

Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam

October, 2020

Romans 13:1-5

At the time Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome, Nero was emperor of the Roman Empire. The rumor was going around that Nero's mother had poisoned her husband, Claudius, so that Nero could reign. This was a bad time of assassinations, conspiracies and misuse of power. Nero wanted his people to think of him as a man of peace, but that is not what the people were thinking or saying behind his back.

This was a difficult time for Christians. What do you do when the civil authorities publicly say one thing and privately do something else? How could Christians obey the government when it seemed that the rulers, you are asked to obey, hid behind lies and half truths? This question is as relevant for Christians today as it was for Christians in Rome 2,000 years ago! Unfortunately, it seems that our nation is becoming more and more like ancient, pagan Rome.

In this life, God cares for us through two kingdoms: the Church which proclaims salvation through Jesus to the world, and our government in which God often uses unbelievers to maintain peace so that we can worship and serve our Lord.

Today Scripture shows us that God wants His authorities to **Protect and Serve**.

Notice that Scripture says that the government is God's servant. God established government. Whatever authority exists has God standing behind it. We obey and respect the government because God gives it authority over us. Our text describes the work of the government as simply:

- to commend those who keep the law
- to punish those who break the law
- to punish some crimes with the death penalty.

Our governments; local, state, and national, make laws that are mostly for our good. However, sometimes laws are stupid. For example: In California it is against the law to trap a mouse unless you have a hunting license. In Seattle it is against the law to carry a concealed weapon more than six feet long! And in Vermont it is against the law to whistle under water. Laws like this should be erased from the books.

Laws are important for peace and happiness in this life. It is against the law to drive over the speed limit. It is against the law to scam someone. It is against the law to murder someone. It is against the law to destroy someone's property because you don't like them. We need laws to live in peace. If we don't break the law, we enjoy life. If we break the law we get a ticket, pay a fine, or go to jail. We get that.

A nation with no law ceases to exist as a nation.

There has been a lot of news about civil unrest this year in our nation. This unrest has occurred in many cities of our country: Minneapolis, Atlanta, Portland, Seattle, Chicago, and even in Kenosha and Wauwautosa. You know what happened: buildings were burned, windows smashed, businesses looted, and parts of cities burned to the ground. Laws were broken. There was no peace. This didn't make us happy. It didn't please God either.

In order to give its citizens peace so they can be happy, we have a military whose job is to protect us. It patrols our shores with ships and planes and submarines to give us protection. They serve us, and, even if they don't know it, they are serving God. Because they serve and protect us, we give these men and women our thanks and respect.

Our cities have police officers who protect and serve us. If we are in danger, we call for help and the police will come. If we are living within the law, we will have no problems with the police. If we live as outlaws, we should be afraid, for God expects His representatives in the government to apprehend and punish those who break the law and endanger citizens.

This is part of the 4th Commandment, Honor your father and mother. Within their offices, our mayors, our police officers, our men and women in uniform, Governor Evers and President Trump are to be given our respect. We may not have voted for the people in office, yet God placed them there, and God stands behind them. We disobey those in authority – we disobey God. We show a lack of respect for those in authority – we are showing a lack of respect for God. Sometimes elected officials use their power wisely. Other times not. In those offices we see the power of God, establishing order for the citizens of the United States.

Let's review:

- The government is God's servant to whom God has given the power to punish and put someone to death.
- Christians are to obey their government because we want to be loyal citizens.
- Christians want to obey the government out of love for Jesus.
- If the government does not do what is right, that does not give us an excuse for doing what is wrong.
- Rebellion is wrong because God tells us to submit to the government.
- When we submit to the will of the government, we are kneeling before our Lord Jesus.

David, Daniel and Jesus are Bible examples of believers who gave respect to godless leaders who were not carrying out God's will.

It was Paul who wrote, Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good. Paul also wrote that we should pray for those in authority so that we might live peaceful and quiet lives.

We are blessed to live in a country where we can freely gather to

receive God's spiritual gifts and worship Him. We obey those who govern us unless they contradict God's Word. We give respect to parents, teachers, employers and those who govern us. We give God's representatives honor and obedience not blindly, but as Paul says, faithfully, as we seek to do good and to avoid evil.

We are in the world, but not part of the world. We live as permanent citizens of heaven. We are strengthened in this life by Word and Sacraments. We live now, looking forward to life in heaven with Jesus, the angels, and all the saints.

Since we are living in this life we want to know how our Savior would want us to live -

- ✓ we can live in peace with our neighbors
- ✓ we can work faithfully for our employers
- ✓ we can respect those in government whether they deserve it or not
- ✓ we can obey the laws of the land
- ✓ we can pay our taxes
- ✓ we can pray for those in authority

Jesus has entrusted believers and unbelievers to be in authority over us. Pray for them so that God's will is done. But since we live in a sinful world, do not expect that God's will will always be done as we want! Those leaders must face the Lord Jesus one day!

Until that day, let us continue to worship and serve our Lord in the freedom that we enjoy. Since we love our Lord who has loved us even more, let us, as Paul encourages, be obedient and ready to do whatever is good.