

21S22 1st Peter 2:13-17

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. Today we are continuing our series on 1st Peter with 1 Peter 2:13-17.

The author of this letter is the Apostle Peter. Most scholars believe this letter was written sometime in AD60-64. The main theme of 1st Peter is “Where does our Hope come from?” for those suffering persecution. This letter was written to Christians living in the Roman Empire and facing persecution because they follow Jesus.

I’m reading from the International Children’s Bible (ICB) again today, I like the plain English in this translation. But of course, you can use whatever translation you choose.

Let’s read 1st Peter 2:13-17 (ICB) *¹³ Obey the people who have authority in this world. Do this for the Lord. Obey the king, who is the highest authority. ¹⁴ And obey the leaders who are sent by the king. They are sent to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. ¹⁵ So when you do good, you stop foolish people from saying stupid things about you. This is what God wants. ¹⁶ Live as free men. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Live as servants of God. ¹⁷ Show respect for all people. Love the brothers and sisters of God’s family. Respect God. Honor the king.*

This section in my Bible is titled, “Obey Every Human Authority” . Now let’s take a closer look at these verses. Read verses 13-14 again, *1st ¹³ Obey the people who have authority in this world. Do this for the Lord. Obey the king, who is the highest authority. ¹⁴ And obey the leaders who are sent by the king. They are sent to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.*
(1st Peter 2:13-14 ICB)

There is quite a bit of debate about these verses. Are we talking about the Roman emperor as the “highest authority” or God as the highest authority? Well, my opinion is yes. Peter is referring to the highest worldly authority for the people he was writing to. God is obviously the highest authority, greater than any king or emperor.

What Peter is really saying is governments, leaders and laws are in place to help people live peacefully with each other. God expects us to follow the good laws and rules where we live. But you may ask why this is so important. Let’s read on in 1st Peter.

Verses 15-17, *¹⁵ So when you do good, you stop foolish people from saying stupid things about you. This is what God wants. ¹⁶ Live as free men. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Live as servants of God. ¹⁷ Show respect for all people. Love the brothers and sisters of God’s family. Respect God. Honor the king.* (1st Peter 2:15-17 ICB)

We follow the laws and leaders where we live because the world is watching. When we live lives of submission to the authorities where we live, this stops non-believers from accusing us of breaking the law or resisting the authorities.

God wants us to follow the laws where you live. People are watching. One of the ways we witness to others is by obeying the laws and authorities. This does not mean we should blindly follow unjust laws. In general laws are good and they help people to get along.

Now of course there are bad laws and bad leaders. We are still subject to the highest authority, which is God, not any man. God's laws are more important than any law made by humans.

If law is wrong or bad, we still have to do what is right. But we also have to accept the punishments for breaking those laws and not obeying those bad leaders. In fact, Peter and Paul and all the other apostles went to prison for breaking the law and not doing what human authority told them to do. They resisted unjust laws and bad leaders. But they had to face punishment for resisting the authorities. In fact, all were in prison, tortured and killed. Many of the Christians Peter was writing to would be killed by the Roman authorities just because they followed King Jesus. They were correct to resist those in authority because God has the highest authority.

Review,

- 1) **Why should we follow authorities?** There are really two answers to this question. First, authorities in general are in place to help us live together and punish those who do evil. But also, people are watching. As Christians we are witnesses for Jesus. The way we live our lives needs to point to Jesus. We are different by design to help others seek and find Jesus.
- 2) **Are laws generally good?** The simple answer is yes. The purpose of Laws and rules is to help us live together peacefully. Most laws are good because they punish bad. The Bible says we have nothing to fear from our authorities if we do good works.
- 3) **Are all laws and leaders good?** Certainly Not. not all laws or leaders are good. In fact, it often seems most leaders are not good or at least no good most of the time. But in general, authorities don't punish good work. But that does not mean bad laws and leaders won't target us as Christians. In fact, they will. And as Christians, we will resist them because we answer to the highest authority which is God. Remember though, we will face punishment for breaking the law and disobeying the leader but it's only temporary. We will receive far greater reward in heaven for obeying the one true God. That's why the apostles were willing to die for Jesus.
- 4) Let me leave you with this question. **We are free in Christ, but does this mean we can do whatever we want?** I want you to think about this, this week. We have to be careful how we exercise our freedom in Christ. Other people are watching. How we behave matters. How we live matters. The world is watching us. Be the light that points to Jesus not a stumbling block for others. Be the crazy Christian that leads people to wonder, "why are they so different". And just maybe they will look and find out.

Let's Pray.

Heavenly Father thank you allowing us to be your witnesses to the world. I know I'm not perfect but help me to live a life that shows my neighbors you, Jesus. Help me to realize the world is watching, so I can choose my actions wisely. I pray for the authorities in my life. I pray for the leaders of our country and our communities. Help me to submit to their authority so that my life is a good witness for you Jesus.

In your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

I hope you are enjoying our study of 1st Peter. I hope you will join me for the rest of this series

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