

1 Peter

Entrusting
Ourselves
to a
Faithful
Sovereign



1 Peter 2:11-17

Answering Accusers and Authorities

The person sitting next to you will at some point face the temptation to give up on following Jesus. This temptation may not be to deny the faith explicitly but to stop letting his or her light for Jesus shine in this world, to stop telling people that he or she is a Christian and to stop telling people about the love of Christ. One way this person may be tempted is to withdraw from society altogether. Symptoms of resignation also show up in the other extreme of social and political activism while having no evidence of submission to Christ's reign over his or her life.

This person next to you will face this temptation as social pressure mounts. He or she will certainly feel this pressure and may even be slandered by a co-worker, neighbor, or social media troll.

So, please today be considerate of the other person who needs to hear God's encouragement today through Peter on how to handle such pressure and accusations.

How should we respond to slanderous accusation just because we are Christians?

**11 Dear friends, I urge you as
strangers and exiles to abstain
from sinful desires that wage
war against the soul.**

**12 Conduct yourselves
honorably among the Gentiles,
so that when they slander you
as evildoers, they will observe
your good works and will glorify
God on the day He visits.**

**13 Submit to every human
authority because of the Lord,
whether to the emperor as the
supreme authority**

14 or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good.

**15 For it is God's will that you
silence the ignorance of foolish
people by doing good. 16
Submit as free people, not using
your freedom as a cover-up for
evil, but as God's slaves.**

**17 Honor everyone. Love the
brothers and sisters. Fear God.
Honor the emperor.**

**It is God's will that you silence
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persevering Christian simplicity.
(2:11-12, 15-16)**

It is God's will that you silence any foolish attacks on us with persevering Christian simplicity. (v.11-12, 15-16)

Peter transitions in his letter from writing about our identity to telling us how our identity will shape our lives. What is true of us is foundational to what we do.

Enduring any undeserved slander in the pattern of Jesus is part of existing as the Living Temple of God.

We are to love God and live according to His reign. We are to dwell within a particular society with Christian integrity, which includes loving and serving our neighbors and city or county. We engage in such service while not indulging in those attitudes and behaviors that would compromise our commitment to Christ's Lordship. We are both for and against the world. We are for it in that we want to point others to the love we have come to know. We are for the world by seeking to promote the best possible society and seeking flourishing for our neighbors, including the unborn. But we are against the world's rebellion against God, against the chaos that sin seeks to promote, against the culture of death that masquerades as life. Sadly, many within the world who do not know Christ will only hear that we are against them and not see how we are for them. Sin has a way of blinding people to the light.

Peter repeats that Christians will be considered strangers and foreigners within the world. Basically, your non-conformity to the world is the very thing that will bother non-believers. The world desires to be confirmed in their sin. But spiritual death cannot produce life. There is a war going on at all times in the lives of unbelievers. They desire life but choose death.

There was an article this past week in the Huffington Post written by a 40-year-old lawyer. She joined the Satanic Temple because of her desire to meet with like-minded people who promote abortion as good and true. She writes of promoting life for her daughters by promoting death of any potential grandchildren she could have. She spoke of truth and nobility, but her words sounded like Uncle Screwtape from CS Lewis's book. Her words were without any grounding for defining truth except for her

own personal and political agendas. Her main complaint was against Christians for being Christian and participating in government and in civic affairs from a Christian worldview. She portrayed Christians as devoid of truth and as those attempting to assert control over the freedom of others. It is for this reason that she aligned herself with the Satanic Temple.

So how do we respond to those seeking to slander us? We respond with Christian simplicity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer had time to process a Christian response to societal rejection of truth while imprisoned by the Nazis. While acknowledging the need to be as sly as snakes, he calls for the persevering need to be as innocent as doves. The lasting effect that the world needs is Christians living in simplicity.

Bonhoeffer writes, “We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds. We have become cunning and learned the arts of obfuscation and equivocal speech. Experience has rendered us suspicious of human beings, and often we have failed to speak to them a true and open word. Unbearable conflicts have worn us down or even made us cynical. Are we still of any use? We will not need geniuses, cynics, people who have contempt for others, or cunning tacticians, but simple, uncomplicated, and honest human beings. Will our inner strength to resist what has been forced on us have remained strong enough, and our honesty with ourselves blunt enough, to find our way back to simplicity and honesty?” (p. 20)

The key to showing yourself faithful in standing up for what is right within a culture opposed to truth is responsible submission to God by faith, depending on God in vital relationship for truth and strength. Dependence on self in any form is not enough for standing up for what is right amidst such a society. Earlier in his prologue, Bonhoeffer adds that it is not those who consider themselves reasonable who will stand firm, for they ultimately either are crushed by competing forces or resign to the strongest force. The fanatic will trap himself in the insignificant. The person who depends on his conscientiousness will find his conscience insufficient and given over to fear if he only depends on himself. Those who uphold deontological duty to authority as one’s greatest responsibility without regard for worship, love, or wisdom, may ultimately have to serve a devil or several, depending on who takes command. Even those who assert political freedom as their great banner for standing faithful will fall to utilitarianism, promoting evil to prevent what they believe to be worse, regardless if it really is or not. The only people who will persevere in standing up for what is right within a culture that is opposed to truth are those whose ultimate standard is found beyond themselves in a faith-based relationship to God who calls us to obedience through love in action. (pp. 5–6)

As our society over time slips away from acknowledgement of absolute truth found in relationship to God, the more that emphasis will be laid on the desires of the individual, until an individual or group arises with enough persuasion or power to assert himself or his group as the only acceptable standard, replacing God’s truth with his own. This is not a slippery slope, for it is not based on fear. It is history as Bonhoeffer experienced it under Hitler after centuries of “The Enlightenment” eroding human philosophy and working its way through education, the arts, and even theology. Europe was just a few centuries ahead of us.

So, even if we don’t ever end up in a situation like Germany did in the 20th century, we can at least acknowledge that America is no longer as stable in its understanding of truth as it once was. Do you feel the pressure of every voice and every group clamoring for your support and attention? To fail to give your attention and agreement feels like it brings the threat of rejection as a human being.

Peter speaks of passions that war against your soul. He appears to be talking about the desire to conform to those around you that are threatening to slander you if you do not agree with them and live as they do. These desires to fit in are attacking your allegiance to Christ. The world puts pressure on you to conform to their idolatry, their self-glorification, their injustice, their fallacies and follies, their sexual appetite, and their inner circle. Respond with patience, knowing King Jesus will have the final word; “Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult” ; respond with compassion because you were ignorant like them before the Spirit washed you clean; respond with truth as you have now entered the light and have nothing to do with darkness; respond with love, the love with which God responded to your sin, the love that led Jesus to die for us even while we were sinful enemies of God. In disputes, your greatest goal is not to win an argument but to show yourself faithful to Christ Jesus.

Peter promises that ultimately those slandering you will glorify God on your account IF you give them no ground for accusation. This response of glorifying God has two possible timeframes. Either they will come to salvation in Christ and thank God for your steadfast faith and love, or they will acknowledge before God on judgment day that He showed Himself faithful through you.

Church, you are free. Your freedom cannot be taken away from you even if the U.S. constitution were destroyed. For you have a constitution that cannot be touched by age, decay, or fire. You have the Spirit of God in you who testifies to you of the risen Christ and that you are His. And where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.

In your freedom, you are able to submit to earthly authorities, even those with whom you disagree, because you serve a greater authority.

**We are to respect governmental
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(2:13-14)**

We are to respect governmental leaders for their position as keepers of stable society. (Vv13-14)

When you read Peter's words about respecting the emperor or governors, you may have thought, "That's easy for him to say. He didn't have to suffer under Donald Trump's arrogance as a president." Or, "He didn't have Ralph Northam as a governor, who signed two bills on Easter that are explicitly anti-Christian, among other things."

Peter most likely wrote this letter before any government-sanctioned persecutions but after anti-Christian sentiment had arisen among the populace. It is highly likely that Nero was emperor when Peter wrote. Look, if you think Donald Trump is arrogant, Nero was the image of Narcissism, having faithful soldiers fall on their own swords when he felt they were growing too powerful. He had his mother killed for objecting to his marital affair. He became increasingly erratic in his decisions but had not yet begun blaming Christians to cover up his egregious decisions. This is likely the emperor Peter told the Christians to respect for the fact that he is emperor.

Some of the governors of Asia Minor included those who were assassinated because of backroom orders from the emperor for fear of attempts at rebellion or assassination attempts against the emperor. Another governor had been a corrupt lawyer known for taking bribes until the highest bidder became the emperor.

Scripture does not command us to respect political officials based on their moral character. Yes, a society is blessed when a righteous and wise leader is in charge, but God calls for respect for government even when those with questionable morals are leading it. They are referred to as servants of God because they are supposed to help keep peace through upholding laws that allow for society to exist.

If a leader seeks to undermine just laws, then that leader should be held accountable. An example of God using a pagan political power whom God also later judged would be the Babylonians. God promised to judge His people Judah for their idolatry by means of the Babylonians, but He also judged the Babylonians for how they

unjustly treated captive Judah by having Cyrus and the Persians then defeat the Babylonians. Thankfully, we still have checks and balances to power within our government, but ultimately God will judge every man and woman for deeds done in the body, whether acts of commission or omission.

But Jesus did not give us a mission of gaining political power to make His name known. He gave us the mission of living as faithful disciples who make faithful disciples, as the gospel is to spread on the grass roots level from person to person. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2 that we are to offer prayer on behalf of those in political leadership positions. Why? Because we should ask God to have leaders make and uphold just laws that promote a stable society so that we may quietly live godly lives as the gospel propels forward through us without unnecessary hindrance. Part of you praying that God would not lead us into trial but deliver us from evil is praying for your elected officials.

America is a government for the people by the people. You have a civic duty to cast your vote for those seeking to represent you. While your hope and identity are not to be wrapped up in any candidate, you should consider the candidates available to you based on your Christian virtues and if this candidate is promoting a society that promotes life and allows for flourishing. This duty includes considering local leaders and local laws, which will affect you and your county or city more immediately. But after voting, or after you make your voice heard to your elected official on bills that are being considered, on what mission do you focus your energy?

I'm thankful for those Christians who have made politics or the justice system their career, but all Christians have their vocational missions submitted to the Great Commission. Are you filling the world with born-again worshippers and shaping it for the glory of God, or have you forgotten Jesus's mission for your next political effort?

Do your civic duty. Pray for our elected and appointed officials. But make sure to follow through on what opportunity we have before us because there are officials in place keeping the peace. Pursue Christ in godliness and pass on affection for His reign through sharing and applying the gospel to people's lives.

Give everyone their proper due according to God's economy of respect and love. (2:17)

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Your primary identity is with God and His people, not a political party. Your ultimate worth and life is not dependent on an emperor, much less a president or congressional representative. You are to fear God alone. This fear is not the fear that says you should run from God. It is trembling before Him as the Holy Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Judge. It is also resting in His care as Savior. It is seeing God as Father and Jesus as Lord and living accordingly.

If this is true of us, then the church is our identity group, and we are obligated by love to one another. If your political reaction in this season is leading you to attack, malign, or disregard other Christians, then you need to reevaluate what god you have been worshipping. You are mature enough to hold intelligent conversation with those with whom you disagree on subjects and still love them. This should be even easier when you can be confident the other person has Christian love for you as well. Dialogue and debate do not equal hate.

Rather if you pursue dialogue and debate lovingly, it helps show the world the maturity that Christianity brings.

And to say it again, show respect and honor to all. Respect is more essential to life than intelligence. Show respect and honor, including to our elected and appointed officials. Yes, when they are in error, they should be corrected, but do so honorably and respectfully, for there is no stable geopolitical society apart from government. God wants to use us within stable societies as fertile ground for gospel expansion. So, yes, because God has ordained for society to exist, show proper honor and respect to our elected and appointed officials.