

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

GOD'S WORD CONCERNING CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP – PART II

Romans 13:3-4 “For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”

Today’s devotional verses continues the thought of verses 1 and 2 those having governmental authority are helpers or agents of God. The authority of those in government has been given by God to serve His good purposes. God gives them their authority to prevent anarchy, tyranny, and all kinds of evil. This authority includes the use of capital punishment (v.4) when determined by the one in authority as necessary to carry out this responsibility.

The reason Paul says you are to submit to those with governmental authority is they have received it from God. As stated in yesterday’s devotion, to rebel against their authority is to literally rebel against God who instituted it. Those who obey those placed by God in authority do right and have no need to be afraid of the government nor those who serve in its various offices. It is only those who do not obey, do not do right, who should be afraid of the what the government can do to them. God has placed men and women into offices of authority for the good of society.

These words of St. Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit are given to honor the words found in Romans 12:2, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what god’s will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will” and to heed his warning found in Romans 12:17-18, “Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

St. Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:13-17 “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the

ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor."

Prayer: Lord God of power, You hold all things in Your hand. Raise up good and honest leaders who will defend our liberty and inspire our service, following the wisdom of Your Word in the cause of justice and peace. In Jesus' name. (This prayer was prayed at Crown of Life Lutheran Church, Sun City West, AZ, Sunday, February 4, 2024)

Before You, Lord, we bow, Our God who reigns above
And rules the world below, Boundless in pow'r and love.
Our thanks we bring In joy and praise,
Our hearts we raise To You, our King!

The nation You have blest May well Your love declare,
From foes and fears at rest, Protected by Your care.
For this bright day, For this fair land—
Gifts of Your hand—Our thanks we pay.

May ev'ry mountain height, Each vale and forest green,
Shine in Your Word's pure light, And its rich fruits be seen!
May ev'ry tongue be tuned to praise
And join to raise A grateful song.

Earth, hear your Maker's voice; Your great Redeemer own;
Believe, obey, rejoice, And worship Him alone.
Cast down your pride, Your sin deplore,
And bow before The Crucified.

And when in pow'r He comes, Oh, may our native land
From all its rending tombs Send forth a glorious band,
A countless throng, With joy to sing
To heav'n's high King Salvation's song!
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