

# ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS

## 1 PETER 02: 11–12

### *Introduction*

We live in a day when the flesh (sinful nature) is exalted and evil desires honoured. A person's esteem and worth and image are often determined...

- by how much of the world he possesses
- by how much money he has
- by how much power he has
- by how much worldly recreation and pleasure he is able to enjoy
- by how famous he becomes
- by how many people he conquers in face to face confrontations or in bed sexually

The flesh (sinful nature) is exalted and evil desires honoured. But this is not the way of God and His Word. Scripture is clear: abstain from evil, sinful desires.

- I. Reason 1: you are aliens and strangers on earth (v. 11).
- II. Reason 2: evil desires, lusts war against your soul (v. 11).
- III. Reason 3: unbelievers are watching (v. 12).

### **I. *1 Peter 02: 11 Aliens and Strangers on Earth***

Abstain from evil desires because you are aliens and strangers on earth.

1. The word “alien” (parepidemos) has more of a temporary idea than *stranger* (paroikoi). Alien has the idea of a visitor or sojourner, of a foreigner who may be visiting and staying for a while but not long enough to lease a house.

The point is this: the believer is only passing through the earth on his way home to heaven. Heaven is his home, and his heart and mind are at home. He lives in a consciousness of home and his thoughts are upon home. He lives and walks in the consciousness of being in heaven with God. This is his attitude, his thoughts as he walks through his pilgrimage upon earth. He travels through life often moving from city to city, but his mind and heart are always upon heaven which is his permanent home.

Note what this means in so far as the world is concerned: the believer does not become entangled with the world and its affairs. His customs and lifestyle come from heaven, not from the earth. He does not practice the customs and lifestyle of the earth but of heaven.

*Heb 11:9-10* By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

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**Heb 11:13-16** *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

**Heb 13:14** *For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

2. The word “stranger” (paroikoi) means someone who dwells alongside or is exiled, but his home is elsewhere. It is the picture of a foreigner who is in a country for a while, long enough to rent or lease a house, but he is not a permanent resident. He has no legal rights or status. He is a stranger, an exile who dwells in a strange land (B.C. Coffin. *First Peter*. “The Pulpit Commentary,” Vol. 22, p.72). What Peter is saying is this: the believer is a stranger, a foreigner, an exile on earth. He is a resident, but he is not a citizen of this earth. He has no legal status in the world. He is not to follow the standards and the ways of the world. He belongs to God and to heaven; therefore, his legal status is in heaven. He is to follow the standards and the ways of God. The believer’s laws are the laws of God, the highest and most moral and just laws in all the universe. The believer has no right to live by the standard and laws of the world, for they are far lower than the standards and laws of God. The believer is to live as a stranger on earth, as one whose heart and mind are upon a far greater home and world. The believer’s heart is to be upon perfection of life and morality and justice, a home and world where perfection is the rule and standard.

**Thought 1.** This does not mean that the believer does not obey the legal laws of a land. He does; all foreigners are to obey the laws of a land when they visit that land. In fact, believers will go far beyond obeying human laws and do much more when they obey God’s laws. God’s laws and standards stress perfect behaviour plus love, and there is no greater law than love. Therefore, the believer is to abstain from fleshly, sinful desires because such desires are of the world, and he has no right to partake of those fleshly, sinful desires. He is to obey the laws of God which forbid such sins and immoralities.

**Phil 3:20-21** *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

**Rev 21:27** *Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*

**1 Chr 29:15** *We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope.*

## II. *1 Peter 02:11 Sinful Desire War against the Soul*

Abstain from evil desires because they war against the soul. The term “sinful desires” (sarkikon epithumion) means the evil desires, urges, passions, lusts of the flesh and cravings of the sinful nature. It means to have a yearning passion for the things of the flesh. Every person has experienced the flesh...

- yearning
- longing
- wanting
- taking
- thirsting
- desiring
- grabbing
- hungering
- pulling
- grasping
- craving

Every person knows what it is to have his flesh craving after something, to have it yearning and yearning to lay hold of something. The flesh is strong and difficult to control, and it never lets up its assault against the will.

1. What are the lusts of the flesh, the acts of the sinful nature? What kinds of sins are being referred to by Scripture? Scripture means far more than the sexual sins usually thought about when the lusts of the flesh are mentioned. They are listed in Galatians 5:19-21. When they are read they paint a picture of human nature that is seen or experienced by us all every day:
  - a. *Sexual immorality* (moicheia): a broad word including all forms of immoral and sexual acts. It is pre-marital sex and adultery; it is abnormal sex, all kinds of sexual vice, sexual unfaithfulness to husband or wife.
  - b. *Impurity* (akatharsia): moral impurity; doing things that dirty, pollute and soil life.
  - c. *Debauchery* (aselgeia): filthiness, indecency and shamefulness.
  - d. *Idolatry* (eidololatreia): the worship of idols, whether mental or material; the worship of some idea of what God is like, of an image of God within a person’s mind; the giving of one’s primary devotion (time and energy) to something other than God. (See *Idolatry*, 1 Cor. 6:9.)
  - e. *Witchcraft* (pharmakeia): sorcery: the use of drugs or of evil spirits to gain control over the lives of others or over one’s own life. In the present context it would include all forms of seeking the control of one’s fate including astrology, palm reading, séances, fortune telling, crystals and other forms of witchcraft.
  - f. *Hatred* (echthrai): enmity, hostility and animosity. It is the hatred that lingers and is held for a long time, a hatred that is deep within.
  - g. *Discord* (ereis): strife, contention, fighting, struggling, quarrelling, dissension and wrangling. It means that a man fights against another person in order to get something:

position, promotion, property, honour or recognition. He deceives, doing whatever has to be done to get what he is after.

- h. *Jealousy (zeloi)*: wanting and desiring to have what someone else has. It may be material things, recognition, honour or position.
- i. *Fits of rage (thumoi)*: indignation; a violent, explosive temper; anger; quick and explosive reactions that arise from boiling emotions. But it is anger which fades away just as quickly as it arose. It is not anger that lasts.
- j. *Selfish ambitions (eritheia)*: self-seeking: craving position, power, fame for selfish ends; a strong desire for attainment or achievement to gain honour or recognition; pretension.
- k. *Dissensions (dichostasiai)*: division, rebellion, standing against others and splitting off from others.
- l. *Factions (haireseis)*: sect, party, differences, heresies; some faction rejecting the fundamental beliefs of God, Christ, the Scriptures and the church; believing and holding to some teaching other than the truth.
- m. *Envy (phthonoi)*: this word goes beyond jealousy. It is the spirit...
  - that wants not only the things that another person has, but begrudges the fact that the person has them.
  - that wants not only the things to be taken away from the person, but wants him to suffer through the loss of them.
- n. *Drunkenness (methai)*: taking drink or drugs to affect one's senses for lust or pleasure; becoming tipsy or intoxicated; partaking of drugs; seeking bodily or sexual pleasure through drink or drugs.
- o. *Orgies (komi)*: carousing; uncontrolled license, indulgence and pleasure; taking part in wild parties or in drinking parties; lying around indulging in feeding the lusts of the flesh.
- 2. Note that the flesh, sinful desires war against the soul. The flesh has within it base and unregulated urges and passions. A man senses the desire and urge to do what he likes, to lift the restraints and to follow his own desires and passions. He knows he should not do it, but the pull and desire tugs and struggles and wars against the soul.
- a. The flesh or sinful nature keeps a person from doing what he would. Every person has experienced the power of the flesh; everyone has caved in to the flesh and done something that he did not want to do. He fought against doing it — knew it was harmful or hurtful — yet he could not resist the flesh. He gave in to the power of the flesh and did it. He...
  - overate
  - became angry
  - began smoking
  - got drunk
  - did evil things
  - lusted

- became prideful
- committed immorality
- cursed
- cheated, lied or stole
- acted selfishly

Note another fact as well. All of us have been tempted, and we have known how to combat and overcome the temptation. However, the flesh was so strong we just did not struggle long enough to overcome it. The struggle we experienced involved that of...

- controlling
- showing kindness
- sacrificing
- showing kindness
- being patient
- loving
- helping
- reaching out
- giving
- giving in

The point is this: the flesh is so strong that it often keeps us from doing what we would. The only hope of ever controlling the flesh is to walk in the Spirit of God — in His presence and power.

***Rom 7:15-20** I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.*

***2 Cor 10:4** The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*

- b. Now note a fact of critical importance: the flesh in itself is not sinful. The flesh or human body is God given; it is for God's use. In fact, when a person is converted to Christ, his body becomes a temple for God to dwell in through the Holy Spirit. The Christian is not told to cleanse himself from the flesh but from "the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:16), from "everything that contaminates body and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1), and from "the acts of the sinful nature" (Rom. 13:12; Gal. 5:19). The acts of the sinful nature are the fruit of indwelling sin, and sin originates in the heart not in the flesh.
3. The exhortation is strong: "abstain from sinful desires, which war against the soul." We must abstain from them, for they do unbelievable harm and damage to the soul.
  - a. Sinful desires or fleshly lusts enslave and weaken the freedom of the soul. Sinful desire enslaves, no matter what the desires are:
    - => Desire for drugs enslaves.
    - => Desire for alcohol enslaves.
    - => Desire for cigarettes enslaves.

- => Desire for sex enslaves.
- => Desire for pornography enslaves (films or magazines).
- => Desire for position and power enslaves.
- => Desire for money enslaves.

The more a man follows the desires of the sinful nature, the more freedom and liberty he loses. He becomes a slave to that which he sets his heart upon. If he sets his mind and thoughts upon the flesh and its desires, he will enslave himself to desires. He finds himself enslaved and in bondage to those desires and finds it very difficult to break away from them.

- b. Sinful desires disturb and often destroy the peace and security, assurance and confidence of the soul. When the believer came to Christ, one of the first things Christ did was give him peace and security of soul. If the believer turns back to the world and follows his desires, he breaks his peace with God and loses the security of God's presence and guidance and protection.
- c. Sinful desires hamper the growth of the soul. The soul living in the desires of the flesh [sinful nature] is destroying its fruit, not growing and proclaiming the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).
- d. Sinful desires doom the soul to defeat, sorrow, brokenness and eventually to eternal separation from God.

**Thought 1.** The exhortation is strong: believers must abstain from fleshly lusts or desires, for they war against the soul.

**Mat 5:29** *“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”*

**Rom 6:6** *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

**Rom 13:14** *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

**Gal 5:16** *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

**Col 3:5** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

**1 Th 4:3** *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.*

**1 Th 5:22** *Avoid every kind of evil.*

*1 Pet 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

*1 Pet 4:2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

### **III. 1 Peter 02:12 Witness to the World**

Abstain from evil, sinful desires because unbelievers are watching you. The world watches everything a genuine believer does. If a person really follows Christ — if he is genuine — then the world watches. This is the reason for this exhortation: we must live good lives before the world, always abstaining from evil desires.

The word “good” (kalos) means a good life, a life that is honourable, righteous, pure, lovely, decent, excellent, upright and noble. It means a life that is without blame, that cannot be justly or accurately blamed with any sin or evil. The world watches a genuine believer to see if he really lives what he professes. Therefore, we must live good lives, lives that are just what we profess: holy, righteous and pure. Note two reasons why:

1. Unbelievers accuse believers of doing wrong. Some will always accuse genuine believers. If a person really lives for Christ, his righteous and self-denying life convicts those who love the world and its pleasures and possessions. Therefore, they talk about, joke, mock, ridicule, abuse and persecute the believer when they can.

The point is this: the believer must never add fuel to the fire. He must never give the world a chance to justly accuse and down him. The believer must abstain from evil, sinful desires: he must live a good life, do exactly what he proclaims and professes.

2. Unbelievers must have a chance to be saved. If we live bad and fleshly lives — go against all that we proclaim and stand for — then unbelievers will know we are hypocrites. They will not be attracted to Christ. We must, therefore, live for Christ and do good works. When unbelievers see our righteous lives and good deeds, they will experience the day of God’s visitation and glorify God. The day God visits us means two things:

=> the day a man is visited by God to bring the man to repentance and salvation.

=> the day God will visit the earth for final judgment.

The day of visitation is the day of God’s inspection and salvation, the day when He saves a man. It is also the day when He returns to earth as Saviour and Lord. The idea is that unbelievers will be won to Christ by our good lives and glorify God in the great day when He shall visit the earth.

*Mat 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

**1 Th 1:8** *The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia — your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.*

**1 Tim 4:12** *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.*

**Titus 2:7** *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

**James 2:18** *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

**James 3:13** *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*

**1 Pet 2:12** *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

**2 Pet 3:10-12** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ■*



# SUBMIT TO THE STATE

## 1 PETER 02:13–17

### *Introduction*

Remember, the church and its believers were being severely persecuted by the government and the society of that day. The believers had even been forced to flee their homes. They had to leave everything behind: money, clothes, property, jobs and professions. In light of such severe persecution, what was to be the attitude and behaviour of the believers toward the government and its authorities? This is a critical question because of the periodic persecution of the church by society and government. History reveals that the genuine church is constantly suffering persecution of some sort.

- I. Submit to national and local officials (vv. 13-15).
- II. Live as free citizens, yet as servants of God (vv. 16-17).

### **I. 1 Peter 02:13–15 *Submit to All Authority***

First, submit to national and local officials. This is a hard pill to swallow when one is being persecuted and has lost so much because of the persecution. But note: the word *submit* is an imperative; it is a strong command. God expects believers to submit themselves to the laws of government, and note the word *every*: every authority or institution is to be obeyed. Every level of government, local as well as state and national government, is to be obeyed. Why is this so important? The reason is self-evident; it is perfectly clear: without law and the keeping of the law society would be in utter chaos.

=> Lawlessness would run wild.

=> No one would be safe to walk the streets.

=> People would have to live behind closed doors.

=> Abuse, attacks, murder and war would be a constant threat.

=> No property would be safe.

=> There would be no public roads, transportation, water, sewage or electrical systems, for there would be no law to collect taxes. And even if there was, no one would honour it.

=> There would be no military police or fire protection for the same reason.

Without law and the keeping of the law there can be no society and no community, no life together, no bond to tie people together. Law, rulers and their authority are an utter necessity to keep people from becoming wild beasts in a jungle of unrestrained selfishness and lawlessness.

Chaos is not God's will for the world; law and order are God's will. God wills men to live in a world of love, joy, and peace — a world of perfect law and order. Therefore, the believer is to set the example: he is to obey the rulers and the laws of his community and nation. He is to show how *loving and joyful, peaceful and wonderful* life can be if people

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will obey God and obey the civil authorities of this world. (See Rom. 12:18; 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-17 for the believer's duty when rulers and laws oppose God.) There are three reasons why believers are to obey civil rulers.

1. Civil rulers are sent by God; civil authority is ordained by God. That is, the existence, the authority, the position, the offices of government are ordained by God. It is God's will that government exist and that persons have the authority to rule within the state. There are three institutions ordained by God: the family, the church, and the government. All three exist because God set them up as the means by which men are to relate to each other and to Himself as God.
- => God has ordained that the family exist as the means by which family members share together, and that the office of parents rule within the family.
- => God has ordained that the church exist as the means by which people share with God, and that the office of church leaders exercise authority within the church.
- => God has ordained that the government exist as the means by which citizens relate to each other, and that the office of government officials exercise authority within the state.

The institutions and their authority are ordained by God, and men are responsible for how they carry out the functions of the institutions. Each of the three institutions have leaders who are faithful and do an excellent job, and each have leaders who are totally disobedient to God and do a terrible job. This includes the men who hold authority within various levels of government as well as men serving on various levels in the church and family. The fact to remember is that government is ordained by God, and rulers are answerable to Him: they shall give an account to God.

**Rom 13:1** *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

**Prov 16:12** *Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness.*

**Isa 16:5** *In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it — one from the house of David — one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.*

However, the *thrust* of this passage is not the rulers of government; the *thrust* is the believer and his duty to the state. Usually, the believer can do little about how the authorities in government conduct their affairs, but the believer can do a great deal about his behaviour as a citizen within the state; and God is very, very clear about the believer's behaviour. Keep in mind that the *infamous Nero* was ruling as the emperor when God led Peter to give these instructions. The believer is to obey all civil authority, no matter who it is.

2. Civil authorities execute justice for God. They rule to execute punishment for evil-doers and to reward those who do well and work good throughout the state. Rulers are not ordained by God to be a restraint upon good works, but upon evil. Civil authorities and laws exist to restrain evil; therefore, any believer who breaks the law can expect to be punished by the state. For this reason, the believer...
  - should fear the state enough to obey its laws.
  - should do that which is good and lawful.

By fearing and doing that which is good and lawful, the believer has the *commendation* of the state. The idea is that the believer contributes to the good and to the commendation of the state. He helps to build up righteousness and truth within the state, and thereby he is able to be the citizen of a good and commendable state. The believer has the *commendation* of the state; he is allowed to live in peace as a citizen of the state.

**Thought 1.** Note that civil government and law are a *restraint* upon evil. The power of evil and corruption is so strong that when men are without law, they go on a rampage of selfishness and sin, looting and stealing, assault and immorality, destruction and murder. History and the breakdown of law within communities, cities, societies and even families provide ample evidence. When law does not exist or when law is not enforced, evil runs rampant. Society desperately needs to heed this fact.

**1 Tim 1:9-10** *We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers — and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.*

3. The believer's good behaviour is to silence the critics of Christ. In the days of the early church, the church and its believers were under severe attack from the state and society. People wanted nothing to do with Christ and His demand for self-denial and holy living. They wanted to live like they wanted and to do their own thing. The very idea that a person had to give all he was and had to Christ and His cause of world-evangelization — that they had to sacrifice themselves to meet the desperate needs of a dying world — was the last thing upon their minds and the very last thing they were going to accept. Therefore, the government and society were set upon stamping out the church and anyone who refused to turn away from Christ and His cause.

Note: the Scripture calls anyone who persecutes the church and believers “foolish men.” Imagine rejecting a person just because he teaches...

- love and joy
- long-suffering and gentleness
- morality and purity
- justice and righteousness
- peace and health
- rule and authority
- discipline and control

Any person who opposes the great virtues of life and the teaching of the great virtues is doing a foolish thing, a very, very foolish thing. But note a significant fact: the believer who continues to live for Christ by doing good will eventually silence the critics. It may take some time, but eventually the righteous and godly behaviour will overcome the lies and attacks of the vicious and evil of the earth. This is the third reason why we are to obey rulers — so that our lawful and righteous behaviour will silence any question about Christ and His great cause. (Note: Is there ever a time when believers are not to obey the state? See *the State; Government*, 1 Pet. 2:13-15.)

**Exo 22:28** *“Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.”*

**Eccl 8:2** *Obey the king’s command, I say, because you took an oath before God.*

**Mat 22:21** *“Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”*

**Acts 23:5** *Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”*

**Titus 3:1** *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.*

**Rom 13:1** *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

**1 Pet 2:13** *Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority.*

**1 Pet 2:17** *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.*

## **II. 1 Peter 02:16–17 Free Citizens and Servants of God**

Live as free citizens, yet as servants of God. When a person receives Jesus Christ as his Saviour, the person subjects himself to God above all other laws. If man’s law stands against God’s law, the believer obeys God rather than man. But note: there is a danger that the believer can use his liberty as a cover-up or veil to act maliciously against the state. He can disobey laws because he claims they are unjust when in fact they are not. It is just a matter that he does not like the law. William Barclay states it well:

*“Any great Christian doctrine can be perverted into an excuse for evil. The doctrine of grace can be perverted into an excuse for sinning to one’s heart’s content. The doctrine of the love of God can be sentimentalized into a defence for breaking the law of God. The doctrine of the life to come can be perverted into a reason for neglecting life in this world. And there is no doctrine so easy to pervert as the doctrine of Christian freedom and Christian liberty.*

*“There are hints in the New Testament that it was frequently so perverted. Paul tells the Galatians that they have been called to liberty, but they must not use that liberty as an occasion for the flesh to do as it wills (Galatians 5:13). In 2 Peter we read of those who promise others liberty and who are themselves the servants of corruption (2 Peter 2:19)” (The Letters of James and Peter, p. 245f).*

The point is this: believers are the servants of God, not the servants of their own ideas and thoughts. They are to serve God and His call, not their own lusts and desires. They have no right to break the laws of government unless the laws are directly opposing God and His law. In dealing with government and living as citizens of the state, they have four clear duties. These duties are demanded of every servant of God. Note how pointed and brief they are.

1. Respect everyone. Respect and esteem all citizens as your fellow-citizens. Remember the early church and its believers: how they were surrounded by heathen worshippers of idols and by the most corrupt people who wallowed around in a cesspool of immoral, unjust and drunken behaviour. Yet, Scripture is here saying to show proper respect to *everyone*, these as well as the more controlled and disciplined. Note: this does not mean to respect them because of their sin, but to respect them...
  - because they are God’s creation.
  - because their souls are of more value than all the wealth in the world.
  - because of any virtue and good and order they have in their lives.
  - because they contribute to the work, defence and structure of the nation.

All persons are to be respected, honoured and esteemed. No person is to be mistreated, no matter who he may be: rich or poor, corrupt or clean, bad or good, evil or righteous, destructive or constructive. We must try to reach all persons on earth for Christ. They need to make their contribution to society. They need to be doing all the good they can for society. No person is to ever be counted beyond reach.

**Luke 10:33-34** *“But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.”*

**Acts 28:2** *The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.*

**1 Cor 10:33** *Even as I try to please everybody in every’ way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

**2 Cor 8:9** *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

**Phil 2:3-4** *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

**1 Pet 2:17** *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.*

2. Love the brotherhood of believers. This means to love all believers whoever they may be, regardless of colour, nationality or beliefs. If a person is a *brother in Christ*, a true brother, we are to love him. Note: it is not enough to honour and respect a brother. Something far more is expected: love, a true brotherly love. And remember what love means: it means to care and look after one another...

- to teach one another
- to support one another
- to protect one another
- to fellowship and commune with one another
- to pray and worship with one another
- to feed one another when needed
- to help one another
- to share with one another

Love is the very opposite of criticizing, backbiting, grumbling, murmuring and being divisive. We are to love the brotherhood of all believers everywhere.

**Mat 22:37-40** *Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

**John 13:34-35** *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

**John 15:12** *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”*

**Rom 12:9** *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

**1 Th 3:12** *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

**1 Pet 1:22** *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

3. Fear God. Do not fail in your duty to obey God as a citizen nor as a member of God's church. Fear God. His will and commandments are to be obeyed. Fear what will happen if you disobey God. The idea is that judgment is coming and disobedience will bring the judgment of God down upon you.

**Mat 10:28** “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

**1 Pet 1:17** Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

**Deu 10:12** And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

**Isa 8:13** The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.

4. Honour the king or supreme authority of the nation. Remember: the evil and infamous Nero was on the throne when this was being written and the believers were being persecuted by the authorities (Nero ruled A.D. 54-68). But note: believers are to be a people of order and discipline, of righteousness and justice. They are to set a dynamic example of love and peace so that some can be won to Christ and be saved for eternity.

**Acts 23:5** Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize [know] that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”

**Rom 13:1** Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

**Exo 22:28** “Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.” ■