Government and the Christian

**1 Peter 2:13-17**

**The Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.**

**November 15, 2024**

**Jeff:** Gracious God, we thank You. We delight in You and we bow before You, for You are indeed God. And You have rescued us from the mouth of the devil who in the past has sought to devour us. And yet You removed us from his clutches, and yet he still pursues us. And You, Lord, providentially intervene time and t time again because we are Yours, and we are thankful for that.

Father, as we come before You today we are mindful that we’ve been rescued in the Son and by the Holy Spirit applying the Son’s work to our lives. And so, Father, we are grateful to You and love You, knowing that we love You because You first loved us.

Father, as we come we ask that You will enable us to glorify You in our thinking, in our doing and in our speech. We pray, Father, that today would be a new day, that You would help us to experience Your mercies afresh. And we pray that You will strengthen us especially in our consciences. Lord, we ask that You would help us to experience the blood of Christ in that way as it applies to our justification, helping us to understand what the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing of the conscience means. But not only that; we actually pray that You would go further and give us the experience of all of the benefits that we possess in union with Christ. And so, Father, actually change us and shape us after the image of Your Son.

Father, these are the things that You do. And we are thankful and ask that Your hand would be upon us continually in this, and we pray, Father, as well for those things that are upon our hearts and minds. We think of Sig and ask that You would bless him and strengthen him by Your grace. We pray, Father, that You would enable him to think Your thoughts after You. We pray, Father, for his physical well-being. We pray for our brother Bruce and ask that Your hand would be upon him as well. And we just continually pray for our brother Don and for his heart situation and ask that You would truly make him well. We pray, Father, that You would do these things for Your glory and for our good, and we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Okay. I don’t know where I am; what am I doing today? *(Laughter)* We were gonna start with Romans 13:1-7 the last time and we kind of wrapped it up pretty quickly. And at the end of that we basically decided that we were going to revisit that topic again. So I decided that rather than to put up the slides from last time that I would make a quick presentation on 1 Peter. And so I want us to think a little bit about 1 Peter today. It has some of the same basic content to it as Romans 13, but I want us to think about it from another angle--we could say maybe a fresh angle!—and look at the same material. And yet we’re gonna have some additions to it. But what I want to say is, anything that we talked about last time, especially in the last part of the presentation, that you didn’t feel that you had an opportunity to talk about or ask questions about or things like that, please feel free to raise them in this talk although we’re gonna be on another passage.

I want us to think about something that’s said here about the text of 1 Peter before we actually read the passage. This is what a commentator said about it. *“The more I study it,”*—meaning 1 Peter,--*“the more alien it seems to the interests and projects of mainstream Christianity”*

I wonder if that might not have been true of us five or ten years ago. And yet it’s truer today than then. And the reason I say that is because of what I think you’re going to see in the text. And yet there’s a particular concern that I think I want to raise; I think I’m going to raise it in the conversation that we have with one another. But it’s about our present moment, post-election. And I want to talk to us a little bit about that.

So before we get into the full topic let’s turn to 1 Peter chapter 2. And what I want us to do is just to look at verses 13-17. Let me read it to you; it’s a fairly short passage.

*“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the emperor.”*

Well let me give you the outline that I want us to look at today. I want us to look at just a couple of thoughts by way of introduction as we get into this passage. And then I want us to look at the structure of the passage. I think that in looking at the structure of the passage there is a message there—not just in the content but in terms of how the content is being given to us—and I think that’s important. And then we’re going to look at the meaning of submission, and then we’re going to look at persecution. And we’re going to look at how persecution does have a purpose within the church/state relationship. Those are the things that we’re going to look at today as they come from 1 Peter.

So let me give you a little bit by way of introduction to help you to enter into this passage. Now I want you to think about this letter. Go to the first chapter if you will. And you’ll notice that this letter is written to exiles who are in five different locations.

Now oftentimes what people will say is that these people are not really exiles. These people are Christians that are living in their home regions. This letter just happens to be to those five regions where those different Christians native to that land live. Now I don’t think that’s right.

I’m not wanting to be overly dogmatic about this because we’re just frankly not told. But I will say this to you: We know that there was a disturbance in Rome under Emperor Claudius. And Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews, not worrying who was a Jew and who was a Christian and who was a Jewish Christian; that wasn’t his concern. His concern was to expel them because they were creating trouble over the name of someone by the name of Christ. That’s historical.

Now we also know that Emperor Claudius more than any other emperor, populated the five regions that are mentioned here. So Claudius who expels the Jews populates this particular area with Roman exiles, more than any other emperor.

I know that’s not solid evidence. But it’s pretty good circumstantial evidence that perhaps Peter is writing a letter to those who were Claudian exiles. And so if that’s the case, he’s writing to people who have experienced a pretty raw deal from their government.

And yet what he says is this. And I think this is the absolutely important thrust of this introductory point. He introduces them as *“a royal priesthood, a holy nation.”* This is how he describes them in chapter 2. “You who have experienced suffering, you who are going through the smelting process, you are a royal priesthood and a holy nation.”

Think about that! Don’t let that roll off of your mind too quickly. You are a holy nation! Now I don’t think that’s a big surprise, because Peter equates the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with the kingdom of God. And so if they’re in the kingdom of God by the gospel they are citizens of a holy nation.

Okay. So first of all they are in this holy nation. However, they are to submit to every human institution. And that’s the rub, isn’t it? That’s the rub, and that’s what we try to figure out constantly as Christians who are citizens of a holy nation. How is it that we submit to hostile authorities? How is it that we submit to every human institution?

Now I think that Peter is similar to Romans 13, but with one particular difference. And the difference is this: The recipients of Peter’s letter know that something has gone very, very wrong. In other words, it isn’t at all apparent that things are wrong in Rome at the time that Paul writes.

Now we know that things probably have gone sideways or are about to go sideways because we know that there was a tax rebellion in 58. We know that Romans was probably written before that. And so there was foment among the people about how much they were paying in taxes. And what does Paul say in verse 7 of Romans 13? He says, “Oh, and by the way, keep the main thing the main thing; pay your taxes.”

Okay. But when we get to 1 Peter it’s not just that matter. I mean, who really enjoys paying taxes? Even if we don’t admit it, nobody enjoys it, right? But we know we have to pay our taxes.

But then you have a government that says, “Get out of your homes! No, you can’t take anything with you except what you can carry or put in a wagon at your expense. And by the way the going is going to be tough because you’re going to have to cross the Taurus Mountains to get to where I’m putting you. And you’re going to settle down there amidst a people that already live there. And they’re not going to be happy that you’re there, because we’re gonna give you a little plot of land not your own, but ours. But where you’ll live is going to be in the midst of them, so enjoy that. Oh and by the way, we’re gonna exile you with all the people who were persecuting you in Rome, so have a good time.” *(Laughter)*

I mean, at this point in time you know that something is really wrong. You’re a holy nation and yet you have to submit to this authority.

Now I want to say this right up front; I want this to be in our thinking. Go with me to chapter 3. And I don’t want to spend time with this section about baptism. But in the baptism section—and it’s in verse 21—we get this; it’s almost at the bottom of verse 21: *“Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

Now we’re going to get a relative pronoun; he’s going to tell us about who Jesus Christ is. *“Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* Listen to this: *“Who has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities and powers having been subjected to Him.”*

So think about it. He says, “You are to be subject to every human institution. But by the way, the Lord Jesus Christ who ascended into heaven—you know, the One who resurrected from the dead?—He ascended into heaven, and now every authority is subjected to Him.”

So we are to be subject to an authority that is subject to Christ. Now that’s comforting. But the question comes to mind, and I think it’s a different one from the one we’re going to discuss today. But the one that comes to mind is: If that authority that is persecuting me is subject to Him, and I belong to Him as a holy nation,--in fact I’m His body,--then why am I being subjected to these humiliations? I think the quick answer to that is because we’re in the humiliated Christ and it’s for us now to be humiliated in Him and for us to be exalted in Him at the proper time, the time He deems fit. That’s what Peter says at the end of his letter.

But the point is that for now we have to be subject to every human institution, and that’s not easy. That’s hard, especially when we have what we have here.

Now what I want us to do is that I want us to move to the structure. So let’s think a little bit about structure. I think that if we think about the structure of this passage, we’ll be invited into the content in a way that it will be helpful for us to think about.

So what do we have here? Well, verses 13-16 is a chiasm. And what is a chiasm? A chiasm is basically two phrases that are inverted. So my favorite is that you have peanut butter and jelly. You invert that phrase and you have jelly and peanut butter. I love a peanut butter and jelly sandwich; a jelly and peanut butter sandwich I love, right? That’s a chiasm; you have a phrase and you invert it. Sometimes you just leave it and sometimes you can separate it and put a lot of material in between it, and then it becomes bookends for more material. But that’s what we have here; we have a chiasm in verses 13-16, two parallel phrases inverted.

Now let’s talk about those phrases. We have an outer phrase and we have an inner phrase: verses 13 and 16, and 14 and 15. 13 and 16 are the outer, and 14 and 15 are the inner.

Now let’s take a look at the outer. The outer phrases go like this: “Submit to every human institution.” So that’s verse 13. And then verse 16: *“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants to God.”*

So submit to every human institution; we are free men and servants to God. Okay, now let me put it like this. When you look at a chiasm like that you realize that this is an x. So submit as servants of God, but you are free in regard to every human institution. That’s the thrust of what’s being told to us in that chiasm. We are to submit to God, but we are free as to every human institution. But as we are to submit to God we are to submit to those institutions that are under His authority.

Now what about the inner? The inner is something that we’ve seen before, isn’t it? There is to be the punishment of evil and the praise of good in doing good and silencing foolishness. So look at what we have here in verses 14 and 15: *“Governors as sent by Him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God: that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorant and foolish people.”* And so what we have here again is that we have punishment for evil and praise for doing good, praise for doing good and silence to the foolish.

Now think about this: punishment for evil; let me show you the chiasm. Punishment for evil silences the foolish; doing good brings praise. That’s the idea; that’s the chiasm. There’s an outer chiasm and there’s an inner chiasm.

And so the very middle of the outer and the inner is what? *“For this is the will of God.”* That is the conceptual center of this whole thing, okay? So he’s telling us some awfully important things not just in the content, but in the way he’s communicating the content to us.

Okay, now I want to stop here and I just want to ask you, because now seems to be an appropriate time to ask if there’s anything that’s a carry-over from last time, because what we run into is Romans 13. The governor is supposed to reward the good and punish the evildoer; that’s what we find here.

Now let me lead into something that might be helpful if you do have comments about this. You remember I said to you the last time that there are those who believe that Romans 13 is prescriptive and there are those who believe that it’s descriptive. And the difference is this: If you believe that Romans 13 is prescriptive, then you believe that you have the right to rebel against an existing government. Why? Because if this is the prescription and the government is not following the prescription, then you have the right to get rid of that government and establish a government that fits the prescription; at least that’s the way of putting the old position.

If you believe that Romans 13 is descriptive, then you come away saying yes, this is a prescription. But there is a descriptive element in this text. And that means that if it’s descriptive I don’t have a right to do away with it if it’s not following the prescription.

Now what is the descriptive element in Romans 13? I mentioned it last time; let me just mention it again. The thing that Paul says that makes this descriptive—and I would say descriptive and prescriptive,--is what he says at the very beginning: *“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God,”*—and here it is,--*“and those that exist have been instituted by God.”* The descriptive element is right there. Oh, and by the way the governments that exist now have been instituted by God.

Now that’s descriptive; he’s telling us about what is. And he’s also putting a prescription there, and he says that now this is a prescription for those governments that exist. But when you talk about description and prescription what you find yourself in the midst of is not a mandate to rebel, but what you find yourself in is a mandate to submit.

Now the question is this: What’s the meaning of submission? But what questions do you have before we get into the meaning of submission? Or what thoughts do you have before we can break into this?

**Ted Wood:** Would the prescriptive understanding be adopted by the American Revolution? My mind is slow this morning. Would they adopt the prescriptive versus the descriptive?

**Jeff:** I think more likely that they would. I mean, obviously people are different across the board. I’m thinking about my own heritage in terms of my own ecclesiastical heritage. You know, they were of the view that Romans 13 was prescriptive. So for instance there were actual moments where in Scotland they would declare the king to be no king at all, and then actually fight guerrilla warfare against the crown; you know what I mean. Let’s just say that I have a problem with my ecclesiastical heritage. But—

**Ted:** The Scots can’t help themselves.

**Jeff:** Yeah, they can’t. *(Laughter)* You know, I feel like a stranger in a strange land because I’m a Stivason; I’m Dutch and not Scottish. I feel like I’m bringing sanity to them, Ted. *(Laughter)* So we’ll press on. Let’s talk about the meaning of submission.

Now I think the starting point is that we are slaves to God but free before men. That comes under the first chiasm, the outer chiasm. I think that’s where you start: I’m a slave to God but I’m free before men.

Now I want us to think a little bit about some things that might be helpful to you. Maybe they’re the kinds of thoughts that I wanted to incorporate from another talk, but I think they might be helpful here; we’ll see where we go. But we’re slaves to God and free before men.

But there’s more to it: For the Lord’s sake no person is exempt from this subjection to governing authorities. Now I think that in the best scenario that feels pretty good, right? Now here’s where I want us to think about the post-election scenario that we’re in.

If you’re politically conservative, if you’re religiously conservative, I think there is probably a sense in which you’re feeling that for the next four years the church is going to have less difficulty in our world, and there’s going to be less movement toward a woke agenda and these kinds of things. And so you have a tendency to feel a little more at ease. And yet I would simply say to you that when we are living in the world in which we’re living, we need to remember that the minute we begin as the kingdom of God and a holy nation to cozy up beside a party—any political party, but especially a political party that looks and feels like us,--we’re in trouble.

Okay, I want you to think about it. There is seepage, and let me just put it like this. Let’s say for instance that we have a political system and an ecclesiastical system that is exactly parallel one to another; there are two circles here. You only see one, but you only see one because the political and the ecclesiastical are so in harmony that you think to yourself: Oh, that’s a good theonomy; this is the Old Testament. The state and the church are together.

But you realize that no, there are actually two circles. Now think about it like this. Think about this as the laws of the land. These are the laws, and think about this section as those things that are left to your wisdom, that the government leaves to your wisdom.

So for instance, “You will not murder. Here is who you can marry.” There if freedom here (who you can marry), and there is not freedom here (murder.) If you do this (murder), you are going to be punished by the law. You should fear the evil that you would do because the governor is going to punish you. Here, (with marriage), you are left with freedom.

Now that’s all good until the government says that there are things that are evil that it now calls good. Now think about that. If somebody says to you, “We’re no longer going to punish robbery as a crime,” you say, “Whoa, wait a second! That’s all good until somebody robs my place,” right?—or something like that. Those are the kinds of things where we begin to say, “Wait a minute!”

But what happens when this group here says that trans-genderism is okay? That’s actually legal, and actually because it’s the law of the land you need to uphold it. You need to affirm it; you need to support it with your tax money. You can’t speak against it; that would be hate speech, and so on.

This becomes a difficult area right here, and here’s the problem. The problem is that our political parties try and morph to this area here, and even this area here: (marriage and murder.) They try to morph to the areas that I’ve been talking about.

So for instance let’s take the gay and lesbian agenda. Let’s put aside the trans-gender agenda for a minute, but let’s take the gay and lesbian agenda. The Republicans have basically divided the LBGTQ-plus theory. They now follow the LGB; that now belongs to the Republicans; those folks are now part of the Republican party; they are mainstreamed. It’s the T that’s the Democratic stuff now.

And so what we begin to see is that we can never fully align with the Republican party as the kingdom of God because we know that both parties are going to seek to adopt the world’s standards to please their constituents. And the kingdom of God must never be in that situation where it aligns itself totally with a political party that has allowed itself to be defined by the sin of the world; it just can’t be. Go ahead.

**Ted:** My mind is going sixty miles an hour. I’m actually thinking of 16th-century England.

**Jeff:** Surprise, surprise, Ted. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** And Europe in general in the sixteenth century. But anyway, if you were a Catholic in England in the 1580s you were not in good shape.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** And you had to be a secret Catholic. But that’s good because the Protestants ruled and called the shots.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** But I’m thinking more about the woman who refused to issue a license for gay weddings.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right.

**Ted:** Should she have done that as a Christian? Should she have stepped aside to say, “I can’t do this because I’m not allowed in my role as a government official? Or are my Christian values such that I’m going to impose that on the government system?”

**Jeff:** Well I think that’s really the question, right? Somebody’s values are going to be imposed on the governmental system.

**Ted:** Right.

**Jeff:** And so she steps out. She’s leaving a vacuum in which somebody else is going to impose his or her values. So it’s not like values aren’t imposed. And so the question is, which values ought to be imposed?

You know, if you’ve been thinking at all about what I’ve been saying, what I’ve been arguing for is something like this. For instance, if I think that the nations ought to kiss the Son, if I think that’s their obligation, then you have to say to yourself that in some way, shape or from Jeff is arguing for some sort of establishmentarian principle. That is, he is not arguing for the separation of church and state; he is arguing for the church and the state,--not for the state to become the church or the church to become the state. But what he’s arguing for is not a situation in which we now live where the state says, “No, you may not” to the church. No, what we’re arguing for is that the state does everything possible to defend and advance the church. That’s what I’m arguing for, but never that the state becomes the church or the church becomes the state.

But now that means that there is going to have to be a lot of thinking done. For instance it’s easy to apply the last six Commandments to the civil realm. But how do you apply the first four Commandments to the civil realm? In other words, how does a person who is of the Islamic faith become a citizen of this country if he is not going to hold to the one true God?

Now I think there are answers to that. But none of them would satisfy a full-blooded American who believes this is a melting pot, right? We’ve been trained to think that establishmentarianism is bad because our forefathers ran from it. But I would simply say this to you. You have to work out in your own mind how it is that nations are to kiss the Son, if you really believe that the nations have been given to Jesus as an inheritance and that it’s their obligation to kiss the Son, and that the kingdom of God is to spread over the face of the earth. And that means spread over the face of the earth not with the exception of the government, but including the government.

For instance, that means this. Remember when Ashcroft was the Attorney General and he was asked the question: If the laws of the land and your Christian faith conflict with one another, will you uphold the laws of the land?” And he said, “At that point I would set my Christian beliefs aside and uphold the laws of the land.”

And I would want to say this: I don’t know how you do that. I think that if I were Ashcroft I would have said, “If my Christian beliefs and the laws of the land conflict, I’m always going to go with my Christian beliefs, always and forever.” Now that may put me in conflict with the state, but so be it.

**Ted:** But the rules of the game of the United States are that we vote on things and the majority rules.”

**Jeff:** I’ll only say this: The rules of the game come from rebels who changed the previous rules.

**Ted:** Well, there you go with the American Revolution. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** a That’s all right; that’s what I’m saying. But we can’t now function like an American democracy that doesn’t acknowledge God as its foundation; that is certainly the perfect form of government. It’s not the perfect form of government because it has a fatal flaw at its core, and that is that it does not bow the knee to God as King. It bows the knee to the people that rule.

Now that’s great if all the people happen to be Christians. But it’s not great when you’re in a society like we’re living in and that’s not the case. It used to be like this. It used to be that people said, “You know what? The United States is governed by people who were Christians and deists.” And even the deists thought that the moral system that was contained in the Bible was a good thing. Everybody said, “Hurray!”

And then we lost that footing. And then people said, “Well, you know what? People govern according to natural law. Our constitution is not necessarily founded upon the moral system that’s in the Bible; it’s founded upon natural law.” That’s good; that’s a Biblical right. And we said, “Yea!”

And then you have Joe Biden as a senator saying that no one believes in natural law anymore. And now we’re at a place where it genuinely and truly is whatever the majority believes, and in fact not necessarily even that, because there’s the oligarchy that says, “You know what? We’re not even gonna let you guys vote in 2015 on whether or not gay marriage ought to be a Constitutional right; we’re just gonna make it so.” And so we’re not even in a situation where we decide any longer.

And if you read in 2015 it was Roberts who said, “We did what we were not supposed to do.” And that was to make a decision in place of the people, and this can have an impact on the people. What just happened here is going to have an impact upon the church.

So that’s where we are, right? And so we didn’t argue this abstract idealism: a Republican democracy of America. But that’s not what we’re living in.

Now do I think that establishmentarianism is going to come back again? No! But do I think that kissing the Son brings some form of establishmentarianism? I think it must. I don’t know what that looks like: for instance, the case of a Muslim who wants to be a citizen of the United States which is now acknowledging that the only God is Yahweh.

I think that you can say it like this. You could say that we could have tiered membership. For instance, you may be a citizen who can work here, and we’ll certainly be glad to take taxes from you. But you may not vote, because you can only vote in this country if you are a professing member of a church that believes in the one true and living God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ; only those people can vote.

So that sort of thing is doable. Not everybody likes that sort of thing because of the American democracy thing, as I said. But how do you work that out with kissing the Son? How do you work that out with Jesus? Every authority is subject to King Jesus; how do you do that? I could just go on and we can interact.

**Ron Baling:** I think that this whole idea of diversity is our strength. The reason for having a state religion is antiquated is because I think you had to have a common moral foundation for a society to work together. The achievement of America was founded on the idea that things like eastern religions or Islam as a minority wasn’t even in the thought processes. Freedom of religion was for Protestants and Catholics, issues of the Christian religion. But even some of the states had to have state religions. In order to be a politician or a governor, one of the qualifications was that you had to be a Christian.

**Jeff:** Yep.

**Ron:** And so I think we are a model. America ended up being the envy of the world is that it was always fashioned to be—

**Jeff:** Yes, and that’s kind of what I was saying. When you move from the unity being the moral code of the Bible to natural law and now just to diversity, you have to say that our strength is in our diversity because what else are you gonna say? You don’t have anything to unify us. Yeah?

**Jordan Obaker:** This can be polarizing.

**Ted:** Good. *(Laughter)*

**Jordan:** You may have said this last time. Last week I thought that I remembered hearing that we were talking about the Christian’s responsibility to submit to a legitimate authorities that you said were legitimate.

**Jeff:** Uh-huh.

**Jordan:** At what point does an authority become legitimate? For instance, if you go back through Old Testament examples—what Assyria is going through with Israel or Judea,--clearly they are taking authority over whatever they touch until they hit Jerusalem.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** And what is coming is what stands, and the Lord preserves.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** So you can say that Assyria was not a legitimate authority, or maybe was until that point. And so Hezekiah yielded to the state; he now had to live in exile. Clearly there came a point where all right, Babylon has authority over us. And now we’re submitting to Babylon until Darius comes.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** And then if you’re looking for more recent or modern examples, you will have people who say that our current President didn’t actually win the last election.

**Jeff:** Sure.

**Jordan:** Other people would say, “I don’t believe a woman has legitimate authority to rule over a man.”

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jordan:** So where do you—

**Jeff:** Let me answer this. But first of all let me consult my computer and ask a quick question. Don, *(Laughter)* Do you remember if I mentioned legitimate authority? I don’t think I did.

**Don Maurer:** I don’t remember you saying that.

**Jeff:** I think I intentionally stayed away from that because I didn’t want that line where we could draw it and say that now we can disobey, because there are those who do that, and I don’t think that can be done. Let me show you a couple slides and then let me answer what your question is, because it’s a great question.

**Jordan:** I might have misheard you.

**Jeff:** No, no, no; it’s a legitimate question.

**Jordan:** Okay.

**Jeff:** Even if you did hear wrongly, or maybe if I misspoke and you heard rightly, it’s a good question, so let me answer it.

**Ted:** He made it up, but it’s still good. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** So what about evil rulers? The Westminster Confession in chapter 23 Section 4 says that A ruler’s infidelity or indifference to religion does not negate his authority. Let me show you another one: Calvin’s *Institutes. “In Daniel the Lord changes times and successions of times, removes kings and sets them up.”* Daniel 2:21-37.

Let me tell you what Calvin says: *“Yet we need not labor to prove that the wicked king is the Lord’s wrath upon the earth.”* So Calvin believes for instance that a wicked ruler is legitimate and that his authority is not negated. So Calvin and Westminster are the same at that point.

Now let me say this to you. When we think about our place in the culture, one of the things that we ought always to think about is this: How can I obey? For instance, let’s say that we lived in a United States that has moved so far from morality as possible to the extent—let’s say it like this—that public affirmations of the faith are illegal, and that any form of quoting Romans 1 is hate speech. Let’s say we’ve moved to that point where we’re there now; not flirting with it but we’re there.

Now we’re here, okay? Nobody knows we’re here. We’re here meeting and we’re discussing these things. And we leave and we drive out and we hit the first light. Every one of us, including all of the wicked people, are going to stop at the red light and go at the green light, okay?

**Brave Man:** Not if you make a right turn. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Unless you make a right turn, or unless you’re Don. *(Laughter)* If you’re Don, you’re just movin’. Now we’ve all seen him drive. *(Laughter)* Now what I mean is, there are some laws that are legitimate and healthy for the order of society. Everybody knows that a red light means stop; everybody knows that a green light means go. And everybody knows that a yellow light means: Do it baby; take it! *(Laughter)*

So everybody knows that and everybody follows that. And so what I’m saying is, there are legitimate laws in the most wicked societies that bring a semblance of a certain amount of order to a society. And then there are those laws that bring disorder to a segment of society. And that segment as I define it would be the church, right? We no longer have freedom to speak the gospel. We no longer are able to have the free exercise of religion; that’s out the window. Those things are gone for us.

And so what we need to do in that case is not to submit to the government. At that point we would say that’s an illegitimate law and we’re not abiding by it. Why? Because God told me to proclaim His gospel to all the nations; I must speak the gospel in this nation; this nation is no exception. The king does not have the right to forbid the gospel proclamation because that king is under the authority of King Jesus, and Jesus bids me proclaim it, and so I need to proclaim it.

So that’s the kind of thing that I would say. We might live under a wicked king who makes illegitimate laws. But it’s the illegitimate laws that we must resist. Go ahead.

**Jordan:** I have a follow-up.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** That It’s helpful,--

**Jeff:** I can tell what’s coming. That’s helpful, but—*(Laughter)*

**Jordan:** No, I was interested in a different aspect.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Jordan:** It’s not so much when the authority gives you legitimate versus illegitimate commands.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** But how would you determine who the authority is that you are obliged to submit to? So let’s say, for instance, since you are preaching through 2 Samuel in the evenings at our church,--

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** David is anointed king. But King Saul dies.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jordan:** And now there is Ish-bosheth his son and David.

**Jeff:** Yep.

**Jordan:** If you’re a Jew in Israel at that time, Ish-Bosheth is kind of the one that the people like. He’s the son of the king; he should be king. Other people like David who has been anointed king. And you fast forward to Absalom and David, right? Absalom assumes authority and David with a long retreat leaves. So you’re in Israel at that time. Am I following Absalom? Am I following David? Am I following David? Am I following Ish-Bosheth? How do you determine or how do you make the call on you the authority is over you with those conflicts?

**Jeff:** Yeah. Now in that scenario you know as well as I do that you follow the Lord’s anointed, right? That was David’s example. David said, “I’m not raising my hand against the Lord’s anointed.” Now he’s the Lord’s anointed. Anybody that’s around him should say, “I’m not raising my hand against the Lord’s anointed,” right? So that’s an easier one.

Now move that into our current context. In our current context what you have is, you obviously have anybody—men, women,--who can be President of the United States. In fact some people would believe that they ought to be President of the United States. But even then I think that we have a Word that tells us how we ought to think about who can be what.

For instance, I think those who would say that a woman should be in political office are not taking the Old Testament seriously when it says that God mocks a nation for having women as its leaders. I mean, how else do you take that? I don’t know. I think that women ought not to be pastors. But I think that’s a 1 Timothy chapter 2 kind of thing. I think it’s pretty clear that a woman ought not to teach and have authority over you, not because they’re women but because it goes back to the Garden, because Eve was deceived and not Adam.

So I think that there are clear indications of what men and women ought to do. Clearly a wife is to submit to her husband and she’s the order of the home and has authority over the home. The husband is to love his wife and see her flourishing. I think that it’s America and the push for feminism in America that has gotten us to the point even as the church is saying, that sure, women can do anything they want, anything a man can do. They can fight in the military. They can be presidents; they can be preachers. I don’t think so.

Now people are gonna say, “You’re just following an ancient patriarchy that’s outdated, and you need to catch up with the times.” Well, not if I believe that this is the infallible and inerrant word of God that has something to say to our society today.

Now I don’t believe for a minute that there are some who can stifle women and berate women. You read a lot of guys on the Internet today who have a terrible view of headship. And the terrible view of headship they have is like this: My wife ought to ask me what she should read. And I want to say, “I know your wife, and you should probably ask her what you should read.” *(Laughter)* You’d probably get a better answer; that sort of thing, right?

But my point is that when you go to Proverbs 31 you would see a woman who is under the authority of the man’s headship flourishing. She’s buying property. Why? So he can sit at the city gate and make wise decisions for the community. She’s doing things not just in her home. But she’s doing things outside of her home that are really productive and faithful to her family and husband, and so forth, and for the good of her society, and she’s flourishing. And she is flourishing under her husband’s headship.

But that doesn’t change the fact that this Word gives pretty clear indications. For instance, if somebody said to me, “Do you think Kamala ought to be running for President?”, I would say no. I personally don’t think that a woman should be running for President; I don’t.

You know, you can scream, “You’re a bigot; you’re patriarchal,” whatever. Now I’m okay with that; I really am. I think that our society has gotten the way it is because if you really look at it, the suffrage movement has really taken us in a direction that I’m not happy with in terms of where we are, in terms of our families, in terms of our society. But that’s just me and we’re talking politics.

All right, I’m leaving. *(Laughter)*

**Brave Man:** Women choose to be corrected or everybody else would be wrong. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Yeah. I see that a lot. I had a lot of practice with my wife. I would say to her, “You can have any opinion you want, but I’m right. *(Laughter)* She’d slap me and then we’d go on with our day. *(Laughter)* Well let me pray, and maybe we’ll come back to this and maybe not. *(Laughter)* I don’t know. Last week Ted said, “Hey, let’s do this again!” Today he’s like—*(Laughter)*

**Don:** We didn’t get to the 1 Peter passage though; we have to do it again.

**Jeff:** Okay. All right, maybe we will; we’ll see. Let’s pray. Father, thank You for the day and for the blessing of life in Christ. Thank You for the abundance of grace that we receive in our Savior. And Father, as we go throughout our day let us draw deeply on the well of that grace, that others that we meet might know that we have had our thirst slaked in His well. And so we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*