

VI. Laws of Divine Establishment and the Royal Family Honor Code: Philippians 2:12 Summary

Fear is the mental attitude of the baby believer who submits to the mandates of God because of fear of punishment.

This is enforced humility.

Reverence is the mental attitude of the adult believer who submits to the mandates of God because of a willing desire to serve Him motivated by a personal love for Him.

This is genuine humility.

The believers at Philippi are not baby believers, they are adults who have personal love for God and in genuine humility are willingly motivated to pursue the plan and execute its mandates.

Now we can better understand Paul's comment to the Philippians. Let's take a look at a corrected and expanded translation of Philippians 2:12.

Corrected and Expanded Translation of:

Philippians 2:12 - So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed my teachings [over the past 15 years], not only in my presence but now much more in my absence, [*katergazomai*] continue the willing cultivation of your streams of consciousness to the ultimate conclusion of harvesting [*soteria*] your own deliverance from danger and preservation from persecution, accompanied by reverence and respect.

The danger and persecution indicated here refer to the immediate situation involving Nero and the subsequent problems imposed by the Flavian Caesars: Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian.

Deliverance and preservation are indicated in two ways:

- a. Spiritually through divine protection during the dangers and persecutions imposed, and
- b. historically by the advent of the Antonine Caesars.

Their "reverence and respect" are composed of:

- c. Authority orientation, indicated by the aorist active indicative of the verb, *hupakouo*: "just as you have always obeyed."
- d. Genuine humility, indicated by the imperative of permission from the verb, *katergazomai*: "continue the willing cultivation."
- e. Personal love for God, occupation with Christ, and submission to the Holy Spirit, indicated by the genitive of accompaniment from the noun, *phobos*: "reverence."
- f. Love for God is manifest by executing the mandates, indicated by the genitive of accompaniment from the noun, *tromos*: "respect."

Principles

When historical trends indicate that the duly established authorities are developing an anti-Christian attitude, the policy of the mature Christian is to assume a low profile.

By that I do not mean to deny the faith or adjust your lifestyle with regard to spiritual growth.

Your due diligence is to continue to study the Word, function under your ambassadorship, and stand fast for truth.

But you never, ever challenge the government or seek to do harm to duly elected officials.

Matthew 22:21 - Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.

1 Peter 2:11 - Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers [as ambassadors representing the heavenly community] to abstain from fleshly lusts [crusader arrogance], which wage war against the soul [the constant assault by the sinful nature's lust pattern].

1 Peter 2:12 - Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles [establishment morality including submission to duly elected authority], so that in the things which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

The phrase by Peter, "slander you as evildoers," had direct application to the charges leveled against first-century believers mentioned by **Philip Schaff** in his **History of the Christian Church, volume 1**:

To divert from himself the general suspicion of incendiarism, and at the same time to furnish new entertainment for his diabolical cruelty, Nero wickedly cast the blame upon the hated Christians, who ... had come to be distinguished from the Jews as the most dangerous offshoot from that race. They were certainly despisers of the Roman gods, and loyal subjects of a higher king than Cæsar. What could be expected of the ignorant multitude, when even such cultivated Romans as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny, stigmatized Christianity as a vulgar and pestiferous superstition.

Some Christians were arrested, confessed their faith, and were "convicted not so much," says Tacitus, "of the crime of incendiarism as of hating the human race." Their Jewish origin, their indifference to politics and public affairs, their abhorrence of heathen customs, were construed into an "odium generis humani," and this made an attempt on their part to destroy the city sufficiently plausible to justify a verdict of guilty. An infuriated mob does not stop to reason, and is apt to run mad as an individual.

Under this wanton charge of incendiarism, backed by the equally groundless charge of misanthropy and unnatural vice, there began a carnival of blood such as even heathen Rome never saw before or since.

We live in a day of inverted thought. Thus, unbelievers evaluate the lifestyle motivated by Christian integrity to be dishonorable.

Such an evaluation is forced by their inability to consider all the facts.

Because of unbelief, the unbeliever is incapable of resolving the problems of life from a divine perspective.

Thus, human viewpoint always produces human solutions. This is the subject of an excellent article by: **Sobran, Joseph**. "Dark Ages, New Morality." **Sobran's**. Feb., 1995, p. 11.