

## Is The United States A Christian Nation? (Part 3)

### Jesus' Example in Relation to Government

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It is very interesting to me how prominent this subject of American-Christianity's impact on Western civilization has become since I began speaking on this subject. Not a week goes by that another article by a well-known journalist appears on the national scene. This is because the American version of Christianity is undergoing a very severe crisis. You may recall that this previously occurred in Europe; there the secularists clearly won so decisively, say the journalists, that now Europeans are living in the *post*-Christian era.

I think the reality is that I am actually behind the curve on the subject of this war. American journalists are way out in front of me covering this, and this week a condensed version of a speech given by Dinesh D'Souza at Hillsdale College in Michigan arrived in our mailbox. Mr. D'Souza is a nationally known conservative author of several books, the latest of which is titled *What Is So Great About Christianity?* His speech given at Hillsdale College was titled "How Christianity Shaped The West."

His speech had a very positive approach. I believe that despite the fact that what these authors are searching into is but a counterfeit of the reality, the counterfeit's quality as a moral guide is still so far out in front of whatever is in second place there is no comparison.

Mr. D'Souza's speech began with this comment:

In recent years there has risen a new atheism that represents a direct attack on Western Christianity. Books such as Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, and Christopher Hitchens' *God Is Not Great*, and Sam Harris' *The End of Faith* all contend that Western society would be better off if we could eradicate from it the last vestiges of Christianity. But Christianity is largely responsible for many of the principles and institutions that even secular people cherish. Chief among them is equality and liberty.

I think I have shown fairly clearly in the first two messages of this series that though the Founding Fathers clearly had strong intentions that religion be taught in public schools, their intention was to limit instruction to general subjects of universal agreement, with topics such as "God is Creator," "The Bible is indeed the word of God," and that "Jesus is the Savior of mankind." However, in the past fifty years or so, people with strong influence and zeal have managed to eliminate religious instruction from public schools entirely.

There is no doubt the Constitution containing our Bill of Rights has a general true Christian base to it. This base reveals the guidance of biblical teachings in the minds of the Founding Fathers. However, what they believed was Christianity is in reality only a shadow of the reality. They were misguided by a counterfeit Christianity they sincerely believed was the reality, as was virtually everybody else in their time. Most today agree in their thinking about the Christian religion.

I recently heard, in a radio interview, a widely-known and respected Protestant minister in the Charlotte area give a clear example of how Christianity's original doctrinal package became changed from what it was originally "for all time delivered to the saints." The subject involved some events surrounding the celebration of Christmas in the Charlotte area.

In his response to the circumstance, he briefly decried some narrow religious people who object to Christmas because it has ties to pagan celebration. I wonder whom he was thinking about. That thought did not come from his belief in the original package of Christian doctrine. Twice God strongly warned that no one should either add to or take away from what He gave. God did not give Christmas. It makes absolutely no appearance in the Bible, but here was this theologian acting as though it *did* appear in the Bible.

That statement by that minister denigrates specific teachings that *are* part of *the* faith in that doctrinal package "once for all time delivered to the saints." In his expressed thought, he was not reflecting the mind of Christ. It is that manner of thinking that makes adjustments away from "the faith once delivered."

I have been giving you evidences that at no time in the American history has this nation ever had "that faith" as the doctrinal basis for its dominate religion called "Christianity."

In the second sermon I continued that theme, but added in the fact that the nation never followed Christ. There is a difference between having the right faith and actually following even that base, which they did not do.

In this sermon I will continue to expand on those two themes by first showing a major reason why this circumstance exists, and then begin to show more evidences in specific areas in which we can identify deviations from the doctrinal base and from following Christ.

First we will look at a major cause for these problems. I want you to turn to Revelation 12:9.

**Revelation 12:9** So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This is the reality that all of these people are unaware of, that they are under a cloud of deception. In addition to this, Jesus warned in Matthew 24 that false christs would arise, claiming that He, Jesus, is the Christ. You ought to be able to relate to that. The fact that He is the Christ is true. However, the body of beliefs of the false prophets only contain portions of "the faith once delivered for all time to the saints."

It is in honesty, examining the body of beliefs within the faith, that we find many proofs that what people think Christianity is, is in reality a counterfeit.

The purpose of God is to create an entire family of the character-image of Jesus Christ. This is just a little bit of an aside issue here, but it is important to make this point about "the faith once delivered to the saints."

**II Corinthians 3:17-18** Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

I bring this verse into this because of what God is forming us into. He is forming us into the image of Jesus Christ. The mind and nature of Jesus Christ is multi-faceted in its perfection. It takes the whole of the doctrinal base of "the faith that was delivered once for all time to the saints" to give us a fairly good picture of what we are being formed into.

It takes a specific package of doctrines to define the image of Jesus Christ; if you begin altering those doctrines, you are beginning to create a god in a different image from that of Jesus Christ. That is why that group of doctrines is so important, because it reflects the mind of Christ. It is the mind of Christ that God is forming and shaping us into so that we think like Him, have the same attitude, and do as He did—of course considering that it is down to our level. All that we do in conformity is going to be full of imperfections as well, but we need the right model to assist in our responsibility.

As the last message was finishing, I was beginning to show a major governing difference between the citizens of the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God. The kingdoms of this world govern using what the Bible refers to as "the power of the sword." They govern by imposing and compelling their agendas on others, and in so doing they are failing to submit to God, and thus rejecting His will with their thoughts and operations. Now if they were really Christians, they would follow what "the faith once delivered to the saints" has to say on this issue. But they are not following it. They have deviated.

By way of clear contrast, Jesus used His power to submit to the Father, strongly resisting imposing His agenda to the point of allowing His life to be unfairly and unlawfully taken from Him. Jesus imposed nothing of His agenda on anybody. The governments of this world, which are all carnal, *do* impose, as we shall see.

In that section in that former sermon, I referred you to John 1:12 where it says that those who receive Christ, through God's calling, are given the right, the power, the authority, or the privilege to become sons of God. This means, that in order to truly be sons of God, we must live our lives submitting as Jesus Christ did. He set the example.

Let us go to Jeremiah 10 because there is a fly in the ointment here.

**Jeremiah 10:23** O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

The American nation, and no other nation, has ever given evidence of choosing to submit to God. Each has gone its own way, and that includes America. Deceived? Yes they are, but that is evidence they are not Christian. That is the important thing here.

You will undoubtedly recall that God frequently called the ancient Israelites under the Old Covenant as being stubborn and stiff-necked. They were uncircumcised in heart. They were carnal. Thus, not trusting God, their human nature always had reservations at which they individually, and as a nation, drew the line.

The unconverted mind will not, by nature, choose to govern itself by submitting to God because it wants to compel and to control. Recall, again, that Romans 8:7 says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Would you say that America as a nation is governing itself by submitting to God? It cannot do it because it is carnal. It is fighting God, and yet it calls itself "Christian." America acts like any other carnal nation on earth. Now because it has had the benefit of some Christian truth from the Bible, it does not act with the viciousness and violence that many of the nations do. There is some constraint there from the truth they do have, but I am talking about the overview here.

Brethren, it takes a miraculous God-given gift through His calling to enable the converted mind to begin to consistently submit to God by obeying the teachings contained within "the faith" without drawing lines in the sand and figuratively saying, "This far, and no farther."

There exists a vital cooperative effort underway in us consisting of God and us as coworkers. Godly faith, hope, love, and character cannot be imposed from one person to another. They are created individually within each person through that person's cooperation with God. Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (skill in living) can be taught. They can come out of a book, but they will not become part of the hearer unless the hearer cooperates by using them, yielding to them, and thus making them, by faith, a part of himself.

What the issue is in this governmental difference is free moral agency. Hang onto that. Each person must make those choices for himself on the basis of his faith in order to submit to Christ, and thus be living by faith, following Christ.

Let us draw this a little bit clearer. Suppose there is in a family a health issue as to whether one should have a risky operation, use a powerful medication with dangerous side effects, or, as one might say, "Just trust God." Well, a wife cannot impose her faith on her husband. Why? Because it is *his* issue, and therefore *his* choice. And neither can the husband impose on the wife. It is *her* choice. It is *her* faith that is on the line. Christians do not use their God-given faith to impose *their* faith on others.

We do not want to go too far away from this concept in relation to the nation that I have mentioned a couple of times in the past couple of weeks it seems. We are going to go to Deuteronomy 33:17. This is very interesting in relation to the nation. Moses is writing about Joseph. Notice what Joseph is going to do.

**Deuteronomy 33:17** His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns like the horns of the wild ox; together with them he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Moses prophesied that Joseph—the nation, the people of Joseph—will push the people together to the ends of the earth. Does not that description strongly imply an imposing power on a worldwide

basis? "Push" indicates herding that is done against the will of others, and the economic wealth of the tribe of Joseph supplies the power the carnal government then uses for its pushing. This is evidence of Israel being a non-Christian nation.

Did Jesus and His followers ever push other nations or other peoples to the ends of the earth? Has there ever been a modern nation more imposing of their way of life over a longer period of time than Britain and the United States? Whether it is to impose a way of life, as in Democracy, or to increase its economic power? This illustrates how kingdoms of this world achieve their agendas. They *impose* themselves on the other nations and push them around, and if they have to, they will go to war to do it.

Is this the kind of imposition of power that we should expect of a Christian nation? Not on your life! This is just another indication that our nations are not Christian. They are of this world. They are not submitting to God and following Jesus Christ.

**John 18:33-37** Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Following Jesus' arrest, the various authorities bearing rule over Judea began to contend as to who was responsible for executing judgment. Each ruler seems to have wanted to avoid the responsibility, but eventually it fell to Pilate. Jesus made it very clear His kingship and His kingdom were no threat whatever to Rome or the Jews, because it is not of this world. Twice He used the word *cosmos* to emphasize this truth. *Cosmos* essentially means "an arrangement of things" or "the system among men."

Jesus is showing how the spiritual mind reacts to the circumstance in which He found Himself, and if we have the mind of Christ, this is the way God wants *us* to react. Though His kingship is very real, His kingdom is not of this order. It is not of this time and arrangement of what is going on, and it does not derive its power from anything on earth. He is doing this to establish that His kingdom is far different from anything that Pilate had been informed of.

Pilate had assumed that if Jesus was a king, as He indeed affirmed, then the Jews were the nation from which He drew His support and that He ruled over. Pilate also assumed Jesus' kingdom could be understood on the same term as every carnal earthly kingdom—that is, along geographical lines, ethnic makeup, patriotic ideals, and its attitudes and laws concerning things. He was wrong; *radically* wrong. In fact, he could not have missed the mark by a wider margin. However, he did begin to grasp a measure of the truth of what Jesus said, but out of fear he backed away from setting Jesus completely free. He tried to do it, but he feared the Jews and an uprising, and being reported to Rome more than he did facing the truth that Jesus was no threat to him whatever, so he gave Him up.

Pilate's questioning was aimed at finding evidence of the method that carnal revolutionary leaders use to gain power, and then after gaining it, to retain leadership. He did not find it, because Jesus was no threat. So how do the leaders of this world gain rulership and then use their authority as they rule? It is very interesting that Jesus Himself supplied the answer. He did this a little bit earlier in His ministry.

**Matthew 20:25-26** But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

We are going to tear this apart a little bit because Jesus used two different terms in verse 25 to emphasize the manner of their rule. The first term, translated in the *NKJ*, "lord it over them," and in the *KJV* as "exercise." This word in the Greek is Strong's #2634, and is closer in meaning to the English term "subjugate." The word "subjugate" is a pretty strong word. This term "subjugate" is actually stronger than either version translates, but it certainly indicates "compulsion"—sort of a "Do this, or else," with a threat of force.

Now Mark's account of the same thing in Mark 10:42 uses exactly the same words as Matthew does, but Luke's account in Luke 22:25 softens it a bit.

**Luke 22:25** And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'

The second term translated "exercises" in both translations is *Strong's* #2715, and it means "to have and wield full privilege." I mean they make the most of their office as dictator, king, or whatever.

Jesus makes very clear that those kings have authoritative power, and openly and frequently use it *against* others. Both of those terms indicate a compulsion against, so the implication of the whole instruction is that the rulers of the kingdoms of this world unjustly take advantage for their own benefit.

In verse 26, Jesus makes it exceptionally clear that a Christian is not to conduct his life following the pattern of these rulers. The Kingdom of God is a submitting service-centered institution, and the kingdoms of this world are subjugating, using manipulative powers. There is quite a difference between the two.

Jesus' instruction sets the foundation for the use of God-given authority by a Christian. In Jesus' trial and crucifixion, He was confronted by a government of this world, and His reaction supplies the Christian with a pattern should the same happen to us.

I want you to notice first Paul's advice in regard to government, which in one sense we can almost see as an enemy. They are not converted, and they use their power and authority where they see fit. We are going to look briefly at five verses in Romans 12.

Incidentally, history shows that there always have been two factors that have persecuted Christians. The first is the government, and the second is the entrenched religious authorities. Almost all the time what happens is it is the entrenched religious authorities who get jealous or suspicious, or whatever,

and they then instigate the government to come down upon the Christian. Romans 12:14 is our reaction.

**Romans 12:14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

**Romans 12:17** Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

**Romans 12:19** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

**Romans 12:21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Now go all the way back to Romans 12:2 and see how Paul led in to this instruction.

**Romans 12:2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

That is instruction from the Chief.

It is in our conduct before government that we show that we are really and truly following Christ. By this I mean the governments of men, and I also mean the government of God, because all of our actions, our attitudes, our conduct and behavior are done before Him as well.

Let us go on to Romans 13. This immediately follows all of this advice about "Don't fight back," "Be calm," "Repay evil with good," and so forth.

**Romans 13:1-4** Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister [or servant], an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

Thomas Paine, during the American Revolution, said "Governments are a necessary evil." I would not say that they are all evil in the way he was thinking of, because I think he did not want much government at all.

As we begin expounding these verses, please understand that what is written here applies to the United States government just as surely as it does to all other nations on earth. I think you can see there are indications (being shown by what is happening in the United States) that changes in the American peoples' relationship with their government is going to be severely tested. Things are already happening. The warning signals are going up that it is becoming more authoritative; freedom is being impinged upon, and the demands are going to be, I believe, a great deal more intense than anything that any of us has experienced in our history in the United States.

I want us to notice some important truths that are not always readily apparent in these first four verses. Some aspects of these verses are very frequently misunderstood. Assumptions are made because people do not see these verses or understand them or interpret them within the *broader* context of the entire Bible, and that is needed for a correct understanding.

As we continue on these verses, I want to establish first of all a couple of foundational thoughts. The first is that God, under no circumstance, approves of sin, whether it is committed by an individual or a nation. Nations go to war. The United States goes to war. They do not have God's permission to do that. They are killing. That is sin, and it shows that they are not following Christ.

The reason God will not tolerate sin is that it runs counter to His sense and standard of righteousness. Whether it is committed by an individual or a government, He never changes in this. Sin always—and I mean *always*—is destructive in its effect and always produces death. All of God's ways and means are pointed toward producing life. All it takes is one sin to produce these two negative effects.

The verse says, "The wages of sin is death." Incidentally, that word "sin" is singular, not plural. The wages of sin is death, and Satan is a destroyer, not God. Satan promotes sin in *order* to destroy.

Let us go back to Deuteronomy 30 and just touch on this very important command from God. It is not a suggestion.

**Deuteronomy 30:19** I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life [That is not a suggestion.], that both you and your descendants may live.

This verse gives evidence, as to whether a nation or an individual is involved, there is always a choice. The verse also implies that should sin occur, the person or nation will be cursed, but neither the curse nor the death penalty may immediately be exacted. There may be a time element, a lag, between cause and effect, but the effect is certain. Adam and Eve were not forced to sin. Of their own free will they chose to do so. In the case of the Adam's and Eve's sin, the curses began immediately, because they were put out of God's presence right away and ejected from the Garden. But the death penalty did not occur until almost a thousand years later.

It is interesting to make note of this, because it is so plain and clear. Adam's and Eve's sin was against government—the government of God. And when *we* sin, those sins are *also* against government. Always the government of God is there in our life. It must have been twenty times that I heard Mr. Armstrong say government is the most important issue in the Bible.

All of the governments covered by these verses in Romans 13 are governments of men regardless of what their forms might be, whether they are a Democracy or a Republic, whether they are Socialist, or Fascist, or Communist, or kingly. Notice next that they all share another characteristic. Their power is represented by the sword. That is in verse 4. The sword symbolizes their ability to coerce behavior through pain, all the way from punishments like deprivation of liberties or tax burdens, and on and on, to the death penalty. Their rule is essentially enforced through fear. It is not a good kind of fear; not mere respect, but the *terror* kind, the *being afraid* kind.

Although all versions of the kingdoms of this world try to influence how their subjects think and feel, their power resides in their ability to control behavior. We are getting to a very important principle here. Their power resides in their ability to control behavior. But as effective as the sword is, it



cannot bring about internal change in anybody's nature. This is very important to understand. It can get people to conform, but it does not change their nature.

Now why is this so important to Christianity? It is because God's creation of the character of Jesus Christ in us requires voluntary cooperation. Coercion destroys free moral agency. God wants us to *voluntarily* submit to Him, and He gives us all the reasons in the world why we should do it. In addition to that, He gives us His spirit and even changes our nature to let us have the opportunity to do it in our own volition, because what He is creating cannot be created through coercion.

During child training, God shows that children should be, *must* be, introduced to the power of the sword by the parents to the extent of corporal punishment in measure to the seriousness of the infraction. Children should be spanked in order to learn the lesson of the sword as early as possible. There is no better place for them to learn it than in the home where it is mercifully applied. However, understand that the spankings will not change the child's nature any more than the sword will in regard to the governance, but it begins to make the child think and to fear pain in the right way.

In childrearing, even though they should be spanked, they are still nonetheless going to do things rebelliously against your will in order to impose *their* own will, because the nature remains unchanged. Of course that always lets us know that human nature is still there. They might be cute and cuddly, but Satan is doing his thing.

In like manner, a kingdom can stipulate that murder (we will say as an example) will be punished; but nonetheless, it will not change a person's desire to hate, to envy, to lust, and so on. Laws enforced by the power of the sword control behavior, but they cannot change hearts. It is only a miraculous spiritual circumcision that can accomplish this.

In Romans 13:4 it says, "The government does not bear the sword in vain." Now what does "in vain" mean? In this case it means it does not bear the sword without a reason, and the reason is that civil government and its sword is, in reality, a divine gift provided to keep human nature from running amok, which it would do if there were nothing to restrain it. So governments serve a good purpose. Without them there, without them imposing pain, human nature would just run wild, and so there is enough fear coming from the government that will help keep most of human nature in line.

This does not mean that the worldly governments are created by God, or that governments always use their God-given authority as God intends. Rather, what it means is that God has instituted or stationed governments for the purpose of maintaining order.

We have a tendency to think that God sets every person in his assigned position within a community, whether it is in the United States, or Russia, or whatever. That is not what is shown by this. It only says that God assigns governments to carry out this responsibility, and He is not taking responsibility for who is in the office doing what. We will see that there is a little bit of a caveat here, and the Bible allows for some of that, and we will get to it in just a minute.

What we do find is that God uses governments as He finds them in all of their ungodly rebellious ways, and He then uses them to serve His purposes. What Paul is saying here is a generality, and thus at times God will place somebody in a position in a government to work on His behalf. Thus He did with Joseph; thus He did with Daniel; thus He did with Nebuchadnezzar; thus He did with Cyrus

when He raised those men up to take those offices. But we cannot just broadly assume that God puts everybody into government. He does not do that. Usually when God puts somebody in the government, it is to carry out a good purpose.

The speaker here is Jethro (or Reuel)—Moses' father-in-law.

**Exodus 18:19-22** Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.

I want to touch on this because this advice from Moses' father-in-law was that *Moses* appoint judges. There is no indication whatever that God was involved. Now Moses undoubtedly did it from his experiences with the people, making his own judgments as to who would fit these responsibilities that he was then going to appoint.

Here is Moses giving instruction to the people. Not to anybody in particular. They are just general instructions to the people who are going to be guided by the book of Deuteronomy.

**Deuteronomy 16:18** "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

Does that not look like the people themselves were going to choose who the judges were going to be? It does. I am not saying there is no involvement from God, but I think that the Bible shows pretty clearly that God is not going to take the blame for all the stupid, idiotic things these judges decided. They were not *His* appointment; they were the *peoples'* appointment. Did they hold elections? Possibly. I do not know. Was there any American-style campaigning? I have no idea. God does not fill in all those details.

I said there was a caveat or two here. In chapter 17 He says, "*I will appoint the king.*" Very interesting. You can read that for yourself, but I just wanted you to see that God is not responsible for all the governments that exist in all of the nations in every little town, in every little township, every state, or whatever. I think there is a saying that is pretty much true, and that is, we get the government we deserve.

There is a portion of God's word that shows the truth of this proverb, that we get the government we deserve. In I Samuel, chapter 8, when the people decided they wanted a king like the Gentiles had, God said, "Okay." And then He proceeded to tell Samuel, "This is what you are going to get. Samuel, tell them." They got exactly what they chose—a king just like the Gentiles.

Let us go back to the theme of Romans 13 which we were in, but I am going to go to I Peter 2. The theme here is the same, and that is our responsibility in our relationship with God to the governments that we are living under.

**I Peter 2:13-17** Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

I want you to go back to verse 13 and I want you to take notice first of the word "Therefore." The word "Therefore" is a conjunction relating to the practical application we just read to what preceded this new paragraph that begins in verse 13. Those things preceding verse 13 are the reason why Peter said what he did beginning in verse 13. I am going to pick out what he is pointing out to these people, and what he is pointing out is what they are, and because they are what they are, therefore they have to submit to the government.

**I Peter 2:9-12** But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

So here, beginning in verse 13, is what honorable conduct is out in the world. We submit to the government that is over us.

I am going to compress this down into a little saying for you, and it is this: Peter is saying is that it is impossible to be a good Christian without also being a good citizen. The two go hand in hand. If we are not a good citizen, we are not glorifying God. We are not submitting to Him. The submission goes up through the local government and on to God. So why do we submit? It is to glorify God. God is not saying that this is pleasant. He is saying that this in the end is what is going to glorify Him.

**I Peter 2:15** For this is the will of God.

**I Peter 2:13** Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man [Why?] for the Lord's sake—[that is, in His behalf, because He is saying this is what glorifies Him.]

**I Peter 2:21-23** For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

Despite the fact that those governments may be completely atheistic, unjust, totally corrupt, we always remember that God knows full well what is going on. Nothing escapes His eye in His creation, and in good time He will act according to His purpose. So we must not assume we know better how to take care of injustices. By virtue of His invaluable calling, it has fallen on us to submit to them, because in God's purpose for us right now, submitting to them *is* God's will. So let Jesus' example of His submission to the injustices of the Roman and Jewish civil governments be your guide. He also submitted to the Jewish religious authorities as well, and they were guilty of

ramrodding His execution through the civil authority. In the end, submitting to Him will work out best for all concerned.

What I just gave you was one reason why we have to submit to the local authorities and of course to God too.

The second reason appears in Matthew 22:17-21.

**Matthew 22:17-21** Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Jesus clearly commanded us to pay the government taxes. Now is there anything practical to this? Yes there is, because this is an aspect of "the laborer is worthy of his hire" principle that is found in the Bible. One does not honor God by dishonoring the emperor. Give the emperor his due, whether it is in service or whether it is in money. The way this works out is that giving the emperor his due is actually a way of giving thanks for the good they do accomplish for us. Now we may have many correct objections as to how our taxes are used, but Jesus is saying this is part of our submission. We must pay for services rendered.

There is a third factor involved in this, and it is in I Timothy 2:1-4.

**I Timothy 2:1-4** Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Regardless of how bad they may seem to us, regardless of how corrupt and atheistic they are, we are commanded to pray for them for a specific reason—that we might live quiet and peaceable lives. This is so important, brethren. This emphasizes once again how important peace is to our spiritual growth into the image of Jesus Christ.

War and its persecution forces one into a survival mode and concentrating on the self, and this is not good for spiritual growth, because we become ever more self-centered than human nature normally is. One of the more surprising items in this passage is found in verse 3, and that is that in such praying it is excellent and admirable in God's sight, despite the fact that these leaders may be abominably corrupt. It points out how differently God perceives people than we do.

Now what did we cover very briefly here? It is showing us, through the example of Jesus Christ, the responsibility that we have toward the governments of men. They are corrupt. They are carnal. They use their powers unfairly. But God knows all this. Jesus faced it in the flesh, even as we do, and He resisted rebelling against them, and fighting for His own cause to the point He allowed them to take His life. That is going a long way, and I do not know that we will ever have to face that. I hope that

we do not, but the example is there, and such behavior, such conduct is in reality submitting to God. That is what we have to remember. It is His will that we do this, and therefore we are submitting to Him, and we are doing it in His behalf, and He will be glorified from it.