

## How Should Christians Respond to the Government?

1 Peter 2:13-17

We continue our series through 1 Peter entitled "Elect Exiles." This is the term Peter calls Christians in the opening verse. "Elect" means chosen and loved by God; He loved us first. "Exiles" means we are not quite at home in this world, for it is a foreign land far from our true home, which is with the Lord.

Here's the problem with being an elect exile: "I'm not sure what to think about the people ruling over me..."

- *Elect.* Not only are we loved and forgiven by God, we are also ruled by Him. Jesus is Lord! This is great news:
  - Perfect, competent, self-sacrificing leadership
  - Paradoxically, only His rule brings true freedom!
- *Exile.* Jesus is not visibly ruling here on earth. All things have not been fixed in this broken world. So I'm not home.
  - Plus, there are human "authorities" that claim they can tell me what to do! But only Jesus is Lord, right? What should I do?

Three options towards the authorities: we may give *fight, flight, or respect.*

- All three are commanded by God at different times in the Old Testament (!)
- But when the Israelites were exiles, consider Jeremiah 29:4-23. No fight or flight commanded by God.

Let's read today's passage: 1 Peter 2:13-17

"Be subject to" and "honor" pagan Emperor Nero and his officials. But why, Peter?

1. *It's about the Lord.* "For the Lord's sake" (2:13)
2. *It's about the government.* Its task is a good one: "to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good" (2:14; see also Romans 13:1-7).
3. *It's about your neighbors.* "To silence the ignorance of foolish people" (2:15)
  - Some said that Christianity will breed lawless rebellion and destroy society.

[Pushback] Respect, be subject to, honor – what are the limits here? If we are mere doormats, will not this unleash governmental injustice?

- No silent doormat here: Paul appeals to Romans officials against his illegal mistreatment (Acts 16:37, 22:25).

How to apply this passage? Any examples?

### Questions for reflection and application:

1. Read 1 Peter 2:13-17 and the similar statements from Paul in Romans 13:1-7.
  - If you had to summarize these passages in one sentence, what would it be?
  - Be honest: do you *like* this teaching? (Some people do, some people don't.) Why or why not? Either way it says something about your personality and value system.
  - How can you show proper respect to the governing authorities? Give a couple of practical examples.
2. Note Paul's behavior in Acts 16:37 and 22:25. Paul appeals to Roman law and his legal rights as a citizen. May we do something similar?