

# Honor the King

## 1 Peter 2:13-17

**Introduction** – There is a fundamental problem in the idea of ‘separation of church and state’. Some form of religion, some form of ultimate worldview will always dictate the laws and culture of a society. The question simply is ‘which one?’. Our federal government is forbidden from establishing a national church. But the only reason they have authority to govern the people is because God established them. Therefore, there is no separation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns over all, and the government that He installed as one of His vice-regents. The church does not have authority over the civil government. But God has authority over both. Our demand for the government to submit to God will have no force if we do not submit ourselves to God, and most particularly, by submitting to our civil government.

**Submit Yourself** (v14) – Christians are to be submissive citizens. There are plenty of objections that are raised here. But fundamentally, Christians should be known as the best, law-abiding citizens in the nation. In the day of godly disobedience, it should be a shock to those that know us that we are breaking the law.

**For the Sake of God** (v14) – Whether a nation is pagan or not, the government has been established by and will answer to God (Ps 62:11, Dan 2:21, 4:32, Rom 13:1). Because the civil government is under God, there are limitations to our submission. There is only One who has final and complete authority over us. Peter understood this (Acts 4:8-12).

**All Levels of Government** – Wherever the civil authority has established its rule, at national or local points, we are to submit.

**Punishment/Praise** – Here is a good summary of what the civil authority is to do. It is not to reform or change hearts. It cannot and should not be the ‘savior’ of the people. It cannot place love in the heart of the wicked, but it should place fear there. Punish the wrongdoer and protect the just, and all as directed by the Word of God.

**Freedom to be a Slave** (vv15-16) – Your freedom in Christ is never a license to sin. It is freedom from sin (Rom 6:12-14). When it comes to everything lawful, we are to be the most peaceful, thankful, respectful citizens. Your freedom is to provide you with the privilege of being ‘a bondservant of God’.

**Silence the Ignorant** – The nation will not be won by ‘winning the argument’. We are to let our good works go before us to silence them. If we patiently work hard to do what is right, the scoreboard will show in the end who is ahead. The education of our children is probably one of the greatest examples of this.

**Honor** (v17) – Two pair of doublets that help to put this command in perspective.

**“Honor all people. Love the brotherhood”** – On the one hand, all men are to be respected, no matter how far they have fallen, for they still bear the image of God. On the other hand, there is a particular affection to those who are your brothers and sisters in Christ that is right and proper and is to be manifest to the world. We are commanded to discriminate.

**“Fear God. Honor the King.”** – You must fear God so that you can honor the king appropriately. You must not fear the king, who can only destroy the body (Matt 10:28). You must fear God so that you are not afraid to speak the words of God to a lawless throne (Nathan to David, Elijah to Ahab, John the Baptist to Herod, and Peter to the rulers of Israel). We must speak clearly, but as respectful citizens, not vigilantes, and not scofflaws.

**Understanding and Practicing** – As we will see over and over in the coming passages, there is a particular strength that comes from godly submission.

**Godly Submission Must Flow from Understanding Exhaustive Sovereignty** – If God is God, then He is immediately present in every situation and nothing is out of His control. Only then can we pray that God would rise up and scatter His enemies.

**Godly Submission is Related to Understanding the Establishment of Authority** – One can only submit to an imperfect authority with gladness if one understands that God has set up these authorities and that He is completely sovereign.

**The Word of God** – We must submit to our civil authorities, not because they say so, but because the Word of God says so. And our governing authorities must tell us to submit for the same reason. This causes a ‘separation of church and state’ problem that God intends.

**“Bondservants”** – We deserve the growing tyranny that we are getting as a chastisement for using our liberty as a cloak for vice. The church hates God and His Law and wants to preach and experience a sentimental grace with no hard edges. While there may be a day of necessary active disobedience, today is the day to honor the king and receive His rod.