

## Faithful Christian Citizenship Part 3

*Our Identity in Christ*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 2:13-17  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 18, 2023

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2:13 to 17, our text this morning. I really like our Father's Day gift. Are there any dads in here who haven't already tried to see if it really works? If it didn't, we've got some extras anyway.

Now, I'm so grateful to the Lord for the gift of the family, the way he's created it, the beauty of it, how it is a picture of his character and his own heart. He calls himself Father, Jesus is his Son and what a blessing it is to have godly fathers. I'm so grateful for my dad and what a privilege it's been to serve as an elder in the church for now together with my father for about 20 years. Amazing. What a privilege to see his example of love for Christ, love for the word, and love for his family and for the church. And Patty's dad also, wonderful testimony and blessing to us. God is so good to us.

We come to this text again that we're looking at for the third week, and the title of the message is the same as it was the last two weeks, "Faithful Christian Citizenship." This is part 3. Faithful Christian Citizenship, part 3. If you had a subtitle for this, I would say "Cultivating Godly Attitudes" toward others outside the body of Christ. Cultivating godly attitudes, that's part of what faithful citizenship is, and we're gonna see in this, we're focusing this morning on verse 17. We've looked at the other verses in previous messages, so we're gonna read the passage, and then after we pray, we're gonna really try to dig into verse 17. But let's start reading at verse 11 just to get the context again. We read there in 1 Peter 2:11.

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, we come to You and rejoice that You are sovereign over all, that You are the one who places every ruler in his position, You are the God who reigns over the rise and fall of kingdoms. There's nothing that's outside of Your control, and we come rejoicing that not only is that true of Your governance over the whole world, but it's true of Your governance over the details of our lives, that the doctrine of providence is a reality, that You are foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass for Your own glory and the good of those who love You. Help us to see that, help the reality and the truth of that sovereign rule and good purposes that You have in all things permeate our minds and our hearts and transform us, make us more faithful in our citizenship, more faithful as we follow Jesus in the midst of a very dark world. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

So faithful Christian citizenship. The question is, you know, how are we to relate to unbelievers around us? How are we to relate to particularly to ungodliness in positions of power, but how are we to respond to injustice and to wickedness around us? Peter is concerned to help us understand God's will for us. I mean, he says in that passage, "for such is the will of God." He's telling us the will of God, which is to live in such a way that we silence the ignorance of foolish men. Unbelievers believe that we are out to do them harm, though that is not the case at all, but in their ignorance, in their blindness, they perceive us as their enemies, and so this passage is aimed at showing us how to relate in a world that is, at times, so dark that it appears everything has gone mad, yet we can live in such a way that would make the gospel attractive.

And so I want us to think about our attitudes. Our attitudes. The key things we're going to focus on is verse 17 and the one word, key word that's repeated twice in the passage is the word "honor." "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." The word "honor" means "to place value on; to set a price," is the root idea. So it means to recognize intrinsic worth and then to treat accordingly. It can be translated respect, honor, esteem, value. So we're twice told to honor and we're going to see that the call to love the brotherhood and to fear God is a greater call of a higher order of loyalty, but we must hear that repetition that we're to honor all people and we're to honor the king, that is, we are to recognize the real value of every unbeliever and to respond accordingly. We're to recognize the real intrinsic value of every ruler and respond accordingly.

Our attitudes are to reflect the biblical reality. I think it's really a challenge because I think it's very likely that you're struggling, especially if you watch the news much, you're struggling to have a right attitude, particularly toward those in authority. We live in an increasingly ungodly age, increasing corruption we see around us. We see evil. We see people that are supposed to, as this text said, the role of government is to punish evildoers and to praise those who do right, but we don't see people in power doing that, do we? We see, in fact, the opposite. As I shared last time, these words were written at a moment in history that was very much like our own, that the Emperor Nero was an ungodly ruler and when Peter pens these words in 63 AD, it's about a year before a major persecution breaks out at the hands of this man who many historians say just became insane. Some

say he started the great fire of Rome because he wanted to build some new buildings that there were old buildings in the way and so it's speculated that he started the fire and then the fire ended up burning for over seven days, destroyed like 70% of the buildings in the city. I mean, tremendous, catastrophic fire. Historians disagree over whether he actually started the fire. There are those who really believe he did and there's those who believe he didn't. We don't know but it was definitely a fortuitous thing for him because he got to rebuild his buildings the way he wanted to and, of course, there's also those who say that he was fiddling while Rome burned. It's because he was a crazy man. We saw last time he was a terribly immoral man. He was corrupt, politically destructive to the society, mentally unstable.

And so, in the midst of that situation, Peter, writing from Rome, where he has access to all the latest news about what is going on with the emperor, says, "You are to honor the emperor." That is, that you are to place appropriate value to recognize his worth and respond accordingly. It doesn't mean, as we saw last time, that you can't speak truth to him. Last time, I spent some time unpacking some of the balances. When it says, submit yourselves to the Lord, for the Lord's sake, to every institution, he doesn't mean that you're to obey unquestioningly everything they say. We saw this last time because I shared a lot of different passages that show that there are situations in the Scriptures where God commends those who obey God rather than men. In fact, Peter himself, who writes these words, "submit to every institution for the Lord's sake," is the one who says in Acts 4 to the authorities, the Jewish authorities, who are telling him to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, he says to those men who were in authority, God's position of authority, he says, "Shall we obey God rather than men?" Clear implication, "I'm obeying God. I'm not obeying you because you're telling me to disobey God right now." So we clearly understand, we talked about that last time.

So there are places where we're going to have to speak the truth and with clarity, but this is talking about underlying attitudes. What are your attitudes toward those in authority over you? Think about that. Let me help you think about that a little more. What are the things you think, what are your thoughts about those in authority over you? How much do you think those thoughts about them? Now, I understand there's some legitimately true thoughts that you can think about our rulers. When they're doing evil, we're to call evil, evil, right? And so we can say, yes, the policy that's being supported is destructive. It's harmful. This man is doing evil in supporting that. But are we at the same time balancing in our mind the fact that this man is in a position that has been appointed by God and that he has a responsibility that is greatly valuable to all under his authority and that we should give him at the same time we criticize correctly his evil, an appropriate modicum of honor? And I know that's a challenge for me. It's easy to think about and meditate on the evil and the failures, but we need to balance that.

We need to spend time remembering what God says in his word so we can do like John the Baptist did, which I mentioned if you were here when Dalton preached on that, for a series of weeks he preached from Mark 6, where John the Baptist spoke directly to Herod and said, "You are wrong," and God's word commends him for doing it. He did it boldly and he did it clearly, but it still didn't mean that he didn't have respect for the man in his

position. Actually respecting him in his position and caring about his soul means you must tell him what he's doing is evil.

I think another great example of this was John MacArthur's letter to Gavin Newsom. Some of you may have seen that. Gavin Newsom, the Governor of California. John MacArthur, pastor at Grace Community Church, wrote a letter sometime last year in which he really challenged him for the evil that Newsom is doing, and he pointed out things like this, "You know, you're in a position where you're supposed to punish evil doing and praise those who are doing right, and you flipped it upside down, and you're going to stand before God." But he said it very respectfully and clearly. That's how the church is to relate but we are not to wish evil on anyone, and this is the idea, honor.

Now, it's interesting, we see two main points in the message this morning, each with two subpoints. To do this, to honor all people, to treat all people, everyone we come in contact with, with the appropriate recognition of their worth and value, to treat rulers with the appropriate worth and value that they have, we're going to see that in the middle of those two commands to honor are two commands that focus on who we are as children of God. So there's two main points this morning. If we're going to cultivate godly attitudes and be faithful Christian citizens, first of all, first point, we need a right view of our place in the coming kingdom. A right view of our place in the coming kingdom and then the second point's going to be, a right view of our place in this present world. So to have the right attitude, we need to see our place rightly in the coming kingdom and in this present world, and you see this, the heart of the message is those two commands in the middle. After he says, "Honor all people," he says, "love the brotherhood, fear God." You see those two commands are about our place in the coming kingdom. The two commands on the outside, "honor all people, honor the king," are about our place in this present world.

So we're going to start with the heart of the message. We're going to spend most time on the second part, but we're going to start with the heart of the message, which is foundational, a right view of our place in the coming kingdom. In verse 17, there's four imperatives. "Honor all people," that's a command. It's not a suggestion. It's not an idea, a helpful hint. It's a command. Honor all people. The second command, "love the brotherhood." The third command, "fear God." And the fourth command, "honor the king." All four are in the imperative mood. They're commands. And the two in the middle, "love the brotherhood and fear God," they're about recognizing where we are, where our place is, in the coming kingdom. It's really reminding us to know who you are.

We said that this whole letter is really aimed at helping us live faithful lives in the midst of, I mean, Peter was writing to help Christians live faithful lives in the midst of a hostile environment spiritually, an increasingly hostile environment. Persecution was about to break out. He was preparing them for that in the providence of God. Peter himself would die a martyr's death within a couple of years of writing this letter. And as a pastor, he writes to these believers to help them bear up under difficult times and he's been saying, you must know if you're going to do that, the two main points of the whole letter, now I'm stepping back and look at the whole letter, 1 Peter, the two main points are: know who you are and know in a sense why you're here. The second point, why you're here,

could also be know what you're to do because why you're here is to do something and here's what you're to do.

So know who you are, know what you are to do, and what we've seen as we read through the letter is he's spent the first part of the letter, he really hammers home who we are. From chapter 1, verse 1, all the way through chapter 2, verse 10, it's know who you are as a Christian. And then 2:11 to the end of the book is going to be, know what you're to do. And so, here he's even now reminding us though, don't forget who you are with this idea of love the brotherhood and fear God. I mean, the text has told us already, who are you as a Christian? If you belong to Jesus Christ, you have been, according to what we've already read in this letter, born again to a living hope. You have experienced new birth and you are spiritually alive to God. You have been set apart. God sees you as holy, which means set apart from the world, set apart to belong to him, and the command is that we've seen is, "Be holy as I am holy." He talked about that in chapter 1. He said that we have been delivered from darkness, even verse 10, we're "to proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We were formerly in the darkness that the other unbelievers are still in, and God has called us out of that.

So you have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, you've been born again, you're a part of the temple of God, you're a part of the dwelling place of God, he's preparing the new heavens and new earth to dwell forever with his people. And so the other thing we've seen is he's made a theme throughout these verses and we read it today in verse 11, "I urge you as aliens and strangers." If you have been born again, you've been taken out of the darkness and brought into his marvelous light. You are presently an alien and a stranger in this present world. He said that actually in chapter 1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who reside as aliens scattered throughout Asia Minor." You reside as aliens. You live as strangers in the world. He said the same thing in verse 17 of chapter 1, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth, the time of your sojourning. The imagery is you've left your home and you've gone to a place far away and you're living there for a time, but you're on the way somewhere else.

So know who you are, this is who you are, and he's reminding us that even in verse 17, when he says, "love the brotherhood, honor all people, love the brotherhood." Honor all people means recognize the worth of every single individual you have contact with, treat them in such a way that shows you recognize their worth, but love those who belong to Christ. Honor all people. Care for them. Help them. But lay down your life for those who belong to Jesus. They're your family. See, there is a supremacy, a hierarchy. We are to see Christians as the special object of our love. Jesus said, the word here, love, is agape, it's supernatural love, it is sacrificial love. It's the kind of love Jesus talked about in John 15 when he says, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. As I have loved you, so also love one another."

So we're to love our brothers and sisters. We're to remember that we are heading to another kingdom. God's going to make the new heavens and new earth. We're going to live in glorified bodies together with everyone who loves Jesus. It's an eternal relationship. We're strangers and aliens passing through on our way to glory and we're to

remember and prioritize the relationships in the body. Now secondly, you're to fear God. So right view of your place in the world is to know your place among the body of Christ, love the brotherhood. The right view of your place in the coming kingdom is to know the place of God in your life. Fear God, honor the king, but fear God. The fear of God is such an important concept in the Scriptures. It does mean that there's an element of fear.

Now it's interesting, there's this paradox. We're to fear God, and yet every time that you find God coming and talking to people, or angels coming and talking, you see it's first in Genesis 15, God comes and speaks directly to Abram, and what is the first thing he says? "Do not fear. Don't be afraid." That's what the angels are always saying, too, when they show up, "Don't be afraid." First words out of their mouth, "Fear not." That's what the angel says, "Fear not I bring you good tidings of great joy," right, Luke 2. The Christmas story. "Fear not." Well, when you see God or you see his glory manifest in an angel, the greatness of the angel, it produces fear in the hearts of sinners. We see the greatness, the transcendence, and so we're afraid. Well, there's a sense in which he's continually saying, "Don't be afraid," but the Scripture also says, "Be afraid." So which is it? Well, it's both and what we see the Bible work out to, and I encourage you to look with me for a moment at Deuteronomy 10, because you have this, the Old Testament, so much richness in the Old Testament in this blending, and what I'm going to say is that the fear that we're to have of God is a fear that also is coupled with love. It's a fear that knows that the one you fear loves you. So it's not a servile fear, it's not a fear that runs away from God, it's a fear that respects and stands in awe of God, but runs toward God because of love.

Deuteronomy 10:12. "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you." What does the Lord want from you, Israel? "But to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. "Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day." You see, he's saying, "Look at the greatness of God and fear Him and obey Him, but realize that this God who is so great that He made the heavens and the earth, He has set His love upon you. You are His precious child through the work of Jesus Christ." And so the Christian heart is to love him, but to also not love him in a syrupy, sentimental way like so much of evangelicalism that thinks of God merely as like a Santa Claus that just gives you whatever you want; you name it and you claim it and he gives it. No, the God of the Bible is a God who is holy and must be treated as holy by those who come to him but he is a God who loves you and brings you into his presence by his saving work.

So we're to fear God, honor the king. We're not to fear the king. In fact, we see this a number of different places. Jesus himself says that we are not to fear him who can destroy the body, but we're to fear him who can destroy the body and the soul and cast them into hell, God. The fear of God and the love of God, you know, there's this tension of fearing God and loving God at the same time, and it's found, the balance is found in seeing God as he truly is. To see him as he truly is. If you saw God as he truly is right

now, you would be struck with uncontrollable fear, the greatness of God, the majesty of God, the holiness of God. If you saw him as he is, you would be overwhelmed. How do we know that? That's what always happens to people who get a glimpse of him. Think of Isaiah 6. But Isaiah chapter 6, when Isaiah sees the Lord, he immediately says, "Woe is me, I'm undone, I'm a man of unclean lips! I dwell among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the Lord. Woe is me!" Literally, he pronounces a judgment, a curse upon himself. "I'm coming apart at the seams. I feel like I'm disintegrating in the presence of God." That's the urgency and fervency of what he's saying. As he cries out, it just comes out of him. He says, "Woe is me, I'm undone for my eyes have seen the Lord. And I see that everything I've ever said about Him was so woefully inadequate that I'm a man of unclean lips. I talked about God and the things I said, and I thought I was saying good things about Him, but the things I said about Him were horrifically far from who He really is. And now I see Him." But what does the Lord do? The Lord sends an angel, a seraph, to get a coal from the altar and touches his lips and says, "Your iniquity is taken away."

The God who shows himself to Isaiah also saves Isaiah and so that's what you can know, the God of the Bible is a God who is holy, but he's a God who's always saying, "Come unto Me and be saved." That is his universal call to every single human being, "Come unto Me and be saved." He offers salvation freely and he will save any who come to him through the work of Christ. And we are to fear him. We're to see that all of life is to be lived in light of the greatness of God. If we understand the greatness of God, then everything else falls into place and I really think it's actually the key back to our passage in 1 Peter 2, it's the fear of God that spawns the honor of all men and the honor of the king. If you fear God rightly, you will honor the king. If you fear God rightly, you will honor all people. To the degree that you fear God, you will do that. Now, when you're informed by Scripture and you see what God says, and so often we are not informed by Scripture, and so we always need to be being transformed.

So that's the first point, a right view of our place in the coming kingdom. Secondly, we need to have a right view of your place in this present world. Our place is to honor, to give honor to those whom honor is due, to place an appropriate value on all men, and to place appropriate value on those who are in positions of authority. This means, as he says in our passage, the king or the emperor, as well as all governors who are sent by him. So this means governors, this means lawmakers, this means police officers, this means the local magistrate, it means everybody who's in a position of authority is to be given the appropriate honor to that position.

I asked earlier what you say about those people, what you think about those people, and like I said, we should think truth. We can call things as they are. God wants us to speak truth. He doesn't want us to pretend that they're not what they are but even if they're an evil man, we need to see that in light and they're doing evil, we need to see it in light of the Scriptures and we can honor them even in their evil conduct for their position. So we first of all want to look at honor the king. So subpoint number 1 here is honor the king or the emperor, the governors. To honor them, we have to see they have a God-given

position and a God-given task. So this is 2A, honor the king, 1 and 2. 2A1, they have a God-given position and a God-given task. A) is position, B) is task.

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution." Put yourselves under those that God has placed in authority. Now he says every human institution. He doesn't emphasize the fact that God has done it here, but we have other Scripture that fills us out real clearly. Turn with me to Romans 13. Paul, writing a few years before Peter, during the reign of the Emperor Nero also, it says in chapter 13 verse 1, Romans 13 1, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God." Now just take that sentence, "For there is no authority except from God." Every person in a position of authority has been placed there by God. Now if that's the case, that automatically says that should inform the way you see them, think about them, and feel about them. They have been placed by God. We have a high view of God, a God who is sovereign over every molecule in the universe, and the Bible presents a God who is sovereign over every affair in man's life. Every affair in government, every affair in business, every affair in education, every affair in our private lives, he's sovereign over it all. And this is what this is saying, there's no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Verse 2, "Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." So to resist authority is to resist God. Now remember last time we showed that we don't follow authority blindly. We put it in context. We see its place. And God is the ultimate authority, so if we have a lesser authority telling us to disobey the ultimate authority, it's clear what we do, we obey the ultimate authority. But we need to really weigh and understand and think about our attitudes toward authorities, especially in days when we live with those who are even more ungodly than we may be in our past.

The text goes on in verse 3, "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same." Look at verse 4, "for it," that is authority, the person in authority, "it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God." Did you hear that twice it says, "it is a minister of God." The person in authority is a minister of God. Twice, diakonos tou Theou. Diakonos, the word for deacon, servant. It is a servant of God, minister of God. "An avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil," end of verse 4. Verse 5, "Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

So what we see is that the position that a person has in authority, any time you find yourself relating to someone in authority, you can know that God put them there and he puts you under their authority. That automatically, now if you think about it, even an ungodly man, if you remember that this man was placed there by God, does that not affect the way you see him? He was placed there by God. Maybe it's clearly an act of



God's judgment. Yes. But even there, there's a sense of humility and reverence that comes to the soul as we deal with that person. We don't come from a position of stepping out above the authorities. We're to place ourselves in subjection. That's the command in chapter 13 verse 1 is just like 1 Peter 2:13, to line yourself up under authority, hupotasso. To arrange under is the idea of the imperative. To order your life under authority is the disposition of the Christian because God is a God of authority.

I mean, think about this, God is a God who always works through authority. He establishes, and we see in our lives, you have three major realms of authority that you live in. There's the authority in the family that got established in Genesis 2. The headship of the man in the marriage. Parents over the child. That's the authority of the family. It's a sphere of authority that you live in and we're all to respect authority in our sphere in our family. Then you have authority in the government, which we're talking about here. God places rulers in the place he places them for his purposes and we must respect them and give them honor. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Jesus says that. And you have authority within the church. Hebrews 13:17 says you're to obey your leaders in the Lord. You're to submit to them and you're not to do it in such a way that causes them grief.

So we're called to be in authority in our family, we're called to be under authority in government, we're called to be under authority in the church, and it is actually evil to oppose and resist authority. It's the essence of who Satan is, is he is a rebel. He did not take his place. He was the highest created being, the Scripture shows us, and yet it was not enough. He wanted to be equal to God. He wanted to be like the Most High. You see this in Ezekiel chapter 28. He aspired to be like the Most High and God called that violence and that was rebellion and God cast him out of heaven. He took a third of the angels with him. And it's his nature to resist authority and it's the nature of sin to resist authority.

Now, what's the first thing you notice about a little baby? Blessed to have a lot of little babies in our church. One of the first things that parents are going to notice is they are sinners. They are rebels. They are selfish, just like you and me are and they don't yet know how to hide it like we learn to as we get older. I mean, you really can hear it, even in the way a baby cries. Think about it. Baby will, you can start, at some point, you'll see this, like the switch flips, and it goes from being, "Eh, eh," you know, "Hey, I need a little help here," to, "I demand help right now!" And the cry, the tone. And then, of course, you see it when you say, don't do that, and what do they do? They do that. We were watching a little video online where these parents did this thing and they showed their kids and said, "Okay, here's this candy, we're gonna come back in just a minute and you can have it. Don't touch it." Have you guys seen that? And the two little kids look at each other, they're like maybe two and a half, two and three, they look at each other, look back, look at each other, and they go for the candy and they had the video on the whole time, the video evidence is right there.

We rebel against authority. It's of our nature as sinners to want to be our own God. This is why people don't want to follow God, is they want to determine life for themselves.

They want to live for their own pleasure, for their own purpose, to do as they will rather than as God wills and it comes out all over the place, and we need to see it's there even as we deal with ungodly rulers. That sin must be rooted out, we must put it to death so that we can respond appropriately and in a godly way to ungodliness around us otherwise we are a part of the problem, and worse than that, it's not just that we're creating social problems we are eclipsing the gospel in our anger, sinful anger, and in our pride. And this is what Peter is determined to help us with in 1 Peter 2, that we need to show appropriate honor, respect. The position that they have is a position that they have because God placed them in it. God's hand is on that.

Not only that, but the task they have is important. The task is essential. When he says in verse 14, "governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right," the role of the government is to prevent anarchy. It's to prevent tyranny. Now we understand that sometimes the government gets confused, but the role of it is to do that and if you throw off the government, there's no government, what are you going to have when you've got a bunch of sinners? You're going to have anarchy and tyranny. And a healthy respect for the sinful hearts of people, the old saying, absolute power corrupts absolutely, is true. Part of the brilliance of the American system was the checks and balances built into the three branches of government to prevent tyranny, and as those checks and balances have broken down, then you see tyranny becomes more easily accessed. But it was the underlying worldview of the Reformation, coming out of the Reformation, people in American society, though they weren't all Christians who were found in the government, America is not a Christian nation. I'm not saying it is. The only nation that belongs to God is the church. That's the nation of God. But America was formed out of a Western mindset that was informed deeply by Christianity and one of the things that informed it deeply was the depravity of man. And so they knew you cannot let one person be in charge. You can't let even a group of people be in charge. There must be continual checks on the sinfulness of people.

Now that said, we're to honor the king. We're to respect the fact that their task is so essential and important. We should value the work they're doing. We should value the work that the police officer is doing when he pulls you over for speeding. I mean, think about it, if there's no traffic laws, what's this going to be like? If there's nobody there to prevent crime, what's the world going to be like? You see, I value that and we need to spend some time meditating on that rather than meditating on all that's wrong and stewing on that, just reading your cell phone updates and your email updates from the news thing and hearing the latest spinning of that same story over and over and over again about how bad everything is, how bad everything is, how bad everything is. We need to stay in the word and realize that even though things may be bad, there's some truth in what they're saying, God is the one who's ordaining this for his purposes and we can rejoice in his good purposes, even though we don't understand them.

And when you read the Old Testament, I would encourage you to spend some time in the minor prophets. You read books like Joel, but all throughout the minor prophets, all throughout, Isaiah is a great book to read too, a major prophet, but what you see is whatever is happening that is calamitous and is disastrous, there is one author and it is the

God of heaven. He's bringing it upon his people and the people are encouraged to see God at work in that, and rather than resent what he's doing, humble themselves, repent, and run to him, and entrust themselves to him, that a God who sends judgment is a God who sends judgment so he can bring about salvation. And when we start rejoicing in what God is doing in our hearts, and we spend time praying and meditating on that, I mean, if you're struggling, if you've been listening to way too much news and reading too much about this, I encourage you to spend some time in the Scriptures, like, read the book of Joel, read it over and over again, see what the prophet does. He basically does this. They had this terrible calamity come upon them, a locust plague, and the locusts come and strip everything bare, and the prophet's message is, he comes along after that and says, "Listen, look how bad everything is," and he says, "I want you to think about how bad everything is." He talks about how bad it is. He's not got any solution for their problem. They don't have food. He actually just tells them, "Wail." And he talks to all the different people, "Wail about how miserable it is. Wail about how terrible it is." And then he says this, "God did it. And not only that, something worse is coming. It's gonna make this look like small potatoes." Why? Because sin is so great in our hearts, in the hearts of God's people, that judgment must come to make us know how wicked we are so that we turn back to God and receive his saving work, his saving grace. That's what ends up happening. Joel has some tremendous passages. In fact, that's the passage that Peter quotes at Pentecost when he talks about the Spirit of God being poured upon his people. That's in Joel. But it's after all of the bad news.

So if we see things as God sees it, we see his hands everywhere. I mean, read Daniel, Daniel three times in chapter 4, Daniel 4 is amazing, Daniel 4 is a letter written by King Nebuchadnezzar. It's in Scripture. It's like Nero writing a letter in Scripture almost. I mean, Nebuchadnezzar may not have been that bad, but he was close. Read the first three chapters of Daniel and you'll see what a bad guy he was. In chapter 4 you see what a bad guy he was, but it's a letter where he recounts, I think, what is his conversion. He definitely recounts what God did for him. And God humbles him. And God makes him have this dream and the dream is that he sees a tree chopped down. Daniel says, "That's you Nebuchadnezzar. Because of your pride, God's gonna humble you. Please repent now so it doesn't happen to you." Nebuchadnezzar doesn't repent and it happens to him. And three times it says, "The Lord bestows the rule, the authority on whomever he wishes." Three times in the passage it says that so that you will know that God is sovereign over the affairs of mankind. He bestows the rule on whomever he wishes. And one time it says, even the lowliest of men he sets over. I love that how God said that to Nebuchadnezzar. "You're the greatest man in the world? No, you are the lowliest of men," God says to him, "But I set you there."

Well, if God set him there, it's true, he's always setting people there, and if we understand that, then we can give appropriate honor. The Lord has placed this man, this, in a sense, even the President of the United States, not the same way as it was with David, please hear me, but there's a sense in which he is the Lord's anointed in a way, not the same as David, not nearly close, and certainly not like Christ, but he is the one God has placed and empowered and we should respect that. Now, that said, we also should tell him the truth, just like John MacArthur did Gavin Newsom. If you have an opportunity, you

should tell him. "I care about you. I care for your soul. I care about the country. I'm so grateful for the fact that you are in the position you are, because you're gonna try to, we need that position." Not that you are in the position, but that the position is there. Somebody's in it. But I urge you to do what God says to do, punish evil, reward righteousness. Look to Jesus Christ for your salvation.

So that's the key to honoring the king is to see the position and the task, the great value of those things and even as Charles read earlier from John, Caiaphas, the high priest, the Lord's even doing that is showing you he's in charge. The high priest Caiaphas is saying, "We need to get rid of Jesus. We've gotta get rid of him so we can save our country. We've got to get rid of Jesus. It's expedient for this man to die so that the nation can be saved." That's what he's saying. No good intention, only evil. And yet the text calls out and says, because he was the high priest. What's that mean? He was the man placed by God in that position. He spoke the word of God unknowingly. And the same God who made that happen is reigning and ruling right now in every single affair, every sphere and Christians need to be people who are so confident, who fear God so much that we see his hand in all those places. We know the world's not gone, yeah, it's going crazy, but it's going crazy as God is willing it to. He's the one, though he's not the author of evil, he does no evil, he's sovereignly allowing, though, exactly what he wants. Satan's raging, sin is raging, and God's sovereignty is overseeing it all to accomplish his glorious purposes.

If we understand that, we need to spend time meditating on it so that we will treat people accordingly and think about your thoughts. Spend time having these thoughts. Spend time praying for those in authority over us as we're told to do. Pray for their salvation. Pray for their ministry. Then honor all men. The same thing is true. We need to look at their position and their task. The position, let me, I've got to be quick on this, let me just kind of call a couple of texts to your attention. The position of all men. Turn with me to Genesis 1. Verse 26 of chapter 1, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man,' listen for the repetition, "'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Every single human being has been created in the image of God. That is, their position is they are created to represent and to reflect the glory of God.

The word "image," actually, is an interesting word. It's used a couple other times in the Bible. One is in 1 Samuel 4, where it speaks of this word, "tselem," as referring to the statues that the Philistines make to put into the Ark when they send it back. That's a great story if you haven't read it; read 1 Samuel 4 through 6. And so, maybe it's not chapter... chapter 4 is where it starts. So anyway, a little bit later than that, you'll read where they make images of the mice and rats and the tumors that were on them and that is that God afflicted them with rats and tumors when they took the Ark back to their place. They thought they had beaten God in war. They beat the Israelites. They took the Ark. They take the Ark into the temple of Dagon, their god, and they put it below Dagon, remember? And like Dagon, "You beat Yahweh," and the priests go, you know, lock up and go home for the night, set the alarm on the way out, and they come back in the

morning and Dagon is face down before the Ark. This massive statue is down on the ground, face down before this little tiny Ark. And they're like, "Whoa, we gotta do something about this." So they immediately get together, "Come on, let's get him back up." And they get him back up and, "Let's just pretend this didn't happen. Was the alarm set? Yeah, it was set. Okay, well, I don't know what happened." They go home that night. The next morning they come in, face down again on the ground. This time the head's broken off and the hands and feet are broken off. Now they know God has done something and they must be terrified. Dagon is not God. Even because Israel lost to the Philistines, Yahweh alone is the Lord.

And so, after all this happens, then they send the Ark different places, they don't want it, and wherever it goes, they're afflicted with plagues of rats and plagues of tumors that break out all over them. Finally, they decide enough is enough. "Every place we send it, that's what happens and we need to test if this happened by chance or if God did it." And so they fill the Ark with these gold offerings of images of the tumors and the rats, and they send it back to Israel. They send it back in a really neat way too. They get two cows who've never been yoked. They've never pulled anything. These are two female cows that have recently had calves and so they know their babies need them and they've never pulled an ox cart, and they put this ox cart behind them with the Ark in it, and they let them go, and they see, "If it goes back to Israel, we'll know God did this." And what happens is the Ark goes straight back to Israel. I mean, like an arrow, straight back, and it says that the cattle were lowing all the way. What were they doing? What was it lowing? They were calling their calves. They were calling their calves, "Come, come, come. We wanna come to you, but we cannot. Our mission is to go to Israel."

So God is sovereign. God is ruler. Well, they put the image in, I'm sorry, that was a big commercial in the middle of this. Great passage to read. But they put those tumors in the Ark and the rats there, they're images, they're likenesses, and so he says that every human being is an image and likeness of God. Somehow, though God is invisible, he's spirit, we somehow look like him, We represent him in the same way a statue to a great man represents that man. So every human being that you encounter has the mark of God on them and so if that's true, how can you not honor them? How can you not see value? The God that you love has put his form in some way on this human being; no matter how weak, no matter how deformed they might be, they're an image bearer of God and therefore valuable. And so even if they in their lives are dishonoring God, even if they're defacing the image by their deception and foolishness, even if they're striking out at God and rebelling against him, even in the worst case, there still needs to be a sense in which you and I see that person as an image bearer. Their value is enormous. They don't even know it.

So we value them more than they value themselves. This is how we make a difference for the gospel. We love people and care for them more than they care for themselves because we see them as they really are. And their work, according to this, and according to another passage, Psalm 8, you could look at this week, is to rule. He made them to represent him, to be a likeness to him, to show the whole world his glory, and part of the way they represent him is in ruling over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle.

Every man is greater than every animal. We're over them. And people are then to rule over the world, it means not just to rule over the fish, it means to tend the world, to bring order and beauty to the world. And so when you look at people and look for how they bring order and beauty to the world, the job that they're doing, the calling that they have on their life. And even though their life may be mangled and distorted by sin, there's something good and beautiful there and we need to value it and let that attitude of valuing them be there as we speak the truth of the gospel.

I want to close with one passage, Titus 3:1-7. Titus is right before, well, right before Philemon and Hebrews. You'll find it right a page before Hebrews. It's after 1 and 2 Timothy. This refrain is just, I want you to see another passage where the same thing is commanded. Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, Titus 3:1, "Remind them to be subject to rulers," same verb, hupotasso, place yourself under them. "Be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men." All the positive, be subject, be obedient, be ready for every good deed. Do not malign anyone. Do not speak evil of them or wish them evil. It doesn't mean that you don't call out what is evil, but you don't wish harm upon them. You don't want harm to come upon them. "Be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men." And I love what he says next, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived," this was us, we were disobedient, deceived, "enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." That's who we were, he said. "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior," I love this verse, "so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Christians are to be people who are so full of joy and so glad to be worshiping God that we have compassion and honor for all people. Yes, we speak the truth, though. We're unashamed in speaking the truth. God's made male and female, two genders. Yes, we know that and we think everyone needs to know that for their own well-being. It's clear in the Scripture. God has placed people in authority and he intends authorities to do what is right, to reward good and to punish evil. And everyone is under the wrath of God and needs to be reconciled to God and to become his through Jesus Christ. And we say these things unapologetically, but we say it unapologetically from a heart of compassion and gentleness and consideration. This is what God's will for us is in these days. May the Lord help us and I encourage you this week to meditate on these truths so that it'll change our attitudes, change the things you think about others, and when you catch yourself saying something that's ungodly about somebody, I know I find myself saying something and it'll be I crossed the line. You know, call someone a fool or something like that and I have to repent. I'm talking about, I don't normally say that to them, I say that about them. But that's still evil. I have to repent and say, "Lord, forgive me. I should not have called that man a fool. I should have said he was doing something very foolish. He's ignorant." Use biblical terms. "And Lord, help him, save him." If we do that, we cultivate our attitudes, we will be more effective for Christ.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, we thank You for the glory of the gospel. We thank You that You save us not based on our own deeds of righteousness, but based on the righteousness of Christ, and that You're mighty to save any person. Lord, You could take anyone, no matter how confused, no matter how darkened in their understanding, You give them a new heart just like that through the message of Jesus and then You start transforming them as they walk with You and they start learning what it is to fight sin, to love Christ. Lord, help us be a light in this very dark day. May our hope and joy be so great, we have so much to be joyful about, so much to be hopeful about, only good things coming for us in the future; no matter what happens in this world, You will turn it around to be good and blessed for us. May we not be people who are pessimistic and depressed, but be people who are joyful overcomers, who have an attractive joy that will lead to people asking us a reason for the hope that's within us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*