

In case you haven't noticed... we're living in a political charged culture. Since before this last election cycle, the tension in our society b/w the right and the left has been beyond manic; and the hope for some sense of resolve appears improbable. Both sides have dug in and the trench warfare has become a bloodbath. As believers, which side are we to take? That's easy – we're to take Jesus' side. And which side is that? I can assure you it has nothing to do w/ any party and everything to do w/ Christ's mission. Jesus wasn't for Republicans, Democrats, Tea Party, Green Party, or Libertarians – He was for rescuing the lost. So just what is the correct Biblical response? **Where does that leave us?**

This AM I want us to consider the words of Peter as it pertains to our faith and civic responsibilities. But let me forewarn everyone – the more politically motivated you are, the harder this message is going to be to swallow. Why? B/c Jesus isn't being political; He's fixated on man's redemption – and not on our politics. Which brings us back to the title of our series – GLOW. Peter epistle is reminding us of our duty to GLOW for God's glory no matter the political climate or who's at the helm. He's calling believers to live for Christ over living for politics. This doesn't mean Christians are to be apolitical, but that our responsibility for the Gospel must supersede our desires for our culture.

Lest we forget, Peter has just stated that Christians are aliens called to live holy lives that declare the excellency of God – testifying to His character, nature, and mission. Key to this calling is the reminder that this earth is not our home – we’re just pilgrims passing through. As such, it would’ve been easy for his readers to conclude that they had no civic duty here on earth – and yet it appears that God anticipated such an idea, so he inspired Peter to address a Christian’s responsibility so long as they were here on earth:

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

To many of us, the term **submit** is a dirty word – yet it is a favorite word w/ Peter. In fact, it dominates much of the rest of this epistle (occurring in 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5).

**submit** (*hupotasso*) is a military word meaning *to put oneself under another in rank*. It is an attitude of respect that results in positive obedience to authority placed over you.

In this text, Peter is calling Christians to line up under the civil authorities/laws b/c God has appointed them over us.

This means we're to be law abiding citizens who pay our taxes, obey the laws, and show respect to governing officials. We're not to be anarchist, but faithful citizens to influence the culture to Christ. And we do so b/c it is God's will. We do so b/c our respect for our society perpetuates the impact of the Gospel in a lost and dying world.

## I The INTENTION for Human Government

*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.*

We often forget it's God who establishes, ordains, and allows the jurisdiction of man. This isn't to imply that their godless actions are approved by God, but to say that NO person or government supersedes the sovereign rule of God or has come into existence independent of His will.

**So why has God established governments?** He's done so to provide an earthly covering over His creation – *to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.* He allows government to watch over one another to provide security and care – to afford the ability to live.

Are there exceptions? Yes! Christians are to comply w/ governing authorities except where the government violates Biblical morality and obedience to God.

**Take Nazis Germany for example.** A German soldier wouldn't be expected by God to carry out an order to murder innocent people b/c a maniacal man dictated it. Likewise, God doesn't expect His people to cower to the local government to deny their faith and reject the truth of God as w/ Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And yet, even as one takes a stand, there's an appropriate decorum. While God wouldn't expect His people to comply to bowing down and worshipping an idol, neither does He authorize His people to take matters into their own hands by becoming spiritual vigilantes. **It's never okay to become sin to deal w/ sin.** Lest we forget, our fight is not w/ flesh/blood, but on our knees and in the appropriate venues w/ faithfulness.

How does government accomplish their God-given mission? They do it (in part) by **legislating morality**. Only the moral fabric of a culture cannot be based on the selfish inclinations of men, but on a greater standard that serves/protects a nation as a whole. So never let anyone sell you on the idea that morality shouldn't be legislated – it must be legislated – but not in the vacuum of fallen humanity, but in accordance w/ a higher standard.

No society has ever succeeded w/out a strong conviction for morality/law. Not one! This is what the government provides – it establishes/enforces guidelines to support the protection of life and the respect/protection for others and their possessions. This is essential to the preservation of a nation. And these laws need to be fundamentally moral/biblical. Laws must protect citizens from sin and any ideal that's detrimental to the whole.

**The real debate is which morals need to be legislated?** Safe to say, the more resistant a nation is toward God, the greater license they desire to indulge in activities satisfying their perversions. The less a person has respect and fear for a holy supreme being, the more they'll be consumed only for themselves – and this creates a big dilemma for a culture.

Now I don't have time to deal at length w/ this idea, but in a democratic, pluralistic society like the USA, I think it is critical the rule of law legislated must include a higher standard which has the broadest social value and can be argued for apart from an appeal of the Bible to include laws for the protection of life from the womb to the grave, for the innocent and the vulnerable, and to provide for basic human rights w/out supporting behaviors that'll fundamentally deteriorate the fabric of society. A good place to start might be the Golden Rule. Even unbelievers recognize the inherent "rightness" of the Golden Rule.

Which leads us to a 2<sup>nd</sup> truth understand – **Our submission is important to God and our government.**

## II The IMPORTANCE of Submission to Government

*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority... For so is the will of God, that w/ well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

**Notice** there's but one reason God desires our submission – to accomplish His will of ministry. Our submission is the game changer. It's what empowers/enables us to have a viable witness. *What does it mean to submit to authorities?*

### A Submission Means HONORING God

*...for the Lord's sake...*

The most critical thing this text does is put all of our social and political life into relation to God. We can never forget the Bible is NOT a book about how to get along in the world. It's a book inspired by God on how to **live for God**. This is our aim – *to walk worthy of the Lord and to please Him in every way*. We're to live under His authority and in view of His mission/purpose for our lives.



**Lord** (*kurios*) One who's been given absolute ownership and unfettered, sovereign power/authority – He is our life.

*For the Lord's sake* means that as we submit to governing earthly authorities we're actually submitting to God – and the result is our lives are a living testimony of His grace.

## B Submission Means OBEYING the Law

The basic meaning of *submit* is to *obey*. Christians are to obey the laws of their government unless those laws force them to disobey God. Kings we can apply to federal laws; governors can apply to state and local laws.

This text has been on my mind as I've been working on my taxes. We're to properly report our income as we follow the rules to decide what we owe. W/ regard to traffic laws, it means abiding by the laws of the road. If you regularly get traffic citations, then you need to amend your ways.

I heard of a pastor who got stopped for speeding. He told the officer he was on the Lord's business. The officer replied, "I read the Bible too, and it tells me to go out into the highways and bring them in – and that's what I'm doing."

## C Submission Means Doing RIGHT by Others

*by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men*

The reason Christians ought to submit to every authority is quite clear/basic – to prove the critics of Christ wrong b/c of our Chris-like behavior.

**Silence** (*phimoun*) to muzzle an animal or make speechless.

**Ignorance** (*agnosian*) agnostic. It refers to a willful, hostile rejection of truth – senseless and w/out reason.

Peter isn't referring to the government leaders as *foolish* but to the willfully ignorant who slander Christians as evildoers. But thru our civic engagement and witness, we take away the basis for criticism of Christianity from those who oppose it.

*Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. Titus 3:1-2 (Paul)*

When Christians live God-honoring, civic-responsible lives in the world, it's a powerful witness to the truth of God. But should a professing Christians disrespect authority and disobey the law, their witness impugns the Gospel, leaving a bad taste in the mouths of those prone to criticize the faith.

When Israel was in exile in Babylon, their situation was like that of Christians today in that they were strangers/aliens in a foreign land, looking to be restored to their promised land.



God to *Jeremiah 29:5-6* tell the exiles to build houses, plant gardens, take wives, and raise children. He said – *seek the welfare of the city where I've sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you'll have welfare.*

That's *good counsel* for Christians exiled as aliens in this world: Build houses, plant gardens, raise families, pray for the welfare of the cities where you live. Buy property, work to improve the schools, help others, and submit to the laws by respecting your authorities, and serving the community.

## D Submission Means Showing RESPECT

*Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

honor people – to attribute worth and value to everyone

love church – to love unconditionally believers in the H.S.

fear God – to appropriately revere and to respect God

honor king – to attribute worth and value to governance

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. J. I. Packer

PRAY – ENGAGE – CARE – SHARE – TELL – VALUE