

## 1 Peter 2:13-17, Part D

**1Pe 2:13 (NKJV) Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,<sup>14</sup> or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.<sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men--<sup>16</sup> as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.<sup>17</sup> Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**

The main thing that Peter is doing in this entire section through [1 Peter 3:9](#) is exhorting us as believers to develop an attitude of willful and pleasant submission to God-ordained authority that honors and glorifies Him. In that process, however, He does not in any way indicate that all of the different levels of authority that we are impacted by will be good. That would be great, but that simply is not the case, and ultimately that is what so often causes tension for people. It is more than apparent that many segments of our culture today are increasingly “anti-authority”. There are segments of the culture that literally hate authority and have no intention of obeying authority. There are organizations like the Black Panthers that are bent on destroying the very integrity of governmental authority so that they can set up their own states of authority. I watched video a couple of years ago where they publically indicated that they were going to saturate certain states with their followers, over-populate, become the dominant voting force, and then secede from the Union and form their own state.

Now, that may be more of an exceptional and atypical case, but there are many other segments of the culture where the whole idea of “authority” is viewed with contempt, disdain, and cynicism. Even Christians are prone to criticizing every form of government and government officials that they do not like. It has almost become somewhat stylish to resist authority, to disregard authority, and to ignore the laws that are associated with those in authority. However, what we understand biblically from verses like [Romans 13:1-2](#) is that authority is God-ordained. We can go so far as to say that different levels of authority are a God-ordained institution. Put another way, if Christians want to be rightly related to God, then they must be rightly related to authority. Scripture seems more than clear that all authority comes from God and originated with Him, and that He has delegated the principle of authority to man to maintain a level of order in the world. Obviously, there are those who are very good authorities and there are those who are terrible authorities. The following are several verses dealing with the reality of God-ordained authority. [Romans 13:1-2](#) says,

**Ro 13:1 (NKJV) Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.<sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.**

The Greek word for “**ordinance**” in v2 is “**diatage**” and it means an arrangement, an institution. In fact, the verb form of the word is “**diatasso**” and means to appoint, to ordain where “**tasso**” means to arrange in an orderly manner, thus to assign, to ordain. I.e., the word represents that which is God has ordained to bring about order.<sup>1</sup> Now, just so that we do not lose sight of the context in which [Romans 13:1-2](#) was being written, Paul says that “**the authorities that exist are appointed by God**”. The word for “**appointed**” comes from the same Greek word “**tasso**”. The KJV and ASV say “**ordained**”, the NASB

and NIV say “**established**”, and the ESV says “**instituted**”. The emperor at the time that Paul was writing this passage was Nero – as bad of an authority figure as one could imagine. That is the historical context of this passage. I can just hear what someone may be thinking and wants to ask. They want to know if God appoints bad authorities. Based on this verse, it is certainly obvious that He very well may – “**the authorities that exist are appointed by God**”. It seems that what Paul is saying is that God has ordained institutions that have the power to govern with authority and that there will be people in those institutions that are not good leaders. It seems that this is in proper alignment with [Romans 1](#) where God gives people over to their various lusts and cravings, and in this case He gives them the kinds of governors and kings that they want – those who allow them to live how they want.

Then, we are told in [1 Timothy 2:1-2](#) to pray for those in authority,

**1Ti 2:1 (NKJV) Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.**

Please appreciate that this verse does not say to just pray for the good authorities, but for “**all who are in authority**” – which obviously includes those who are not good authority figures.

Then, it is interesting to see some of the verses that deal with the types of people who resist authority. For instance, [2 Peter 2:9-11](#) speaks about those who “**despise authority**”,

**2Pe 2:9 (NKJV) then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, <sup>10</sup> and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, <sup>11</sup> whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.**

Here these people are described as self-willed, presumptuous, as people who walk according to the flesh, and who are unclean. The word for “**despise**” in v10 is “*kataphroneo*” where “*kata*” means against and “*phroneo*” means to think, or simply to think against. It means to think evil against someone, to think lightly of them, to despise completely.<sup>2</sup>

[Jude 1:8](#) says,

**Jude 1:8 (NKJV) Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.**

This passage seems to be even stronger than [2 Peter 2:9-11](#). It says that those people who rejected authority were “**ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ (v3)**” as well as those in Sodom and Gomorrah who gave themselves over to “**sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh (v7)**.” That is not good company!

The word “**reject**” is “*atheteo*” and means to get rid of, to abolish, to displace, to deny, to despise, to condemn.<sup>3</sup> These are not nice words. These are words that indicate the attitude that someone has towards someone else, and in this case, that attitude is directly linked to their ungodly and immoral lifestyle,

Now, at the most fundamental level, Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority for the believer. [Matthew 28:18](#) says,

**Mt 28:18 (NKJV) And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

As believers, we understand that God has established and ordained authority as an institution, but our ultimate authority is to Christ, and He commands us to have a right and godly attitude towards those in authority – even bad authority. For some people, I know that will be a hard pill to swallow, but nevertheless, it is God’s will for the believer’s life.

Now, what is important to understand is that God has created three distinct institutions of what we could call “subordinate authority levels” to Him to which we must all show honor and respect. It is as much of a showing of respect to Christ as it is to the institutions since Christ is the One who created them. The three institutions are the family, the state, and the church. Take the family, for instance. The children are to obey their parents, the wife is to be submissive to her husband, and the husband is to be submissive to Christ and love his wife as Christ loved the church. We have just reviewed how we as Christians are to honor those in God-ordained government who exercise authority over us. In the church, we submit ourselves to the headship of Christ and to theocratically appointed leaders who are under the control of Christ.

Someone is going to ask the question, “*Well what about bad authority? Am I to obey those who are wicked?*”. Well, what we previously established is that we are as long as what those in authority are asking us to do does not conflict with the righteous laws and principles of God. When God had the apostles pen some of these authority principles, He certainly knew that we would not always have “good” authorities to obey. The principle, though, is still the same. As long as what we are being asked to do does not conflict with God’s laws, then we are to respect all of those in authority over us. If they do conflict with God’s laws, then we may be called on to actually suffer for the sake of the gospel and righteousness.

The last thing that we as Christians want to be found doing is “rebellious” against God-ordained authority. In reality, the greater someone’s contempt for God-ordained authority, the greater will be our contempt for the authority of Christ over our personal life. If God is the author of authority, then Satan is the author of rebellion against authority. So, the guiding principle for the believer should be an attitude where even if we may disagree with the policies and decisions of those in authority, we still must treat them with respect and honor. If we do that, then most likely we will be much more inclined to submit ourselves to Christ’s authority over our life, as well as willingly submitting ourselves to the Word of God.

Every part of my life, whether in the family, the church, the workplace, or the nation is to be such that it is all seen in its relation to God. This would be the question that we should ask – “*In this area of my life, am I rightly related to what God wants me to do?*” Every Christian, no matter what their age, has to answer this question. I.e., am I rightly related to my spouse, to my children, to my parents, to my spiritual leaders, to my employers, and to my government? Is there anything in my life that I am doing in any of these areas that would bring dishonor to God because of either my attitude or my behavior against their

authority over certain areas of my life? Please remember first and foremost that submission is an attitude much more than an action.

The ultimate target, the relentless goal of our life is that we should always be willing to live our life “**for the Lord’s sake**” (v13) no matter how difficult it may often become. Without over-reacting to that statement, please keep in mind that there is always a God-ordained balance - always. When we studied earlier about Daniel and his three friends, God gave Daniel a spiritual out, but he first had to have the correct attitude – which he did. He approached the eunuch with great respect and dignity, and not in a kind of belligerent or demanding way. He was not argumentative or confrontational. To the contrary, he was kind, gracious, and complimentary. In most cases, the spiritual out for each of us in the culture in which we live is that our life – whether in our marriage, in the workplace, or in other areas of life, is governed by laws that protect us from being abused and mistreated. Use those laws. That is why they were created – to protect people from being abused and mistreated.

So, the principle is simple - the ultimate authority to whom we submit ourselves is God. We keep yielding ourselves to God, to His Word, and to His principles. We yield today, we yield tomorrow, and we yield the day after tomorrow. We can never go wrong when we completely trust God with our lives. He is wiser and stronger than we could ever imagine, but we must keep in mind that His ways are not our ways. As believers we understand that God has sovereignly raised up certain individuals for His own unrevealed purposes and He has given them authority over certain aspects of our life. So, “**for the Lord’s sake**” and for His glory and because of His sovereign will over all things, we can honor those who have been placed over us. At a personal level, I find great peace and rest in that.<sup>4</sup> When we are able to trust God in the most difficult circumstances, it is then that we truly are living out the Christian life, and ultimately that is when our life will bring the greatest glory to God.

In our passage of Scripture in [1 Peter 2:13-17](#), I contend and maintain that even bad government is better than no government. Where there is no government, the only thing that can result from that is total anarchy. I read the following by a historian by the name of Arnold Toynbee and he said: “*As long as original sin remains an element in human nature, Caesar will always have plenty to do.*” One of the divine purposes of any government is to minimize the impact and effect of those who are going to be disorderly and rebellious. I do not want to be on the same road with people who are drunk or on hallucinatory drugs. That is why they take drunks who are driving straight to jail and they lose their license. It is the order that is produced by the government in America that allows the gospel to be preached to those who are lost. It is what allows us to go to the grocery store without fear. It is what allows us to travel without fear.

We have to keep in mind the purpose for submission that is given in [1 Peter 2:13\(b\)](#) – “**for the Lord’s sake**”. That is always the motive, always the intent, always the target for the Christian. It never changes or is diminished. It is always “**for the Lord’s sake**”. Listen once again to [1 Peter 2:21](#),

1Pe 2:21 (NKJV) **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

This is what John MacArthur rightly calls “model behavior” for the believer. Every level of authority that Christ lived under was unjust rulers. Herod tried to kill Him as a young boy. Pilate was a complete hypocrite. All of the religious leaders were corrupt and hated the government to which they were being

held accountable. Pilate publically admitted that he found no fault in Christ, but still consented in allowing Him to be unmercifully beaten and crucified by his own Roman guards. However, Christ never tried to overthrow the government or oppose their right to rule over the people. He never led demonstrations against slavery or social injustice or became involved in political and social reform. He did not even object when He was arrested and falsely accused.<sup>5</sup> Why? It was because He fully understood the higher purposes of God that were being worked out in His life.

Paul simply closes out this section with v17 when he says,

**1Pe 2:17 (NKJV) Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Zodhiates, 441.

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 847.

<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, 89.

<sup>4</sup> Precept, *1 Peter 2:13-17*, ep.

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, 147.

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