

As we all know we are in the midst of a national election for the next President of the United States. You cannot open a newspaper, turn on the TV or radio or your computer and not realize this. Every day there are reports on both major candidates what they said, what they meant, what it means what they said etc. There are polls that are taken and reported on and they usually change daily.

In addition there are the ads by the candidates themselves – some positive and some negative. The point of it all, that come November the United States will vote for a new President. And both sides have painted pictures of doom and gloom if one or the other is elected.

Now, my purpose is not to tell you who to vote for. As a church, because of our tax-exempt status we cannot do that. However, as your Pastor, I can tell you what I think, so if you would like to know, you can ask me.

If you watched the Political Forum on CNN last week, where Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Church in California, and author of the Purpose Drive Life and the Purpose Driven Church interviewed both major candidates, you would see the differences clearly as to which one we, as Christians should vote for, and I will leave it at that.

But, as Christians, what are we to think? What are we to do about whoever is elected? Thankfully, the scriptures are very specific on how we Christians should view those who are in charge ... those who rule over us. One of those passages is what we will look at today in our continuing study of 1 Peter.

As a way of introduction, we remember that a couple of weeks ago in our study, Peter, who is writing to encourage the pilgrims of the dispersion, that is those who have had to flee because of their faith in Christ, describes who we are – listen again to what he says: 1 Peter 2:9-10 (READ).

This is who we are. We have been chosen by God before the foundation of the world. We are a holy priesthood – in that we have immediate and direct access to God through our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a holy nation, in that we are separated from this world in which we are just passing through, and as such we are a special people ... a peculiar people – we are different from those around us. This is who we are.

As a result of who we are, he then tells us that we are to live and act in a certain way. The first of those ways we looked at last week, when we studied 1 Peter 2:11-12 (READ). We are in spiritual battle which wars against the soul, and we are to avoid those things which God says is wrong, in order that we might be a witness to the world around us.

Today, as we continue our study, he gives us some more exhortations of how we should live our temporary lives here on earth – turn with me to 1 Peter 2:13-17 (READ).

As we consider what Peter says, let us also consider what the Apostle Paul had to say in Romans 13:1-7, where he says: *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he*

*is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."*

The Scriptures are very clear. Put simply, whoever is in power is there because God has placed that person in a position of authority – for His reasons and His purpose. Proverbs 21:1 really puts it in perspective: *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."* The King or President may think he is in charge, but it is really God who is charge. It cannot get any clearer than that.

A lot of people think that if only thus and such is elected, then thus and such will happen. But we must understand that there is no salvation in politics. Politicians are not saviors. Regardless of who is elected, whether we like them and their policies or not, we are required and obligated to pray for those in power and obey them, respect them and honor them, because this is what the Scriptures teach for us as Christians.

A few years ago, in a job at my outside employment, former President Clinton was a guest. As he was approaching the stage, he passed right by my station and those who were there stood, and we shook his hand. Someone asked me, knowing how I felt about him, how I could do that? And my response was that he was the former President and I was obligated as a Christian to respect him and honor him, even if I did not like him or his beliefs.

Regardless of who is elected this fall – whether it is the person I voted for or not, I will pray regularly for them because whoever is elected, is chosen because they will be God's ministers in our country, to accomplish His perfect will.

Remember, when Peter and Paul wrote those words they were talking about an absolutely pagan emperor – Caesar, who at the very least was not kind to Christians ... one who would have them killed in an instant – and yet we are told to pray for them, to obey them and to honor them.

In our passage from 1 Peter, we are told why. Look at what Peter says: *"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors,..."*

Because of who you are ... and the special people you are because of God's calling you, this is what you are to do – *"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors,..."*

Whether we like the person in charge ... whether we agree with his policies ... or his worldview we are to submit to them. Why? Because they have been placed there by God for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of those who do good.

Again, remember a number of things. First and foremost, as the people of God we are just passing through this world on our way to heaven. God has never promised us a rose garden here on earth, in fact He has promised us trials and tribulations. And these trials and tribulations can come in the form of those who are in charge.

But we are still obey them and honor them because they have been placed there by God. Notice the wording in 1 Peter 2:15: *"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish*

men;” Those that don’t know God through the Lord Jesus Christ are foolish. And they will eventually be silenced as they Christians praying for, obeying and honoring whoever is in charge.

I will tell you that I find it very distasteful, to say the least, when religious people, people of faith criticize in a negative way, those who are in charge. You can disagree, but that is not what we as Christians are to do. Again, we are to pray for them, obey them and honor them. Why? Because whoever is in charge is there because of the will of God.

It is not by accident ... it is not by chance ... it is not by luck. In 1992 when Clinton was elected – and you can take this however you want – I said that in the Old Testament, God used the jawbone of a donkey to accomplish His will, specifically the King James says a “jawbone of an ass...” – and I said at the time that God would use Bill Clinton to accomplish His perfect will.

And this is exactly what we see as we go in our passage. We have freedom to obey and honor or not to do this. But look at what Peter says: 1 Peter 2:16: “*as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.*”

But in this freedom that we have, we have to remember that above all we are “*bondservants of God.*” – we belong to Him. He has chosen us, as we have seen. We have access to Him, as we have seen. We are separated from the world, as we have seen. We are a special or peculiar people. And as such we have a particular responsibility to do what God has revealed in His Holy Word, the Scriptures. Part of that is exactly what we are looking at today – “*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors...*”

We see that Peter then summarizes that attitude and mind set that we as Christians are to have: 1 Peter 2:17; “*Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*”

Here we see four simply, and yet hard things. *Honor all people ...* It does not matter whether we like them or agree with, we have to honor all those around us, especially, in context, those who are in charge. *Love the brotherhood ...* this specifically refers to Christians themselves. We are to love one another. There is too much division among those who are true Christians. We are not one, as we are to be. Jesus said this in John 13:34,35: “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*”

*Fear God ...*This is the duty of all, and we see it throughout the Bible, as one of the first duties of religion. The word fear, when used to express our duty to God, means that we are to reverence and honor Him. Leviticus 25:17, God’s instructions to the children of Israel says: “*Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.*” Psalms 25:14 says: “*The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.*” And Proverbs 1:7 says: “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*” And there are many others.

And the last one *Honor the king ...* as we have already noted today.

So, as we think about politics, and we should be concerned about what happens, let us remember to put it all into its proper perspective, remembering that whoever is elected ... whoever is in charge is there because God has placed them there as His ministers, to His honor and glory.