

When Your Government Lets You Down

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Decision Making & God's Will

By Steve Viars

Bible Text: 1 Peter 2:13-17

Preached On: Sunday, September 22, 2013

Faith Church

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

Website: <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

If I asked you to list your last ten statements about some aspect of your government and then we flashed them up on the Powerpoint screen for everybody else to see, what would they sound like? What have you been saying recently about your government? Maybe it was something you said about the President's handling of the crisis in Syria. Or, maybe it's some opinion you have about health care legislation or the condition of our economy. It might have been a comment you made about a police or a fireman. Maybe one of our county commissioners or one of our mayors or city council persons or members of the area plan commission or staff. And maybe it was an evaluation you made of one of our state leaders or somebody in public education. There are a lot of people when it comes to the various branches and functions of our government and most of us have some opinions about all of that. We let those opinions fly from time-to-time, maybe some of us more than others but if we just took a look at what has recently come out of your mouth on those kind of topics or out of your keypad on those kinds of topics, what would they sound like?

Let's add this layer to that: what would God's analysis be of what you said? Would he pat you on the back and give you an "atta boy"; would he say that what you said was perfectly in line with his will and perfectly in line with his plan? And maybe that even leads to a slightly different question. Maybe we need to back up and even ask: should a person's Christianity, if that's what you would claim to be this morning, should it even impact the way you think or speak about other areas of your life? Or is all of this more like Tupperware: individual categories that never interact? So, you have your faith and you have your response to imperfect government but the two never intersect. Is that the way it is? Like the child who doesn't want his food to touch? Or is it more like one big bubbling casserole where the quality and composition of one ingredient invariably effects the overall value and taste of your meal?

Here's another question if I haven't irritated you yet: what about the sources of information you tend to heed when it comes to even framing your view of our government officials and functions? And I'm not even asking you only from the perspective of their level of truthfulness, I'm also asking you about the tone that they tend to take. For example: if a person listens regularly to Rush Limbaugh, is there a tone that he or she is likely to pick up and is that a good thing? And, I'm just asking questions here

in the church house this morning. Or, if a person tends to listen to National Public Radio, is there a tone, is there a viewpoint that a person is likely to develop and is that a good thing? Again, right now I'm not even taking sides on all of that, I'm just asking you to evaluate the sources that you tend to trust as you're formulating the way you think about and speak about our government and then to consider, does that source help you or hinder you from following God's will and accomplishing his plan in this area of your life? Because the bottom line is we're living in a time in our culture when the government's involvement in everyday life is quite large. That gives the average citizen a lot to think about and a lot to talk about and the question before the house is: what direction does the Word of God have for us as we try to navigate this important area of our lives?

With that in mind, let me invite you to open your Bible now to 1 Peter 2. That's on page 181 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you. This fall we're doing a verse-by-verse study of the book of 1 Peter and we're calling this "Decision Making & the Will of God" because passage after passage addresses practical areas of life that we all face day in and day out and the beauty of all of this is, God's Word has clear compelling truth to guide us as we try to determine what is the most pleasing way to live for the Lord in each step along the way.

Now, you say, "Why did Pastor Viars give that introduction? I mean, he must be wound up about something he saw in the news or something that somebody said this week and he decided to go off on the government or go off on something." Well, that's one of the reasons I like just preaching verse-by-verse through extended sections of the Word of God. I planned this particular message last November and the fact that there are all sorts of things happening in our country right now that make this text breathtakingly relevant it's not because of my great planning, it's because of the sovereign will of our God.

And what happens now in our study is Peter is going to turn his attention to the way we relate to our government and perhaps we could best title this text "Decision Making & the Will of God When Your Government Lets You Down" because there's no question about the fact that the government in Peter's day was incredibly corrupt. That would be the understatement of the day, okay? And there's also no question that our government today is imperfect in many ways. You say, "Why is that?" Well, because we're all living under the curse of sin. Imperfect people devise imperfect governments. You say, "Was that a compliment?" No, not really. It wasn't.

But what are followers of Jesus Christ supposed to do about all of that? Well, Peter makes that abundantly clear. He really does. 1 Peter 2, beginning in verse 13,

"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." Him, who? Him, God. "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."

There you have it. Decision Making & the Will of God When Your Government Lets You Down. And I want to suggest to you that in those verses of Scripture, we can find three steps that all of us ought to take when our government disappoints us. Are you ready? The first one is this: to assumed the right posture. This passage could not be any clearer about this: God calls upon you to submit yourself. Right? In 1 Peter 2:13, “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority.” Now, let me just tell you right now, before you run to the, “But, but, but, but, but,” or come up with all sorts of reasons why you don't have to follow this in your particular situation, or maybe even how the Word of God isn't right, part of exalting God like we sang about a few minutes ago in our worship time, is to learn to put ourselves under his Word and to come into the church house not ready to, first and foremost, judge the Bible or not to first judge the pastor, but to first judge ourselves. And to walk into the house of God with the distinct possibility that there may be things happening in your heart and life that our sovereign God wants to see changed.

And that begins by repentance. This is something that, frankly, in this culture, is not nearly well known or practiced as it ought to be by the evangelical church. So, when you hear a verse of Scripture like that, please don't run to the excuses and please run to your own heart and ask the Holy Spirit of God to help you right here, right now to evaluate what might be going on with your inner man and what might be going on in your outer man that is in disobedience to this passage.

“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority.” Peter uses the exact same word that we see in many places in Scripture when this concept is discussed. It's the Greek word *hypotasso*; it's a military term. They would've known that in that culture and we ought to know it today. God gives us a military term to help us understand this concept. Align yourself up in rank under and if you've ever been in the military, you understand exactly what you think about things is really not the issue. What the person over you has said and your desire and willingness to follow it is the issue because God is the one who has ordained government. Is that right? God is the one who ordained government and even submission on the part of citizens to an imperfect government is far better than anarchy and absolute lawlessness.

In fact, I think I need to say this: it's even broader than that, God is the one who has ordained authority in every relationship because I know some followers of Jesus Christ who don't seem to get that. They don't like authority period. Well, here is today's news flash: God is the one who created authority. God is the one who ordained authority. In fact, even authority and submission among equals. Did you know that? Anytime you get two people together, someone has to have the ultimate say. It just has to be that way. “What do you mean it has to be that way?” I can prove that so quickly theologically because did you realize there is submission in the Trinity? That's right.

Now, think about the Trinity for a moment. We all believe, I hope, that God is three persons in one essence: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and we believe that each person of the Trinity is 100% God. They are absolutely equal and so it's not like

the Holy Spirit is 80% God or Jesus is 95% God. No, our understanding of the Trinity is that God the Father is 100% God, God the Son is 100% God, God the Holy Spirit is 100% God. They are absolutely equal yet did God design submission to be necessary even within the Trinity among perfect persons? Absolutely. The Father sent the Son and the Son obeyed. The Son sent the Spirit and the Spirit obeyed. So, if there has to be submission even among equal persons and perfect persons, you'd better believe how much more so when it comes to managing the affairs of human beings who are laboring under the curse of sin.

God calls upon us as followers of Christ to adopt the posture in our hearts, our inner man, and our outer person to submit ourselves. That's one of the reasons why it's wise for husbands, by the way, to follow this principle with their government because other members of his family very well might follow his example in the way they respond to his authority. So, the man who sits down at the dinner table and starts spouting off about our President and walks all the way down through every level of government that he can think of and spouting off about how bad they are and criticizing them every way he possibly can and then criticizes his boss and then complains about the traffic ticket that the lazy policeman gave him on his way home and that ends up with some swipe about how bad the pastor's sermon was last Sunday, should not be surprised when his wife and his children will not follow his leadership in the home. You see, submission is not just the responsibility of some members of the family of God, it is the responsibility of *every* member of the family of God.

Also notice the reflective nature of this. The reflexive nature. The text says "submit yourselves," not do it if somebody else coerces you to do so, or if you can't find a way to get around it. The gospel of Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to assume the posture of submitting ourselves to the imperfect and sometimes disappointing government under which we live. And friends, we ought to do that in such an obvious overt way that those who live around us and certainly our governmental leaders would view us not as a group of people who always have something to gripe about. Or, as the power bloc that has to be continually pacified. Or, as people who are cynical and judgmental and harsh and self-righteous. We ought to be people who allow the power of Jesus Christ to motivate us to joyfully submit ourselves to them whenever possible.

And before you say, "but, but, but, but," please keep in mind that this was written when the wicked Emperor Nero was leading the government. We can't even begin to relate to what that would've been like and yet, this text is still the text. And I would encourage you to think about that list we made at the beginning that the last ten statements that you have made about somebody functioning at some level of our government, and I would also encourage you to think not just about the content of what you said, but also the tone in which you said it. Then ask yourself: would the person who heard that have automatically concluded that you are submitting yourself like this passage of Scripture clearly commands.

Let's add this phrase to the pile: Peter says do it for the Lord's sake. "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake." And I realize this morning you say, "Do you realize you're kind of

honking me off a little bit?” Well, I understand this message will irritate a few people which is exactly why I’m leaving the country tomorrow. I mean, I’m not a fool. I just kind of swooped in here for this sermon and I’m off somewhere else tomorrow. But I understand there very well may be some people who are really wound up right now about something happening at some level of our government and when I talk to you about adopting a posture of submission that doesn’t mean you always agree, by the way, but there is a difference between disagreeing submissively and disagreeing rebelliously. Do we understand that?

And I realize you might say, “I don’t even want to do what the Bible says about this.” Well, do you think the Lord would respond by saying, “Well, then, by all means, feel free to disregard what I’ve said.” That’s why this phrase, that’s why we believe in teaching the Word of God systematically verse-by-verse and sometimes word-by-word. That’s why this phrase “for the Lord’s sake” is so important. We’re talking about, as one writer said, “Promoting the welfare of your society and your government while you await your eternal home.” See, this is about the Lord’s sake, it’s about the Lord’s plan. These individuals felt like aliens. In fact, they were aliens because in many cases, they had been scattered by the actions of the very government they were called upon to submit themselves to. And yet Peter says, “Do this because the Lord has a plan. Do this, not for your sake, but for the Lord’s sake.”

This is very similar, by the way, to what occurred in the Old Testament when God’s people were carried away to Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah said to them, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them and plant gardens and eat their produce, take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands that they may bear sons and daughters and multiply there and do not decrease.” Now, hear this: “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for in its welfare you will have welfare.”

I understand that that was written to a particular context, I get that, but that principle is an example of how we would apply God’s command to submit ourselves to our government for the Lord’s sake. In other words, to accomplish his plan, to accomplish his purposes which apparently can best be fulfilled in this day and age in the exact culture he has sovereignly allowed for us to be living in today. See, do you think that what’s happening in our foreign policy, if you’re all wound up about that, is a surprise to our sovereign God? Do you think that what’s happening with our economy today is a surprise to our sovereign God? Do you think what’s happening in our Supreme Court, etc. etc. health care, blah, blah, blah, just put it on there, do you think any of that is a surprise to our sovereign God? Thank you for a “no” because please tell me that’s a “no” or else we’re switching the sermon right now. So, we all believe that the sovereignty of God which has a way of unwinding us from all of the tension and nervousness that some of us seem to constantly live under and then to ask ourselves how can we accomplish the purposes of God in this particular period in history and the Bible is clear: by adopting the posture of submitting yourself.

By the way, the Apostle Paul made a very similar statement to a man named Titus. In fact, if you've not read through the book of Titus recently, I would strongly encourage you to do that. You may remember that Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to, he said, "set things in order in all the churches." That's kind of what I'm trying to do right now. That was a tall order, especially in light of the wicked culture in which Titus was called to minister. You remember, he was in Crete. We get the word "cretan" from the place that Titus was serving at the time. In fact, the way Paul said it to Titus was almost humorous, he said, "There are many rebellious men in Crete, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'" And then Paul says, "This testimony is true." In other words, "Yeah, that about sums it up. They are liars. That's the kind of culture you're living in, Titus. People on the island of Crete, they're liars. They're evil beasts. They're lazy gluttons. Their own prophets even say that."

But then, what kind of instruction did Paul give to Titus and tell him he was to give to the church even when they were living in that kind of an evil culture? It's the same thing we're reading from Peter: "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to be subject to authorities, to be obedient," and hear this: "to be ready for every good deed." Did you hear that?

So, when the government thinks of Christians and churches they ought to have plenty of reasons to believe that we are in joyful and thankful submission to them whenever possible and we're ready to serve them whenever we can. What we want our government officials to constantly be thinking about us is, "I bet the churches would help us with that." Seek the welfare of the city. Do this for the Lord's sake. And I just want to remind everybody who is going to say this church is their home, that rebellious hyper-critical, self-centered people rarely, if ever, accomplish the will of our God.

This really gets sad, what I think might be a big part of the problem for many of us is: do we really believe that our sovereign God can accomplish his plan best by allowing our culture to unravel the way it is in this day and age and then to allow the power of the gospel to transform us as a group of people who joyfully submit and seek to serve even though our government is obviously imperfect in all sorts of ways?

Another reason we ought to do this is because of the government's purpose. Peter says, "Do this for governors as sent by God for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right." And if we're going to talk about government this morning and developing a biblical theology of government, at some point we have to go to this text. It's the most comprehensive text in Scripture, in the New Testament, about our relationship to government. Think about it. It's Romans 13, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities." There it is. "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." That's powerful. "And they who have

opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.” And churches, same way. “For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior but for evil.” Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes.” Can I get an “Amen” on that? I just paid my quarterly taxes, I’m self-employed. I don’t know if you know that as a pastor, so I just paid my quarterly taxes. There it is. Pleasing God, thankful for that opportunity because of this: you also pay taxes “for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”

That’s what the Scripture says about this very text and when you combine these two passages, we find three central purposes of government: the restraint of evil, the promotion of public good and the punishment of wrongdoing. And Peter says that when we do the will of God in this way, we can actually silence the ignorance of foolish men. Did you see that? Even though I get the fact that we live under an imperfect government, but when we choose to submit ourselves, to treat our government authorities with respect and honor because of the position that God has placed them to be thankful individuals and looking for ways to serve, seeking the welfare of the city, the text says you can actually silence the ignorance of foolish men.

I love that word, it’s the Greek word phimoo which means “to restrain; to muzzle; to make speechless.” You don’t silence the ignorance of foolish men by joining them in their rebellion. You silence the ignorance of foolish men by letting the gospel of Jesus Christ transform you into something that is entirely different. That’s why I was so glad to see this picture on the front page of our newspaper last Sunday and I’m really glad about the young people from Faith West who allowed themselves to be interviewed for that particular story. And when you think about that culturally right now in the backdrop of the West Lafayette police having an incredible challenge right now with the number of loud parties and underage drinking which is a significant problem in West Lafayette neighborhoods this fall. Thank God for young people who are willing to stand up and talk about the difference that Jesus makes in one’s life. How could you argue against that? And when you choose to joyfully submit to the laws in one’s culture, when you do right, you silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Now, is there any balance to all of this? We believe theologically in interpreting the Bible in light of the Bible and so any time we talk about submission, we probably need to make the point that the Lord has never entrusted ultimate authority to any human institution which is why Peter had made the point about 30 years earlier when the authorities were trying to get he and his friends to stop proclaiming the gospel. At some point, I understand, we must obey God rather than men. So, yes, we submit ourselves to our government unless doing so would clearly be disobedience to the Word of God.

Now, I think we have enough on the table to ask some evaluative questions, don't we? And you would want your pastor to love you so much that he would lead you in some evaluative questions right now because you came to the church house to let the Word of God help you see ways that you need to change. Am I right about that? Could I get an "uh-huh?" In fact, you could even get the "I love you, Pastor" look on your mug right now if you wanted to. It'll help. The castor oil will go down better with a smile on your mug. Seriously, does the way you think about and does the way you talk about and does the way you behave toward our government, at whatever level you want to talk about, does it meet the requirements of this text? And does the source of news that you tend to follow contribute to you having the kind of biblical posture for the Lord's sake or does it detract from it?

Where does the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ intersect this discussion? That's where verse 16 fits into all of this. We could say this, "Take the right action, then. Act as free men." So, it's not just a matter of posture, it's not just a matter of the heart, "Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God." In other words, the gospel frees you from being a sinful citizen. You're a free man if you know Christ. You're a free woman if you know Christ.

If you've not trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, I would just pause and say to you that the possibility of having an entirely different framework for daily living could very well be what God used to draw you to himself today because I understand that for some folks, they say, "Man, what I'm hearing right now, it's like you just came from the moon. This is so different than the way people speak in my office. This is so different than the way people speak on the internet. This is so different than what I hear in so many different places." That's right because Jesus Christ wants to change your life. Jesus Christ wants to give you new life in him and it would be impossible for you to live this way, especially in light of all the imperfections of our government, unless you have chosen to make Jesus Christ your Savior and your Lord, letting him be the one who is in charge of the way you think and letting him be the one who is in charge of the way you live and trusting him for the strength to do that even when it's hard. The gospel frees you from being a sinful citizen.

Now, let's think about this together: what are some of the sinful tendencies that would make it very difficult to be the kind of citizen articulated in this text? Here is one: a person who is proud and self-righteous. See, if the way you approach your government is in pride and self-righteousness, you'll never do what this text says. I was traveling last weekend and had finished speaking at one conference and I was preparing to go out to dinner with another church's leadership team and I had a few minutes in my hotel room so I turned on the news because I was just wanting to catch up on what was happening in Syria. There was a panel of journalists on and they were taking turns talking about all the ways President Obama and his cabinet had failed in our nation's response toward Syria.

Now, let me ask you a question: do you think if you were the President, you would've done any better? Seriously? Some of you can't even solve an argument between you and your honey. Do you think if you were the President you would have done any better? In

fact, can you name anyone, any man, woman, boy or girl that if he or she was the President, the Syrian crisis would be solved and behind us? And the principle is: pride and self-righteousness are often the product of a rebellious heart. And the gospel of Jesus Christ stands ready to free us from that and I want to suggest to every person who's going to call this church their home, that we ought to spend a whole lot more time praying for our President than criticizing him. That's not a political statement, by the way. This is not getting out to vote, I'm tell you, whoever God has allowed to be our President has to be honored by the people of God and should be faithfully prayed for.

And if you don't believe that, then you don't get it. It's so clear in the Bible in places like 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." And the media sources that some people who call this church their home, listen to are going to lead you to a lifestyle of anything other than quietness, godliness and dignity and it needs to change. It just needs to change.

What else? What other sinful habits will prevent us from being the kind of citizen that God wants us to be and that the gospel frees us to be? Here's another answer, it's a big one: ungratefulness. Friend, regardless of what you think of our country, there is no question that we are the envy of much of the world and for good reason. We have much for which to be thankful and followers of Jesus Christ ought to be the first in line to offer thanks to God and the appropriate civil servants for all that we enjoy because we are now a slave to righteousness and service. And I realize you may say, "I don't want to do what you're saying." It doesn't matter. The question is: what does my Lord, what does my Master want me to be and how does he stand ready to help me to act as free men. Do not use your freedom as a covering for evil. I sometimes wonder if the evangelical church is not a haven for people who just love to hate, who love to be angry, who love to be cynical all the time and now think they can do that in the name of God.

"But use it as bondslaves of God." In fact, here's something I think would help every person in our church this week: to repeatedly read the book of Titus in as many different versions of the Bible as you can get your hands on. And before you send me an email, don't fuss at me about that. It takes about 15 minutes. There will be people that hear this sermon today and say, "I would never do that, but I can name all the people on Dancing with the Stars." Seriously? So, don't email me and say, "You don't tell me to read the Bible." Oh, for crying out loud. And, yes, I got in very late last night, okay. I get that, so I'll try to get the grump thing off by the next service. I do want to encourage you to read the book of Titus repeatedly in as many different versions of the Bible as you possibly can because that book develops the theme that Peter initiated in ways that are undeniable, that is practical and potentially life changing.

In fact, here's a couple of verses that are just key from that book. Please lock on. This is the Word of God. Well, remember, this is written to people ministering in Crete. "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently," that's what pastors are supposed to do, "so that those who have believed God will be careful to," what? "Engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."

And then he says at the end of the book a few verses later, “Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs.” That’s the way you relate to imperfect government. As a result of being submissive and thankful, “Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.” And I would just ask you to think about this, this morning: what would happen if all the criticism and all the complaining about our government on the part of American Christians was instead channeled into learning to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs? How much further down the road would we be of accomplishing the purposes of our God?

And that’s why I am so glad, by the way, the five year Strategic Ministry Plan that our congregation has assembled this year and just approved a couple of Sunday nights ago, it’s chock-full with that very kind of thing. We’re not going to position ourselves for the next five years as some sort of a political action committee. We’re not going to position ourselves as some sort of voting bloc that’s demanding our way on something. We are looking for as many pressing needs as we possibly can find in our community and we’re looking for ways to serve and love those around us for the purpose of being in a position to powerfully proclaim the saving gospel of Christ. And I’m glad as you just unpack that five year plan, it is filled with those kinds of initiatives. That very thing. Engaging in good deeds in order to meet pressing needs.

You’ll see an article in your newspaper today that I would encourage you to pay attention to. It’s about the New Chauncey Community Housing Development Organization that just refurbished a house over there. They do it because they’re trying to turn rental property back into owner-occupied. I’m not saying it’s a biblical issue, I’m not here to make a statement about that, I’m just saying that article is about them. That is the very same kind of organization that our government has recently asked us to start. Our government came to us, our city government, and you passed this as part of your initiatives a couple of weeks ago and our deacons voted Thursday night to begin the legal process to organize a Community Development Corporation and we’re actually going to be partnering with our government to identify homes that are in need of being refurbished and then working with neighborhood associations to refurbish those homes and then to make them available for low income buyers. You say, “What? Are we now in the housing business?” Well, maybe a little bit. What’s wrong with that? To engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs.

And if our government is saying, “We would like, of all the non-profits we could have partnered with, we would like to ask Faith Church to step up and do this on this side of the river,” because right now the city government does not have one CHODO on this side of the river. And they told us, “As we’ve thought about this, we want to ask your church to do that,” and there’s a lot of reasons why but one of them is that they say, “We realize you’re going to be interested in a whole lot more than building homes. We know you’re going to be interested in bringing wrap around services for that buyer and for that neighborhood and we believe, as a result of these efforts, those neighborhoods would become better places.” Now, when your government is asking you to do that, how long

would it take you before you would say perhaps the hand of God is in that? Perhaps that is a pressing need that we ought to engage in good deeds in order to meet.

How does this text end? Well, by cultivating the right spirit. Peter says, “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.” Honor the king. Honor the king. And, again, before the “but, but, but, but,” let me remind you for the third time now: this was written when Nero was the king and yet they were still commanded to honor the king. Do you know something? Let’s talk about another take-away. Do you want a homework assignment? I could stand up here all day, you know. Here’s what I think would be marvelous, absolutely and, by the way, it’s a lost art, it’s my task, I think, to bring this art back. Back in the old days, when somebody did something kind for us, we would take a pen, it’s a strange instrument, has ink in it and you can write letters. And we would take a Thank You note and we would actually, and my Momma taught me that there needed to be a really short time between when somebody did something for you and when you were writing them a Thank You note. Do you remember when we did that? Back in the old days? There are some people that do not know that art anymore. And the reason they don’t have thankful hands is because they don’t have thankful hearts.

You might want to ask yourself: when was the last time you wrote a Thank You note to anybody? Here’s what I think would be a marvelous thing: if a whole bunch of people from our church this week stopped by Wal-Mart and just keep going down 26 until you buyout every pad of Thank You notes that exist in this town and then turn off your television and turn Rush, in fact, if you’re listening to him on the radio, throw him off the cliff, and write some Thank You notes to people in our government for whom we ought to be incredibly thankful. You ought to thank John Dennis for the price he paid in standing up for Faith West and don’t send him an email. Emails are lame, although I send them all the time, but I’m talking about something that actually took some thought. You ought to thank him for that. Tony Roswarski is a marvelous mayor. He has an incredibly open heart toward faith-based organizations working in our community and if you’ve not thanked him, I want to encourage you to do that this week. You ought to be thankful for our government and we just walked down through so many people in public education, so many people in the judicial system.

I would challenge you: get a pad of Thank You notes and write some Thank You notes and as you’re doing that, ask the Lord to help you have a thankful heart for our government that would lead you to the kind of submissive posture that we’re talking about today, that would lead you to embrace serving opportunities to seek the welfare of our city, to have a platform for a more powerful proclamation of the gospel.

Let’s stand together for prayer, shall we?

Our Father in heaven, thank you that your Word is so clear and, Lord, we confess to you today that we can sometimes cultivate minds that are incredibly muddled on these matters. So, Lord, would you forgive us if we haven’t been getting this one right and would you help us to repent and would you help us to change and would you help us to

be the kind of people that would relate to our government in a way that was a testimony of Christ. We ask this in his Name. Amen.