

1 PETER 2:13-17
CHRISTIANS IN THE MODERN STATE

“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. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.”¹

One aspect of Christian teaching that contemporary believers seemingly find odious is the command to cultivate a submissive spirit. Submission is neither natural, nor is it a popular characteristic to be cultivated in the lives of contemporary Christians. We resist even the thought of nurturing a submissive spirit; we are constantly urged to exalt our personal “rights.” Consequently, we admire assertive individuals, counting those who reveal a submissive attitude as wimps and wusses. Any message that calls for a submissive attitude is inimical to a generation imbued with inflated self-esteem and that is so thoroughly inculcated in modern life.

During pre-marital counselling for a wedding I performed some years ago, the bride-to-be informed me that she would not publicly commit herself to submit to her groom. In light of her views, I suggested that perhaps she should refrain from marriage since submission is a biblical mandate for wives. In the Ephesian encyclical, Paul writes, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” [EPHESIANS 5:22]. She decided against calling off the marriage, and she did declare her submission to her own husband.

Without question, a Christian wife is to submit to her husband; but that same submissive attitude is expected to be revealed in the lives of all Christians. In the verses preceding his instruction to wives, the Apostle wrote: “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” [EPHESIANS 5:15-21]. Godly saints will be submissive to one another—church members are to be submissive to church leaders, and Christians are to submit to civil authorities.

SUBMISSION TO GOVERNMENT REFLECTS UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S WILL — “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.” Christians must respect the civil authorities. This is not to say that every law produced by Parliament or that every piece of legislation passed by a provincial legislature is good and worthy of respect; it does mean that we are to make every effort to be obedient so long as that obedience does not bring us into conflict with the will of God.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This is not a plea for Christians to submit blindly to every state-sponsored idea; there are official positions that a Christian must conscientiously reject and refuse to obey. However, the Christian must willingly accept the consequences of his or her actions.

During the past several decades, I have listened to or read many speeches that were delivered by Martin Luther King. I am humbled to have arrived late at appreciation of the thoroughly biblically saturated position Doctor King promoted in resisting a moral cancer in his nation. I am not saying he was a paragon of virtue, but he did draw his understanding of the place of the citizen in society from a sound understanding of divine purpose for mankind. King reluctantly assumed leadership of the civil rights issue.

Many people don't realise that Doctor King's views were strongly opposed by other black leaders. Thurgood Marshall believed that King was "an opportunist and a first rate rabble-rouser." Ann Coulter, citing Juan Williams as her source for information, writes, "When asked about King's suggestion that street protests could help advance desegregation, Marshall replied that school desegregation was men's work and should not be entrusted to children. King, he said, was 'a boy on a man's errand.'"² Nevertheless, Martin Luther King was a powerful voice for civil disobedience against unjust laws.

What made Doctor King so powerful against his foes was the moral certitude of his position, a position strengthened by resolute willingness to suffer the consequences that attended civil disobedience. I am not saying that Doctor King was a good man, his propensity toward immorality is too well documented to argue the point, but I do say that he was a great man because he fought the right fight, and he fought it in the right way.

In one extemporaneous speech that stands out in my memory, he speaks quite plainly of the consequences arising from civil disobedience. He warned that some listening to him that evening would be jailed—and they were jailed. Some would be beaten—and they were beaten. Some, he said plainly, may be called to die at the hands of cruel and callused assassins. Only days before he spoke these words, Medgar Evers had been murdered—shot in the back before the eyes of his children waiting their daddy's return. The following summer, three young civil rights workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner—were murdered and their bodies buried in an earthen dam. The power of Doctor King's words lies in his willingness to accept the consequences of disobedience. The deliberate nature of his actions coupled to the willing acceptance of the consequences shamed supporters of those wicked and unjust laws.

During the Second World War the French mountain village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon united to resist the evil of the Nazi occupiers. Pastor Andre Trocme urged his parishioners to hide Jewish refugees. The villagers did so knowing that providing sanctuary for Jews was punishable by death. They acted courageously and compassionately despite crushing poverty. At times, Trocme had several children in his home, causing deprivation even for his own children who often had very little to eat.

At various times, government and even church authorities ordered Trocme to turn over any Jews hiding in the village. Trocme was thrown into prison. His cousin, Daniel Trocme, who also rescued Jews, was executed in a concentration camp. Other villagers also died protecting Jews. By the war's end, Le Chambon was known to be a city of refuge for Jews.

² Juan Williams, "Is Ann Coulter Right About the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King?", Fox News, June 16, 2011, (: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2011/06/16/is-ann-coulter-right-about-civil-rights-movement/#ixzz1PeVKXl5f>) accessed 16 June 2011

The villagers were led to such civil disobedience by Trocme's sermons—sermons noted as biblically based with an emphasis on the believer's power to follow God. The pastor stressed the obligation of Christians to protect the helpless, even in defiance of governmental authority. The village was strengthened in its resolve by regular small group prayer meetings so that those resisting were bathed in prayer. And the villagers could identify with persecution, because their Huguenot ancestors were persecuted in Catholic France. Thus, the villagers had cultivated habits of compassion, virtue and involvement in helping the helpless. Rescuing the Jews was the fruit of these habits.³

It should be obvious that for the Christian, there is a time to disobey some laws. We must be cautious, however, that we do not fall into the trap of thinking that we are empowered to pick-and-choose which laws we will obey or which laws we will ignore. Civil disobedience is exceptional; it is this exceptional nature that gives power to the action. If civil disobedience were the usual course of action, it would have no significance when it is practised.

This begs us to ask, why should a Christian obey the law, and especially a bad law? Why should Christians obey civic leaders? At any given time, some among us will dissent from obeying laws passed by a given government. We live in a democracy, and the government of the day does not always represent our personal political leanings. When a government passes legislation that does not represent our desires, why should we be obliged to obey their edicts?

It would be proper to speak of the need to obey to ensure political stability, though Scripture is silent on this particular issue. I suppose I could even speak of the fact that we have agreed to accept the terms of the constitution; and that we are thus compelled to obey the laws of Parliament. This demands obedience even to laws that are odious and not entirely to our liking. That position, though also true, is not addressed by Scripture. However, the Apostle clearly identifies the reason for our obedience when he writes, "Be subject for the Lord's sake" to governments. The child of God accepts that no government exists without God's permission. Because we are citizens of heaven [PHILIPPIANS 3:20], we make every effort to be good citizens of our own nation.

Underscore in your mind that in God's economy, government is a gift to ensure stability. Paul maintains that government bears responsibility to commend what is good and to punish those who do evil. Protecting citizens from wickedness and from foreign invasion is a biblical mandate. It is somewhat more difficult to justify regulatory activities through appeal to the Word of God. Nevertheless, we have an obligation as Christians to be obedient to governing authorities "for the Lord's sake."

You will remember that the Apostle to the Gentiles urges believers to offer "supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings ... for ... all who are in high positions." The reason we are to pray for those who hold authority is to ensure that "we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" [1 TIMOTHY 2:1, 2]. We are to pray for the welfare of those who govern, praying for God's blessing on the government under which we live, so that we can enjoy peace. There is an immediate benefit of social stability and moral restraint resulting from good government; and we are to obey the law so that we can enjoy peace. However, if we stop reading at that point, we miss a vital reason for obedience.

³ Adapted from Charles Colson, "The Hidden Key to Happiness," July 5, 2011, <http://www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/entry/13/17402>, accessed 6 July 2011

In **1 TIMOTHY 2:3-6** Paul continues: “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” We seek what is good for governing authorities, and we are obedient to those in authority, because good government permits us to do what we are supposed to do—point men and women to Christ. Paul gives similar instruction in **TITUS 3:1, 2**. “Remind [believers] to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.”

Paul’s teaching supplements Peter’s teaching; together, they form a corpus of instructions for Christian social conduct. The basis undergirding this “household code” is recorded in the verses preceding the text. “I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” [**1 PETER 2:11, 12**].

We must not live only for the moment, accumulating goods that are destined for dust. It is not our goal to live in a futile effort to avoid upsetting anyone, contending that we are therefore godly. God left us on this earth after giving us His salvation so that we could glorify Him. For those who wonder what it means to glorify the Father, it means that we demonstrate the transformed life that reveals the presence of Christ, and it means we live self-controlled, godly lives that exhibit the will of God for all people. Consider with me what the revealed will of God is for His people. Multiple statements in the Word of God demonstrate that divine will so that we have no excuse for ignorance.

God’s will is for His people to be holy, and in particular for His people to abstain from sexual immorality [**1 THESSALONIANS 4:3**]. We live in a day in which we might well question whether there exists an exception clause to such narrow statements; but all sex outside of marriage, all infidelity, every refusal to live a life of self-control is condemned.

God’s will is for His people to be thankful in all things [**1 THESSALONIANS 5:18**]. We are to recognise the good hand of God ruling over this fallen world, understanding that He is in control. Being thankful is but the normal response of a soul at peace with God. Gratitude flows from confidence in God’s reign both over the world and in our own life.

The will of God for Each Christian is salvation and preservation. Having been saved, we are now kept secure in the Master. There is a powerful statement in John’s Gospel explaining the will of the Father in this particular matter of salvation. Jesus said, “This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” [**JOHN 6:40**]. The will of God is that all who look to Christ will be saved. Jesus has promised His own, “It is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” [**MATTHEW 18:14**]. Those who are born from above are forever preserved in Christ.

Because you are redeemed, the Father wills that you reflect the transformed life with which you have been divinely invested. The way in which you reveal that transformed life is through being thankful and through deliberately choosing to be holy in your manner of life. Now, in our text, we are given one further expression of the will of God for His people. Christians redeemed by the grace of God and left in this world as ambassadors of Christ, are to be “subject to every human institution.”

What human institutions did Peter have in mind? The Apostle identifies the human institutions before which we are to live honourably. Peter teaches of the need for a submissive spirit toward **the church** [1 PETER 3:8], choosing to speak well of one another and to build one another. He identifies the need for a spirit of submission within **marriage** [1 PETER 3:1-7], an attitude of submission in **the work relationship** [1 PETER 2:18], and a submissive attitude toward **government** [1 PETER 2:13-17] lived out in the public square.

AN ATTITUDE OF SUBMISSION IS EXPRESSED THROUGH DOING GOOD — “This is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.” The world seems transfixed by the spectacle of adherents of one of the world’s major religions raging through the streets of Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian cities. Chanting mobs have burned embassies, murdered Christians while they worshipped, burned church buildings; and even in Western democracies adherents of that religion parade about, carrying signs that threaten entire nations with warfare and death. No excuse is needed and any excuse seems to justify this display of madness.

Christians certainly have many opportunities to be angered by the actions of a society that is militantly secular and antagonistic toward people of faith. Artists ridicule our faith through calling a crucifix immersed in urine, or a “painting” of the Virgin Mary made with elephant dung, “art.” Movie and television producers imagine that we will laugh at a menstruating Madonna statue or at a sitcom that glorifies immorality in the family of a priest. What is important for the purpose of this message, however, is to note that despite the continual hostility of a few people toward our Faith, there were no Christian riots in Toronto over these insults. No Baptists seized control of a bus and drove it into a building. No Pentecostals raged through the streets sawing off heads.

What did happen in each of these instances named—and in many others as well—was that Christians expressed disgust and disappointment, and in some instances, they informed corporate sponsors that they would no longer be using their products. With this measured response, Christians demonstrated that they were committed to “doing good.” Christians recognise that riots and rampage cannot be construed as “doing good.” Some may counter that threats and intimidation create fear; but Christians are not called to intimidate the enemies of righteousness. Instead, we are called to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us [MATTHEW 5:44].

Christians are required to make every effort to do what is good. By this means, we will “put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.” At the time Peter wrote, slanderous charges were being levelled against the followers of Christ the Lord. Christians, it was rumoured, practised cannibalism, engaged in continuous orgies, and it was bruited about that they were atheists. After all, Christians were known to speak of eating the “body” and of drinking the “blood” of their God. Perhaps they practised cannibalism! It was common knowledge that these despised followers of The Way participated in what they called “love feasts.” It sounded as though they were promoting immorality. Moreover, the Christians had no images of their gods; and they refused to acknowledge the existence of the gods that everyone else worshipped. They would not even acknowledge the genius of the Caesar! Because they were opposed to all that society approved, they were called “atheists,” and they were censured and condemned by the elite of society. Therefore, the populace despised Christians; they were convinced that there had to be validity to the charges levelled against the Christians.

The Christian Faith did not become *religio licit* because believers had superior apologists or because they were more forceful in their arguments. Christianity did not sweep the Empire because the Christians outnumbered the pagans. The Faith of Christ the Lord became accepted because of love those first Christians had for one another. Tertullian writes of the testimony of the pagans about Christians, “*See, they say, how they love one another, for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves will sooner put to death.*”⁴

To be subject means “to show respect toward,” or “to defer to” the governing authorities, in contradistinction to the meaning when we say we must be subject to the will of God.⁵ The submission in the former is a voluntary choice in which we must know the impact of our choice on observers. If the higher duty to God leads us as Christians to dissent, we willingly accept the consequences, knowing that God is honoured and that observers will ultimately glorify the Saviour because of our choice. If respect toward the governing authorities is exhibited, we know that observers will be unable to speak ill of us because of our choice. Whether obeying or disobeying governing authorities, our attitude as Christians, of necessity, has an impact on those watching. Of this, you may be certain, someone is watching you as you live out your life.

To do good implies that we honour those to whom honour is due. This does not mean that only on special occasions are we to honour those “institutions ordained for people.”⁶ To honour the church wherein God has placed you is to accept those whom He has appointed to leadership and to obey their rule [HEBREWS 13:7, 17]. To honour marriage means to accept that God has established marriage for our benefit and to maintain a pure life within the boundaries of marriage [HEBREWS 13:4]. To honour the workplace is to accept your position either as an employer or as an employee, doing the best possible work, knowing that you must ultimately answer to Christ the Lord for your conduct [EPHESIANS 6:5-9]. Honouring those in government means demonstrating respect for those who govern and it means endeavouring to obey all laws that do not oppose righteousness.

It must be said that many of the “good” aspects of modern society are the result of the Christian Faith, growing out of conscientious and practical application of biblical teaching, and because of social stability that arises out of the Faith of Christ the Lord. Hospitals and orphanages are rooted in Christian missions—they did not arise out of governmental largess. Public education became a reality because of Christian concern that people should be able to read the Word of God. And despite the caricature of Christians as a threat to the liberal social agenda of our nation, Christians are counted as among the “best” citizens. Christians are not prone to being or to becoming bad citizens.

Having stated these truths, there is a temptation to castigate politicians holding an opposite view than that which we might incidentally hold. Whether you are liberal or conservative in your political views, if you are a Christian, it is wrong to speak ill of those with whom you disagree. Assail their position, speak against their policies, argue against their views—but avoid speaking ill of the individual.

⁴ Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, **The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. III: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian**, Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997, pg. 46

⁵ Cf. J. Ramsey Michaels, **Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter, Vol. 49** (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN 1988) 124

⁶ Alternative reading provided in the ESV

I am not seeking to dissuade you from involvement in the political process; but you must give honour to those to whom honour is due—and that includes politicians holding to a view opposite of that which you hold. Scot McKnight is correct in saying, “[O]ur motivation for political activity needs to be set in the context of our mission as a church. Too often political activity by Christians seems to have so little Christian motivation that it betrays what we are all about. Our first task is to glorify God by bringing the good news of the gospel of the kingdom to bear on our world. If our political activity is not drenched in that motivation and is instead only slightly stained (work as hard as possible to appear nonreligious and acceptable) by the message of the kingdom, then we are denying the purpose of our existence. Peter motivated the churches to good actions in their world so that they would declare forth the good news of God and demonstrate his goodness and glory, in the hope that others would want to become Christians.”⁷

This is not a plea to measure every act by whether that particular action is evangelistic or not; it is rather a challenge to realize that every action we perform as Christians will either advance or hinder the cause of Christ. Either we are laying the groundwork for others to learn of Christ through giving us a hearing, or we are turning them from the Faith as they determine that we are really no different from them. Far too many of us are saying, “Come to Christ” with our lips while we are saying, “Go to hell” with our lives. Peter confronts us to ensure that our attitudes and lives do good.

Jonathan Edwards is perhaps best known for his sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Often forgotten is that Edwards was a university president and an incisive thinker that wrestled with great philosophical issues affecting the Christian Faith. At one point, Edwards fashioned guidelines for Christian interaction with public life. Gerald R. McDermot has summarized six points of Edward’s theology of public life.

- (1) Christians have a responsibility to society beyond the walls of the church.
- (2) Christians should not hesitate to join forces with non-Christians in the public square to work toward common moral goals.
- (3) Christians should support their governments, but be ready to criticize them when the occasion demands.
- (4) Christians should remember that politics is comparatively unimportant in the long run.
- (5) Christians should beware of national pride.
- (6) Christians should care for the poor.⁸

Christians must live in society; and in the society in which the Christian lives he is responsible to make every effort to “do good.” It is only as we who profess Christ have turned from the mandate to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” [MATTHEW 6:33], that the charge that we are detrimental to the advance of society has gained traction. Let me say that again—the charge that Christianity is detrimental to society only gained traction as Christians ignored the mandate to seek first God’s Kingdom and His righteousness.

⁷ Scot McKnight, **NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: 1 Peter** (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI) 159

⁸ Gerald R. McDermot, “What Jonathan Edwards Can Teach Us About Politics,” **Christianity Today**, July 1, 2001, <http://www.ctlibrary.com/8180>, accessed 4 July 2011

Christ the Lord is glorified as we Christians respond with compassion to hurt and injury, as we are noted to do during disasters. It is to the glory of God that we Christians “aspire to live quietly” and to mind our “own affairs” [1 THESSALONIANS 4:11]. It is to the glory of the Father that we Christians hold firmly to our convictions, and speak the truth in love in order to hold society accountable to moral and ethical truth.

AN ATTITUDE OF SUBMISSION EXPRESSES CHRISTIAN FREEDOM — “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.” Peter presents a balance that is too frequently ignored among contemporary believers. Christians are to live as servants of God—servants, and not kings. We are to honour all people, demonstrating respect and according each individual the dignity that is due fellow creatures of the Lord Christ. We are to be vitally and vibrantly connected to the church where we are placed. Here, among the people of God, we are to worship the Living God. Only then, are we capable of honouring government, keeping perspective as free people.

It is impossible to imagine a free state arising out of a society that adheres to a religious view other than the Christian Faith. Freedom has never been enshrined by a culture saturated with Buddhist principles, or within a Hindu state, or in a Muslim society. Neither democracy nor freedom is sustained within an atheistic society. Western democratic societies are now living on dividends accrued from past Christian investment. Totalitarian religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam—do not, indeed cannot, respect individuals, and they cannot maintain perspective.

The reason that society tempered with the Christian Faith tends toward freedom is that ultimately the Christian must confess that earthly citizenship is temporary. We will quite naturally have patriotic pride in our nation because we are concerned for the needs of our country. However, superseding the transient citizenship we hold on earth is the knowledge that in reality “our citizenship is in heaven” [PHILIPPIANS 3:20]. Ultimately, as Christians, we are free of the jurisdiction of the governing authorities. As Christians, we are slaves, not of Caesar, but of God. Thus, we must live free, as we truly are in Christ.

The freedom we enjoy in Christ is a precious gift that must not be abused through ignoring personal responsibility to the society in which we live. Because we are free, we must honour God through the choices we make. Because we are free, we must live righteously. The strength of a Christian is strength that arises from freedom in Christ the Lord. This is freedom that can be voluntarily held in check for the sake of another person [e.g. 1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-29], or that can be invoked in order to refuse to accommodate evil.

However, freedom does impose responsibility. Freedom requires that the free individual deliberately, voluntarily, accept responsibility to use his freedom for the benefit of others in order to honour the Master. Christians within the modern state must live as free people. The freedom each Christian enjoys will be revealed through compassion for those neglected within society, even when the neglected do not want to be noticed. Christian freedom will be expressed through participation in the political process, even as opponents of the Faith seek to disenfranchise believers. Freedom in Christ will be expressed through accepting the burden to serve as the conscience for society, rather than withdrawing from the public square. Freedom for the child of God will lead that individual to be holy and righteous in the way she or he lives.

Freedom is God's gift in Christ. Listen to Paul's teaching concerning freedom in **GALATIANS 5:1**. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Shortly after penning these stirring words, the Apostle reminds those reading the letter, "You were called to freedom, brothers." The application of this particular knowledge is then appended: "Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" [**GALATIANS 5:13**]. In Christ, the Christian enjoys perfect liberty. We who follow Christ are those who live without fear, honouring and serving Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Our freedom is grounded in the Word. James attests to this truth when he writes, "The one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing" [**JAMES 1:25**]. His words iterate the word of our Lord, who promised, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" [**JOHN 8:32**]. Indeed, Jesus promised that "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" [**JOHN 8:36**]. Because liberty is the purpose for which we are saved, this Word that reveals Christ to us is called "the law of liberty" [**JAMES 1:25**].

The freedom we enjoy in Christ is freedom from sin [**ROMANS 6:18, 22**] and freedom from fear [**ROMANS 8:2**]. The Spirit of the Lord dwells with us and in us, and thus we are always assured of freedom, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" [**2 CORINTHIANS 3:17**]. This freedom, this divine gift entrusted to each Christian, becomes the strength that instils conviction and courage in each believer. We need not fear what others may say concerning us, because we can be confident that our lives will refute any lie that is formed against us.

It should be evident that the professed child of God that fails to nourish his soul with the Word is sacrificing freedom intended for his enjoyment. The Christian that neglects feeding on the Word will become increasingly susceptible to falling from the secure position she previously enjoyed in Christ. To be truly free, you must embrace Christ as Lord of life, believing that He died because of your sin and that He rose to declare you free of all condemnation before the Father.

The Word of God declares, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved." That glorious truth continues by declaring, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" [**ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].

If you have never believed this message of life, this is the day for you to believe. Jesus, the Son of God, has provided a way for you to be free. Only as you accept the grace He offers can you hope to do good. The call is for you to believe that He died because of you and that He was raised for you. Believing that He lives, accept His offer of life. Then, you will have the divine power that enables you to do what is good. Only as you rest in Christ the Lord is that the possibility that you will know His peace because you have received the forgiveness of sin.

It is obvious that I have primarily addressed Christians through this message. For all who name the Name of Christ, the burden of the message is that we would choose to live as the Lord's slave, so that we can enjoy freedom [see **1 CORINTHIANS 7:22**]. Only as we serve Him can we hope to obey the injunction that warns against becoming "slaves of men" [**1 CORINTHIANS 7:23**]. I urge you to be righteous in the midst of what can only be described as a fallen society to the praise of His glory and for His honour. Amen.