

The Box Sessions: Christianity & Politics

March 13, 2016

Should Christians involve themselves in government and politics? If so, how? Do you have to be a Republican to be a Christian?

Helpful Blogs:

1. <http://www.waynegrudem.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Why-Christians-should-influence-government-booklet.pdf>
2. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-89-christ-lord-our-politics-rom-131-7-and-other-scriptures>

Key Biblical Passages With Explanatory Commentary:

Psalm 33:10

10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples.

The satisfaction he had of God's sovereignty and dominion, v. 10, 11. He over-rules all the counsels of men, and makes them, contrary to their intention, serviceable to his counsels. Come and see with an eye of faith God in the throne, 1. Frustrating the devices of his enemies: *He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought*, so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves *a vain thing* (Ps. 2:1); the counsel of Ahithophel is turned into foolishness; Haman's plot is baffled. Though the design be laid ever so deep, and the hopes raised upon it ever so high, yet, if God says it *shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass*; it is all to no purpose. 2. Fulfilling his own decrees: *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever*. It is immutable in itself, *for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled, nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its time. With what pleasure to ourselves may we in singing this give praise to God! How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust!¹

¹ Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (p. 787). Peabody: Hendrickson.

Daniel 4:17

17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.'

17. demand—that is, determination; namely, as to the change to which Nebuchadnezzar is to be doomed. A solemn council of the heavenly ones is supposed (compare Job 1:6; 2:1), over which God presides supreme. His “decree” and “word” are therefore said to be theirs (compare Da 4:24, “decree of the Most High”); “the decree of the watchers,” “the word of the holy ones.” For He has placed particular kingdoms under the administration of angelic beings, subject to Him (Da 10:13, 20; 12:1). The word “demand,” in the second clause, expresses a distinct idea from the first clause. Not only as members of God’s council (Da 7:10; 1 Ki 22:19; Ps 103:21; Zec 1:10) do they subscribe to His “decree,” but that decree is in answer to their prayers, wherein they *demand* that every mortal who tries to obscure the glory of God shall be humbled [CALVIN]. Angels are grieved when God’s prerogative is in the least infringed. How awful to Nebuchadnezzar to know that angels plead against him for his pride, and that the decree has been passed in the high court of heaven for his humiliation in answer to angels’ *demands!* The conceptions are moulded in a form peculiarly adapted to Nebuchadnezzar’s modes of thought.

the living—not as distinguished from the dead, but from the inhabitants of heaven, who “know” that which the men of the world need to be taught (Ps 9:16); the ungodly confess there is a God, but would gladly confine Him to heaven. But, saith Daniel, God ruleth not merely there, but “in the kingdom of men.”

basest—the lowest in condition (1 Sa 2:8; Lu 1:52). It is not one’s talents, excellency, or noble birth, but God’s will, which elevates to the throne. Nebuchadnezzar abased to the dunghill, and then restored, was to have in himself an experimental proof of this (Da 4:37).²

John 19:10-11

10 So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

² Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 628). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

10. The silence of the prisoner annoyed the governor. Perhaps he thought that by asserting his authority and advancing the reminder that life or death hung on his verdict, he could make Jesus talk. 11. The device was only partially successful. Jesus talked, but only to state to Pilate his limitations. **Power.** Authority. Christ may have been affirming the broad truth of the divine control over the state (Rom 13:1ff.), but the stress falls on the immediate situation. Pilate was powerless to do other than carry out the will of God in this case. **He that delivered me.** Any reference to Judas is hardly natural here. **The greater sin**, i.e., greater than that of Pilate. “The sin of Caiaphas is greater because Pilate’s authority is from God; and it was the duty of Caiaphas to know and teach as well as do the will of God, But he, the official representative of Israel, the People of God, has had recourse to this heathen, who holds certain authority from God, in order that power conferred by God for the execution of justice may be employed for the perpetration of injustice” (William Temple, *Readings in St. John’s Gospel*).³

19:10 “and I have the authority to crucify You” Pilate asserts that he has political authority of life and death, yet in the face of an unruly mob he relinquished this right to their will.

19:11 “you would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above” This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is called “contrary to fact.” Jesus was not intimidated by Pilate. He knew who He was and why He had come! The Bible asserts that God is behind all human authority (cf. Rom. 13:1–7).

“he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin” At first reading this seems to refer to Judas Iscariot (cf. 6:64, 71; 13:11) but most commentators believe it refers to Caiaphas, who officially handed Jesus over to the Romans. This phrase can be understood collectively as referring to (1) the Jewish leaders or (2) Jewish people.⁴

Romans 13:1-7

1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur

³ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (Eds.). (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Jn 19:10). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴ Utley, R. J. (1999). *The Beloved Disciple’s Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John* (Vol. Volume 4, pp. 169–170). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Paul does not explicitly connect this paragraph with what comes before it, and this has led some scholars to think that it is a later, perhaps post-Pauline, addition to the text of Romans. But there is no textual evidence for so drastic an interpretation. The passage fits in the context perfectly well: submission to government is part of that 'good, pleasing and perfect will' (12:2b) that Paul has been outlining and is also a specific example of doing 'what is right in the eyes of everybody' (12:17b). Paul may have been aware that the Roman Christians were in particular need of such advice, since there is evidence that various groups in the capital, including Jews, were agitating against the paying of taxes at about this time. (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.50ff.). Paul, therefore, counsels that the Roman Christians pay their taxes (6–7) as part of their general obligation to submit to the authorities of the state (1a, 5a). Such submission is called for, Paul argues, because governmental authorities are established by God to serve his purposes of rewarding good and punishing evil (1b–4, 5b).

The *authorities* (Gk. *exousiai*) clearly denote persons in positions of authority in secular government; in Paul's day of course, Roman imperial and provincial officials especially. To *submit* to these authorities means to recognize their place 'over' the believer in the 'order' that exists in the world. This 'order' includes both secular institutions that lack God's sanction (*e.g.* slavery, Tit. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18) and institutions ordained by God for the good of his people (*e.g.* marriage, Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5; the family, Lk. 2:51; church leadership, 1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:21 probably includes marriage, family and slavery). Human government, Paul makes clear in vs 1b–4, falls clearly into this latter category. Echoing consistent OT (Pr. 8:15–16; Is. 40:15, 23–24; Dn. 2:21; 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21) and Jewish teaching, (Wisdom of Solomon 6:3; Ecclus. 10:4, 17:17) Paul reminds us that every ruler is *established* (*tetagmenai*) by God and is therefore *God's servant*, however indirectly or unconsciously (4, 6). Rulers serve God by commending those who do good (3b–4a) and punishing wrong-doers (3a, 4b). Therefore, Christians, like everyone else (*cf.* v 1), are to do what the governing authorities tell us to do; and not just because we fear punishment, but also because we recognize that God stands behind government and we want to avoid doing that which would violate our consciences (5b).

Paul's teaching in this paragraph appears to be quite straightforward and is, indeed, paralleled in other NT books (see especially 1 Pet. 2:13–17). Nevertheless, the apparently absolute command to do what rulers tell us to do creates problems for most Christians. These problems are created not only by our experience—many believers must live under dictatorial and rabidly anti-Christian governments—but by the NT itself, which elsewhere holds up disobedience to rulers in some situations as commendable (Acts 4:19–20; Revelation). The problem thus created by 13:1–7 has been solved in several ways. Some argue that Paul is commanding obedience to government only when it is fulfilling its God-given functions of rewarding good and punishing evil. While there may be some truth to this, Paul does not make Christian obedience contingent on governmental behaviour. Others think that Paul may be restricting himself only to an immediate situation in the Roman community; but the universal language of the text (*everyone, no authority* in v 1) makes this unlikely. A more attractive alternative is that Paul's demand that Christians *submit* to government means simply that they recognize government's rightful place within the hierarchy of relationships established by God, a hierarchy at whose pinnacle is God. When, therefore, government usurps its place, and commands us to do something contrary to our ultimate Lord, we are free—indeed obliged—to disobey. This view may, however, unduly weaken the meaning of 'submit'. Perhaps the best solution, then, is to view 13:1–7 as a general statement about how the Christian should relate to government, with exceptions to this advice assumed but not spelled out here.⁵

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Blessed be God. We have said that the main object of this epistle is to raise us above the world, in order that we may be prepared and encouraged to sustain the spiritual contests of our warfare. For this end, the knowledge of God's benefits avails much; for, when their value appears to us, all other things will be deemed worthless, especially when we consider what Christ and his blessings are; for everything without him is but dross. For this reason he highly extols the wonderful grace of God in Christ, that is, that we may not deem it much to give up the world in order that we may enjoy the invaluable treasure of a future life; and

⁵ Carson, D. A., France, R. T., Motyer, J. A., & Wenham, G. J. (Eds.). (1994). *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 1152–1153). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

also that we may not be broken down by present troubles, but patiently endure them, being satisfied with eternal happiness.

Further, when he gives thanks to God, he invites the faithful to spiritual joy, which can swallow up all the opposite feelings of the flesh.

And Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Understand the words thus,—“Blessed be God who is the Father of Jesus Christ.” For, as formerly, by calling himself the God of Abraham, he designed to mark the difference between him and all fictitious gods; so after he has manifested himself in his own Son, his will is, not to be known otherwise than in him. Hence they who form their ideas of God in his naked majesty apart from Christ, have an idol instead of the true God, as the case is with the Jews and the Turks. Whosoever, then, seeks really to know the only true God, must regard him as the Father of Christ; for, whenever our mind seeks God, except Christ be thought of, it will wander and be confused, until it be wholly lost. Peter meant at the same time to intimate how God is so bountiful and kind towards us; for, except Christ stood as the middle person, his goodness could never be really known by us.

Who hath begotten us again. He shows that supernatural life is a gift, because we are born the children of wrath; for had we been born to the hope of life according to the flesh, there would have been no necessity of being begotten again by God. Therefore Peter teaches us, that we who are by nature destined to eternal death, are restored to life by God’s mercy. And this is, as it were, our second creation, as it is said in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. *Lively* or *living hope*, means the hope of life.¹ At the same time there seems to be an implied contrast between the hope fixed on the incorruptible kingdom of God, and the fading and transient hopes of man.

According to his abundant mercy. He first mentions the efficient cause, and then he points out the mediating cause, as they say. He shows that God was induced by no merits of ours to regenerate us unto a living hope, because he assigns this wholly to his mercy. But that he might more completely reduce the merits of works to nothing, he says, *great (multam) mercy*. All, indeed, confess that God is the only author of our salvation, but they afterwards invent extraneous causes, which take away so much from his mercy. But Peter commends mercy alone; and he immediately connects the way or manner, *by the resurrection of Christ*; for God does not in any other way discover his mercy; hence Scripture ever directs our attention to this point. And that Christ’s death is not mentioned, but his resurrection, involves no inconsistency, for it is included; because a thing cannot be completed without having a beginning; and he especially brought forward the resurrection, because he was speaking of a new life.

4. *To an inheritance.*¹ The three words which follow are intended to amplify God’s grace; for Peter (as I have before said) had this object in view, to impress our minds thoroughly as to its excellency. Moreover, these two clauses, “to an inheritance incorruptible,” &c., and “to

salvation ready to be revealed," I deem as being in apposition, the latter being explanatory of the former; for he expresses the same thing in two ways.

Every word which follows is weighty. The inheritance is said to be *reserved*, or preserved, that we may know that it is beyond the reach of danger. For, were it not in God's hand, it might be exposed to endless dangers. If it were in this world, how could we regard it as safe amidst so many changes? That he might then free us from every fear, he testifies that our salvation is placed in safety beyond the harms which Satan can do. But as the certainty of salvation can bring us but little comfort, except each one knows that it belongs to himself, Peter adds, *for you*. For consciences will calmly recumb here, that is, when the Lord cries to them from heaven, "Behold, your salvation is in my hand and is kept for you." But as salvation is not indiscriminately for all, he calls our attention to faith, that all who are endowed with faith, might be distinguished from the rest, and that they might not doubt but that they are the true and legitimate heirs of God. For, as faith penetrates into the heavens, so also it appropriates to us the blessings which are in heaven.

5. *Who are kept by the power of God.* We are to notice the connexion when he says, that we are kept while in the world, and at the same time our inheritance is reserved in heaven; otherwise this thought would immediately creep in, "What does it avail us that our salvation is laid up in heaven, when we are tossed here and there in this world as in a turbulent sea? What can it avail us that our salvation is secured in a quiet harbour, when we are driven to and fro amidst thousand shipwrecks?" The apostle, therefore, anticipates objections of this kind, when he shows, that though we are in the world exposed to dangers, we are yet kept by faith; and that though we are thus nigh to death, we are yet safe under the guardianship of faith. But as faith itself, through the infirmity of the flesh, often quails, we might be always anxious about the morrow, were not the Lord to aid us.¹

And, indeed, we see that under the Papacy a diabolical opinion prevails, that we ought to doubt our final perseverance, because we are uncertain whether we shall be to-morrow in the same state of grace. But Peter did not thus leave us in suspense; for he testifies that we stand by the power of God, lest any doubt arising from a consciousness of our own infirmity, should disquiet us. How weak soever we may then be, yet our salvation is not uncertain, because it is sustained by God's power. As, then, we are begotten by faith, so faith itself receives its stability from God's power. Hence is its security, not only for the present, but also for the future.

Unto salvation. As we are by nature impatient of delay, and soon succumb under weariness, he therefore reminds us that salvation is not deferred because it is not yet prepared, but because the time of its revelation is not yet come. This doctrine is intended to nourish and sustain our hope. Moreover, he calls the day of judgment *the last time*, because the restitution of all things is not to be previously expected, for the intervening time is still in progress. What is elsewhere called the last time, is the whole from the coming of Christ; it is so called from a comparison with the preceding ages. But Peter had a regard to the end of

the world.⁶

1 Peter 2:9-17

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Verse nine

The “ye” is emphatic in the Greek text. Literally, “but as for you,” in contrast to the disobedient of verse 8. “Generation” is from a Greek word meaning “a race, a body with a common life and descent.” It does not mean here a group of individuals living within the span of a lifetime. The word “royal” is the translation of the Greek word for “king.” The Levitical priesthood were only priests. Believers in this dispensation are king-priests, associated with the Lord Jesus who is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, a king-priest. The word “nation” is the translation of a Greek word meaning “a multitude of people of the same nature.” The word “holy” in the Greek text means literally “set apart for the service of Deity.” The word “peculiar” here is used in a way not often seen today. The Greek word means literally “to make around,” that is, to make something and then to surround it with a circle, thus indicating ownership. The same verb is used in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 43:21 which reads, “This people have I formed for myself.” The word “peculiar” today usually means “odd, strange.” But it is not so used here. The Greek word speaks of the unique, private, personal ownership of the saints by God. Each saint is God’s unique possession just as if that saint were the only human being in existence. The words “show forth” in the Greek text refer to a spoken message. The word “praises” is not the translation of the Greek word customarily used to indicate praise, but of one which means “excellencies, gracious dealings, glorious attributes.” The word “into” refers here

⁶ Calvin, J., & Owen, J. (2010). *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (pp. 27–31). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

not merely to locality, but to a result, that of the saints being participants of the light that God is in His nature. We are made creatures of light.

Translation. (6) Because of this, it is contained in Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a Stone, one chosen out, a cornerstone, held in honor, and the one who rests his faith on Him shall not be defeated. (7) To you therefore who are believers, the Living Stone is precious; but to those who are disbelievers, the Stone which the builders repudiated after they had tested Him for the purpose of approving Him, finding Him to be that which did not meet their specifications, this Stone became a Head Corner Stone, (8) and an obstacle stone against which one cuts, and a rock which trips one, even to those who because they are non-persuasable, stumble up against the Word, to which (action of stumbling) they were indeed appointed. (9) But as for you, you are a race chosen out, king-priests, a set-apart nation, a people formed for God's own possession, in order that you might proclaim abroad the excellencies of the One who out of darkness called you into participation in His marvelous light, (10) who at one time were not a people, but now are the people of God; who were not subjects of mercy, but now have become objects of mercy.

Verse eleven

THE words "dearly beloved" are the translation of one word in Greek, plural in number, the distinctive word used of God's divine love. This is not the "dearly beloved" of the pastor addressing his congregation on the Lord's Day morning, but Peter reminding them that they are dearly loved-ones of God. The Greek word "beseech" is literally, "I exhort, urge, I beg of you, please." While it is Peter writing, yet it is the great God of the universe saying to His blood-bought children, "I beg of you, please." Think of the love and humility, the infinite condescension of God that stoops to address a creature of His handiwork whom He could command.

The word "stranger" is the translation of a Greek word meaning "to have one's home alongside of," thus a "sojourner." "Pilgrims" is from a word which literally means "to settle down alongside of pagans." The two words describe the Christian in his position in this world. He has made his home alongside of the unsaved and settled down amongst them, a sojourner and one that is a stranger to them in that he is different from them. The exhortation to abstain from fleshly lusts is based upon the fact that Christians are living in the midst of the unsaved. They have a testimony to maintain and a message to give. The word "abstain" is literally, "hold yourself constantly back from" fleshly lusts, the implication being clear that the fallen nature whose power over the believer was broken when he was saved is still there with its sin-ward pull. We are told to hold ourselves back from doing the things which before salvation wrought its work in our beings we did naturally. The word "lusts" is literally "cravings, strong desires," good or bad, depending upon the context, here evil cravings coming from the totally depraved nature.

The word "which" has a qualitative aspect in the original, "which are of such a nature as to."

“War” is from a verb which speaks of the act of carrying on a military campaign. The word “against” is the translation of a Greek word whose root meaning is “down.”

Verse twelve

“Having” has a durative aspect in the Greek. It is a steady holding of our conversation up to a certain standard. “Conversation” is the translation of a Greek word speaking of one’s manner of life. The word meant that when the A.V. was translated. Today, the meaning of the word is limited to the act of speaking. We must be careful to note the obsolete words in the A.V., and not interpret them in their present day meaning. The word “honest” is the translation of a Greek word that speaks of goodness which is beautiful, an outer goodness that strikes the eye. Alford translates it “comely”; Robertson, “seemly.” Our manner of life is honest when our lives are in accordance with what we are inwardly, cleansed, regenerated children of God. We give others an honest testimony and picture of what we really are inwardly. “Seemly” also speaks of the necessity of maintaining an outward testimony that is in conformity with our profession. The word “Gentiles” is from the Greek word referring here, not to Gentiles as in contrast to Jews, but to the unsaved world, the world of people without Christ.

The word “whereas” is literally “in what thing,” that is, in the very thing in which the world speaks evil of a Christian, namely, of his Christian life, which latter makes it necessary for him to diverge from the things of the world and live a life of separation. The words “speak against” are literally “speak down,” referring to the act of adversely criticizing a person. The separated life of a Christian is one of the most powerful means God has of convicting the world of its sin. The world does not like its sin uncovered, hence the persecution which it directs against the separated Christian. How the people of the world watch the Christian. The word “behold” in the Greek text means “to view carefully as a personal witness.”

The word “visitation” is the translation of the Greek word which is also rendered “bishop, overseer.” It means “to observe, inspect, oversee” in its verb form, and “one who oversees or observes,” in its noun form which is used here. The day of visitation is “the day of looking upon.” Wherever this word is used in the New Testament and translated “visit” or “visitation,” it refers to the visitation of God’s mercy and grace. Here it refers to the day when as Vincent puts it, “God shall look upon these wanderers as a pastor over his flock, and shall become the overlooker or bishop of their souls.” The same Greek word is translated “Bishop” in 2:25. The good works of Christians, their beautiful and separated lives, are used of God as one of the means of bringing lost sinners to the Lord Jesus. When they are saved, God becomes the spiritual overseer of their souls. Then these sinners saved by grace will glorify Him because of the Christlike lives of certain Christians that caused them to want the Saviour too.

Verse thirteen

The words “submit yourselves” are the translation of a Greek military term meaning “to arrange in military fashion under the command of a leader.” One could translate, “put yourselves

in the attitude of submission to.” The exhortation is not merely to obey ordinances, but to create and maintain that attitude of heart which will always lead one to obey them. “Ordinances of man” refer to human institutions, such as the laws of the land. Christians are to do this because of their testimony to the Lord Jesus.

Verse fifteen

There are no Greek word studies in verse 14. The words “put to silence” are the translation of a Greek word which means “to close the mouth with a muzzle.” It was used of the muzzling of an ox (I Cor. 9:9). It means here, “to reduce to silence.” Matthew uses it (22:34) of our Lord putting the Sadducees to silence, and Mark, of stilling the storm on the Sea of Galilee (4:39). The word “ignorance” in the Greek text speaks of want of knowledge, not in the sense of want of acquaintance, but want of understanding. The word “foolish” is the translation of a Greek word speaking of lack of reason, reflection, and intelligence.

Translation. (11) Divinely loved ones, I beg of you, please, as those who are sojourning alongside of a foreign population (should), be constantly holding yourselves back from the fleshly cravings, cravings of such a nature that, like an army carrying on a military campaign, they are waging war, hurling themselves down upon your soul; (12) holding your manner of life among the unsaved steadily beautiful in its goodness, in order that in the thing in which they defame you as those who do evil (namely, in your Christianity), because of your works beautiful in their goodness which they are constantly, carefully, and attentively watching, they may glorify God in the day of His overseeing care. (13) Put yourselves in the attitude of submission to, thus giving yourselves to the obedience of, every human regulation for the sake of the Lord, whether to the king as one who is supereminent, (14) or to governors as those sent by him to inflict vengeance upon those who do evil, and to give praise to. those who do good; (15) for so is the will of God, that by doing good you might be reducing to silence the ignorance of men who are unreflecting and unintelligent; (16) doing all this as those who have their liberty, and not as those who are holding their liberty as a cloak of wickedness, but as those who are God’s bondmen. (17) Pay honor to all, be loving the brotherhood, be fearing God, be paying honor to the king.⁷

9. *But ye are a chosen generation*, or race. He again separates them from the unbelieving, lest driven by their example (as it is often the case) they should fall away from the faith. As, then, it is unreasonable that those whom God has separated from the world, should mix themselves with the ungodly, Peter here reminds the faithful to what great honour they had been raised, and also

⁷ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (1 Pe 2:9–15). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

to what purpose they had been called. But with the same high titles which he confers on them, Moses honoured the ancient people, (Ex. 19:6;) but the Apostle's object was to shew that they had recovered again, through Christ, the great dignity and honour from which they had fallen. It is at the same time true, that God gave to the fathers an earthly taste only of these blessings, and that they are really given in Christ.

The meaning then is, as though he had said, "Moses called formerly your fathers a holy nation, a priestly kingdom, and God's peculiar people: all these high titles do now far more justly belong to you; therefore you ought to beware lest your unbelief should rob you of them."

In the meantime, however, as the greater part of the nation was unbelieving, the Apostle indirectly sets the believing Jews in opposition to all the rest, though they exceeded them in number, as though he had said, that those only were the children of Abraham, who believed in Christ, and that they only retained possession of all the blessings which God had by a singular privilege bestowed on the whole nation.

He calls them *a chosen race*, because God, passing by others, adopted them as it were in a special manner. They were also *a holy nation*; for God had consecrated them to himself, and destined that they should lead a pure and holy life. He further calls them *a peculiar people*, or, a people for acquisition, that they might be to him a peculiar possession or inheritance; for I take the words simply in this sense, that the Lord hath called us, that he might possess us as his own, and devoted to him. This meaning is proved by the words of Moses, "If ye keep my covenant, ye shall be to me a peculiar treasure beyond all other nations." (Ex. 19:5.)

There is in the *royal priesthood* a striking inversion of the words of Moses; for he says, "a priestly kingdom," but the same thing is meant. So what Peter intimated was this, "Moses called your fathers a sacred kingdom, because the whole people enjoyed as it were a royal liberty, and from their body were chosen the priests; both dignities were therefore joined together: but now ye are royal priests, and, indeed, in a more excellent way, because ye are, each of you, consecrated in Christ, that ye may be the associates of his kingdom, and partakers of his priesthood. Though, then, the fathers had something like to what you have, yet ye far excel them. For after the wall of partition has been pulled down by Christ, we are now gathered from every nation, and the Lord bestows these high titles on all whom he makes his people."

There is further, as to these benefits, a contrast between us and the rest of mankind, to be considered: and hence it appears more fully how incomparable is God's goodness towards us; for he sanctifies us, who are by nature polluted; he chose us, when he could find nothing in us but filth and vileness; he makes his peculiar possession from worthless dregs; he confers the honour of the priesthood on the profane; he brings the vassals of Satan, of sin, and of death, to the enjoyment of royal liberty.

That ye should shew forth, or declare. He carefully points out the end of our calling, that he might stimulate us to give the glory to God. And the sum of what he says is, that God has

favoured us with these immense benefits and constantly manifests them, that his glory might by us be made known: for by *praises*, or virtues, he understands wisdom, goodness, power, righteousness, and everything else, in which the glory of God shines forth. And further, it behoves us to declare these virtues or excellencies not only by our tongue, but also by our whole life. This doctrine ought to be a subject of daily meditation, and it ought to be continually remembered by us, that all God's blessings with which he favours us are intended for this end, that his glory may be proclaimed by us.

We must also notice what he says, that we have been *called* out of darkness into God's marvellous or wonderful light; for by these words he amplifies the greatness of divine grace. If the Lord had given us light while we were seeking it, it would have been a favour; but it was a much greater favour, to draw us out of the labyrinth of ignorance and the abyss of darkness. We ought hence to learn what is man's condition, before he is translated into the kingdom of God. And this is what Isaiah says, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but over thee shall the Lord be seen, and his glory shall in thee shine forth." (Isa. 60:2.) And truly we cannot be otherwise than sunk in darkness, after having departed from God, our only light. See more at large on this subject in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

10. *Which in time past were not a people.* He brings for confirmation a passage from Hosea, and well accommodates it to his own purpose. For Hosea, after having in God's name declared that the Jews were repudiated, gives them a hope of a future restoration. Peter reminds us that this was fulfilled in his own age; for the Jews were scattered here and there, as the torn members of a body; nay, they seemed to be no longer God's people, no worship remained among them, they were become entangled in the corruptions of the heathens; it could not then be said otherwise of them, but that they were repudiated by the Lord. But when they are gathered in Christ, from no people they really become the people of God. Paul, in Rom. 9:26, applies also this prophecy to the Gentiles, and not without reason; for from the time the Lord's covenant was broken, from which alone the Jews derived their superiority, they were put on a level with the Gentiles. It hence follows, that what God had promised, to make a people of no people, belongs in common to both.

Which had not obtained mercy. This was added by the Prophet, in order that the gratuitous covenant of God, by which he takes them to be his people, might be more clearly set forth; as though he had said, "There is no other reason why the Lord counts us his people, except that he, having mercy on us, graciously adopts us." It is then God's gratuitous goodness, which makes of no people a people to God, and reconciles the alienated.

11. *As strangers*, or sojourners. There are two parts to this exhortation,—that their souls were to be free within from wicked and vicious lusts; and also, that they were to live honestly among men, and by the example of a good life not only to confirm the godly, but also to gain over the unbelieving to God.

And first, to call them away from the indulgence of carnal lusts, he employs this argument, that

they were sojourners and strangers. And he so calls them, not because they were banished from their country, and scattered into various lands, but because the children of God, wherever they may be, are only guests in this world. In the former sense, indeed, he called them sojourners at the beginning of the Epistle, as it appears from the context; but what he says here is common to them all. For the lusts of the flesh hold us entangled, when in our minds we dwell in the world, and think not that heaven is our country; but when we pass as strangers through this life, we are not in bondage to the flesh.

By the *lusts* or desires of the flesh he means not only those gross concupiscences which we have in common with animals, as the Sophists hold, but also all those sinful passions and affections of the soul, to which we are by nature guided and led. For it is certain that every thought of the flesh, that is, of unrenewed nature, is enmity against God. (Rom. 8:7.)

Which war against the soul. Here is another argument, that they could not comply with the desires of the flesh, except to their own ruin. For he refers not here to the contest described by Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans, and in the fifth of the Galatians, as he makes the soul to be an antagonist to the flesh: but what he says here is, that the desires of the flesh, whenever the soul consents to them, lead to perdition. He proves our carelessness in this respect, that while we anxiously shun enemies from whom we apprehend danger to the body, we willingly allow enemies hurtful to the soul to destroy us; nay, we as it were stretch forth our neck to them.

12. *Your conversation.* The second part of the exhortation is, that they were to conduct themselves honestly towards men. What, indeed, precedes this in order is, that their minds should be cleansed before God; but a regard should also be had to men, lest we should become a hindrance to them. And he expressly says *among the Gentiles*; for the Jews were not only hated everywhere, but were also almost abhorred. The more carefully, therefore, ought they to have laboured to wipe off the odium and infamy attached to their name by a holy life and a well-regulated conduct.¹ For that admonition of Paul ought to be attended to, “To give no occasion to those who seek occasion.” Therefore the evil speakings and the wicked insinuations of the ungodly ought to stimulate us to lead an upright life; for it is no time for living listlessly and securely, when they sharply watch us in order to find out whatever we do amiss.

That they—may glorify God. He intimates that we ought thus to strive, not for our own sake, that men may think and speak well of us; but that we may glorify God, as Christ also teaches us. And Peter shows how this would be effected, even that the unbelieving, led by our good works, would become obedient to God, and thus by their own conversion give glory to him; for this he intimates by the words, *in the day of visitation*. I know that some refer this to the last coming of Christ; but I take it otherwise, even that God employs the holy and honest life of his people, as a preparation, to bring back the wandering to the right way. For it is the beginning of our conversion, when God is pleased to look on us with a paternal eye; but when his face is turned away from us, we perish. Hence the day of visitation may justly be said to be the time when he invites us to himself.

13. *Submit yourselves.* He now comes to particular exhortations: and as obedience with regard to magistrates is a part of honest or good conversation, he draws this inference as to their duty, “Submit yourselves,” or, Be ye subject; for by refusing the yoke of government, they would have given to the Gentiles no small occasion for reproaching them. And, indeed, the Jews were especially hated and counted infamous for this reason, because they were regarded on account of their perverseness as ungovernable. And as the commotions which they raised up in the provinces, were causes of great calamities, so that every one of a quiet and peaceable disposition dreaded them as the plague,—this was the reason that induced Peter to speak so strongly on subjection. Besides, many thought the gospel was a proclamation of such liberty, that every one might deem himself as free from servitude. It seemed an unworthy thing that God’s children should be servants, and that the heirs of the world should not have a free possession, no, not even of their own bodies. Then there was another trial,—All the magistrates were Christ’s adversaries; and they used their own authority, so that no representation of God, which secures the chief reverence, appeared in them. We now perceive the design of Peter: he exhorted the Jews, especially for these reasons, to shew respect to the civil power.

To every ordinance of man. Some render the words, “to every creature;” and from a rendering so obscure and ambiguous, much labour has been taken to elicit some meaning. But I have no doubt but that Peter meant to point out the distinct manner in which God governs mankind: for the verb κτίζειν in Greek, from which κτίσις comes, means to form and to construct a building. Suitable, then, is the word “ordination;” by which Peter reminds us, that God the maker of the world has not left the human race in a state of confusion, that they might live after the manner of beasts, but as it were in a building regularly formed, and divided into several compartments. And it is called a *human ordination*, not because it has been invented by man, but because a mode of living, well arranged and duly ordered, is peculiar to men.

Whether it be to the king. So he calls Cæsar, as I think, whose empire extended over all those countries mentioned at the beginning of the Epistle. For though “king” was a name extremely hated by the Romans, yet it was in use among the Greeks. They, indeed, often called him autocrat, (αὐτοκράτορα;) but sometimes he was also called by them king, (βασιλεύς.) But as he subjoins a reason, that he ought to be obeyed because he excelled, or was eminent or supreme, there is no comparison made between Cæsar and other magistrates. He held, indeed, the supreme power; but that eminence which Peter extols, is common to all who exercise public authority. And so Paul, in Rom. 13:1, extends it to all magistrates. Now the meaning is, that obedience is due to all who rule, because they have been raised to that honour not by chance, but by God’s providence. For many are wont to inquire too scrupulously by what right power has been attained; but we ought to be satisfied with this alone, that power is possessed and exercised. And so Paul cuts off the handle of useless objections when he declares that there is no power but from God. And for this reason it is that Scripture so often says, that it is God who girds kings with a sword, who raises them on high, who transfers kingdoms as he pleases.

As Peter referred especially to the Roman Emperor, it was necessary to add this admonition; for it is certain that the Romans through unjust means rather than in a legitimate way penetrated into

Asia and subdued these countries. Besides, the Cæsars, who then reigned, had possessed themselves of the monarchy by tyrannical force. Hence Peter as it were forbids these things to be controverted, for he shows that subjects ought to obey their rulers without hesitation, because they are not made eminent, unless elevated by God's hand.

14. *Or unto governors*, or, Whether to presidents. He designates every kind of magistrates, as though he had said, that there is no kind of government to which we ought not to submit. He confirms this by saying that they are God's ministers; for they who apply *him* to the king, are greatly mistaken. There is then a common reason, which extols the authority of all magistrates, that they rule by the command of God, and are sent by him. It hence follows (as Paul also teaches us) that they resist God, who do not obediently submit to a power ordained by him.

For the punishment. This is the second reason why it behoves us reverently to regard and to respect civil authority, and that is, because it has been appointed by the Lord for the common good of mankind; for we must be extremely barbarous and brutal, if the public good is not regarded by us. This, then, in short, is what Peter means, that since God keeps the world in order by the ministry of magistrates, all they who despise their authority are enemies to mankind.

Now he assumes these two things, which belong, as Plato says, to a commonwealth, that is, reward to the good and punishment to the wicked; for, in ancient times, not only punishment was allotted to evil-doers, but also rewards to the doers of good. But though it often happens that honours are not rightly distributed, nor rewards given to the deserving, yet it is an honour, not to be despised, that the good are at the least under the care and protection of magistrates, that they are not exposed to the violence and injuries of the ungodly, that they live more quietly under laws and better retain their reputation, than if every one, unrestrained, lived as he pleased. In short, it is a singular blessing of God, that the wicked are not allowed to do what they like.

It may, however, be objected here and said, that kings and magistrates often abuse their power, and exercise tyrannical cruelty rather than justice. Such were almost all the magistrates, when this Epistle was written. To this I answer, that tyrants and those like them, do not produce such effects by their abuse, but that the ordinance of God ever remains in force, as the institution of marriage is not subverted though the wife and the husband were to act in a way not becoming them. However, therefore, men may go astray, yet the end fixed by God cannot be changed.

Were any one again to object and say, that we ought not to obey princes who, as far as they can, pervert the holy ordinance of God, and thus become savage wild beasts, while magistrates ought to bear the image of God. My reply is this, that government established by God ought to be so highly valued by us, as to honour even tyrants when in power. There is yet another reply still more evident,—that there has never been a tyranny, (nor can one be imagined,) however cruel and unbridled, in which some portion of equity has not appeared; and further, some kind of government, however deformed and corrupt it may be, is still better and more beneficial than anarchy.

15. *For so is the will of God.* He returns to his former doctrine, lest an occasion should be given to the unbelieving to speak evil, though he expresses less than what he had said before; for he says only that the mouths of the foolish ought to be stopped. The phrase which he adopts, “to stop up ignorance,” though it may seem harsh on account of its novelty, does not yet obscure the sense.¹ For he not only calls the unbelieving foolish, but also points out the reason why they slandered, even because they were ignorant of God. But inasmuch as he makes the unbelieving to be without understanding and reason, we hence conclude, that a right understanding cannot exist without the knowledge of God. How much soever, then, the unbelieving may boast of their own acuteness, and may seem to themselves to be wise and prudent, yet the Spirit of God charges them with folly, in order that we may know that, apart from God, we cannot be really wise, as without him there is nothing perfect.

But he prescribes the way in which the evil-speaking of the unbelieving is to be restrained, even by *well-doing*, or, by doing good. In this expression he includes all the duties of humanity and kindness which we ought to perform towards our neighbours. And in these is included obedience to magistrates, without which concord among men cannot be cultivated. Were any one to object and say, that the faithful can never be so careful to do good, but that they will be evil-spoken of by the unbelieving: to this the obvious answer is, that the Apostle here does not in any degree exempt them from calumnies and reproaches; but he means that no occasion of slandering ought to be given to the unbelieving, however much they may desire it. And lest any one should further object and say, that the unbelieving are by no means worthy of so much regard that God’s children should form their life to please them, Peter expressly reminds us that we are bound by God’s command to shut up their mouths.

16. *As free.* This is said by way of anticipation, that he might obviate those things which are usually objected to with regard to the liberty of God’s children. For as men are naturally ingenious in laying hold on what may be for their advantage, many, at the commencement of the Gospel, thought themselves free to live only for themselves. This doting opinion, then, is what Peter corrects; and he briefly shows how much the liberty of Christians differed from unbridled licentiousness. And, in the first place, he denies that there is any veil or pretext for wickedness, by which he intimates, that there is no liberty given us to hurt our neighbours, or to do any harm to others. True liberty, then, is that which harms or injures no one. To confirm this, he declares that those are free who serve God. It is obvious, hence, to conclude, that we obtain liberty, in order that we may more promptly and more readily render obedience to God; for it is no other than a freedom from sin; and dominion is taken away from sin, that men may become obedient to righteousness.

In short, it is a free servitude, and a serving freedom. For as we ought to be the servants of God, that we may enjoy this benefit, so moderation is required in the use of it. In this way, indeed, our consciences become free; but this prevents us not to serve God, who requires us also to be subject to men.

17. This is a summary of what is gone before; for he intimates that God is not feared, nor their just right rendered to men, except civil order prevails among us, and magistrates retain their authority. That he bids honour to be rendered to all, I explain thus, that none are to be neglected; for it is a general precept, which refers to the social intercourse of men.¹ The word *honour* has a wide meaning in Hebrew, and we know that the apostles, though they wrote in Greek, followed the meaning of words in the former language. Therefore, this word conveys no other idea to me, than that a regard ought to be had for all, since we ought to cultivate, as far as we can, peace and friendship with all; there is, indeed, nothing more adverse to concord than contempt.

What he adds respecting the love of brethren is special, as contrasted with the first clause; for he speaks of that particular love which we are bidden to have towards the household of faith, because we are connected with them by a closer relationship. And so Peter did not omit this connexion; but yet he reminds us, that though brethren are to be specially regarded, yet this ought not to prevent our love from being extended to the whole human race. The word *fraternity*, or brotherhood, I take collectively for brethren.

Fear God. I have already said that all these clauses are applied by Peter to the subject he was treating. For he means, that honour paid to kings proceeds from the fear of God and the love of man; and that, therefore, it ought to be connected with them, as though he had said, “Whosoever fears God, loves his brethren and the whole human race as he ought, and will also give honour to kings.” But, at the same time, he expressly mentions *the king*, because that form of government was more than any other disliked; and under it other forms are included.⁸

1 Timothy 2:1-4

1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2:1. From his concerns about false teachers Paul turned to matters relating to the conduct of the church broadly (cf. 3:14–15). Paul began with what he considered most important: prayer. What too often comes last in a church’s priorities should actually come first. Not much weight should be placed on the presumed distinctions between **requests, prayers, and intercession**. The terms are more likely designed to build on one another for emphasis. It should be noted, however, that **thanksgiving** should have a prominent place

⁸ Calvin, J., & Owen, J. (2010). *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (pp. 74–86). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

in the church's prayer life.

2:2. The Ephesian church was to pray “for everyone” (v. 1, lit., “all men”), but especially for the leaders of civil government. Paul did not specify here the content of these prayers, but almost certainly he was instructing that requests be made for the salvation of the populace and its governors. This can be seen clearly from the following verses. With Nero's growing resentment toward Christians—which came to full bloom after the fire in Rome in July, A.D. 64—and the general disintegration of the Roman Empire due to Nero's profligacy, Christians began to suffer persecution from the Roman authorities. Having recently been released from his Roman imprisonment, Paul was greatly aware of the deteriorating political atmosphere. Thus he urged prayer for the salvation of all men, but especially rulers, so that the stable, noninterfering environment of previous days might be recovered. This is the minimum requirement if Christians are to live **peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness**. (This is the first of 10 times Paul used the word *eusebia*, “godliness.” These 10 occurrences are all in the Pastoral Epistles: 2:2; 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:3, 5–6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1. Its five other usages are in Acts 3:12; 2 Peter 1:3, 6–7; 3:11.) Times of political and social upheaval are excellent times in which to die for Christ, but hard times in which to live for Him.

2:3. As in modern times, some in the Ephesian church were prepared to question the validity of a prayer for the salvation of all men. Thus Paul defended his instructions by pointing out that such a prayer **is good, and pleases God our Savior** (cf. 1:1). Literally, the Greek says that such a prayer is “acceptable before” (in the presence of) God. Many prayers are unacceptable to God, but not this one.

2:4. The reason this prayer is acceptable to God is that it is a prayer “according to His will” (1 John 5:14). God, who is by nature a Savior, **wants all men to be saved**. Paul repeated the words “everyone” (1 Tim. 2:1) and “all men” (vv. 3, 6). The same Greek word (*pas*, “all”) is used in each case, referring all three times to the same group (cf. 4:10). God desires that no one perish (2 Peter 3:9), that the entire human race come to know the truth through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Truth (John 14:6). (Of course not all do come to salvation; Paul was not teaching universalism.)⁹

Paul is here concerned that the right approach should be made to public worship, especially to public prayer. He uses a number of words to denote prayer (1), but there is not a great deal of difference between them. Two important considerations which stand out are the inclusion of thanksgiving and the wide scope of the subject-matter. Not only is Paul anxious to include everyone, but draws special attention to those exercising authority (2).

⁹ Litfin, A. D. (1985). 1 Timothy. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 734). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

What is significant is that Paul makes no distinction between those rulers that are just and those that are not. He sees it as a Christian duty to pray for those whose actions affect every citizen. But the purpose of the prayer is that Christians *may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness* (2). There are many cases, however, where the environment has been anything but peaceful but where in spite of this much godliness has developed.

There is an unexpected interjection in vs 3–7 in which Paul makes a theological statement. The connection between universal prayer and the statement about God's desire that *all men* might be saved is not at first clear, but the link seems to be in the relation of the *everyone* in v 1 and the *all men* in v 4. But does this statement support universalism? It could be argued that what God wants must surely come to pass. But it is important to remember that both the OT and the NT speak of God's 'desire' or his 'will' in quite varied ways, determined by the context. Sometimes God's 'will' cannot be distinguished from his decree: what he wills to happen, happens. At other times God's 'will' is his command (*e.g.* 1 Thes. 4:3). At still others, it refers to his stance. The God who cries, 'I take no pleasure in the death of anyone ... Repent and live!' (Ezk. 18:32) is also the one of whom it is said that he wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

It is of course possible to array these statements in some sort of contradictory pattern. In fact, they are part of a consistent biblical picture in which God is presented as simultaneously utterly sovereign and distinctly personal. To set his sovereignty over against his personal interaction with us his image-bearers is to destroy the biblical portrayal of God. In the context of 1 Tim. 2, Paul is anxious to stress divine compassion towards all people irrespective of race, status or condition. Probably he is combatting a tendency towards elitism that tries to limit God's compassion inappropriately. Whatever Paul and other NT writers say about election, certainly it is integral to early Christian preaching that God desires all to come to a knowledge of the truth.¹⁰

¹⁰ Carson, D. A., France, R. T., Motyer, J. A., & Wenham, G. J. (Eds.). (1994). *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 1296–1297). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.