

PETER'S EPISTLES

1 Peter: Living In Conflict With The Culture

X. Relating Righteously To The Secular Government

(1 Peter 2:13-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Several believers in different states of the nation have reported on the increasing difficulty they face in living in accord with Bible truth since doing so conflicts with the godless world's deteriorating culture.
- B. "First Peter was written to Christians . . . whose stand for Jesus Christ made them aliens and strangers in the midst of a pagan society" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 837), so we study 1 Peter for our edification.
- C. 1 Peter 2:13-17 calls us to relate righteously to the secular government, and we view it for our insight:

II. Relating Righteously To The Secular Government, 1 Peter 2:13-17.

- A. Peter's call for believers living under Emperor Nero just before his outbreak of persecution against them in A. D. 64 to submit to every "creation" (*ktisei*), that is, every "law" or "institution" made by man may initially seem to direct that we are to obey the government blindly, 1 Peter 2:13a; *Ibid.*, p. 847.
- B. However, this is the same Peter who called for Biblical civil disobedience against human authorities in Acts 5:29, which disobedience was practiced by Old Testament Daniel in Daniel 6:6-10.
- C. Peter's phrase "for the Lord's sake" in 1 Peter 2:13b provides the clarification we need (as follows):
 - 1. We Christians are to obey government authorities in alignment with God's will, for God was the One Who instituted human government in Genesis 9:5-6 to provide for law and order in society:
 - a. The institution of government with its authority to administer capital punishment for murder in Genesis 9:5-6 followed the Noahic Flood that God used to destroy the godless world that was full of violent murder, cf. Genesis 6:13.
 - b. God intended that murder be curbed by instituting capital punishment for this crime, to be administered by human government, thus providing for a lawful society for mankind's safety.
 - 2. However, when Israel's leaders had crucified God's Messiah and intended to stop people from hearing the Gospel of eternal salvation by directing the Apostles not to preach in Christ's name, those officials failed in their divine assignment to provide for man's welfare while also calling for the Apostles to disobey God relative to their ministries, so the Apostles had to obey God over man.
 - 3. Thus, our obedience to human government is to be made as a means of upholding our testimony in the Lord, and that requires us to obey government when it rightly upholds law and order while also practicing civil disobedience when upholding obedience to God and our testimony demands it.
- D. Peter then called his readers to submit to orderly secular government and its officials, be it the king as supreme, or governors who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well, 1 Peter 2:13c-14.
- E. God's will is thus fulfilled in our heeding an orderly secular government, for by heeding the authorities, we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men who slander us as being lawless, 1 Peter 2:15.
- F. Peter clarified that the believer's submitting to civil authorities did not negate their liberty in Christ (cf. Galatians 5:1, 18), but that our decision of our own free will to heed the civil authorities of an orderly government is God's will in presenting a good testimony before the world, 1 Peter 2:16a.
- G. However, obeying the government should never be used as a cover-up (*epikalymma*, lit. a "veil," *Ibid.*) for evil, but we should live as slaves of God though being free before the world, 1 Pet. 2:16b; *Ibid.*
- H. In summary, we believers should respect everyone, love the brotherhood of fellow believers, revere God and honor the king, a fourfold summation of Christian citizenship in a godless world, 1 Peter 2:17; *Ibid.*

Lesson: *To relate righteously to the secular government, we believers must realize that God instituted human government as a rewarder of those in society who do good but a punisher of those who do evil, that we then submit to every law and institution of orderly civil government. However, the secular government at times may fail in God's objective for it to where it demands that believers do what disobeys God's will for them, so we believers must practice civil disobedience when the demands of the government and God counter each other.*

Application: *(1) May we seek to heed all laws and institutions of human government to do God's will and uphold a good testimony in society. (2) May we obey human government even if its expectations are hard for us, (3) but may we practice Biblical civil disobedience when the directives of God and government for us clash.*