

No Immunity

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Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. If you are new or visiting with us, welcome.

We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we're convinced that there's no one so good, that they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it.

And that's the reason that we come back week after week and we spend a large part of our worship service looking at what God has to say in His Word. We believe that God has something to say to everyone. If you've been with us, you know that we are in the book of 1 Peter.

And the book of 1 Peter is actually a letter. It's a letter written by a man named Peter. And he writes it to Christians who are living in the first century in what is now modern-day Turkey.

And he writes to these Christians to encourage them and instruct them. And he does that because they are facing opposition in the world because they're living lives that reflect Jesus Christ.

[1 : 0 8] And they're also feeling out of place in the world because they're living lives as Christians. Peter writes to encourage them that Jesus is worth it. Jesus is worth them living for and loving for.

He's worth them suffering for and dying for. And he also writes not just to encourage them but to instruct them that they would know how they should live in the world as Christians and that they would know how to respond when living as Christians leads to opposition from the world.

Last week, he gave them something of a mission statement. He told them that they were priests among the nations. And we talked about what that means. Essentially, it means that these are people who are meant to represent God to the world and represent the world to God.

That people would know about God and his goodness because of the way that his people live. Now, Peter, in doing that, was just laying the groundwork, the framework for what's to come in this letter because now he's going to tell us specifically how we can act as priests.

How can we live in a way that would bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ? And how can we live in a way that would reflect what's true about God to the world and bring other people to know him?

[2 : 1 7] In fact, that's how we left off last week in verse 12. Peter says, So the goal is that the people receiving this letter, by their actions, would bring glory to God.

This week, Peter's going to get practical. We're going to look at how Christians bring glory to God in the way that they interact with the government that's been given to them. And so it's with that question about government that we're going to turn to 1 Peter 2.

We're in verse 13. You can open up your Bibles to that. You can open it up on your phone or you can follow along. It's near the end of your worship guide. Remember as we come to this passage that this is God's word.

And God tells us that while grass withers and flowers fall, his word will remain forever. And so that's why we read now beginning at verse 13.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

[3 : 29] For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Verse 16. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Father in heaven, we thank you again that you've given us another week to live and you've also given us another Sunday to hear from you with your people.

We ask that you would send your Holy Spirit because we confess that we need help. Without your help, we will not be able to hear from you or understand what you had to say to us.

And so we ask that you would do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. That you would speak clearly. That we would understand and believe and act.

[4 : 35] We ask all these things not because we have earned them, but because Jesus has earned them for us. And so we ask them in his name. Amen. If you've been following the news recently, you know there's been a very controversial story about the relationship of the United States to the United Kingdom.

And it all started at the end of August when there was this woman, an American citizen named Ann Sackalas, and she ended up having a tragic accident in her car with a motorcyclist who was a citizen of the United Kingdom.

And that man named Harry Dunn ended up passing away pretty quickly after the accident. And there are, of course, all kinds of motor vehicle accidents all around the world, all the time, that we don't hear about.

But this one made the news because Ann Sackalas' husband works for the U.S. government. And so instead of staying in the country to see this case prosecuted, she fled and returned to the U.S.

and she made a claim that she does not have to face any consequences because of something called diplomatic immunity. Now, if you're familiar with diplomatic immunity, you know that it's a way of protecting foreign diplomats when they're in other countries.

[5 : 41] So if you're representing the United States, say in France, the government can't harass you as a representative of another government. And it's to avoid all kinds of conflicts of interest. But there's been a controversy now over whether this is, first of all, an appropriate use of diplomatic immunity, and second of all, whether it even applies to Ann.

There's some controversy since her husband apparently was not stated to be an official diplomat. He was working for the U.S. government, but whether he's a diplomat or not is controversial. Now, in that situation, no one was trying to use diplomatic immunity to get away with doing wrong, right?

This was an accident. Ann Sackalas didn't think, I'm going to collide into this motorcycle and I'm going to get away with it. However, there are people who do abuse diplomatic immunity. I had a classmate in college.

He thought very highly of himself. And his parents were both very high-level political operatives in Washington, D.C. And he went to a very elite private school in the city.

And he had a classmate who was the son of a foreign diplomat. And so he would tell us stories about when they wanted to have parties, they would throw them at this individual's house.

[6 : 52] And so there'd be all kinds of illicit and illegal things going on at these high school parties and the police would show up and this classmate of mine, he would tell stories about how he would walk out of the house and he'd come up and approach the police.

And they would ask him, what's going on at that house? And he would say, you know what? That's the house of the ambassador. It doesn't really matter what's going on in this house.

And as frustrated as they would be, the police in that situation had to accept that answer because they had no authority to go into the home of a foreign diplomat and start arresting people. That man was covered by diplomatic immunity.

Now I mention that in 1 Peter because Peter has just told these people in our passage from last week, verse 9, that they are a chosen race and a holy nation. They're their own group of people.

And it would be tempting for them hearing that to think, that sounds amazing. We're our own nation. I mean, God has given us these rules that apply to us. We don't have to worry about what the government has to say about anything.

[7 : 57] We're just going to follow God's laws. And if the government requires us of something that God doesn't require of us, well, we don't have to worry about that. We're Christians. We're a holy nation.

Peter comes making sure at the very beginning that there is no possibility for these people to have that misunderstanding. There is, in other words, no diplomatic immunity for Christians.

Just because we belong to God and have been chosen by God does not mean that we get to disregard the authorities that he's put over us. And so he tells us, verse 13, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him.

They have a purpose. They're punishing those who do evil and praising those who do good. Even more than that, so they're not just people who are keeping the law. Verse 15, this is the will of God.

By the way, people spend enormous amounts of time trying to discover God's will for their life. And you have the great fortune of being here this morning and getting to skip all of that.

[9 : 04] Because this passage is going to tell you very clearly what God's will for your life is. This is it. You don't need to search anymore. This is the will of God. That by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

In other words, Christians are not just people who obey the law. We're not just people who pay our taxes. We're not just people who respect police officers.

We're not just people who try to obey and follow the laws that have been given to us. We're not just people who follow the rules of the road. We're also people who are seeking to do good.

And so Christians are also serving their community. They're also caring for the poor. They're also actively promoting good in their communities, in their neighborhoods, in their cities. Not only do Christians not have diplomatic immunity, not only are there people who are obeying the law, even more than that, like we talked about last week, there are people who are promoting good.

They're not just seeking to do the very minimum necessary to get by in their society, but they're actually looking for ways where they can promote God's goodness and his justice in the world.

[10 : 14] As Peter's writing to these people, then he's encouraging them that that's how they respond when they face opposition. When we face opposition from this world, we don't respond by saying, well, we don't care anymore.

We don't care about your rules. We don't care about your government. But instead, they double down on doing good and living as citizens who are models to the world and are a pleasure for their governors and their emperors.

Now, we don't have emperors in the United States, right? This was written to first century people in the Roman Empire, but we still have a government. We still have government officials, people who make laws and rules, and as much as we're able, as Christians, we obey those things.

Now, there's other parts in the Bible that talk about this. There's times, right, when the government's going to ask us to do something that God says is a sin, and Peter's not talking about that. We see that in Romans chapter 5.

The people in Romans are told, or not Romans, Acts chapter 5. The disciples are told in Acts chapter 5 to stop preaching the gospel, and they say, well, we can't do that. God's commanded us to preach the gospel.

[11 : 21] That's not a rule we can obey. But that's not what Peter's talking about here. He's talking about the basic rules in the world that help society to function. So one question is this.

If we, I mentioned last week, a church that's come under fire, not from the government, but just in their general culture and society because of some of their views about human sexuality, and that church is also doing what Peter talked about last week.

They're doing good works. So people are on the one hand criticizing them. On the other hand, they can't help but notice the good that they're doing. Peter repeats that here. Verse 14, these governors are punishing the evil, and praising the good.

If we came under fire here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church because of our views of agreeing with the Bible and what it teaches, would our governors be able to praise us for doing good?

Would they be able to say, you know, we really wish that those folks would get in line with us and some of their beliefs, but we can't help but notice the blessing that they are to their community.

[12 : 29] And as much as we'd love for them to stop operating, we also understand the tremendous devastation that would happen if this church pulled out of our community. Can our governors praise us as people who do good?

Even more than that, verse 15, he says, this is the will of God that doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. And I mentioned last week this church that's come under fire.

By the way, there's a second church that I learned about this week that's a little closer to home. It's actually not a sister denomination of ours, but it's in our denomination that's come under a lot of fire for holding true to their biblical commitments.

And so this is something that's coming closer and closer to home, and the question is, how do we respond and how are the people outside going to view us? Peter's telling them that those who are outside of the church should view the church as a place where people do good.

And no matter what criticisms they have about our beliefs or our practices, they cannot argue with the benefit that the church is to the world because of the way that they are reflecting Jesus and his character as priests.

[13 : 41] Peter tells us that we have a reason for doing this too. Verse 13, it's for the Lord's sake. And then in verse 16, he tells us that we are servants of God.

In other words, our primary purpose here is to represent God in the world, whatever we do that it would serve him. Our goal is to make Jesus famous by the way that we interact with government.

And our goal is that Jesus would be famous because of the ways that we serve the community around us. And so what would we do? Let's just think about it for a second.

Thought experiment. There was a politician recently who suggested that churches that hold faithful to certain biblical commitments about sexuality should have their tax-exempt status removed.

What would we do if our tax-exempt status was removed? By the way, if it was, we'd still be more privileged than most Christians in the history of the world. But what we would do is we would be 1 Peter kind of people.

[14 : 44] We would recognize 1 Peter 1, verse 1, that we are elect and exiles. We've been chosen by God, but we're exiles in the world. We would know that our hope is not in this world, but we have a king who's coming back for us.

We have a salvation. This is chapter 1, still ready to be revealed in the last time. And we can rejoice in our trials because we know that it's confirming that we belong to Jesus Christ. And then, still in chapter 1, we can prepare our minds for action and set our hope on what it is that really matters, the kingdom of God.

We can remember that Jesus is the one who was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest for us. That's chapter 1, verse 20. And then, what else would we do?

Well, chapter 2, we'd put away malice and deceit and hypocrisy. And we'd continue to this section realizing, as we saw earlier about the stone, that there are people who are going to stumble on the stone.

And then, we would give praise and honor and glory to God. And we would continue serving Him, submitting to the authorities in the world, and also, the mission statement that we saw last week, proclaiming the excellences, this is verse 9, proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

[16 : 11] In other words, if our tax-exempt status was removed, what would we do? We would praise God for the goodness of His grace, and we would continue doing good in the world for the sake of His name.

How do we represent God as priests when it comes to our relationship with the government? We submit to them as much as we can, and we do it for the sake of Jesus Christ.

We do it so that verse 12 from last week would be true, that some might see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Our goal, in other words, when it comes to government and our relationship with it, our number one goal is that God would be famous, that He would receive honor and glory and praise, because of the way that His people submit to the authorities that are over them.

That is our number one goal, that God would be famous in the world. I had a, you all know, I was a teacher before, I've mentioned that a few times, and I, at one point, was teaching a high school Greek class, and I had a student who was in the class and also her family was at my church, this was back in Virginia, and at one point, her dad came up to me, and this was, you know, on a Sunday, and he said, you know, we've really been digging into the Greek and we've been studying Revelation chapter 4, and we've been looking at that section in Revelation chapter 4 where the elders cast down their crowns before the throne of God.

And you know, I was, I'm really trying to figure out, what's the possessive nature of the word there when it comes to the crowns? Because I want to see, do those crowns, do they help support the view that the Bible supports private property?

[18 : 17] Now, don't get me wrong, the Bible's in favor of private property. If you don't believe me, look in the book of Proverbs. The point of Revelation chapter 4 is that people are so moved by God's honor and his glory and his majesty that private property has no place in their mind because they have no choice but to take their crown and give it to God.

Our goal when we think about government not primarily is to figure out different philosophies and theories and ways of thinking about it. I'm not saying those things are bad, those are good, but our primary goal is to bring honor and glory to God.

Our primary goal is that people would see and know Jesus because of the way we interact with government and the way we think about government. It's not wrong to ask questions about what the Bible teaches about private property.

It's just that there's something so much more important and glorious than that. There is something better. And so it's not that we don't do those things or those things don't matter but what we do first.

The first question we ask is how can I interact with the government in such a way that people would praise God? How can I interact with the government in such a way that people would praise God?

[19 : 46] Finally, Peter tells them that they're putting together, verse 15, not finally but in the middle that they're putting to silence the ignorance of foolish people. In other words, if people are going to speak ill about you, if they're going to speak poorly about you, let them speak poorly about you because you follow Jesus.

Don't let them speak poorly about you for any other reason. Don't let them speak poorly about the way that you talk about politicians that you don't like.

Don't let them speak poorly about you because you're someone who doesn't seem to care about your neighborhood or the community that you're in. Give them only one reason to speak poorly and give them every reason to speak well of Jesus.

You're free in Christ. Verse 16, live as people who are free, free from the penalty of sin and the power of sin and so live in a way that brings honor and glory to the person who freed you from sin.

Yes, you're free but you're a servant of God. Peter's really giving two main instructions here about how to live faithfully as priest in relationship to the government.

[21 : 13] Instruction one, obey the authorities that are over you and do good. And then he gives us another instruction here at the end, verse 17, one about honor.

Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor. Remember, you're living in a world, recipients of 1 Peter and also Christians in America, where some people are not going to like what you believe or do.

And how you respond to each and every one of them is with honor. We make Jesus famous, we make God famous and bring him honor and glory and praise when we treat every person with dignity, whether they agree with us politically or not.

That's part of how we are priests to the nation. That's how we make God known to the world and represent the world to God. Christians bring shame to the name of Jesus Christ when we pick and choose which politicians we'll speak well of and which ones we won't.

Now I'm not saying we can't disagree with someone. I'm not saying we can't criticize someone. But we speak about someone with honor and we honor their position even if we disagree with them.

[22 : 44] And we honor the people around us even if they have different convictions about all sorts of things in this world. And we do it not because we're doormats but because we want God to be honored.

And so we want them to see that even as they walk away from him we see the image of God in them. I've been reading through this book that I've been loving called Evangelism as Exiles which is based on the book of 1 Peter and he says it much better than I am so I'm going to read you I will so I'm going to read you a short quote here talking about this idea of how we interact with the world.

It's written by a man named Elliot Clark and he says the fact is ridiculing your opponents is the privilege of the powerful. But now as an excluded minority American Christians no longer have the upper hand.

Maligning our cultural and religious adversaries is therefore no longer an effective strategy. The days of mocking atheists crash joking about homosexuals slurring Muslims and making derogatory remarks about political rivals need to end.

They should have never existed but the church could get away with such impudence when we were the cultural majority. Not anymore. And of course what Elliot Clark is doing is not introducing something new but calling the church back to what 1 Peter wrote in the first century.

[24 : 17] that Christians would be known as people who submit to their authorities and obey the laws of the government they find themselves in. That they'd be people who would be doing good seeking the good of the community and the city and the world that they're in.

And finally they'd be people who honor everyone. That we would surprise the world around us because unlike them we refuse to engage in that sort of behavior. But we disagree with people with tremendous respect and honor and so they have a sense of what God's love to them could look like.

Finally Peter tells us that the way that we interact with God is different than the way we interact with everyone else. We honor everyone and we honor the emperor.

We love the brotherhood by the way so we're committed, we're faithful to the church in a special way but we fear God. part of the way that we're able to honor everyone is because of our fear of God.

We know that there's something more than this world. And so if we lose something in this world because of obeying our authorities that's a small loss compared to the future that God's prepared for us.

[25 : 42] And we also know that as we obey the authorities, God is the only one who can bring true and full and final justice. Matthew chapter 10 verse 28 says this, And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. And of course that's talking about God, right? That God is the only one that we truly fear.

God is the Lord. Because there's no government or power even as we submit to them that can destroy our souls. Peter's recipients are able to receive this and honor their authorities even when it's hard because they know everything that Peter has already told them.

They've been chosen by God and they belong to God. They've been sprinkled by Jesus' blood. They're servants of God. They're not under the power of sin anymore and they're servants of God because of what Jesus has done for them.

The sprinkling of Jesus' blood comes from Jesus' death on the cross when he suffered the penalty that we should have suffered for our sins. And he lived the life that we should have lived and he gave his righteousness to us and took our sin upon himself.

[27 : 00] And so he's given them not just that forgiveness but as we've talked about a true and full inheritance that they have to look forward to in the world to come. And so because of that there's nothing that they can lose, there's nothing they can't afford to lose to these authorities as long as they remain faithful to God because they have everything that is coming for them to inherit in the world to come.

And so that's how they can be priests. They're willing to suffer. They're willing to love and live for Jesus, representing him to the world even when it's hard and representing him to the world by the way that they interact with government.

How do we represent God as priests when it comes to the government of Colorado Springs and Colorado in the United States? We obey our leaders as much as possible unless they tell us to sin.

do good so that they would see God's character even as they oppose God. And we honor them and treat them with dignity that they would have one small glimpse of God's goodness and his love.

And we do all of it, verse 13, for the Lord's sake, verse 16, because we're servants of God, and verse 17, because we fear God.

[28 : 31] That's how we can be priests, bringing people who don't know Jesus to know him and bring praise and honor and glory to God. That's what we're going to do in our closing hymn in which we're going to sing, all hail the power of Jesus' name.

So I invite you to pray with me. Before we do that, please pray with me. Dear Father in heaven, we thank you that you speak to us clearly in your word. Lord, we ask that you would help us to represent you well in this world, submitting to the authorities you've given to us for the sake of your name.

And we ask these things in Jesus' name because he has earned them for us. Amen.