

## **“Honor Everyone...Including the Emperor”**

1 Peter 2:13-17

### **CONTEXT OF 1 PETER**

- 1. Peter wrote to Christians who were experiencing suffering and being persecuted for their faith. 1:6**
- 2. Peter reminded Christians of our true home, identity, and calling in this world. 1:1; 2:9-10**
- 3. Peter taught Christians how to live in this world which is not our home. 2:11-12**

### **LIVING FREELY IN SUBMISSION TO GOD. 1 Peter 2:13-17**

#### **1. The role of the Christian in relationship to the government. v.13-14a**

- A Christian is to be subject to human government. subject to = submit to
- We are called to submit to governing authorities even though they are imperfect and run by fallen people.
- We are called to pray for those who govern us. 1 Timothy 2:1-3

#### **2. The role of those who govern. v.14b**

- The role of government is to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good. v.14b
- Governing authorities administer justice ('bear the sword') & collect taxes. Rom 13:1-7; Lk 20:21-25

#### **3. How then should a Christian live in this arena? v.15-16**

- The Christian will fulfill the Lord's will in this arena "by doing good." V.15
- Christians are called to 'live freely' as "servants of God." v.16
- But do not use your freedom as an excuse to sin. v.16

#### **4. The Christian is called to live a life of honor, love, and fear in their various relationships. v.17**

- Peter summarizes with 4 imperatives (commands):
- Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood (Christians). Fear God. Honor the emperor.

### **THE NECESSITY OF PROMOTING THE COMMON GOOD.**

- Some lessons from our Founding Fathers...

#### **1. The necessity of religious piety for society to function. I.e., “True virtue promotes the common good.”**

- John Witherspoon: "To promote true religion is the best and most effectual way of making a virtuous and regular people. Love to God and love to man is the substance of religion; when these prevail, civil laws will have little to do.... The magistrate (or ruling party of any society) ought to encourage piety...[and] make it an object of public esteem."<sup>1</sup>
- James Madison: "...the belief in a God All Powerful, wise and good, is so essential to the moral order of the World and to the happiness of man, that arguments which enforce it cannot be drawn from too many sources...."<sup>2</sup>
- John Witherspoon: "Those who are vested with civil authority ought...to promote religion and good morals among all under their government."<sup>3</sup>

#### **2. The link between moral degradation in culture and loss of civil liberties.**

- "There is not a single instance in history, in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire. If therefore, we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Witherspoon, *Works* (1815), vol. 7, 118-119, "Jurisprudence," Lecture 14.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Ketcham, 66. From "Madison to Frederick Beasley, November 20, 1825," Gaillard Hunt, ed., *The Writings of James Madison*, 9 vols. (New York, 1904), IX, 230-231.

<sup>3</sup> Witherspoon, "Sermon Delivered at Public Thanksgiving After Peace." from *Works*, Vol. 4, p.265.

<sup>4</sup> Witherspoon, "Dominion" in *The Presbyterian Enterprise*, (Westminster Press; Philadelphia, PA. 1956) edited by Maurice W. Armstrong, Lefferts A. Loetscher, and Charles A. Anderson, p.86.

- “Nothing is more certain, than that a general profligacy and corruption of manners, makes a people ripe for destruction. A good form of government may hold the rotten materials together for some time, but beyond a certain pitch, even the best constitution will be ineffectual, and slavery must ensue.”<sup>5</sup>
- “What follows from this? That he is the best friend to American liberty, who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, who sets himself, with the greatest firmness, to bear down profanity, and immorality of every kind. Whoever is an avowed enemy to God, I scruple not to call him an enemy to his country.”<sup>6</sup>

→ Virtue and religious/spiritual piety are necessary for the nation’s health.

### 3. The necessity of placing limits upon those in power (i.e., the government).

- James Madison: “If men were angels no government would be necessary, and if angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.”<sup>7</sup>
- From *The Declaration of Independence*: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government...”

### 4. The separation of church and state is essential to maintain civil liberty.

- James Madison: “During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution. Enquire of the Teachers of Christianity for the ages in which it appeared in its greatest lustre; those of every sect point to the ages prior to its incorporation with Civil polity.”<sup>8</sup>

Some of George Washington’s resolutions for his character in daily life...

- *Show not yourself glad at the misfortune of another, though he were your enemy.*
- *When you see a crime punished, you may be inwardly pleased, but always show pity to the suffering offender.*
- *Associate yourself with men of good quality, if you esteem your own reputation; for it is better to be alone than in bad company.*
- *When you speak of God or his attributes let it be seriously and with reverence.*
- *Labor to keep alive in your breast that little celestial fire called conscience.*
- *Let your conversation be without malice or envy, for it is a sign of a tractable and commendable nature; and in all cases of passion admit reason to govern.*
- *Speak not evil of the absent, for it is unjust.*
- *Use no reproachful language against anyone; neither curse nor revile.*

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 88

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>7</sup> Madison, *Federalist* no. 51, II, 118. Quoted by Smylie, *Theological Roots*, 160.

<sup>8</sup> James Madison, quoted in *Never Before in History*, (Foundation for Thought and Ethics; Richardson, TX. 2011), p.166.