

Honor, Love and Fear - Continually

1 Peter 2:17

1 Peter 2:17 Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Honor, love, and fear are words quite familiar to us. We use these words liberally in our conversation; we read them, and we hear them. Fictional stories are often based upon the concepts of honor, love, and fear. To show honor is acceptable, to love others is expected, even to fear God is generally accepted in our culture. Honor is given to our heads of government; this is seen in their housing, mode of transportation, and the hundreds of thousands of people who gather to see or hear them. Honor is given to those who have accomplished great feats; the *Guinness Book of World Records*, first published in 1955, notes the names of those who have exceeded 'the most' in a variety of subjects and activities. People in general would say they love others by giving to the needy and supporting different humanitarian efforts. Some individuals may adhere to the idea of a 'higher being' who is able to rain hail and brimstone from the heavens. If we blatantly choose to dishonor the government, we will be imposed with penalties.

As we dig into this verse, keep these questions in mind –

What does it mean to truly honor someone according to God's word?

Why would we honor all men?

How do we love others beyond words or writing a check? What is 'the brotherhood'?

What actions result from fearing God? Why would we fear Him?

Can we honor those in authority when we do not agree with them? Why should we honor those in authority?

Honor all men.

Honor, timao, means to prize, to fix a valuation upon; by implication, to revere. (*Strong's Greek Dictionary*)

Honor: bestow honor upon, show respect towards, a symbol of distinction. (*WordWeb*)

Think of the ways you might show honor to someone. You would speak highly of them and often, you would encourage others to get to know them, you would be excited to introduce them to your friends and family. When they spoke you would give your undivided attention to their words. You would value your time with them, even protect it.

We can honor plans and events. These are the things you write on your calendar in pen instead of pencil. You have heard the phrase, 'I'll pencil it in'. This means that if it is convenient, the plan that is suggested will hold; however, if something else comes up, the suggested plan will be cancelled. This does not mean something is unimportant, but it does mean that it may not be as important as other things.

The opposite of honor is dishonor. This is a state of shame or disgrace. Someone who is not honorable lacks integrity.

How can we honor all men when 'all' men are not honorable? In general, we highly esteem men because they are God's creation. God created all men therefore each of us should treat one another with kindness, hindering no one. All men are made in the image of God.

Genesis 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

You may have heard the saying, 'treat others as you would like them to treat you'.

Matthew 7:12 "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets".

Jesus died for all men therefore, those standing next to you or before you may be fellow heirs of eternity. Because of this, **each individual has personal worth**. Specifically related to this verse is what is said before. In our study on 1 Peter 2:13-16, we looked at obedience and submission to those God has placed in authority over us. Positionally, those in authority deserve our honor – not because we agree – but because God has allowed them to be in that place at this time.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;

"Christ has dignified our humanity by assuming it; therefore we should not dishonor, but be considerate to and honor our common humanity, even in the very humblest", *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary*.

The idea of honoring all men is difficult because we readily tend to place judgment upon each other. The challenge is to show honor to **all** – the lowest and even, in our minds, the undeserving. Regardless of wealth, position, looks, accomplishments and so forth, we are to honor man because he is created by God. When you consider what Christ has done for you and the fact that God has chosen you to personally know Him, gratefulness born out of humility is the response.

If God can save you even in your wretched state, will He not save others?

How do we apply the command to 'honor all men'? We willingly submit ourselves to those placed in authority. We cultivate humility in our hearts and attitudes, placing others before ourselves. Practically speaking, one of the best ways to honor others is to share the truth of the Gospel in the hopes that God would bring them to a saving knowledge of His forgiveness and grace.

How will you apply the command to honor all men?

Do you need to take a closer look at how you are treating others?

Do you choose to honor some yet not **all**?

When I consider personally responding to each individual as God's creation, I am quickly reminded of their value, and this affects my response and actions – even towards those who I think make my life miserable, even towards those who I think are wrong, even towards those who I think should know better, etc., etc. It is good for us to consider the purpose for our actions, thoughts, and words before we engage them. Am I encouraging, am I seeking the welfare of others? Ask yourself this question – *Who am I? The answer – nothing without Christ.*

Love the brotherhood.

Your brothers and sisters in Christ, those who are likeminded, those who recognize Jesus alone as Savior, those who are dependent on God's saving grace, those who are persevering toward the same goal of God's glory and making disciples.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

1 Peter 3:8-9 To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

Let's look closer at the above scripture to get a clearer picture of loving others.

Are you harmonious or like-minded, seeking to exist in an agreeable state or do you create conflict?

Are you sympathetic, showing compassion to others, or do you easily brush people off?

Are you kindhearted – sympathetic, considerate, and helpful, or are you judgmental?

Are you humble, looking upon others as worthy, holding others' above yourself or do you run on the thought that you have it all together?

We have a general love for all men because they are created in the image of God; we have a specific love for those who have been adopted into the family of God. You can probably testify to a special connection with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Love, *agapaō*, is the present active imperative, meaning – do it now and keep on doing it! This is not a one time 'I showed love to so and so today', it is a continuous, frequent showing of care towards one another. It is not based upon feelings or circumstances but rather based on obedience in following God's commands.

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

"Love the brotherhood; as there is general respect due to all men, so there is a special love due to the brethren, to all the saints, of what nation and country soever, of what estate and condition soever, high and low, rich and poor, of what judgment and opinion soever; therefore the apostle calls upon us to love the brotherhood, the whole fraternity and society of Christians, by what unhappy means and characters of reproach soever distinguished: there is no better evidence of the life of grace in ourselves, than the love of grace in another", *William Burkitt New Testament*.

Galatians 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

How do we love the brotherhood? Follow Christ's example of loving us. Christ loved with a sacrificial love, looking to the benefit of others rather than Himself. The verses in John chapters 13 and 15 above repeat the phrase, 'love one another' 'as I have loved you'.

Philippians 2:5-8 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Fear God.

Be in awe of Him, give Him reverence. God is love yet He is also a righteous judge, and He will punish sin.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Ex 34:6-7 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave [the guilty] unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Leviticus 25:17 'So you shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Fear of God will lead us to obedience. He is above all things and knows all things. Notice, the king is to be honored but in no way equal to God – God alone is to be feared.

"Fear God; with a filial fear or reverence. This command is interposed, either to show what is the true spring and fountain from which all the duties we perform to men are to proceed, viz. the fear of God, because where that doth not prevail no duty to men can be rightly performed; (they love the brotherhood best, and honour the king most, that truly fear God); or to show the due bounds of all the offices we perform to men, that nothing is to be done for them which is inconsistent with the fear of God", *Matthew Poole's Commentary*.

"Reverence God at all times with the sincerest and profoundest humility; and let a sense of the honour and favour he has conferred upon you increase, rather than diminish, that reverence", *Phillip Doddridge N.T.*

The command to fear God is written in the present tense imperative. We are to keep on fearing God. So in all things we are to show God reverence. This means we have a profound respect for Him; we are in awe of who He is, what He has done, what He says, and what He can and will do. God is immutable. His value will never diminish, and His promises will be fulfilled.

Look again at the passage in Exodus 34:6-7.

God is compassionate and gracious,

God is slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth, and

God forgives sin.

Yet God is righteous and will punish those who reject Him. He will punish those who willfully choose to live against His commands. Our fear of God is not based upon ignorance. Fear based on ignorance is a worldly kind of fear which holds someone in suspense – not knowing what is going to happen next. Instead, fear of God is based upon knowledge of who He is. As a result, and as our understanding of God increases, our reverence of Him increases and our commitment to His commands is strengthened – because we understand His majesty and power and dominion over us. And we develop grateful hearts for His perfect care and instruction leading to a genuine desire

to please Him in all our ways. This is the fear of God. With Him we are blessed; without Him we are doomed.

William Burkitt's New Testament notes, "live in a religious dread of His name, as a glorious God, and a gracious Father; have a reverential awe and fear of His majesty immovably fixed and implanted in your souls".

How are your thoughts and actions affected by a proper fear of God?

What must be the first step in fearing God?

Honor the king.

This statement refers back to our study a few weeks ago, 1 Peter 2:13-16. Honor is translated from *timao*, meaning to prize, to fix a valuation upon, to revere. This is different than the honor we show God. *We honor God because of who He is; we give honor to those in authority because of the position they have.* It is our duty to value the position of our elected officials, bosses, parents, and so on, as those who have been placed in authority for our benefit. This honor is not based on agreement or personal feelings, it is simply based on the subjection we have to our superiors.

Here is some food for thought, "Pay that respect to the emperor which his high authority requires, knowing that civil power is of God; that the authority with which he, in the course of his providence, has invested him, must be respected in order to its being obeyed; and **that if the man be even bad, and as a man be worthy of no reverence, yet he should be respected on account of his office.** If respect be banished, subordination will flee with it, and anarchy and ruin will rise up in their place. Truly religious persons are never found in seditions", *Adam Clarke's Commentary*.

This command in 1 Peter 2, to honor the king, was written specifically to those under the Roman sovereign Nero, who was a murderer and persecutor of Christians. It was necessary for Peter to remind the Christians of their duty to the king. It was difficult to understand why they should honor him when he was against what they believed and even tried to usurp their faith. Even so, these Christians were reminded that they should give honor to the one in position of authority. This command is generally applied to all men and governments today. Remember, the duty to honor governing authority is not based on like or agreement, it is based on the fear of God and obedience in following His instructions. ***It is the position which is held in high esteem, not the person.*** Consider if you were to willfully go against the laws of government. *What would this say about your reverence to God when He is the One who set up authority? What message would you send to those who are not believers, regarding your respect of duty to man?* God has set up the governing laws of man and we are to regard those laws as authority, *unless we are specifically told to deny Christ and sin against His commands.*

"Honour the king whom God hath set over you, and all the subordinate governors who derive their authority from him; paying obedience to all their just commands, and taking heed that there be nothing rebellious or factious in your behaviour, which would turn to the hurt of society, and bring a reflection upon your holy profession", *Philip Doddridge N.T.*

"Honour the King; this duty consists in reverencing their persons, in obeying their lawful commands, in a cheerful payment of their dues, in praying affectionately for them, and in praising

God for the blessing of their government. Nero, the worst of kings, and the persecutor of Christians was now on the throne, yet the command is express to honour him.

“And if we consider the words in their connexion and conjunction one with another, fear God, and honour the king, we learn, that religion and the fear of God do best qualify persons to be good subjects, this is the true and steady principle of loyalty; that obedience to governors that is lasting, is for conscience-sake to the command of God: where there is no fear of God in the heart, there will be no regard to the command of God in the life.

“Lastly, these words may be considered, as in their conjunction, so in their order in which they stand; first, fear God, and then honour the king; intimating that the fear of God must be the rule and guide of our subjection unto governors”, William Burkitt New Testament.

The freedom we have in Christ is to be used for His service. We are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness. Therefore, we are able to choose to act in obedience to the One who purchased our freedom. The preceding verse to our studied text reads, “[Act] as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but [use it] as bondslaves of God”, (1 Peter 2:16).

The commands to honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the king, are all continuous, with the fear of God being above all else. So we honor all men as God’s created beings *unless evil is promoted*; we honor our family in Christ *unless sin is supported*; we honor the head of government *unless we are asked to sin against God*. We are to keep on keeping on in obedience and reverence to God.