

A Study of The Epistle of 1st Peter

Theme: “A LIVING HOPE!”

Trinity Lutheran Church - Norman, OK.

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Lesson: 16

Chapter 2:13-17

Date: 11-22-20



HONOR EVERYONE.
LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.
FEAR GOD.
HONOR THE EMPEROR.
1 PETER 2:17

BIBLE TEXT:

(13) Be subject for **the Lord's sake** to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, (14) or to governors as **sent by him** to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (15) For **this is the will of God**, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. (16) Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as **servants of God**. (17) Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. **Fear God**. Honor the emperor.

STUDY NOTES:

A. 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.

(Acts 4:19; Rom 13:1-7; Titus 3:1,2)

B. For **this is the will of God**, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

(Lk 6:28; 1 Cor 4:12; 1 Th 5:15)

C. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as **servants of God**.

(Jn 8:32; Rom 6:22; 1 Cor 7:22,23; 8:9; Gal 5:13; Jas 1:25)

D. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. **Fear God**. Honor the emperor.

(Prov 24:21; Mt 22:21; Rom 12:10-14; Heb 13:1)

Luther's Works – Volume 30 pp. 75-76

We do not owe the government obedience for its own sake, says St. Peter, but for **the sake of God**, whose children we are. This must induce us to be obedient, not the thought that our obedience is a meritorious deed. For what I do **for God's sake**, this I must do without recompense and to serve Him. Therefore I must be willing to do for nothing everything His heart desires. But why should one be subject to the government for **God's sake**?

Because it is **God's will** that malefactors be punished and that benefactors be protected, in order that in this way unity may remain in the world. Therefore we should further external peace. **God** wants us to do this. For since we are not all believers but the great majority are unbelievers, **God** has regulated and ordained matters this way in order that the people of the world might not devour one another.

The government should wield the sword and restrain the wicked if they do not want to have peace. Then they have to obey. This He accomplishes through the government, so that in this way the world is ruled well everywhere. Thus you see that if there were no evil people, one would not need a government. Therefore St. Peter adds the words "to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right." Pious people are to be commended for doing what is right. The secular government should praise and honor them, in order that the others may have their conduct as an example. But it should not be one's purpose to merit anything **before God** for this. Thus Paul also says in Rom. 13:3: "Rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval."

Therefore **God has instituted** government for the sake of the unbelievers. Consequently, Christians, too, may exercise the power of the sword. They have the obligation to serve their neighbors and to restrain the wicked with it, in order that the pious may remain in peace among them. Yet the injunction of **the Lord** not to resist evil remains in force, so that even if a Christian wields the sword, he does not use it for himself and does not avenge himself but uses it solely for others.

Thus it is also a work of Christian love to protect and defend a whole community with the sword and not to let the people be abused. **Christ** gives His teaching only to those who believe and love. And they observe it. But since the great multitude in the world does not believe, it does not keep the commandment either. Consequently, it is necessary to rule these as non-Christians and to check their arrogance. For if one permitted their power to run riot, no one would be able to live among them.

Thus there are two kinds of government in the world, just as there are two kinds of people, namely, believers and unbelievers. Christians let **the Word of God** rule them; for themselves they have no need whatever of the secular government. But non-Christians need another rule, namely, the secular sword, because they refuse to be guided by **the Word of God**.

Otherwise, if we were all Christians and followed **the Gospel**, it would not be necessary or profitable at all to wield the secular sword and power. For if there were no transgressors, there could be no punishment either. But since we cannot all be pious, **Christ** has entrusted the wicked to the government to be ruled as they must be ruled. But the pious He keeps for Himself and rules them Himself **with His Word alone**.

Therefore the Christian rule is not opposed to the secular rule. Nor is the secular government in opposition to **Christ**. The secular rule has nothing at all to do **with the office of Christ** but is an external matter, just as all other offices and estates are. And just as these are outside the pale of **Christ's office**, so that a non-Christian administers them as well as a Christian, so it is not the office of the secular sword to make people either Christians or non-Christians. But I have often said enough about this elsewhere.

LIFE APPLICATION

1. In the civil realm, how are we 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?
2. In the spiritual realm, how do we live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as **servants of God**?