

Christian Conduct as Good Citizen

1 Peter 2:13-17

Introduction

“Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable...” (v12).

Inward transformation of the heart should lead to outward reformation of our behavior.

Be a good citizen for the Lord's sake.

“Beloved, I urge you...” (v11).

“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” (v12).

Our singular purpose: *to deliver a message, to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

“For to this you have been called” (v21).

“you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who call you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (2:9).

“Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.... For this is the will of God” (v13a, 15a).

“when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (v12).

“The day of visitation is ‘the day of looking upon.’

“God shall look upon these wanderers as a pastor over his flock, and shall become the over-looker or bishop of their souls” (Vincent).

I. An Exhortation for Public Submission (vv13-14)

“Be subject” ‘to arrange in military fashion under the command of a leader.’

“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).

“By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern the earth” (Proverbs 8:15-16).

“He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings” (Daniel 2:21).

“for the Lord's sake”

“They said, ‘Caesar’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s’” (Matthew 22:21).

“to every human institution” literally, ‘every authority instituted among men.’

“The exhortation is not merely to obey ordinances, but to create and maintain that attitude of heart which will always lead one to obey them” (Wuest).

“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” (v14).

“For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed” (Romans 13:3-7).

“You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11).

Christians are to submit to the laws of man, all of them, unless of course complying with the laws of man interferes with the laws of God.

“So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 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, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard’” (Acts 4:18-20).

“But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men’” (Acts 5:29).

II. A Revelation of Divine Desire (v15)

“For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people”

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“that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people”

“put to silence” literally, ‘to close the mouth with a muzzle.’

Christian conduct must not only conform to the Word of God, it must also comply with the laws of man.

“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people” (Titus 3:1-2).

III. A Clarification on Christian Freedom (vv16-17)

“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God” (v16).

Free from what? Free to do what?

First, believers are free from bondage to sin, death, and condemnation from God!

“Whoever believes is not condemned” (John 3:18).

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2).

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin” (Romans 4:7-8).

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Second, believers are free to serve God and submit to His will.

“not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God”

Because of the remaining temptation of the flesh, Christians can abuse their freedom in Christ.

“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. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:13-14).

“As soon as the Christian employs freedom to advance his own cause, he no longer obeys the law of love; in fact, he fails to serve God” (Kistemaker).

The Christian is free to obey God, and selflessly, sacrificially serve his fellow man as a good citizen.

Summary duty as it relates to *Christian Conduct as Good Citizen*:

“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (v17).