

Living Godly Among the Lost Brings God Glory

1 Peter 2:11-17

WHAT IS TRUE, AND WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS DO?

Living a godly life among the spiritually lost brings glory to God. Christians should respect secular authorities and lead righteous lives in a non-Christian society, aiming to draw others toward faith in Jesus.

1. Conduct yourselves honorably among the lost (v.11–12) ¹

- A. We received God's mercy and are the community of God (v. 4-10). As foreigners briefly staying in the world, this is not our true home (Ps. 39:12). We are passing through, headed home to heaven's glory, and should honor God by living holy in an unholy world.
 - We must abstain from sinful desires (live "honorably") in hopes that pagans (unbelievers) may glorify God. Peter says:
 - a. Unbelievers slander us as evildoers
 - b. Christian good deeds prove their slander is a lie
 - c. Christian good lives convict them of their sin and slander
 - d. Unbelievers may become converted and glorify God
 - Why? Peter gives us at least four reasons for self-discipline:
 - a. Our citizenship is in heaven, so we live by God's rules (v.11)
 - b. Our lives will influence others (v. 12)
 - c. Sinful desires war against the soul (v. 11)
 - d. Christ is coming; we want to glorify Him with our lives (v.12)

2. Submit to civil rulers because of the Lord (v. 13–17) ²

- A. Irrespective of rank, position, or title, whether fair or unfair, morally upright or not, our obedience should be immediate, wholehearted, willing, and enthusiastic. Why? Because of the Lord (v. 13, 15).
- B. *UNLESS* our obedience results in disobedience to God (e.g., Dan. 3:4–12; 6:6–10; Acts 4:18–20; 5:28, 29.) If we must disobey them, we are to explain to them the reason for our disobedience and then cheerfully take the consequences for our disobedience (Acts 5:41)
- C. In addition to obeying civil rulers, we are to: (1) pay taxes to them, Romans 13:5; (2) render proper dues to them, Romans 13:7; and (3) pray for them, 1 Timothy 2:1–4. See Romans, chapter 13, for a full discussion of the Christian's civil duties.

D. Why submit? (to the Civil Rulers, v. 13-17)

- a. *To glorify Christ* (v. 13)
- b. *To cooperate with God in maintaining the moral order* (v. 14); when we obey civil rulers, we contribute to maintaining moral order, for one of the chief functions of civil rulers is to punish evildoers and to praise well-doers (Romans 13:3, 4)
- c. *To shut the mouths of the foolish and ignorant* (v. 15); We are to live such orderly lives that civil rulers can find no occasion to accuse us and persecute us.
- d. *To exercise our Christian liberty* (v. 16), We as Christians are freed from the will of men (see 1 Cor. 7:23), but we are not to use our liberty as an excuse for evil. We are freed from the will of men that we might do the will of God, and it is His will that we live in submission to civil rulers.

E. Ways to submit? Four commands for honorable living that serve each of the purposes (a-d) above in addition to avoiding sinful desires (v. 17):

- a. Honor everyone!
- b. Love other Christians!
- c. Fear God!
- d. Honor the Emperor!

CONCLUSION: Government leaders are an authority put in place by God. There is no authority except from God, and those rulers that exist have been instituted by God (Romans 13:1–2). However, Peter was *not* saying to violate your Holy Spirit-directed conscience.

Remember, Peter told the high priest years before, "We must obey God rather than any human authority" (Acts 5:29). At times, God approved disobedience to human authorities (e.g., Ex. 1:17; Dan. 3:13–18; 6:10–24; Acts 4:18–20; Heb.11:23). In those cases, the government had called upon God's people to sin against God and God's people had to submit to the higher power—God Himself.

In most aspects of daily life, it was desirable for Christians to live according to the law of their land, whether they agreed with the policies or not. Believers must not act lawlessly.

¹ Bruce B. Barton, *1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 1995), 62.

² Roy E. Gingrich, *The Book of 1 Peter* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 1997), 21.