

TITLE: "Silencing the Critics" (Part 5)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:14b-15

THEME: The Believer's Submission to Civil Authority

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Read Passage

We've been looking at a passage I've entitled, "Silencing the Critics" - that from v. 15 {read}

Peter is concerned about our conduct . . .

. . . that we as those who would profess t/name of JC, not only profess, but proclaim (publish) t/excellencies of our God as it says in v. 9, that we would not do anything as His envoys to tarnish that name that is above all names.

It's a truism that t/messenger often gets in t/way of t/message. IOW what people see in t/CH is indicative of whether they will listen to t/message of t/CH. Or to personalize it, what they see in you . . .

Reminds me of t/Robert Louis Stevenson story of a Muslim messenger who wore a veil over his face. He claimed that his face was so glorious that no one could bear the sight of it. But as time went on the veil decayed and eventually fell away, revealing nothing but an ugly old man beneath.

If you have character problems, no matter how true t/message may be, there comes a time when t/veil wears away & you show yourself for what you really are. What's under your veil? {pause} Is it t/face of X-like character or t/face of apathy or hypocrisy?

We saw v. 9, how we are to proclaim God's excellencies, we saw how He called us out of darkness into t/light // we are to refuse fleshly lust & desire because it wars against us (v. 11) // how we are to keep our behavior excellent among t/pagans with whom we exist in v. 12. And that emphasis holds true even as it relates to our conduct before political leaders & governments & civil law as we see in v. 13.

Sometimes our attitude is like that of a man who was bitten by a stray dog. He made an appointment with his doctor who told him, "Jim, I'm sad to say that you have rabies." The man's face grew stern and he pulled out a piece of paper and began scribbling furiously. The doc thought that the man had panicked and was writing down his final will. So the doctor says to him, "Jim, don't worry, we can treat this. You don't have to start making final plans." The man replied, I'm not making final plans, I'm making a list of people I want to bite."

You see, we feel that vengeance is ours. We can get a vengeful attitude about those laws or leaders that we feel are mistreating us or are less than Godly. We want to stop paying our taxes, we have hateful attitudes toward politicians, those whom we view "on t/other side of t/aisle" from us. That can be very dangerous. We can't be making lists of those we want to bite.

As I said last week, we can't make the mission field our enemy

And we have to keep in mind that God is in control, He will exact justice according to His timetable, not ours. Our responsibility is to maintain a decorum of humility & grace as we proclaim t/gospel of JC to a lost world.

Begs the question: "Are imprecations okay?"

You say, "What are imprecations?" "Imp." are curses, usually in t/form of a prayer, that are requested against one's enemies, specifically against

God's enemies. We have a classification of t/Psalms known as "The Imprecatory Psalms." These are Psalms like Ps. 58 where David, after describing t/nature of wicked unrighteous judges, prays to t/Lord saying: Psalm 58:6-11 - **6 O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord. 7 Let them flow away like water that runs off; When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts. 8 Let them be as a snail which melts away as it goes along, Like the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun. 9 Before your pots can feel the fire of thorns, He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike. 10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 11 And men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!"**

Does that make you a bit uncomfortable?

Is there any sense today in which we should have that same attitude, or even pray that same sort of prayer? Is this something limited to t/OT age?

We've got lots of wicked judges in this nation! How do you feel when some unelected godless indiv. lets off some child molester w/a slap on t/wrist only to have that pervert do t/same again or worse? // a judge makes a ruling that is totally out of bounds morally & even constitutionally?

Let me suggest that imprecations are not totally out of bounds, if you can pray them in keeping w/the Holy Spirit. That's a big "if." When t/Psalmist prayed judgement on God's enemies he did so under t/inspiration of t/H.S. That inspiration was only true of t/biblical writer, so none of us can claim that safeguard.

Be angry against sin, but do not sin yourself // keep your conduct lawful & laced w/humility. Keep in mind t/biblical imprecations have as their goal

t/vindication of God's name (not ours) & t/salvation of t/lost. That's what Asaph suggest in Psalm 83 where his prayer of judgement is tempered by both t/reverence of God's name & t/salvation of t/lost ==>

15 So pursue them with Thy tempest, And terrify them with Thy storm. 16 Fill their faces with dishonor, That they may seek Thy name, O Lord. . . . 18 That they may know that Thou alone, whose name is the Lord, Art the Most High over all the earth.

The Bible is always our guide and the H.S. our teacher in these matters.

I. The Believer's Submission to Civil Authority: Silencing the Critics (2:13–17)

A. The Command for Submission (2:13a)

Submit yourselves to every human institution . . .

B. The Motive for Submission (2:13b)

. . . for the Lord's sake . . . (that is, "For the sake of Jesus Christ.")

C. The Extent of Submission (2:13c-14)

Submit yourselves to every human institution . . .

1. It's to every human institution : Includes government in general

That's t/machinery of men, local, state and federal law.

2. It's to every supreme leader

Submit yourselves to every human institution, whether to a king as one in authority. . .

3. It's to every secondary leader

Those leaders & rulers who are lower on t/political scale. As Peter puts it:
or to governors as those sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

This past week I read a sermon by C.H. Spurgeon entitled Citizenship in Heaven. In that sermon preached some 150 years ago in London, He says:

"So, in this land of ours, where you and I are strangers, we must be orderly sojourners, submitting ourselves constantly to those who are in authority, leading orderly and peaceable lives, and, according to the command of the Holy Spirit through the apostle, "honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King' (1 Peter 2:17); . . . I cannot say that I delight in political Christians. I fear that party strife is a serious trial to believers, and I cannot reconcile our heavenly citizenship with the schemes of the campaign trail and the stress of the polling both. You must follow your own judgement here, but for my part, I am a foreigner . . . and as such I mean to act. We are simply passing through this earth, and should bless it in our transit, but never yoke ourselves to its affairs."

4. Peter focuses on two specific reasons why these governments and leaders are given by God

. . . for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

a. Word "punishment" has the idea of vengeance or justice

Governments & leaders have been granted by God to punish evil, to keep wickedness in check.

Even t/most oppressive governments serve some purpose, holding evil in check to some point, at least short of complete anarchy.

Even tyranny, as bad as that is, is nonetheless better than total anarchy.

That's why anarchy invariably leads to tyranny. People will not tolerate is anarchy and will accept a tyrannical ruler over that state of affairs. Of course, that's the concern in Iraq right now. Should we lose our grip on that war t/result may very well be total anarchy and because anarchy leads to tyranny we will see another Saddam Hussain in power.

(2) So leaders & government exist for the punishment of evil and also, as verse 14 says, for the praise of those who do right
We see t/same thing in Romans 13==>

3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.

We t/same thing in ==>

Proverbs 14:35 **The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely, But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.**

...for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

(a) No doubt we think more about the former than the latter

IOW - As it relates to t/Govt. we know more about punishment than reward. Nowadays people are happy if t/govt. leaves them alone. It's like driving on t/interstate. You're going 65 and you pass Mr. Highway Patrolman who's waiting on t/side of t/road, & you are content for him to ignore you. You probably would not want him to pull out behind you, turn on his lights to pull you over, only to say, "I just want to praise you for your good driving."

IRS doesn't come to your house to commend you for paying your taxes.

BATF doesn't stop by to congratulate you on your lawful use of firearms.

Sure, once in a while a good citizen may get a street or park named after him or her (but you usually have to die first, so what's the use?).

In Peter's day, the Roman government commonly engaged in recognizing those who did good for the community. They would erect statues and grant special privileges to those who went out of their way to do right.

However, our ultimate motivation as representatives of JC should neither be fear of punishment or desire for commendation.

After all, if we knew for sure that we could do wrong & get away with it, (shoplifting, speeding, tax evasion), we still would not do it because we know that our disobedience toward governmental authority is disobedience to God; it displeases Him Our ambition is to do His will, as the next verse states.

D. The Reason for Submission 2:15

For this is the will of God, that by doing right you might silence the ignorance of foolish men.

1. Peter has much to say about "the will of God"

In chapter 3, v. 7 he says that it is God's will for you to suffer for righteousness sake, rather than for t/doing of evil.

In 4:2, he says that we are to no longer live for the lusts of the flesh, but for the will of God.

In 4:19 he says that those who suffer according to God's will are to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing right.

Here, it is ==>

For this is the will of God, that by doing right you might silence the ignorance of foolish men.

I watched in dismay t/other night as CNN broadcast a special program entitled "Sinners or Hypocrites". The topic involved t/alleged sexual tryst between Ted Haggard & a homosexual "escort." Haggard, of course, was t/president of t/Nat. Assoc. of Evang. & pastor of a 14k member CH in CO. At one point in t/program they played an excerpt of what they referred to as an HBO documentary where Haggard and two other men were discussing their sex lives on camera. I'm not comfortable even repeating what they were saying. It was horrifying. Even t/show's female host was appalled & she correctly noted how this sort of thing gives Xns a bad reputation.

For this is the will of God, that by doing right you might silence the ignorance of foolish men.

I was thankful that John MacArthur was a guest panelist on that show. And he correctly pointed out that 98% of Xn leaders are living their lives w/integrity (at least those Xn leaders who are really Xns). And it is noteworthy that t/Televangelist scandals of 2 decades ago as well as t/more recent ones have certain common elements: The leaders involved were heads of high-powered mega-church ministries & they all shared a similar bad theology rooted in Arminianism.

But t/world doesn't know that. They don't care what your theology is. All they care about is t/scandal behind it all. Tragically, it's like Paul in Rom. 2:24 where he says ==>

. . . "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" . . .

Hey, it's one thing when you're wrongly accused of doing wrong. That may even be expected {cite v. 12}

But never let it be for sinful reasons! Peter addresses that in 3:17 ==>

For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Is Ted Haggard suffering right now? Yes, but not for doing right.

So ==>

D. The Reason for Submission 2:15

That is, t/reason for our submission to governing authorities is that the critics be silenced, that those who would jump at t/opp. to speak out against us & against our God have no reason to do so.

2. They will literally be muzzled

a. φιλωω - A graphic word meaning "to muzzle" or "to gag"

It's translated "speechless" in Matt. 22:12.

It's used of Jesus putting t/Sadducees to silence w/his wisdom in 22:34.

It's used of Jesus quieting t/storm in Mark 4:39

It's used of muzzling an ox in 1 Tim. 5:18.

For this is the will of God, that by doing right you might muzzle the ignorance of foolish men. is one way it could be translated.

I even think of t/events of a week or two ago. 200,000 pro life demonstrators gathered peacefully in front of t/Whitehouse & of course, t/secular media chose to largely ignore it. But when 10k anti-war demonstrators gathered in t/same spot it was headline news. But t/differences between t/groups went beyond size. The largely liberal anti-war protestors vandalized t/Whitehouse grounds and threatened police with jars of urine. The largely Xn pro-life demonstrators gathered in peace.

That's one way to silence ignorance: To get your point across in a gracious, law-abiding way.

3. Interesting that this "ignorance" is largely spiritual in nature

When Peter says ==>

...that by doing right you might muzzle the ignorance of foolish men.

a. The word he uses for "ignorance" is ἀγνοσία

Rare word that seems to imply religious ignorance, in particular, a lack of Xn knowledge.

Only used here and in 1 Cor. 15:34 where Paul uses it of those who have no knowledge of God.

(1) Harkens back to Prov. 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Did you get that? "The FOTL is t/beg. of Kn." To fear t/Lord requires that you know about Him, that you not be ignorant. It's t/foolish who despise wisdom & instruction.

Peter tells us to ==>

... muzzle the ignorance of foolish men.

Interesting that Peter frames this ignorance in terms of spiritual ignorance. To be ignorant about life is to be ignorant about God, about t/Xn faith.

b. That brings us full-circle back to 2 Corinthians 10

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

We can't use human means. We don't stoop to the level that t/world uses. We don't attack t/Whitehouse w/cans of spray paint and jars of urine.

How do we battle? How do we confront t/social issues of our day? We do good; we share t/truth of t/gospel; we take every thought captive to t/obedience of X.

Our weapons, v. 4, are divinely powerful. A simple literal translation of that would be Powered by God.

They're ==>

. . . divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

Massive strongholds of sin, t/massive strongholds of intellectual dishonesty that rule our culture thru contemporary academia, t/arts & t/media.

What's the word destruction mean? It means to tear down, pull down. The weapons of our warfare are strong enough to rip down the massive strongholds that have been built by sin.

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

The "fortresses" (v. 4) are described as "speculations". Λογισμεις = ideologies. We are to wage war against false, ungodly thinking, against false worldviews. Any religious or philosophical system raised up against t/truth of God.

We are to destroy these things.

Pictures an army moving against a city & just tearing it down. And the weapons are all spiritual. They're all powered by God.

And then he says ==>

And we are taking every thought captive.

Remember, I said that this word in t/original was really vivid. It pictures a prisoner walking into t/city w/a soldier behind him holding a spear in his back, bringing in the captive.

c. That doesn't mean we can't get involved at all in the political process or that we can't write a letter or sign a petition

It does mean that we dare not take our eyes off of t/real issue of t/Gospel, of what it means to take every thought captive to X's obedience. I wrote a letter to t/chairman of a corporation last week. But I did more than say I was not going to trade w/his company, I pointed that t/positions his corporation has taken are at odds w/the Gospel & that God was dishonored in t/process.

Our battle is spiritual, not carnal. We are to engage t/world on t/level of t/mind. We win t/hearts of men by t/gateway of t/mind. And we breach t/walls of t/mind by way of t/Spirit, not t/flesh.

d. The Apostle Paul exemplified that

I think of Paul's example before t/worldly authorities rec. in book of Acts.

(1) Turn with me to Acts chapter 23

In t/final chapters of Acts we find Paul a prisoner of Rome. He had many enemies among t/Jews who were angered at his allegiance to X, so angry that they plotted to murder him.

Near t/end of his 3rd missionary journey, these enemies of t/cross had him arrested in Jerusalem on false charges. That began a long period in which Paul was required to appear before magistrates to defend himself.

In Acts 23 he is required to face t/Jewish Sanhedrin. Was t/San. that formed t/ruling body of t/nation of Israel. They held final author. in religious matters, but had only limited author. in matters of civil law (occupying Rome held that position).

Paul appears B4 t/Sanhedrin as Luke records it in 23rd chapter of Acts. And Paul's opening statement in v. 1 is this ==>

And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

"My consc. is clear, I can look you in t/eye & say that I've not done wrong w/my life before God or men." I don't know that he said anything wrong, but t/H.P. Annnias reacted to his words by having him struck on t/mouth.

Remember what Paul said ==>

“God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?”

We may sympathize w/Paul. It was a violation of t/Law according to Dt. 25:2. But his knee-jerk reaction was out of line.

1 Corinthians 4:12 . . . when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

Those words reflect t/conduct of X, 1 Peter 2:23.

Rem. it was Jesus who stood before t/H.P. in John 18 and who was also struck on t/face, but his response was much different ==>

If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?

It was as if Paul were being tested. God had him struck on t/face in same manner as his Lord, but his reaction was not in keeping w/that of his Lord.

4 But the bystanders said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?”⁵ And Paul said, “I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”

Paul realized that it was he who was in violation of t/Law & he apologized for it. He humbly acknowledged his sin.

There have been times when I have done t/same thing, when I have reacted, even toward those in authority, w/anger & have spoken out of turn & have had to likewise acknowledge my sin in doing so.

Lesson #1 - When we fail to respect authority we must repent and apologize for our sin.

Paul went on to share his hope in t/resurrection which resulted in a debate between t/Sadducees & Pharisees on t/matter and such a riot ensued that t/commander, fearing for Paul's safety, ordered him to be taken away.

(2) Paul was to have other opportunities to model godly behavior before worldly authorities

(a) He appears before the Roman governor Felix in chapter 24
Felix fails to pass a sentence on Paul, & instead has him imprisoned for two years. Felix is later relieved of his duties by t/Emperor Nero for mishandling a riot in Caesarea and Porcius Festus is installed in his place.

(b) In Acts 25 Paul appears before him

This is two years later! Rem. Paul has been in prison for 2 years! And it was during that time that he had some of his most fruitful ministry - in prison. He wrote t/4 Prison Epistles at that time (Eph. Phil. Col. Plm.). He also evangelized t/members of Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22).

Lesson #2 - Don't underestimate how God can use you, even during times of your life when it seems otherwise.

Early in Festus' rule over Judea Jewish leaders petitioned him to retry Paul on t/charges against him. They wanted him sent to Jerusalem so that they could kill him (v. 3). Festus decided to keep Paul in Caesarea and he replied, "if you want to charge him, you meet with me there." (v. 5)
{read vv. 6-7} - The charges were false.

Remember what Peter said?

Keep your behavior excellent among the pagans, so that in whatever they accuse you as evildoers, they may see your good works and glorify God in the day of visitation.

Of Paul's conduct, one writer observes ==>

"The inability of his Jewish opponents to make any of their accusations stick emphasizes that Paul and other early Christians were good citizens . . . In spite of the frequent false allegations that the followers of Christ were nothing more than a sect of political revolutionaries, they were stellar examples of innocent, law-abiding subjects—a status all believers today should strive for. When Rome eventually persecuted and killed many in the early church, it was not because Christians were revolutionaries but because they refused to worship the emperor."

[John MacArthur, Why Government Can't Save You, 122]

In v. 8 Paul answers the charges against him ==>

"I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

I'm not guilty of either sectarianism (violation of Jewish law), sacrilege (violating Temple law) or sedition (violating Roman Law).

Festus was caught in a dilemma. He asks him in v. 9 {cite} Paul realized that would give t/Jews what they wanted: an opp. to kill him, replies {cite vv. 10-11}

This was Paul's right as a Roman Citizen. He could appeal to Caesar.

Lesson #3 - It is right and good to make use of legal means available to you.

Paul may have been first and foremost a citizen of heaven.

But he was not afraid to make wise use of his Roman citizenship either.

It got him out of a beating in Acts 22.

So Paul appeals to t/Emperor and Festus accepts his appeal. He would go to Rome.

Remember, In acts 23:11 the Lord appeared to him and said,

“Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”

So God uses two pagan rulers (Felix and Festus) and the Roman govt. to fulfill His promise that Paul would go to Rome. That, BTW, again is t/doctrine of concurrence that we spoke of last week.

Lesson #4 - God can sovereignly accomplish His purposes without our interference.

Had Paul warred according to t/flesh he would only have gotten in t/way of what God was going to accomplish.

What a wonderful lesson for us.

We began this AM w/a quote by Spurgeon & I'd like to end on t/same note. His words reflect my heart as well.

"My beloved friends, I can assure you it is always one of the sweetest thoughts I ever know, that I will meet with yo in heaven. There are so many members of you in this Church that I can hardly get to shake hands with you . . . but I will have plenty of time then in heaven. You will know your pastor in heaven better than you do now. He loves you now, and you love him. We will then have more time to recount our experience of divine grace, and praise God together, and sing together, and rejoice together concerning Him by whom we were helped to plant, and sow, and through whom all the increase came.

But we will not all met in glory not all—unless you repent. Some of you will certainly perish unless you believe in Christ. But why must we be divided? O why not all in heaven? 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved'. . . . Trust Christ, sinner, and heaven is yours, and mine, and we are safe forever."