

## Studies in I Peter (34)

### The Exhortation of Salvation -- Obey The Government.

#### Introduction

- A. There are three divine institutions: the family, the church, and the state.
- B. Due to our fallenness we often find these three areas of our life in somewhat of a conflict. When unusual stress is generated in one of these institutions -- we are tempted to abandon it.
- C. Those who were the first readers of these Epistles were living in a pagan society in which the governmental officials would often demand that which a believer could not do -- and be in the will of God. One common demand was to worship the Caesar as God.
- D. Peter, under inspiration, exhorts the believers to obey the government.

*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the otherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. I Peter 2:13-17 NIV*

#### **I. The Explanation of the Exhortation. "Submit ... to every authority ... among man."**

##### A. The meaning of submission.

- 1. The issue is clearly stated. Believers are to obey the government in all its demands.
- 2. One of the accusations leveled against the early Christians was that they were not only unpatriotic but were seeking to overthrow the government. Acts 24:5
- 3. To refute such slander -- the believers were exhorted to be careful to obey all leaders.

##### B. The extent of submission.

While Peter does not deal with this issue here, the Bible teaches that the state is not the highest authority. Whenever a government demands that which violates a believer's conviction -- then the believer must choose to disobey. Two examples of such action were not only known to Peter, he was the leader in explaining to others how it was right to disobey. See Acts 4:19; 5:29

## II. The Basis of the Exhortation. "For the Lord's sake."

- A. The Lord has a plan in government -- "Punish and commend."

It would seem that any form of government is better than mob-rule. The emperor, when Peter wrote, was a very infamous man -- Nero (A.D. 54-68). God's design in the state is to keep mankind from being as bad as we could be.

- B. The Lord will use the government -- "Silence the ignorant talk of foolish men."

The believers were to obey "God's will ... by doing good". This is a reference to the two preceding verses. Doing good is to do what is right, just and honest.

When believers obey those who have rule over them -- God will use their obedience to stop the mouths of their accusers. The word for "ignorant" here is "lack of understanding." God promises to use us to bring truth and light to the non-Christian -- if we obey Him.

## III. The Warning in the Exhortation. "Don't use your freedom to do evil."

- A. The believer's description -- "Free." (We are "free" to obey God not to disobey Him.)

- B. The believer's vulnerability -- "A cover-up for evil." (We cannot use trials as an excuse to do evil.)

- C. The believer's instruction -- "Live as the servants of God." (To serve God is to be a good citizen.)

## IV. The Breadth of the Exhortation.

- A. "Show proper respect to everyone." (All have the same value. We may not "use" people.)

"Doing good" here would mean expressing love and honesty the best they could.

- B. "Love the brotherhood." (The reference is to believers. They were to "care" for one another.)

"Doing good" here would mean to do all they could to help other believers in their trials.

- C. "Fear God." (The word "fear" can be translated "the reverence of love.")

"Doing good" here would mean to give the Lord His rightful place in all areas of life.

- D. "Honor the king." ("Honor" would mean "respect" for the king's office leading to obedience.)

"Doing good" here would mean obedience to the laws of the land if they did not conflict with the will of God. And, if they did, to find the best way possible to respond.