

TITLE: "Silencing the Critics" (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 2:13; Romans 13:3-7

THEME: The Believer's Submission to Civil Authority

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Open Bibles

This is part 3 of "S.T.C" - been looking at a passage that exhorts us to live above reproach as examples of X before civil governing authorities - that's 2:15 {cite}

Read Passage

By way of illust. turn with me from 1 Peter to 6th chapter of Acts

I want to look at a passage/person that is no doubt familiar to most of you.

In Acts 6 we are introduced to a dear saint by name of Stephen. S. was 1 of 7 men chosen to assist t/Apostles & he's listed 1st among them in v. 5. He was a noteworthy believer described as a man full of faith & t/H.S.

According to v. 8 he was not only a man full of faith/H.S. but also G.&P. No doubt there's a parallel intended whereby G => F & P => H.S.

And note that he was ==>

. . . performing great wonders and signs among the people.

IOW - he had t/1st c. gift of miracles - an apostolic gift that I believe passed along w/the apostolic age.

Look at vv. 9-10 ==>

But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

We don't really know for sure what the SOTF was. May have been synagogue members who were former slaves or prisoners of war. At any rate, they decided to debate with Stephen, and as v. 10 says ==>

And yet they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Here's Stephen, not only a member of t/7, not only a man w/gift of miracles, but also a skilled debater. (Let me add that there's nothing wrong w/debate so long as it doesn't involve sophistry or arrogance. We live in a culture that loves to use sophistry & ad hominem arguments. IOW - it doesn't matter if your argument is true so long as you can overwhelm your opponent w/words & personal attacks - that's a methodology championed by most any law school in most any university.)

Stephen was no doubt logical and gracious (v. 8 says he was filled w/G.). And in t/end truth fueled by grace always wins out, so his opponents did what men do when they can't win t/discussion: They resort to ad hominem attacks, they assail your character, v. 11=>

11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and dragged him away, and brought him before the Council [Sanhedrin]. 13 And they put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place, and the Law;14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

Here's this man, full of grace and power, armed w/the truth of t/Gospel. Rather than submit to that truth men devise lies & false accusations & have Stephen arrested & tried for blasphemy.

But look at v. 15 ==>

And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

Isn't that interesting? They were accusing Stephen of heresy against the Law & Moses & what happens? His face glows, it shines. No doubt all who saw it harkened back to Exodus 34 where it's recorded that t/face of Moses himself glowed as a result of his intense fellowship w/God.

Amazing parallel. Stephen is accused of being Anti-Moses if you will. The glorious God of heaven, as if to say to all present, *"This man Stephen has t/Spirit of Moses - Moses t/one you think you are defending! You foolish men, you might as well be persecuting Moses himself!"*

And you would think that all those present would fall on their faces in repentance! This man speaks t/truth - He represents t/God of Moses! We're t/guilty ones! God have mercy on us!

But, no, t/H.P. apparently unmoved says ==>
Are these things so?

So, Stephen. Are these accusations true? Let's get this trial over with; what do you have to say for yourself?

Starting at v. 2 Stephen launches in to a sermon that goes all the way to v. 50. Was a simple ?, but it deserved a complex answer.

Stephen being full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, full of grace, full of power, being a gifted preacher & logician, full of wisdom, launches into an inspired sermon & he closes it in v. 51,

51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your

fathers did.⁵² “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;⁵³ you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

Stephen must have gone to t/John t/Baptist school of preaching. Remember, JTB who addressed t/Jewish leaders as a brood of vipers?

I've got to admit, I've been preaching for 14 yrs. now & I've never once had an occasion to address my listeners as a brood of vipers. This isn't BTW - good post-modern, seeker-sensitive preaching, is it? You're not going to draw lots of people that way, but it sure is a reminder that t/preacher is to tell people what they need, not what they necessarily want.

Did Stephen get a round of applause? // a place on t/staff (*Stephen, you're an intriguing speaker. You gave a perfect 3-point message in less than 20 minutes, we want to bring you on board*).

No! They were furious; They were cut to the quick. They began to gnash their teeth. They were so furious they literally began to grind their jaws and their teeth together out of rage.

They should have fallen on their faces. Here's a man whose face glows like that of Moses. And rem. M. had to veil his face because it shone so brightly. Here's S. w/an unveiled face, but t/problem was his listeners didn't have unveiled hearts.

TAP talked about that in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 ==>

13 . . . Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away. 14 But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. 15 But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;

I love v. 18 ==>

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory . . .

We brethren not only have unveiled heart, we have unveiled faces; we behold t/glory of t/Lord & we are being transformed into t/same image from G. to G.

I believe Paul had Acts 7:55 in mind when he penned 2 Cor. 3:18.

Acts 7:55, Stephen ==>

Being full of the Holy Spirit he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Isn't that amazing? Stephen w/unveiled face gazed into heaven & saw t/glory of God. We, too, as Paul writes, {cite 3:18}

No wonder Stephen had the face of an angel!

They cried out with a loud voice and covered their ears.

Why? They thought this was blasphemy.

They rushed on him with one impulse, and when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. And having said this, he fell asleep."

8:1 says (should be last v. of chapt. 7) "And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death."

"What's the significance of all this as it relates to 1 Peter?"

It's this ==> There's no doubt that t/way Stephen died had an indelible effect on Saul.

The powerful, truthful, faithful, forgiving way in which Stephen endured that performance of injustice was quite likely a huge factor in Saul's conversion from t/X-Rejecting Jewish leader to t/X-Loving Apostle Paul.

Talk about a travesty of justice. Stephen was a man who was as much a man of integrity as anyone in t/world & he's stoned to death for no reason. He's mocked, he's wronged, he's mistreated, he's condemned to death & even tho he dies unjustly, there's no protest, no vengeance, no seeking revenge, no retaliation, not even any anger— just forgiveness. He casts himself into t/care of his sovereign Lord & like His Lord he dies saying, **"forgive them for they don't understand what they're really doing."**

No doubt in my mind that Paul never forgot t/angelic face, t/forgiving heart, t/powerful message, t/courage in t/face of death.

In fact, if you turn back to 1 Peter chapter 2 . . .

Death of Stephen was in some ways like t/death of t/Lord. In fact, if you look at v. 23, it says that {cite}

But consider t/context. Now I know this is talking specifically about slaves, but there's application for us all here {cite v. 20} - Sounds like Stephen.

Remember, Jesus also died an unjust death

He was condemned through false accusation, by false witnesses. He suffered t/violent hatred of men, men who could not stand t/truth & power of his life & message. He, too, in midst of all that injustice & murder perpetrated against Him, bore it w/o retaliation. He bore it quietly,

patiently, & w/forgiveness in His heart saying, "Father, forgive them they know not what they do."

That amazing example of grace & forgiveness personified in t/Sinless Lamb of God may have been part of t/reason why t/centurion & others said, "Truly this was the Son of God."

You see, v. 21 says that He left us an example, that we should follow in His steps. Stephen did.

As one writer notes, ". . . as much as what Stephen said it was what he was that was so powerful. As much as what Christ taught, it was what He was that was so powerful—now mark this—particularly in a situation of injustice and even murder. You see, how a believer reacts to the world's violence, to the world's injustice, to the world's persecution, to the world's perpetration of murder is a definite key as to how the world will react to that Christian's message. The platform that we establish by the quality of our living in the direst kind of circumstance is crucial to the impact of our testimony." [John MacArthur from a 1997 sermon on 1 Peter 2:13-14]

This brings us full-circle back to 2:15 (rem. I said that this v. gives us t/main idea for t/entire passage) ==> {cite}

Listen - It's God's immutable will that we do good in every situation that we find ourselves in whether we're falsely accused // we think some law is right or wrong // we think some leader is good or evil. We are to maintain a X-like attitude & demeanor // entrust ourselves, like Stephen, into t/care of a sov./loving God. & like Stephen, our lives will glow w/the glory of X & t/ignorance of foolish men will be stilled.

We are to ==>

"Respectfully submit to civil authority so that the critics be silenced."

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

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

Submit yourselves to every human institution . . .

1. Literally, every "human creation"

We've noted that t/word "creation" in t/original text always refers to a creation of God. So it's only a human institution in that men are t/human agents who exist under t/sovereign control of God who has ordained t/governments that be.

Human institutions are ultimately derived by God.

I. The Command to Civil Obedience (1a)

I have to confess that t/past few weeks have been awkward as far as my preaching thru this passage is concerned.

Dec. 17th we started this passage. Next wk. was Xmas eve. so we were out of it. Dec. 31st we were back in it. Last week I was out of town. This wk. we're back in again.

2 weeks ago I not only didn't finish 1 Peter 2:13-17, I didn't finish t/parallel passage in Romans 13. So I left off at t/beginning of our main text in 1 Peter & also in t/beginning of t/corollary text in Romans! My homiletics prof in seminary would cringe!

So I want to at least finish up from where we left off in Romans 13 (if you would, please turn there).

TAP writing to t/CH at Rome. He pens a passage that reads much like 1 Peter 2:13-17. Chronologically, Romans was written B4 Peter, so it's possible that Peter knew this passage in Romans & drew from it.

Four main points ==>

I. The Command to Civil Obedience (1a)

II. The Reason for Civil Obedience (1b)

III. The Consequence of Civil Disobedience (2-6)

IV. The Practice of Civil Obedience

I. The Command to Civil Obedience (1a)

We see t/command once again in v. 1 ==> {slow}

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities.

{pause}

II. The Reason for Civil Obedience (1b)

For [or "because"], there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

A. Two-fold reason:

1) God is t/only sovereign (no auth. apart from Him); 2) those authorities do exist have been est. by Him (His providence).

I think of a key event that occurred in t/fall of 1561 in Scotland between Queen Mary & Calvinistic preacher, John Knox.

Mary was Romans Catholic. She had been education in Catholic France, & she believed that sovereigns (kings & queens like herself) had absolute power over their subjects. The reformer John Knox was known for his uncompromising preaching . That wasn't appreciated by t/governing authority & as a result Knox was sentenced to serve as a galley slave for 19 mo.

After he was released, Knox studied in Geneva under J. Calvin from 1533-59. In summer of 1560 he helped draft t/Scottish Confession of faith that affirmed JC as t/only rightful Head of His Church.

2 yrs after Knox's return the queen accused him of proclaiming a unlawful religion. One of t/things she asked him was this, "And how can that doctrine be of God, seeing that God commands subjects to obey their princes?" She was referring to this very verse in Romans.

Knox admonished her, saying, "God commands queens to be nurses unto his people." She replied, "Yes, but [yours is] not the church that I will nourish,"

With that, Knox retorted, "*Your will, Madam, is no reason.*" [adapted from James Boice, Romans, Volume 4, 1639-40]

Nourishment according to Mary included t/death of nearly 300 people, all burnt at t/stake for heresy, including former Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. That earned her t/moniker "Bloody Mary."

But Knox was correct, her will was no reason and ==>

... there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

As John MacArthur writes:

"In whatever form it exists, government and its authority derive directly from God and exist to benefit human society. . . . No matter what form it takes, all human government that has ever existed (or ever will exist), in any nation, at any level, as a part of any ethnic group, has been under God's sovereign control, because [quoting Psalm 62:11] all 'power belongs to God.' In fact, the entire universe, including Satan and his demons, is subject to the omnipotent, omniscient will of the Creator. Without exception, the power any leader, political party, or agency wields is delegated and circumscribed by God. Therefore, it only makes sense biblically that we ought to obey the government because its one and only source is God." [Why the Government Can't Save You, 27-28]

B. Does that mean God is pleased with Marxism or Naziism?

No. What it means is that God is ultimately sovereign over Marxism or Naziism or any form of government. While He may not be pleased

w/ them, I can assure you that He is pleased to use them for His purposes and glory.

1. There's a false assumption that has infiltrated the church

A false assumption that we have some divine right to live within some ideal, theocracy called t/United States of America. So we have to fight a culture war to "Christianize" America. We have to lobby and picket and fight t/opposition using whatever means at our disposal. Thought is that if we somehow gain majority vote & control we'll get our way and be on t/road to civil utopia.

Consider t/simple fact that t/CH has historically flourished in oppressive settings & grown lazy/apathetic in non-oppressive ones. We are called to be a kingdom of priests, not a kingdom of activists. As priests we conquer our culture by being salt and light, by taking every thought captive to t/obedience of X. In short, by proclaiming t/gospel w/our lips & our lives.

I'll admit there is a benefit to moving a nation, politically or otherwise, in t/direction of a Christian worldview, upholding Christian principles. Even non-believers benefit from that, it's part of God's common grace. After all, who would you rather have as a neighbor, a religious person who thinks he's a Christian but really isn't or a radical Moslem? A moral family who uphold Christian ethics or a family of atheists who have no viable standard for ethics or for t/dignity & worthiness of man? How about a family of observant Roman Catholics or a bunch of guys running a crack house? Answer is obvious.

So, yes, I believe there's a benefit to groups like the American Family Association & Focus on the Family & Groups that are peacefully and lawfully trying to rid our nation of t/curse of abortion. BUT these things should never replace t/first and foremost priority of t/CH which is to proclaim the Gospel of J.C. Because in t/long run it doesn't matter a

whole lot if you go to hell as a religious person or as an atheist. And t/only way to lasting change in any given culture is not by way of reformed politics but by transformed hearts.

That's not only t/mandate of Scripture, it's also t/example of Scripture. In Acts chapt. 14 Paul and Barnabas are in Lystra. There in a pagan region filled w/superstition & hostility. There was no Roman justice or order, those things that protected those who lived in Roman Colonies. They were so lawless that they attacked Paul & stoned him - almost to death (v. 19 says they left him for dead). If you would think that any place deserves to be cast into a culture war it was here.

Was that why Paul and Barnabas were there? To lobby t/local political parties? To arrange a sit-in at a clinic somewhere in t/area?

Verse 15 [we're here to] preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them.

You want to see change? Proclaim X. Change culture one heart at a time.

BTW - a CH was est. in Lystra - Lystra which later gave Paul his child in the faith, Timothy. So you never know what sort of impact you might have in t/hearts of men by proclaiming X.

a. Let me clarify something

I don't want to give you t/false impression that I expect t/scope of your ministry to a lost world centers on handing out gospel tracts. I don't think that individual Xns standing on a street corner w/a megaphone screaming at people is particularly effective.

You see, taking every thought captive to t/obedience of X is much bigger than that. I'm all for intelligent Xnty. Over t/past century or so t/world has looked at t/CH as a bunch of mindless hicks. Men & women w/two

brains, I lost & t/other out somewhere looking for it. All truth comes from t/hand of God. I don't care if it's science, history, philosophy, mathematics - it's all to be brought under t/Lordship of JC. We need to be able to meet our culture where it is so that we can show them t/inconsistency of how they live, that a life lived apart from t/God of t/Bible is foolishness, that they have no logical grounds to believe in t/dignity of man, t/universality of morals, or even logic itself. But that's a means to an end, not an end itself. The goal is that we bring them face to face w/JC and t/Gospel.

That's 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (we looked at it last time) ==>

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.⁵ 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,

You don't do that by laying down in front of an abortion clinic, or worse, by blowing it up. That's doing battle t/worlds way, according to t/flesh. Am I against abortion. Absolutely. Do I want to see abortion done away with in this nation. You bet I do. Should we support pro-life groups? Yes, t/ones anyway that operate lawfully.

But hoping that we get enough like-minded justices on t/supreme court isn't t/answer to t/problem. So what? We lobby & work to get some law passed or to get some judge elevated. What happens if t/hearts of men are not changed? // we don't work to take every thought captive to t/obedience of X? The other side works harder than we do & a few months or years later it's all undone. It's a temporary solution at best.

People need to know t/logical fallacy of their position & most of all that their only hope is found in t/person and work of JC.

III. The Consequence of Civil Disobedience (2-6)

Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

There's really a 2-fold consequence here . . .

A. First Consequence: To Resist authority is to oppose the ordinance of God

IOW - God commands us to submit to civil authority. This isn't optional.

1. Some go to great lengths to explain this away

1 fairly popular interpretation claims that this passage is only a warning against overthrowing govt. for t/purpose of anarchy. IOW - it's okay to resist an evil govt. & disobey it – even overthrow it – if that govt. is unjust.

". . . [only if one was] choosing anarchy over an established government, then that would be a violation of Romans 13. Although Romans 13 is not an endorsement of every government, it is a description of what God says is the proper role of civil government." [Brannon Howsein "Was the American Revolution Unbiblical?" July 4, 2005, NewsWithViews.com]

C'mon, don't make nonsense out of that which makes perfect sense!

We already noted that Nero was emperor at this time. He was a wicked, sadistic ruler.

Note also that the political atmosphere of Jesus' day was every bit as bad, in fact much worse, than our own.

Tax rates were unreasonable & tax-collectors were sanctioned by t/govt. to abuse t/system even more putting tremendous \$\$ strain on t/people. The Jews in Palestine were afforded almost no civil rights & were

considered an underprivileged minority with no right of appeal against t/legal injustices of Rome. As a result some Jews rebelled against Rome.

There was a party of t/Jews known as "The Zealots" who ignored their tax obligations & opposed Rome, w/ violence. They believed that they had no obligation before God to recognize a Gentile ruler, according to Deut. 17:15. Many of t/Zealots became assassins & terrorized both Rome & fellow Jews.

Interesting that Jesus' ministry took place right in t/middle of that problematic political situation. That's why many of his followers believed that he had come to deliver Israel from political oppression. But we know that X did not come as a political deliverer. He didn't invoke a "culture war" that centered on legislation; He invoked a "culture war" that centered on t/Gospel. [adapted from John MacArthur, Why Government Can't Save You, 10-11]

A. First Consequence of Unjustified Civil Disobedience is this: To Resist authority is to oppose the ordinance of God

Robert Haldane:

"The people of God then ought to consider resistance to the government under which they live as a very awful crime, even as resistance to God Himself." [cited in MacArthur, What the Government Can't Save You, 31]

B. Second Consequence: To resist authority is to invite judgment

Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

1. What kind of condemnation or judgment is this talking about?

It's 2-fold: The judgement of God and the judgement of the state. To disobey a commandment of God (that's t/Command to Civil Obed. we saw in v. 1) is to invite God's discipline.

To disobey t/laws of t/state is to invite state's discipline. That's vv. 3-6=>

{read vv. 3-4}

That's t/point Jesus was trying to make to Peter ==>

... all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword."

{read vv. 5-7 } on v. 5 "conscience" = latin "con" (with) & "scientia" (knowledge). With knowledge. Has to do w/knowledge of our inner heart, that which motivates & guides behavior

IV. The Practice of Civil Obedience

Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Remember Matthew 22:15-21? I'll probably comment more on this later, but it's also relevant here.

15 Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap Him in what He said.16 And they *sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.17 "Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"18 But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?19 "Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius.20 And He *said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?"21 They *said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He *said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

Back to 1 Peter chapter 2 {read vv. 13-17} - What's the goal? {read v. 15}