

Christians as Citizens

1 Peter 2.12-17

¹² *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

¹³ *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. ¹⁶ Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. ¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.*

As Christians we are citizens of heaven, and our permanent residence is there, but we live temporarily on earth. The way we live down here as citizens, recognizing the political and economic and sociological structures of the society in which we live, is very important. We're not just spiritual people living in a spiritual vacuum; our true spirituality is demonstrated as we live in the midst of a secular society.

There are three particular areas of concern that Peter mentions which relate to our unique position in secular society – **authority, liberty and dignity**.

The Christian Citizen and Their Relationship to Authority

⁵ *All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'* Proverbs 3.24

⁶ *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.* 1 Peter 5.5b-7

¹ *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.*

⁶ *This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.* Romans 13.1-7

¹⁸ *Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, 'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. ²⁰ For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.'* Acts 4.1-21

The Christian Citizen and Their Relationship to Liberty

Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 1 Peter 2.16

²² *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.* James 1.22-25

The Christian Citizen and Dignity

Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. 1 Peter 2.17

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