

AVOIDING ELECTION DEFECTION

1 Peter 2:11-17

INTRODUCTION

As Christians approach another potentially divisive election, examining what truly guides our voting decisions is crucial. While culture wars, social media, and polarized news outlets heavily influence many believers' political attitudes, we must ask ourselves: to what extent does the gospel inform our choices at the ballot box? Many Christians have either forgotten or are unaware that their primary allegiance should be to Jesus Christ, not to a political party or presidential candidate. Some mistakenly equate American constitutional rights with Christian entitlements, failing to recognize that while life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution, they are not promised as rights for Christians in the Bible. Scripture teaches that followers of Christ must be willing to sacrifice their lives, freedom, and comfort for the gospel's sake when necessary.

THIS WEEK:

This week, discover God's perspective on how our heavenly citizenship should reshape our allegiances, political priorities, and engagement as Christians.

OBSERVATION *What does it SAY?*

Discover key details of the passage by reading 1 Peter 2:11-17 and then answering the following questions:

1. What are the terms Peter uses to address the believers in verse 11?
2. What reason does the apostle give believers for conducting themselves honorably among the Gentiles (v. 12)?
3. What reason does Peter give for believers submitting to human authority (v. 15)?
4. What prohibition does Peter give on exercising one's freedom in Christ (v. 16)?

INTERPRETATION *What does it MEAN?*

Use the Bible to interpret the Bible. Look up the cross references and use them to interpret the passage under study:

5. The Greek terms used to describe the recipients of the letter are *paroikos* (strangers, sojourners- these are those who move to a city or land to reside there temporarily) and *parepidēmōs* (exiles, pilgrims- these are those who move to a place and do not have the right of citizenship). In what ways do these terms reflect what passages like Heb 11:13-16, 2 Cor 5:18-20, and Php 3:17-20 teach about the status of believers?

6. How do passages such as 2 Tim 2:1-2, Rom 12:17-21, and Matt 5:13-16 instruct believers to interact with and relate to non-believers? What specific attitudes, behaviors, or approaches do these scriptures require for Christians when engaging with those who don't share their faith?

7. What are the six (6) reasons found in Romans 13:1-5 for Christians submitting to governing authorities?

8. Consider the Apostle Paul's own posture before unbelievers found in 1 Cor 9:19-23 and Phil 2:3-4. From his example, what lessons can believers glean about God's will for our personal rights?

ROMAN POLITICAL CLIMATE

Lest we think that the political climate of our day is worse than what the early Christians faced, check out these facts:

1. Roman Oppression: The letter was written during a time when Christians were facing persecution and hostility under Roman rule. Peter likely wrote around 64 AD, just as persecution of Christians under Emperor Nero was intensifying.

2. Unjust suffering: Peter addresses believers who were experiencing unjust suffering and trials due to their faith.

Social marginalization: Christians were viewed with suspicion and seen as anti-social because they did not participate in pagan religious practices. This often had political and economic ramifications for believers.

Verbal hostility: Much of the persecution mentioned involves verbal attacks, with Christians being maligned and misunderstood by their pagan neighbors.

Conformity Pressure: Pressure on Christians to conform to Greco-Roman cultural values, was intense, but Peter calls them to maintain their distinctive Christian identity while still respecting authorities.

Call for Submission: Despite unjust treatment, Peter instructs Christians to submit to human institutions and authorities as a witness to their faith.

APPLICATION *Why does it matter?*

Now that you know what the passage means, think through the various ways it may apply to your life or the lives of others:

9. How should the fact that we are Christians first and Americans second affect the way we interact with people who differ from us politically or morally?
10. What could "conducting ourselves honorably" (v. 12) look like in the face of the prevalent abuse and vitriol on social media today?
11. What are some of the ways American Christians use their "freedom as a cover-up for evil" online and on social media?
12. Nero was reigning as emperor when this letter was written. What does Peter mean when he instructs believers to "Honor everyone...Honor the emperor" (v. 17)? What would that look like today?

TAKE AWAY *How does this change me?*

13. What does this passage reveal about God?
14. What does this passage reveal about humanity?
15. What is the Holy Spirit revealing in this passage about your life?