

Text: 1 Pt 2.17

This morning we discussed Peter's expression of the Christian political ethic. Our message this afternoon is the capstone to that discussion, the last verse of the passage, a terse collection of four imperatives.

Peter is concerned with the inner life.

Our study of the first chapter, and the first half of this chapter, focus on the inner man and our response to salvation.

God wants us to live

1. In expectation of the Lord's return
2. In imitation of his own holiness
3. In reverence to his majesty
4. In affection with his people
5. And in an eagerness for his word

All of this will produce the newness of life that salvation brings, a spiritual effort that turns around and transforms the life we live on the outside, out in the world around us.

So, now we focus on outward things. The first specific outward thing is our relationship with the state, with government, with human kings (or what have you).

We can look at things like this as a matter of duty, but in reality, that's not the case. God is *always* after our heart, our spiritual life.

This capstone verse addresses our attitudes in relationships, but especially in relationship with the king.

Let's read the passage again and get into the message:

Read 1 Pt 2.13-17, text 17

Honour All

Proposition: Submission expressed positively turns into others-oriented respect.

I. The broad attitude towards all

A. A grammatical debate

1. The structure of the verse

- a. Aorist “imperative of decision” — “honour all”
 - b. Present “imperative of practice” — “love the brotherhood”
 - c. Present “imperative of practice” — “fear God”
 - d. Present “imperative of practice” — “honour the king”
2. Some say that the tense difference makes no difference: interpreting as a chiasm or as pairs
3. However, the difference seems to have a reason, not a coincidence
- B. Broadly, then, the call for a decision
1. We talked about “submit to human institutions” as an “imperative of decision”
 2. The same idea is here, this is a general challenge
- C. What does it mean to “honour all”?
1. First, note that “people” is not in original (though not italicized)
 - a. KJV has “all *men*” with “men” italicized
 - b. Phrase is simply, “honour all”
 2. In the following imperatives, Peter calls us to fear God; making this phrase unspecific expands the possible applications
 3. Honour =
 - a. Basic meaning: “set a price on, value something”
 - b. Metaphorical: “to show high regard for, *honor, revere*”¹
 - c. Thus, a wide range of positive attitudes, with specific designations in the following commands
- D. Remember, this is an “imperative of decision”
1. There is a need for conscious decision
 2. Contrary to our natural “me first” superiority, we decide to pay respect to all

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

II. The specific attitudes towards three classes

A. Love the brotherhood

1. “The brotherhood” occurs only here and in 1 Pt 5.9
2. Peter’s word for “the church”
3. The command echoes a frequent refrain in the NT
4. Our relationships with one another is a high priority of the spiritual life
 - a. We chose to subordinate ourselves: “honour all”
 - b. We actively express that choice when we are “loving the brotherhood” (present tense, a command of duration)

B. Fear God

1. Another frequent refrain in the Bible (we’ve already seen it in 1 Peter)
2. We know it means reverence, worship, submission, respect
3. There is an echo here of Prov 24.21

Pr 24.21 My son, fear the LORD and the king; ...

4. The difference is that in 1 Peter, we have no call to “fear the king”
 - a. The king of Proverbs is the Davidic king — the line of Messiah
 - b. The king of Rome is Nero

I think this makes a significant difference!

“Only God is to be feared, but this does not rule out honor for the emperor.”²

C. Honour the king

1. Again, a present imperative, a command of duration, not just a one-time decision
2. Speaks to an inner attitude, honour and respect

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 126.

3. But note: it is not the person, but the office that is due the honour

“We honor *them* because they occupy the office; we do not just honor the office. Peter commanded us to honor the king and all who are in authority over us, not just the offices that they occupy. We may not respect someone, but we can and should honor them by treating them with respect.”³

III. The heart attitude creating this spirit

A. The spirit that afflicts the human spirit the most, and the worst, is pride

1. We know better than others (especially the king)
2. We perform better than others
3. We focus our attention on others in relation to ourselves

B. Yet the Holy Spirit transforms our inner spirit — transformation

1. There is a part the Spirit plays
 - a. Educating our mind
 - b. Informing our conscience
 - c. Impressing our will
2. And there is a part we play: we decide in our inner man

“we *purpose* in our heart”

C. The result of our following the Holy Spirit is a happy attitude in our world

1. A happy attitude to all in general
2. A love for the brotherhood
3. Fear for God
4. Respect for the King (as king)

³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Pt 2.17.

Conclusion:

Proposition: Submission expressed positively turns into others-oriented respect.

We all must reflect on this. The people God calls us to serve are made in the image of God, just as we.

As we serve them, we serve God.