

God and Government

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[0 : 00] Alright, here we go. You ready? I'm wearing boots today. It might get deep.! I need a lot of waiters up to hear.

I remember when I first came here, they were going to do a baptism. I remember Lucy Jenkins. She said, you're going to do the bath? I said, yes. I got waiters for you. I don't think I need them, Lucy. I don't mind getting wet. Alright, I want you to do me a favor. We're going to be in 1 Peter 2, 11-17. So open up your Bible, or a Bible, to 1 Peter 2, and find verse 11.

Now, those prayer cards you did not fill out, or those offering envelopes in the pew that you did not use, put one in there. Because I'm going to have you open up to another place as well.

Okay, so 1 Peter 2, verse 11. Okay, now, the other place I want you to go is Romans 6.

[1 : 09] Romans 6. And that's the one you really need to mark. So if you want to go back to 1 Peter, you can move your mark to Romans 6. We're going to go back and forth between these two sections.

While you're doing that, I'll start. Now, you know we live in contentious times. Have you been looking at the news? I avoid it, but you can't avoid it much.

I mean, it's out there. I mean, yesterday was the, what, day of protest, I think it was. You know, Trump had his day of liberation, which was all the tariffs and all that stuff.

Well, then the protesters had their day of protest, and they were going to massive protest all over the country. I heard they were even in Europe, like that sort of business. Anyway, Dennis was supposed to go do something yesterday and wasn't able to because they put the Kerry Police Department, those guys that were off, on alert and told them they had to be standing by in case something happened.

Well, I don't think anything happened particularly, but we do live in a very contentious time, and there's a pull on us as Christians. Everybody's pulling on us. And it's a strong pull, a strong, almost in the form of a demand that we do certain things, we believe certain things, that we connect with certain things, whether those ideas or beliefs or demands are cultural or political or economic, I mean, they're all out there.

[2 : 34] The society that we live in is divided. They're huge social, political, and cultural forces demanding, not suggesting, but demanding allegiance from us.

You remember the last elections? They were trying to find out. They couldn't figure out where the evangelicals were going to vote. Are they going to vote like they've done in the past? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Where are they showing up? Why aren't we hearing more from them? And I think the evangelicals got the idea that we're tired of being used by the media and by the political parties, and we were just going to be quiet and do what we thought we had to do before our holy God.

But everyone's telling us that we're on the verge of destruction. Have you seen that too? Oh, the Constitution's in danger. We're going to go, oh my goodness. We need not a president, not a dictator. And then on the other hand, we've got our government's too big and it's too corrupt and we need to cut it down to size.

I sort of agree with that, by the way. I took a course. I have a minor in sociology. You want a useless minor? Study sociology. But I needed to graduate and I couldn't get the minor I wanted.

[3 : 48] Anyway, I took a course called the sociology of bureaucracy. I'm going to tell you the secret of bureaucracies. They never get smaller. They're self-existing and they only grow bigger.

Ours has grown to 2.4 million people. He's the largest employer in the entire nation. It works for the federal government and the bureaucracy. So I think we can afford to lose a few of them.

I don't know. But that's not, you know, they didn't elect me president. If they did, I'd be Musk right now. Maybe that's why I'm not president.

But, you know, there really isn't much different what's going on today. Satan is not a very clever being. He has one plan and he keeps repeating it over and over and over and over again.

He has the same temptations over and over. Think about that. When you're tempted, it's almost the exact same thing. He may dress it up a little different, but it's the same thing. You know, put lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig.

[4 : 50] It doesn't make any difference. And the same thing was going on in Rome. I mean, Rome was a huge empire with all kinds of people and ethnic groups, races.

The diversity was amazing. The religions that were in the empire. It was a huge collection of nations and cultures and all this stuff from all over the whole known world at the time.

And it was all pulling, you know, doing its thing. People were revolting or fermenting trouble. And it was an amazing thing.

And the emperor and the Roman administration, that was their job, was to pull all this together and try to make it work. To keep it unified. And they did that by suppressing these people and promoting this and whatever.

Not much different than what's going on today. And that was in that milieu, that turbulent mixture, that cauldron of the empire that Peter was writing to the churches scattered all over the age, the minor that we're studying here in this letter.

[6 : 01] So today we're going to look at 1 Peter 2, 11 through 17. So let's read that. Where did my slide changer go?

There we go. Now I think there's two slides on this one. All right, let's read it. Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles to keep away from the fleshly desires that do battle against the soul. And maintain good conduct among the non-Christians. So that though they now malign you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God when he appears.

Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake. Whether to the king as supreme or the governors as those he commissions to punish wrongdoers and praise those who do good.

For God wants you to silence the ignorance of the foolish people by doing good. Live as free people, not using your freedom as a pretext for evil, but as God's slaves.

[7 : 05] Honor the people. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the king. See, what Peter is reminding us of is that we are a beloved people.

We are those who have been called into relationship with God himself. And that we are those also that are called out. That's what the word church in Greek means.

Those who are called out. We've been called out of the world. We are, in fact, foreigners and strangers here. In the midst of a culture and society that we live in.

Peter uses a similar phrase earlier in chapter 1. He said temporary residence. You understand that? Now, I've been here 76 years, going on 77.

And I'm still only on a temporary visa. It could be revoked at any moment. And that's what we all are.

[8 : 05] We're here for a time. We live in the midst of a culture and a society. But we're not supposed to be part of it. I mean, we're not of this world.

We're in this world. If you ask me where my temporary residence is, I'll tell you, 308 Saffron Court. Sam from here on by tramway.

But where's my permanent home? Well, the Lord hasn't told me the address, but there is a place for me on the new earth. Probably in the neighborhood of the New Jerusalem.

I'm not sure. I'm waiting to see. And since that's our true home, He is our true King.

And we live in His kingdom. I love the song we last night. I've always loved that song, but it fits this sermon. What did He say He was? He was King of Kings.

[9 : 04] And sometimes we forget that. That our allegiance is not to some human institution here on this earth. It is to the King who is the King of Kings.

And His kingdom is supposed to be what we give our allegiance to. That we seek. What did He say in the Seek ye first the? Kingdom of God.

He didn't say, Seek ye first the kingdom of the earth, where you might find riches and temporary glory. It says, No. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. I think that that's what Peter's telling us.

We need to sit back for a moment and ask, What are we looking for? What are we striving after? What is it that we set our heart on? And if we're honest with ourselves, unfortunately, all too often it's the wrong thing.

Because what did Jesus say about things of this world? They're going to pass away. He says, Don't store up for yourselves treasures like gold and silver.

[10:13] Why? Because they rust and they can be stolen. He says, Store up for yourself treasures. Where? In heaven. Where you'll find them one day. And you'll enjoy them on the new earth.

We're citizens of His kingdom. And we need to remember that in this world, we're in it but not of it. And that we have been called to a marvelous kingdom of our God and Savior.

Being made new and given a new hope that this world has not shared. They don't understand that. They don't understand what we hope for.

We have become a people. Suri's with us. Is she a sister in Christ? Yes. Your sister in Christ? Yes. Absolutely. Guess what? She doesn't, she's even more of a temporary resident here than we are. But we were the same in Columbia. But we're all the same people.

[11:14] We're all the same people. And by the way, this people, and it usually goes like this. To be a people, you have to have a common culture. You have to have a common language.

You have to have a common history. We don't have all that. We have a common history, but we sometimes forget about it. We have something more important.

We have a common father. A common purpose. A common destination in citizenship. A common life. And one day, we will bring all of the glories of this world, whatever can be redeemed, and we'll present them to our God, and He will make it into a culture that we'll all enjoy and rejoice in forever. We've got to get there though first, guys. We are a chosen race. We've received mercy. We've been made royal priests. We're a holy nation set apart.

That means set apart for God's purposes. A people of God's own choosing. Set to inherit the earth. You realize that? We're going to inherit the earth. That is the new earth.

[12:28] And we're going to reign with Him forever. It's like Peter said. Next slide. Next slide. He said, We are told to keep away from the fleshly desires that do battle against the soul and maintain good conduct among the non-Christians.

Now, you know that every... How many of you have bodily desires? I mean, do you get hungry? Do you get sleepy? Do you... I mean, there's others that I won't mention, but how many of you have such things?

Every one of us. You know why? You know why? They're part of being a human being. Where we get into trouble is not because we have them. It's because we sin when we try to fulfill them in a way that is against God's will.

Think about that. You're hungry, and you gorge yourself and overeat. That could easily be called a sin. It's called what? Because you're trying to satisfy a need, but in a way that is not very godly. You say the same thing about sexual relations. They're part of being a human being. God said, multiply. Well, you've got to do that to multiply. But the problem is not that you have sexual relationships with your wife or your husband.

[13:58] It's that you want to have it with anyone, anywhere, anyhow. That's where you sin. There's nothing wrong with making a living.

Where do you get in trouble when you start doing work to make a living? You decide you don't want to just live. You want to get rich and spend it on yourself.

Now you've got greed. And that leads you away from the Lord. This is where we go to chapter 6 of Romans.

Next slide. Paul talked about these very same things. By the way, if ever there was an argument that Paul and Peter did not agree, just like Paul and James did not agree, these things that we're looking at tell you we're wrong, because they both talk about the same thing, just like James and Paul talked about many of the same things, just from a different point of view.

Romans 6, verses 6 and 7 says this, We know that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

[15:12] For if someone has died, they've been freed from sin. A dead person doesn't suffer temptation. You think about that. You bring a coffin in here, you can say and do anything you want, and that guy or person in that coffin is not going to respond to that temptation.

It's just not going to happen. Why? They've died to sin, and everything else for that matter, but they're not going to respond. We have died to sin.

When did that happen? When we accepted Christ. It says that if Christ died, we died with Him. If Christ was raised, we were raised with Him in newness of life. Go down to verse 12. Next slide. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires.

Do not present your members to sin as instruments to be used for unrighteousness, but present yourself to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members to God as instruments to be used for righteousness.

[16:24] For sin will have no mastery over you because you are not under law, but under grace. We are those who have been freed from sin.

He has no claim on us. When Satan comes to you and says, you need to, and you can fill in the blank, seek more money, go find some pretty person, go look for a buffet that you can get, you know, five bucks for all you can eat, and you go, you're free from that.

You don't have to do that. If you do that, you choose to do that, and so you choose to sin. But you're not under any obligation. You have freedom to avoid that, to say, no, I'm not going to do that.

You go out there and find somebody who is not a Christian, do they have that freedom? No, they don't. They're going to be hounded until they finally give in because not only is Satan going to hound them, but their own bodies are going to hound them, their own minds are going to hound them, to go and do what is wrong, contrary to God.

We are to present ourselves to God as slaves of righteousness. This is something we need to realize. Before Christ, we were slaves to sin and death.

[17:49] We were servants of Satan in a lot of ways. You come to Christ, and you get set free. That's an amazing thing. He says, John, you're free.

Now, I'm going to advise you to accept slavery to God, but that's your choice. What most of us, what do we like to do, especially young people?

We go, I'll just be free. I still like you, God, and I'm glad you set me free, but you know, I think I'll try to do this on my own. What happens? Failure.

You can't do it on your own. So, the wise thing to do is say, I'm going to be a slave to something. Let me pick a good master. Let me pick someone who has the best interest for me in mind.

Hey, God, can I be your slave? Can I be your servant? Now, that's the idea. It's not a slave in the sense that we think of slavery a lot of times. It's more, it's not a servant, but it's not a slave slave. It's a sort of, a *doulos*, which is more than a bondservant, but less than an American Civil War type sort of slave.

[19:04] He wants us to submit ourselves to Him because there is actually freedom. Next slide. Look down at verse 17, chapter 6.

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you obeyed from the heart the pattern of teaching you were entrusted to and have been freed from sin.

You became enslaved to righteousness. Then verse 22. Next slide. But now, freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your benefit leading to sanctification and the end is eternal life.

If you don't do that, what is your end? Eternal death. Hell. I'm not supposed to say that word in church.

I was told by a very godly woman. Peter then goes on. Now we're going to go back to 1 Peter. It says, Our righteousness should shine forth in good behavior and deeds.

[20:13] These have a purpose for those who do not believe. You've been freed from sin, become slaves of God in righteousness. Your deeds are supposed to be righteous.

Then Peter says, and here's why you want to do that. Because your deeds, your good deeds are supposed to be a beacon to those that live in darkness so that they can see what is right and good and proper.

And in verse 12 he says, next slide, he says, And maintain good conduct amongst the non-Christians. Why? So that though they now malign you as wrongdoers, and they will, they do, they may see your good deeds and glorify God when He appears.

And what Peter's saying is not necessarily at the second coming because at that point, it's too late. What he's saying is when God shows up in their lives and says, Here, let me offer you life.

They'll look and say, Wow, this is the same God that inspired Him to do that good deed wherever it was. That's the person that stopped on the highway when I had a flat tire in the middle of the

rainstorm and helped me get it fixed.

[21 : 33] That's the person that when they knew whatever, they came by and offered me help or sympathy or compassion. We're to do those good deeds so that even though when we stand in court and they say, You are a wrongdoer, they cannot deny that you have done good.

I was thinking of Eusebius. This guy lived in Asia Minor, by the way. He was an old man. He had been a Christian all his life. Old man.

And he lived in a town well known for his good deeds. For his love and compassion for people Christian and non-Christian. decree came down from the emperor that says Christians are to be killed if they don't repent.

They don't confess Caesar as Lord. They've got to die. Well, the governor knew Eusebius.

They knew he knew him. And he said, Go get him. He's got to come before everybody else was coming. He's got to come before me and he's got to bow down and say Caesar is Lord.

[23 : 00] Well, all the brothers in the church warned him and so he went to the countryside to a house of a friend and was there. And the soldiers found out where he was and they went to the house.

And guess what he did? He didn't flee. He didn't fight. He invited him in. He says, Well, before we go, can we offer you a meal? So he fed them.

And he said, Okay, it's time to go. But don't you want to, don't you want to, no, let's go. And when he got to the governor and he stood before the governor and the governor says, I know you're a good man.

Please, just say it. You don't even have to mean it. Just say it. He says, my God has been faithful to me every day of my life.

How can I deny him now? He said, but if you don't, I'll have to have you executed. He said, I cannot deny my Lord. And they beheaded him.

[24 : 05] How many people do you think saw that, heard that, and goes, there must be something to this man's faith? another story, and this is up in the northern part of the empire, France, Germany, somewhere.

And word came that any Christian, and there were a lot of Christians at one point in the army, any Christians in the army were to be executed and they were to be executed in a cruel way.

The word came to the commander of one of the legions, find the Christians and I want you to chain them to the ice of the lake that's frozen midwinter. And so he did.

Stripped them naked, took them out, had them taken out on the lake and chained them and left them out there to die overnight. And he heard them singing praises to their God.

And the man said, I cannot do this. Look at their faith. I believe too. And he stripped himself naked and went out on the ice and died living.

[25 : 15] Do you have that kind of faith? Would your good deeds scream God's glory to those that don't believe? That's what Peter's telling us to do.

We're to reflect God's glory, to present his love and his grace to a fallen world, particularly to those people who are lost wandering in darkness around us.

And we do that by doing good deeds of righteousness and grace amongst those that don't understand and might even malign us for living outside and we're contrary to the ways of this world, this society.

We're to reject the values and the ways of this world around us and live by the commandment to obey Christ and to be holy as God is holy. That simply means that we're different, separate from the sin and the acts of immorality and shame that are so common and accepted in our society today.

We are to glorify God, speak of His honor and character and grace and love and be image bearers of those things to a world that does not know Him, that they might see that He is truly God of all creation and life and He calls us all to Himself.

[26 : 43] Then Peter tells us, now this, Paul does this a lot in his letters, except his has theology at the front and practical application in the rear. James and Peter do it in sections.

They say something theological and they say, now this is how you live this out. Then they'll say something else theological and this is how you live it out. Peter's now going to tell us, so how do you live this out? So the next slide, this is verses 13 through 17.

Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to a king as supreme or to governors as those He commissions to punish wrongdoers and praise those who do good. For God

wants you to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.

Live as free people, not using your freedom as a pretext for evil, but as God's slaves. Honor all people, love the family of believers, fear God, and honor the king.

See, we're supposed to be subject to the government authorities as those who have the power to punish evildoers or wrongdoers and to reward those to do good.

[27 : 55] In it all, the aim is to be model citizens. Even though this is not our real home, we are to be model citizens to live at peace with all men and to do good.

Paul says something about this and it's very similar. So turn back to, now we're going to Romans 13, so you go to 6 and go back, you know, go forward to 7 more chapters. So next slide.

In Romans 13, 1-7, Paul says this, let every person be subject to the governing authorities. That sounds exactly what Peter said to do. For there is no authority except by God's appointment, and the authorities that exist have been instituted by God.

So the person who resists such authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers cause no fear for good conduct, but for bad. Do you desire not to fear authority?

do good, and you will receive his commendation, for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be in fear, for it does not bear the sword in vain.

[29 : 10] It is God's servant to administer retribution on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of the wrath of the authorities, but also because of your conscience.

For this reason, you also pay taxes, and by the way, tax day is coming up. If you haven't paid them, get it done. Jesus paid taxes, by the way.

He has a shirt that says, Jesus slept. Be like Jesus, right? Take a nap. Jesus paid taxes. Be like Jesus. Pay your taxes. Don't cheat.

For the authorities are God's servants devoted to governing. Pay everyone what is owed. Taxes to whom taxes are due. Revenue to whom revenue is due. Respect to whom respect is due.

Honor to whom honor is due. So it's not a matter whether you agree or disagree with those who govern us. You don't have to like them.

[30 : 10] You don't have to agree with them. What do you have to do? You have to be a good citizen and honor them, respect them in that sense as an individual, and obey the law.

It's a matter of doing what is right. We obey authorities until it would cause us to disobey God.

Remember, no one rules over you unless God allows it, and he will repay them good for good and punish evil with judgment.

We're to leave that to him. we're not to let them have any reason to charge us with evil. Rather, let all authorities see the good that you do, and grasp that God is indeed good and glorious.

Now, if you survey the New Testament in particular, you will find that Caesar and Rome are rarely mentioned. think about that.

Revelation speaks of Rome, but only indirectly as Babylon and the beast. Nero and Domitian, two of the worst rulers toward the church, are not mentioned at all, even though Paul and Peter probably died at Nero's hands.

[31 : 41] They affected the church drastically, and many Christians died at their orders, but what is mentioned rather than them are churches. And I want you to get this, and it is they, the churches who are given political promises by Jesus.

You might want to turn to Revelation chapter 2. There are seven churches that Jesus wrote letters to Revelation.

And one of them was the church of Thyatira in verse 26 through 29 of chapter 2. And here's what he says, verse 26.

And to the one who conquers and who continues in my deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations.

He will rule them with an iron rod, and like clay jars he will break them to pieces. Just as I have received the right to rule for my father, and I will give him the morning star, the one who has here, had better hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

[32 : 58] We, the churches, are to proclaim the audacious hope of victory over the world, over Satan, who is the prince of the air of this world.

As it is promised by Jesus that those who do his will to the end will rule the nations with Christ, and he holds the right to rule, he is the king of kings, not by democratic vote or autocratic takeover. Those are the tools of men. But by being, next slide, next slide, next, there you go, the lamb looking as if it had been slain.

And we gain this right, not by campaigning and voting, although we should do those things, but by bending the knee before him.

His kingdom is what we seek, not a kingdom in this world. This world is ruled by the evil one, will and he will never conform or be conformed to the will of Christ.

[34 : 24] We proclaim this rather as we gather around a table. What table is that that we gather around? The Lord's table. And we proclaim as we share in the body and blood of the Lamb of God who was slain to free us from sin and shame, who saved us by his grace, and united us in his body as one, and filled us with his spirit, and sanctified us and made us increasingly holy.

And we reclaim it most loudly as we gather around this table that he is the king of kings, and it's him that we have allegiance, and it's him that we're going to serve. He is our ruler and our leader, and we are only here temporarily.

This world is only going to get what? Worse. And we, I hate to say this, this is one of those terrible things to say, but if it's going to get worse, when shouldn't we go, Lord, make it even more so now, quicker.

Why? Because the end will come sooner. But the end's coming. This world is not going to get any better. Now, that doesn't mean that we should sit back and do nothing. We should be working to save people to do good deeds.

That's what Peter and both Paul have said. Do good deeds. Help people do things to bring glory to God. Help them be rescued from this mess that we're in. But don't get caught up in the mess.

[35 : 55] Don't become part of it. Because we share in something much greater, much more enduring, much more permanent. By the way, when we gather around this table, we're actually pronouncing the prophecy of our ultimate political future that we will reign with Christ in a kingdom that will never end.

Eating and drinking until He comes again. What's that word that we should all be yelling?

Maranatha. Lord, come. Come reign over all your creation. Let's pray. Lord, I know I haven't done a really good job of this, explaining all this, but I know in my heart that you are my King.

I have a president that has to deal with me. I have to deal with day on and day out. I mean, all those things are going to happen.

I have a governor. I have all these people who have claimed authority over me. But ultimately, you have the only authority over me. And let me remember that day in and day out, that I am to be a good citizen here, doing good deeds and being responsible and law abiding.

[37 : 29] But ultimately, it is to bring glory to you. That the world would know that you are the only true God. That you have a purpose for all creation and that you're going to fulfill that purpose.

And that you called your church to walk with you, to obey you, to serve you, to glorify you, and to be yours and yours alone.

Help us to do that, Lord, to be that, to be image bearers of God to a world that denies there is one.

And we thank you for your loving grace and mercy in Jesus' name.

Amen.