

ATTENTION!!

Business Meeting: Today at 2:30

**WELCOME!
Jacob Machengete**

Our Actions? Jesus said...

“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”
Matthew 7:12

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Upon these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets.”
Matthew 22:36-40

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.
Sunday.....10:45 a.m.

Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

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Do We Honor Our Rulers?

By Dylan Stewart

Social media is rampant with people - even Christians - making daily, sometimes hourly posts criticizing our governmental leaders. It does not matter what side of the political spectrum you may fall on, it is so easy to constantly dwell on the negative that the rulers of our land may be promoting. However, as "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20), we have been called to treat our rulers with respect and honor.

Paul told the Romans, "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed" (Romans 13:7). Since the governing authorities "have been instituted by God" (Romans 13:1), we certainly owe our leaders respect and honor. For instance, Peter commanded, "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. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:13-17).

This passage does not mean that we can never express disagreement with the views and policies of our rulers (Joe Biden, Kay Ivey, etc.), especially when they speak things contrary to the word of God (Psalm 119:104), nor does God expect us to follow along and participate in or advocate for laws and policies that contradict His Law (Acts 5:29). However, when we disagree with

the actions of our ruling authorities, it does not mean we are justified in ever speaking evil of them.

Consider Paul's response to those who asked if he would speak against those who ruled over him. Paul says, *"You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people"* (Acts 23:5; see also Exodus 22:28). This means we cannot call our leaders derogatory names, epithets, etc. As a younger, more immature Christian, I was guilty of falling into this trap - constantly criticizing our governmental leaders - and I pray that God forgives me of my sins. Instead of speaking evil against those who rule over us, Paul commands, *"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way"* (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Thus, we can see that we are exhorted to pray for everyone, but especially on behalf of those in roles of authority. However, the text proves that it is not enough just to simply pray for our leaders, but we must also give thanks for them. I will be the first to admit this can definitely be difficult at times. Yet just because something is difficult, it does not excuse us from obeying what God has commanded (1 John 5:3).

God will hold those who dishonor their rulers accountable on the day of Judgment. It is written, *"The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction"* (2 Peter 2:9-12). As result, to ensure we do not heap condemnation upon ourselves, let us render the honor due to everyone, including our ruling authorities.

Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

By Ron Thomas

How does one keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? When people willingly join themselves together, they do so with good intentions. Each one comes from a place that is not shared by the others in that group. We all have our experiences, perspectives, and we launch into the future with that. Sometimes, we forget that not everyone thinks like I do. When we forget this, we attribute to others "they understand" my intentions (my motives) when, in fact, they may not. A great failing of humanity is this: attributing to another my way of thinking.

In answering the question, the only right answer is under the banner of the Lord's leadership. We have political perspectives that align, but they do not always align perfectly. We have philosophies of life that align, but they do not always align perfectly. When we address another who is totally different from me, then what? Can we still be unified? Yes, but only under the banner of the Lord's authority. The Lord molds us into a thinking people that aligns with Him, and not our heritage or perspective.

In this approach to keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace we gain the Lord, and the Lord gains all those who love and obey Him. With love, devotion, and conviction, we live as Paul exhorted us to live, *"I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me..."* (cf. Galatians 2:20). With this new approach to life, we operate from the source of love, as revealed in that which God did for us; we seek to show this love to others, regardless of their point of reference and circumstances (cf. Matthew 7:12; 22:34-40). We are kind, gentle, teach the truth, forbearing to those we believe have done us wrong, allow not yesterday to get in front of today. In short, we live as Christ.

How much effort are we putting in to keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?