

This is a very challenging passage. How do we respond to our leaders when they promote immoral things and even use our tax dollars to pay for things that we don't approve of?

As Christians who stand for the truth of God's word, we must not be surprised by the resistance and even persecution from the world around us.

In 1 Peter, the apostle is writing to exiled Jewish Christians who were facing persecution, ridicule and abuse for their faith. Peter instructs his readers to submit to the authorities of the land. These people probably felt that their opinion counted for little in a hostile society. This may sound familiar to Christians in America in 2024.

When we feel that the societal norms are opposing our Christian beliefs, we are tempted to respond in one of three ways.

1: We fight. We write angry letters, we grumble, and post angrily on social media. If we are honest, we see the public figure, the politician as the ultimate enemy. We fight back, because we are so invested in our world and our constitutional rights. We fight because we forget that as a Christian, we are part of an everlasting Kingdom, one that will outlast every earthly kingdom.

2: We flee. We find a Christian community that accepts us and then we circle the wagons, close the doors and quarantine ourselves from anyone and everyone who does not believe as we do. We spend all our time within a bubble that ensures we are never tainted by the world out there. But that is not what Jesus has called us to, how can we share the Gospel or be the Salt and Light in our world, if we are hiding from the world?

3: We conform. We don't like to be the odd one out, we don't like being exiles and as a result we adapt, we modify our behavior, and we conform to fit in. But as followers of Jesus, sometimes we try to conform, even when we know it is not God's will for us.

We minimize the call to holiness in order to fit in.

"Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream"

Malcolm Muggeridge

However, instead of fighting, fleeing or conforming, we are called to engage with society and be good citizens who follow the laws of the land to avoid legitimate punishment. (See 1 Peter 2:13-14). This is for the Lord's sake, and in verse 15 we read that it is God's will for us.

God chooses to reveal himself to those who reject Christianity, through us doing His will, and that is being subject to those who are in leadership in society. We are called to walk in humility and serve our society (See 1 Peter 2:16).

Then we come to verse 17, this is where the conviction and challenge really hits home. *"Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."*

As believers, we are to honor everyone, even the ruler of the land. Notice that we honor the emperor, but we fear God.

Honoring everyone seems a far fetched ideal in our world, but we are called by God to do it. We live in an age where people say the most dishonoring things online, claiming that they have a right to speak their mind. But for a Christian, this is not permitted.

Honoring is not agreeing, you can disagree and still honor the person at the same time.

Honor our political leaders:

Surely the Bible isn't talking about America in 2024? The truth is that Peter's readers faced a government that was cruel and murderous towards Christians under emperor Nero.

We are called to perform our civic duties and pray for our leaders.

Now we must remember that if the government makes laws that defy God's Word and His standards, then we are required to honor the government, but fear God. And this will require us to take a stand for Biblical truth (See Acts 4:19-20).

Throughout history, thousands of Christians have respectfully and peacefully spoken out against various issues, whether it was slavery, the fight for the unborn, child labor, poverty, and so much more. Christians are called to honor everyone, but fear God.

Honor your Boss:

In the following verses, Peter addresses how slaves were to respond to their masters. During the first century, many of the readers were slaves or indentured servants, people who were bound by contract to their master.

We cannot fully equate these words into our context here in Kansas City in 2024, but the principles of how we are to relate to our boss or supervisor are similar.

Many supervisors are kind and fair, but other times they are people of poor character who belittle and verbally abuse their employees.

So how do we respond? We join in with the gossip at the proverbial watercooler, maybe we don't give our best effort or even look for ways to discredit our supervisor.

But the Bible says we must not repay evil for evil. We must commit to working with excellence.

Now, this does not excuse the supervisor or boss who is doing something illegal or abusive. In this case, we are required to report him or her to the authorities.

But how do we respond to demanding and unfair bosses? The Bible calls us to submit to their authority and commit to doing good.

As Peter is writing these words it is almost as if he hears the grumbling and the murmuring; “you don’t know my master”, “you don’t know my situation”, and our personal favorite, “but what about my rights!”

Peter immediately turns to the example we have in Jesus (See 1 Peter 2:21).

These are difficult words, humanly speaking it is impossible. We cannot do this in our own strength, this kind of lifestyle is only possible when empowered by the Holy Spirit.

As Christians we must always have an eternal and a supernatural perspective. And when we live this way, the Holy Spirit will give us the strength and the grace to endure, to honor and to love.

Jesus is our example (See 1 Peter 2:22-24). Jesus knows exactly how challenging this is for us, that is why he sent us the Holy Spirit to empower our day to day lives.

This is where we must take our Christianity and apply it to the real world. The world we live in. The practical day to day.

So, what are you facing today? Give that situation to the Lord and allow Him to lead you in how to respond with honor and grace.