



A BETTER RESISTANCE | NO ONE TELLS ME WHAT TO DO (8)

March 7, 2021

1 Peter 2:13-17

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

BACKGROUND

Taken from The Early Christian Letters by N.T. Wright:

“As the letter goes on, we realize that Peter is not imagining for a moment that [living under authority] will be easy, or that the authorities will always and instantly respect followers of Jesus. Far from it. The Christians will be called to suffer, to suffer greatly, to suffer unjustly—after the pattern of Jesus himself. But all that happens within this solid advice, to which the moral and social compass must swing back after whatever interruptions may occur. Christians are to respect all people. They are to love the family—in other words, to share with other Christians anything that is needed. They must always put God himself first in everything. And—they must pay respect to the emperor. Though respect does not mean, of course, that you agree with everything the emperor says and does.”

PURPOSE

To understand how the gospel enables Christians to use their freedom in Christ to serve God and to others

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can Christians show respect to those in authority even when we think they are wrong?
2. What do you think Peter means in verse 16 when he writes, “live as people who are free?” What freedom(s) do you think he might be referring to?
3. Peter says that God's people should do good and behave well in order to silence their critics. What are some practical ways Christians can do this?

Question 1: The purpose of this question is to understand what it means to submit to the authority that he has placed over Christians. The exception to this is that God's authority always supersedes all other authority. So, Christians are to submit to those in authority EXCEPT in anything that directly causes them to disobey God.

LEADER'S NOTES

God can use civil authority to deter evil and to give justice. He can also use them to encourage and uphold good behavior. Christians are to live as such good citizens and such godly lives that their actions will put to silence any false charges against them. Those who imitate Christ and pursue good will honor God and bear witness to the truth and power of the gospel.

Christians are to be subject to every civil authority. The apostle Paul writes about this in Romans 13:1-7. This passage may be worth reading to your group as it can give additional clarity.

¹ 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. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ 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, ⁴ 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. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ 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.

Question 2: Freedom in Scripture is not a license to sin but expresses itself in devotion to what is good. It means that Christians are no longer bound to their inclination towards sin, but through the work of God's grace, are free to love and serve God and others in a new way.

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

The Westminster Confession of Faith puts it this way:

"The liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the Gospel, consists 1) in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil world, 2) bondage to Satan and dominion of sin; 3) from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also, 4) in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto Him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and willing mind."

Question 3: The "goodness" that is produced by God in the life of the Christian can be self-attesting because of the innate capacity people have to recognize moral goodness. This includes acts of love, kindness, generosity and mercy. Such goodness can be very attractive and compelling to the "watching" world who are skeptical of the beliefs of Christians.