



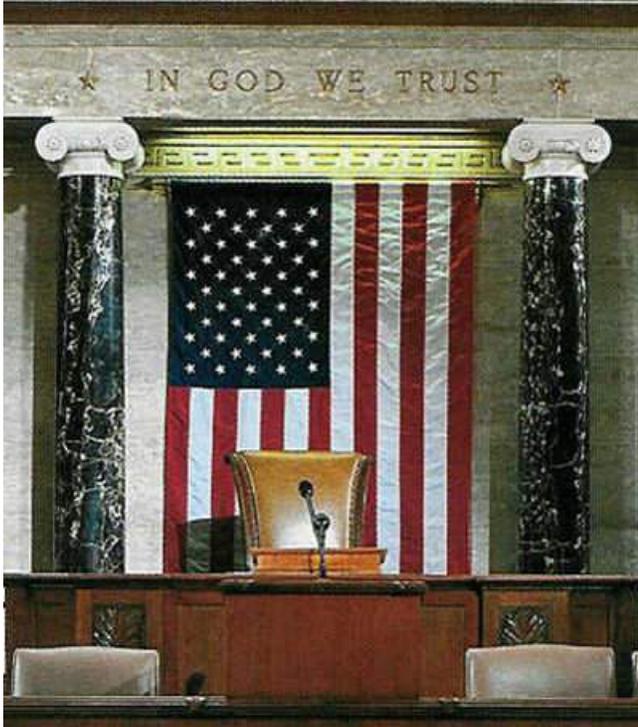
CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Bible Study: A Biblical Response to Gov't (1 Peter 2:13-17)

CALIFORNIA

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1 Peter 2:13-17 “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. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”

This passage provides at least five important insights regarding government.

1. GOVERNMENT IS GOD’S IDEA

1 Peter 2:13 “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake ...”

Some people of faith act as if government is an enemy to be battled, when actually God created the concept of human government and guides it for His good purposes. 1 Peter 2:1 therefore says we are to submit to government “for the Lord’s sake.”

Romans 13:1-3 states this even more clearly:

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.”

Not only is God the author of human government in general, but He guides the appointment of individual government leaders. *Daniel 2:21, “He removes kings and establishes kings.”* Note that this even includes ungodly leaders who do not acknowledge the Lord.

- *Exodus 9:16 God raised up Pharaoh, the ungodly leader of Egypt, for his purpose*

Did you know that the Bible has a lot to say about how we should regard and relate to the government? One passage that addresses this is found in 1 Peter 2:13-17.



**Frank Erb
Pastor to California’s Leaders**

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- *Isaiah 45:1* Cyrus, the ungodly leader of the Persian empire, is called God's "anointed"
- *Jeremiah 43:10* Nebuchadnezzar, the ungodly king of the Babylonian Empire, is called God's "servant."
- *John 19:11* Jesus to Pilate, the ungodly Roman governor, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above."

1 Peter 2:14 governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. (See also *Romans 13:3-4*.)

Notice that each of these five institutions has a different role in society. When one institution attempts to do what it was not created to do (i.e. the church doing the government's job, or government doing the family's job, etc...) problems and confusion invariably ensue.

Government's primary role is the protection of the people. When it does this well, it is functioning at its best.

2. GOVERNMENT SERVES AN IMPORTANT PURPOSE

1 Peter 2:13 "... as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right"

God has ordained five "human institutions," as they're called in 1 Peter 2:13.

1. **Marriage**
Purpose: to connect people
Genesis 2:24 two "become one flesh"
2. **Family**
Purpose: to create people
Genesis 1:28 "be fruitful and multiply"
3. **Church**
Purpose: to grow people
Ephesians 4:11-12 "to the building up of the body of Christ"
4. **Work/Business**
Purpose: to provide for people
Genesis 2:15 "the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."
5. **Government**
Purpose: to protect people

3. THEREFORE, WE SUBMIT TO GOVERNMENT

1 Peter 2:13-14 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors ..."

Since government is God's idea and has been created by Him for an important purpose, we are to "submit" to it. This word *submit* is from the Greek term *hupotasso*, which was a military term meaning "to rank under, to be subject to." Just as good soldiers follow orders and obey their commanders even when they disagree with them, we are called to submit to human laws even when we do not agree with them, recognizing that God has given government leaders legal rank over us for His good purposes.

This might well raise a few questions:

A. Does submitting to government mean we shouldn't be involved in politics?

No. We are fortunate to live in a country where the government, as Abraham Lincoln declared, is one "of the people, by the people, for the people." In other words, the American citizenry are, in a sense, in charge. So, it is good

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for all Americans to vote. It is good for us to speak up about what concerns us. It can even be good to respectfully criticize our government's decisions or rally others to be involved in a just cause. Some will even sense God's call for them to run for office, accept a government appointment, or work for the state, following in the example of esteemed men and women of God such as Moses, Joseph, Daniel, and Esther. After all, if we who are God's people do not participate in government when we are given the chance, then we certainly have no right to complain if government does not function as we would like it to. As Plato said centuries before Christ, "Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber."

"Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber." - Plato

B. Does submitting to government mean we relinquish our rights?

No. If we want to keep our legal rights, then we need to claim them. We see this demonstrated by the Apostle Paul in Acts 16:37 when he was illegally arrested for preaching about Christ and he scolded the police and civic leaders for violating his civil rights as a Roman citizen.

C. Does submitting to government mean we follow the laws even when we disagree with them?

Yes. For example, Jesus showed that we should pay taxes even when the government will use the money unjustly (Mark 12:13-17).

D. Is there ever a time when it is ok to break the law?

The only exception to obeying the law is when it clearly contradicts the command of God, who is our highest

authority. The author of our passage demonstrated this himself in Acts 5:29. There we read of Peter being arrested and commanded to stop teaching about Jesus, but he replies, "*We must obey God rather than men.*"

4. WE HONOR GOVERNMENT LEADERS

1 Peter 2:17 "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

Not only are we to submit to ruling authorities, but we are called to go even further and *honor* them. This can certainly be a tough sell in our day, when insulting government leaders online or in the media has become almost a sport for some people. The temptation to participate in this is nothing new.

- "*We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.*" - Aesop, born 620 B.C.
- "*Suppose you were an idiot and suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself.*" - Mark Twain

Some may even argue that today's leaders are so uniquely despicable that we have no option but to disrespect them. However, when Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:17, the king, or Emperor, was none other than Nero. We would be hard pressed to find any leader in history who was more evil or corrupt than this man. A short list of his well-known offences includes rape, incest, and widespread murder, including the assassination of his own mother and a heinous genocide against Christians that would ultimately include the execution of Peter himself.

How can we honor a leader who behaves so dishonorably? Again, just as soldiers salute even those commanders they do not like or respect, so we show honor for the office even if the person holding it is unworthy of it (see also Titus 3:1-2.)

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5. WE THEREBY SILENCE OUR ACCUSERS

1 Peter 2:15 “For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

What good can come from submitting to and showing honor to government in this way? Besides pleasing God by our obedience to Him, we in doing so may hope to *silence* (literally “muzzle”) those who ignorantly oppose God’s people. We demonstrate that though we regard ourselves as citizens of a heavenly kingdom (*Philippians 3:20, Colossians 1:13*), we are also model citizens of this world. Anyone who would persecute us must therefore do so without just cause.

In other words, if the world is going to hate us, let it hate us for our stand for the Gospel, and not because we deserve it. As Peter explained,

“If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4:14-15).

Furthermore, we remember that we who are God’s people are engaged in something much more important and enduring than earthly politics. Our ultimate mission is beyond this place that we’re just passing through. If we are model citizens of this corrupt but temporary world, we may gain a hearing to tell some people, including even some government leaders, the way to a more glorious eternal home.

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- Frank