

# For the Lord's Sake: Living Honorably in a Watching World

## Submitting to Authority for Christ's Glory in 1 Peter 2:13-17

By Anthony Kim

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Please turn with me in your Bible to First Peter chapter 2. We will continue our study with verse 13. I want as an opening illustration and to bring out our context for this evening before we go into verse 13, I want us to recall the phrase “dearly beloved.” I emphasized that quite a bit last Sunday, and I want us to really get the significance of this because it will not appear again until we arrive at First Peter chapter 4, beginning with verse 12, and it encompasses a lot in between from now until chapter 4 and verse 12. So let's take in the significance of this phrase “dearly beloved.” It is significant for believers because it shows our identity in Christ. Our identity is important for one thing: our security that we are secure in our identity. Once we are believers in Christ, we are forever settled in heaven as well as on earth of our identity that no one can take that identity away from us. The world does all sorts of things with identity today. As believers, we are secure first and foremost in our identity. To be called beloved, it confirms we are a child of God. We are secure.

We can depend upon Him for all of our needs in His will. He's adopted us once and for all. He will not kick us out once He has brought us in. He will not kick us out of this adoption. We are family to Him, and we are cherished by Him. We are loved by Him. So not only is our identity secure, but we are to be encouraged by this identity. We are to find our assurance in this identity that this phrase gives us a purpose knowing that God's love never changes. How many times does our love waver? When we secure ourselves in the only one that never changes, never on this point, we are to be encouraged and feel assurance that He will be with us and help us to experience His love when we are going through many challenges in life. We are to be motivated from out of that love that He has for us. We are motivated to love others because we are secure in Christ. We have encouragement and assurance that God loves us and never changes. Then we are secure to tell others the same thing because God doesn't change. God doesn't change. So we can send that message out, and you'll know that message will not change. You can rest assured that when you say God is loving His children, that should bring a sense of security, and maybe someone who is lost would get a sense, “I want to experience this love, tell me more, tell me more,” an opportunity to give your testimony, but it must come out from that security that people go, “What is this hope that you have that I don't get from the world?” Then you can tell them. You can tell them that love, and if he is chosen or she is chosen, she will be saved. He will be saved. It starts with that witness of His love within us and extends it out to others.

I mentioned about this word “beloved,” and the word that I want us to keep in mind is this word that you’ll be sustained. Whenever we’re going more into the text throughout chapter 2 and chapter 3 and arriving at chapter 4, in the back of your mind, you’ll remember that word “beloved, beloved, beloved” because it will help you understand the passages that we’re going to touch on because it will be on that point that you will get a sense of no matter what difficulty I am experiencing, He is there, He never changes, He will be with me through all sorts of things. We’ll see just a glimpse of that here, just mentioning in chapter 4:12, He says don’t be surprised by heavy trials, but He starts it “beloved.” We’re not going to go there tonight, but more on this point of chapter 2:11 to chapter 4:11, I mentioned as well about I preached on the point of being a foreigner, a sojourner, a pilgrim, a stranger, all of this giving a different sense. What I want you to remember from that is that we’re foreigners because our citizenship is in heaven primarily. We are residing in this land. Yes, we are. But it is not in the sense that it is our final permanent residence. Wherever you are in your life, always remember that you are temporarily residing here on this earth, and with that understanding, you will help understand that your purpose by doing that is people recognize, “Wow, you’re not giving any glory to yourself. You’re not trying to make something out of yourself here on this earth primarily. That’s not your main objective.” Your primary objective is, “I want to give glory to God. I want to give glory to Him and Him alone.” If that means that I have to stay in this sense of “this is not my home,” praise God. Praise God for that. As I preached on last Sunday, we live in a hostile world. As a reminder, we were once hostile to God, weren’t we? We understand that dynamic that we live in this dynamic of glorifying God and also living in a hostile world that surrounds us.

Peter explains more of how believers should live as soldiers. That’s the idea that we are chosen by God. Yes. This is not our home in this world. Yes. People are going to reject us when we preach the gospel, unbelievers, and they will speak all sorts of evil. You remember how people that live in the world think that we live just like them, that nothing has really changed in your life. They don’t see any physical changes because they don’t see the spiritual work that’s going in your life, that the Holy Spirit is activating in you. So they don’t see that. All they see is them; they actually see their own reflection in you, and they think that you’re doing the same thing. We’re not to argue; we’re to bear witness of the gospel. That’s our primary objective: to proclaim the gospel, to bear witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, and live in a way that ultimately pleases Him. How are we supposed to do that? In the text, in the passage, I mentioned where Peter talks about having honest conversation, just having truth in most of your conversation. That’s part of them identifying that we’re a new creature. Somehow the things that come out of our mouth are mainly truth. It’s truth. Starting with the gospel and just everything that God is doing in our life, all the truth that He’s doing in us, that we’re just speaking to people and letting people know that He is doing a good work in us, that it’s not us, right? We were producing all sorts of bad works. Now He’s given us a new identity, a new heart, regenerating us to do good things that please Him. That’s also reflected in my title of my sermon last week, “Gospel on Display,” that they will behold the gospel in your conduct.

We’re going to go into another section within these two chapters, which is a subsection within it, starting at verse 13, which we’re going to go into today tonight. The subsection ends in chapter 3, verse 12, and this is testifying the gospel in the social order. Peter exhorts Christians to live as good citizens, and that’s what we’re going to cover today in verses 13 and 17: how to live as good citizens on this earth. How are we supposed to live? The whole thrust, the ending of it, is

that we would imitate Christ and pursue goodness and receive an eternal reward. That's in chapter 3, ending at verse 12. That's the goal. That's the end in mind. We're starting here tonight in this subsection with how to live as citizens, as Christians. When someone becomes a Christian and starts experiencing a new life with fresh interest, with new motives, with new desires, with new connections, it can often be very tricky to figure out how this new self, this new identity in Christ fits into all your old relationships. Your old relationships haven't changed. You've changed, but all your relationships around you have not changed. Peter's going to help us understand how to work out with our relationships. We have old associations as well in our work, our family circumstances, if you're still living with lost family members, about business, lost co-workers, your obligations, your social conditions, or social dynamics. You used to go to these social events, and suddenly you don't have an interest in it. What do you do about all that? This is all new to these Christians that Peter is speaking to. Recall your time. Just pause for a moment. Recall your time, believer, when you first became a Christian. You were new, but like, "What am I going to deal with all my other relations, all my associations, obligations?" I'm going to help us to go back to that experience, as it were, with going through First Peter.

What are some other things that Peter wants us to keep in mind? How are we going to figure out during this new life how we can fit things so that I can make them better, or how can I make relationships better? Once you and I were doing bad things in our relationships, He's going to help us work that out to be better in our relationships, at least from our perspective out. We won't mess things up if they were messed up in the past. He's going to help us to figure out all that mess because it's tough when you're a new believer in the Lord as a Christian because all of us, we're not Jews. We're of Gentile sorts. We practiced all sorts of pagan practices in one degree or another. We lived among other pagans, and we're looking for ways to excuse ourselves from disassociating ourselves from them. It is clear we are to disassociate ourselves from our past and any pagan practices. If you haven't already experienced it, you probably have many times: when you are now in this new identity in Christ, you start seeing people talking to you about all these inconsistencies in your life. "Oh, you're a believer, but you're so inconsistent in this thing and that thing." Have you experienced that where people, you're just like being spotted all of a sudden when you weren't as much, but now you're just on a target, being watched, and everything you do, all your little inconsistencies, and you find out, "Wow, this is more challenging than I thought it would be to be a believer." They were experiencing that. The Christians had to really be careful not to cause big problems and make Christ look that there will be reproach on Christ. That was on their mind; that was on our minds, right? We don't want to bring reproach to the Lord. We want to be a good witness for Him.

More on this passage on the practical side, which He will cover. I want us to look at just a kind of overarching theme of verses 13 and 17, and then we're going to dial in each verse. This part of the passage points out some of the practical problems that the Christians face, as I mentioned already. Some of them, that their new way of life will naturally give way to a sense of people looking at us like we have so much respect for people. All of a sudden, we have respect for people, and we're not easily turned away from bad feelings, that we don't accuse them like we used to or say bad things. Suddenly we have some self-control, and so they say good things about us as believers, and they want to know more when that happens. When we mess up in our interactions, we're willing to accept it right away. Do you notice as a believer that you're able to accept your mistakes faster, quicker? That's the Holy Spirit quickening you, right? Because He

wants to make sure you are a good witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He helps us in all these nuances in our life that have already taken place when we were saved. Other things that this new life produces is, yes, we are free. We have freedoms. We're not constrained to restraints as we once were. That would bring about resistance to some people in the world. Let me just name some. "Oh, you still believe in the marriage of a male and a female, right?" Well, nothing changed with us. That was God's intention all along. But suddenly we're being resisted. "Oh, you're changing the culture." No, we're not. It's being identified in Christ that there is this level of resistance. There's rebellion against us. "Why are you so concerned about life in the womb?" Well, that's what God's intention was all along. Nothing has changed. But again, they think we're rebelling about free choice and all that stuff. There are some things that we're constantly bombarded with, and the Apostle knew that. The Apostle knew that, and he knew that they were in certain circumstances. Peter and Paul, they go at it in full harmony with each other. Here in this text, for Paul, it's in the book of Romans in chapter 13, where he deals with this whole thing about civil authority and how we are supposed to be witnesses to the government. It's sometimes challenging because, again, we're trying to fit into living the life as a believer, but this is all new to us, and we need certain instructions on how to live in different types of social orders. He gives us the words that we need.

Let's go now into verse 13. He says here, Peter, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme." Just looking at that word, "submit yourselves." This is the idea that it's yielding. It's the idea of yielding in the place of authority. That's the way to see it: you're yielding to place yourself under authority under human institutions for who? The Lord's sake, and recognizing that God has ordained these authorities and that our submission as believers to them, the human institutions, honors God. That's the thing that we look by faith and not by sight. We know that this is the main reason why we submit ourselves to the ordinance of man. Submitting is a spiritual act, and it's driven by our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What is it supposed to show by submission? It's humility and obedience primarily to the Lord's sake. With that, it's not the idea that whoever is in charge in these institutions that we're making them worthy of our obedience and humility. It's beyond that. It's to the office of the human institution. That's what we are to rest upon with our faith and our understanding because God is the ultimate authority. He is sovereign over all human institutions, and we are to obey in that way. The ordinance of every man mentioned in this passage, so as citizens in this world under all the civil laws and authorities, God's people are to live in a humble, submissive way in the midst of, yes, a very hostile, a very godless, and a slanderous society. If you recall during this time, it was the time of Nero, and at this time, Nero was accusing Christians of burning Rome. It was a very hostile environment. Yet this is where Peter tells us to submit ourselves. That takes faith. It doesn't make sense in the flesh. It doesn't make sense. But when you believe it in faith that God is sovereign over human institutions, you know you rest in Him, and you are ultimately honoring God in that. Christians should take care not to give any sense of occasion to make an offense of the gospel in society. That was a thrust of Paul's message in chapter 13, that we would not make an offense to Christ in the society. Though we as Christians, again, are true citizens in heaven, we still must live as obedient citizens in this world so that God will be honored and glorified. We don't want any rebellion in our conduct in the sense that we bring dishonor to Christ. That's the main thing that we think about anytime that we might feel, "I don't feel easy about," but is this going to dishonor Christ in my witness in the civil world? Christians are told to follow and respect human authorities and their laws, not

primarily for the authority in the office but the office, the actual office, because God is ultimately in charge of every civil government, people that are placed in certain offices. He's the one that ultimately has the last say, right? It might not happen immediately to our favor. It didn't happen with the Christians when Nero was accusing the Christians, but in the long, grand scheme of things, it was used for His glory, right? Many people were saved under that time of heavy persecution and trials.

Keeping that in mind, I must say, and it is brought out in other texts, that yes, we do it for the Lord's sake. Yes, we are to honor Him and to obey Him, but it is not a blanket rule. What I mean by that is, if human laws go against God's commands, we ultimately have to obey God. That is very clear in Romans chapter 13. The word "king" here, just for clarity, is that it's just an abstract word. It just means a person who has chief authority, so someone like the president who has sovereignty over the nation. That would be an occasion to use and understand that word "king."

In verse 14, we go into another section of civil authority. Let's go ahead and read that: "Or unto governors, and unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." This passage is talking about Christians, again, who are to live in obedience to every institution when it comes to the civil and social order. We're going from national government to now state government, and that includes under the state any police that is doing due and good judges that are doing and living by the law. Yes, we're to safely submit to them as well. When the government tries to force a Christian to go against, again, the law of God under the state government, we are explicitly stated in Scripture to refuse to submit. There are multiple texts regarding that. The thrust here, besides that which is important, is the idea of what government is supposed to do. It's pretty clear. He talks about the punishment of evildoers. The government should punish evildoers. It's without saying. It's this idea in the Greek: it's talking about justice and punishment and retribution. These are what the government should be doing in a healthy society. It includes not just deterring evil but carrying out retribution, as I mentioned, against those who do evil. Paul talks about this about retribution in Romans 13:4. We're just kind of going along with Paul and Peter here. Like a good government, it praises them that do well, as you see in the text. By contrast, governments are to praise and reward those who do good and encourage more good behavior. That's good for us, right? Because as believers, we're going to be doing a lot of good work. You'll notice that a lot of big movements happen by believers. You can think about the hospitals, about schools, right? Seminaries, education started there. All these good things happen when the government is doing what they're supposed to do based on how the Scriptures explain it.

Now verse 15: "For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." The will of God, that with well-doing, that we would not debate with people primarily but that we would show people their irresistibility of persuading people to see how good it is to live in the will of God, which is a good life that He gives to us, and He gives us in well-doing, it says in that verse. It's a wonderful thing to know that God's will for us is to do good and to live with well-doing; that is what He wants for us in the day-to-day activities of our lives. By doing that, by living this way, our conduct is going to reveal something, and that's why Peter brings out these words here about in verse 15 that you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. What was the ignorance at that time and still is today is that people hated Christians and spread lies about them. All sorts of lies, even though they didn't really know what they were

talking about. That's what ignorance is: "I don't want to find out. I just hate you. Don't talk to me. I just hate you." That's the idea of this ignorance. They don't even want to talk about it. They don't want to hear testimony about it. That's their ignorance. It was like that, and it still is today; people are still ignorant. Don't want to listen to our testimony. Don't want to hear about the gospel. They are stubbornly ignoring the truth on purpose. God is going to hold them accountable. Unfortunately, we want to break through that, but He's saying there's some people like that, and they're being foolish by being ignorant. It is a foolish thing because they have the opportunity to hear the truth. It's amazing. We were once like that, right? We were once like that. So, just humility, humility. They see us submitting to authority and avoiding judgment. We're not being condemned by doing all sorts of rebellious things in civil disorder, but we're gaining approval by commendation. They start seeing like, "Wow, you're Christians, and you still respect the office of the human institutions," and that silences those who are foolish, even though they stubbornly oppose us living out our faith. We can just easily tell them, "This is the way God wants us to live," but they will stay in their ignorance, unfortunately. This is a reason why we're criticized as believers, that we still submit to civil authority, and that we're found fault with. Just more fault-finding, isn't it? When we submit as Christians to government and to those who are in the office holding that office, it's an opportunity to reveal the praises of God through our lives in this way: we're honoring God, we're praising Him, we're thanking Him that He's given us the opportunity to live in civil obedience, right? He's given us the ability to obey. We should praise God in addition to all that I've said already about our obedience because, again, any opportunity to give a testimony. Amen. Any opportunity to give a witness, there are multiple opportunities after opportunities to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is because He has given us opportunities.

Let's go now into verse 16: "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." In this passage, the idea is, yes, we are free, as free, but we are not to cover that freedom with evil. That's that idea of "cloak of maliciousness," that we're not covering evil, right? We're not just playing a game here. This is real. This is reality. We are literally being impacted on this level of civil authority. Let's take this very seriously. That's the idea. There are people that are putting on a cloak of maliciousness. There are people that are not living as true believers. Yes, we are to enjoy our freedom in Christ, but we are not to put that mask or veil, covering up what really is wickedness, right? We are reflected on the outside and on the inside. Amen. Starts, it's both. Christian freedom is never to be used as an excuse for self-indulgence. Unfortunately, many people fall into that trap or a license to sin. Again, another trap that many people fall into because freedom in Scripture is not a license to sin but expresses itself in who? Devoting ourselves to that which is good. We're not in the direction of darkness anymore. Amen. We're on the trajectory of good. That's in Galatians 5:13-14. We are living this way as free. We're not bound ultimately by worldly rules or social norms or everyday habits of the world, how they define good habits or popular opinions. Those are not things that we're bound to anymore. Do you see that in your life, that certain things that people say, how to live in this life in this world, and different social posts about, "Hey, you know, live like this, don't live like that," meaning like Christians or in some way to belittle our witness in the social world, right? We've got to be very careful that we don't fall into those traps. Social media is a trap, I'm telling you. We have to go in with our eyes open and knowing that there are traps all around. It looks good. It looks good. But you know what? Does it fall into worldliness? Does it fall into self-centeredness? Is it focused on whatever's popular? Even though we're not living a

popularity contest here, we're not living to be popular. We're living to be grounded in truth and live out truth. As believers in Christ, that word "liberty" is there. It's a very powerful word. I can't go too much into it, but the idea is that the man outside of Christ does not have, ultimately, doesn't have liberty, doesn't have true freedom here. They can't live out true freedom out in the day-to-day. It's a marvelous thing to think about. We have liberty in Christ Jesus. Something to note and something to remind ourselves over and over again.

Another thing on testimony, as we're going into this part of this section that I want to speak on, our freedom, mind you, also is for how we relate to brothers and sisters in Christ. I want to throw this one in here because I think it's important. It's the idea that we are a testimony to each other as believers, and we might be stronger in certain temptations than others. For example, you might be someone here that watches a lot of politics, okay? And you don't get affected by it. It doesn't tarnish your witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. But someone else who is totally against politics, and it's a brother in Christ, and they're weak to that. They fall into all the traps. They love to accuse everyone. They can't keep their mouth shut. They have to say something bad about politics. I'll be very careful about mentioning politics to that person. I'll be very careful. That's just one example. Some of us are just stronger with certain things that don't impact us negatively. We can just let things go. I think that takes time. With some people, some of it is maturity. Yes. Some of it is just someone has a weaker conscience and a strong conscience. There's a lot of variables in that play. The idea is, let's be more kind, more considerate within us, that we are careful when it comes to things about civil conversations. I, for one, don't like to talk about it. So I'll just throw it out there. I try to keep my mouth silenced on politics. But of course, I will speak against things that are totally against Scripture. I will definitely speak out against those things. Amen. I hope you do too. As God's servants, let's live in this way with each other. That's not in here, but I just wanted to write that in here just for our sake as a church and our witness as believers.

Verse 17: "Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." Just very short, like military commands for you to get. Paul does this in Thessalonians. You'll see this repetition of just word phrases. I'm going to just touch on it briefly. Honor, it means the idea to be obedient in the sense of having inner respect. Honor has inner respect. You're to respect everyone. All men. There is no inclusion here. It is all men. Honor all men. That is what God commands us. These are commands, quick commands. Deeply respect people for being created in God's image. God has created all of us in His image. Yes, as unbelievers, they are not living the way that God has intended, but we are to respect God's image. Amen. That's one sense, honor all men. He's talking about everyone, believers and unbelievers. Then he goes into "love the brotherhood." Now he's just talking about other Christians. While we respect all men, we are to love the brotherhood. Do you notice the difference? One has honor, the other one has love. There's a reason for that. Yes, we're to respect all men, but we're not to love all men. Interesting enough. There's a contrast here. We are to love the brotherhood, other believers. That's what Jesus said, "love one another." Peter, we brought that out earlier in the text, to love fervently the brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not to be complacent in our love. This is not an area where we are to be passive. These are active commands. So honor, love the brethren. I love that because, yeah, some people are unlovable that are unbelievers. I'm just going to put that there. Don't take that too seriously. Then "fear God." Only God is to be feared. That's the way of putting it. Only God is to be feared. So not fear man. Only fear Him. Certainly, we as believers are to reveal by our lives that

we are God-fearing people, that we recognize Him as sovereign over all, supreme over all national, state, and all types of governments. That's what that meaning is. Lastly, "honor the king." We should respect the person in charge, no matter who it is. I particularly don't like certain people in office at certain times, but here's what Peter wants us to drive home in this last command. It's the idea that, regardless of who's in office or if they seem incapable, we should honor the position. We're not to be impressed by who that person is. It helps us not to attack the president. Just to put it another way, anyone who's in office, we're to remind ourselves we are honoring the position, the office. That clears a lot out, doesn't it? We're not siding with one person or the other, but we are respecting the office. By doing that, you, again, are being a good witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants us to do this. He commands it.

Let that rest with you this evening. Keep these things in the forefront of your mind. You have a lot of opportunities to be a testimony where you're at in this part of our lives, which we call civil authority. May God bless you and help you, and may this encourage you to have more clarity in how to go about in your day-to-day this week, and may He bless you and honor you, and may He be praised through your testimony time this week. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank You so much for clarity in Your Word and how we are to live in the realm of civil authority. Father, You are so kind to us. You're so good to us that we can live, Lord, because You have changed our hearts. You regenerated us. You have given us a new mindset, a new heart set, a new love, a new desire, a new way to live in this civil life that we call this world of civil government. Help us, God, to live as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to take every opportunity to be a testimony of the good work that You have done in our lives. Lord Jesus Christ, bless, Father, our witness opportunities this week. Help us to be more vigilant, to be more aware of all these potential opportunities. Then, Lord, remind us of these verses. Remind us of the importance of being firm with Your Word and with Your understanding on how to live our lives in this realm. Father, bless us to that end. Encourage us. Give us strength. Give us boldness when boldness is required. Help us, Father, to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel in this way. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.