we have a God who we can trust. We need not be afraid with our God, only reverent and in a place of awe.**

### **Psalm 46:1-3 The Message**

**God is a safe place to hide,  
ready to help when we need him.**

**We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom,  
courageous in seastorm and earthquake,**

**Before the rush and roar of oceans,  
the tremors that shift mountains.**

**Jacob-wrestling God fights for us,  
God-of-Angel-Armies protects us.**

**Conclusion:** J. I. Packer wrote, “It is a paradox of the Christian life that the more profoundly one is concerned about heaven, the more deeply one cares about God’s will being done on Earth” (*Christianity Today* [4/19/85], I-4).

**Sir Frederick Catherwood, a Christian, and formally a member of the European Parliament, put it: “To try to improve society is not worldliness, but love. To wash your hands of society is not love but worldliness” (ibid., I-4, 5). Christian citizens are commanded to be good citizens. The main way we do that is by submitting to our human government.**

**The answer to the earth’s problems and man’s demise, though, cannot be solved by humanity. The world needs a Savior. The black radical from years ago, Stokely Carmichael, was once asked, “When the world is the way you want it, what will it be like?” After brief reflection, he answered, “Men will love one another” (Grounds, p. 89). But that can’t happen apart from the gospel. Our love for fellow Christians and our submission and honor toward government officials is a powerful witness. Thus we submit “for the Lord’s sake.”**

**-quoted from a Steven Cole sermon**