

Bethany

BIBLE CHURCH

May 31, 2020

Dear Bethany Bible Church,

By now, most of you are hearing about and seeing the violence and protesting which is overtaking many streets in several major metropolitan cities across America. These scenes are seemingly related (at least primarily) to the escalating racial tension regarding two recent deaths in the South and Midwest. Particularly with regard to the death this week of George Floyd in Minneapolis, those who are peaceably demonstrating and protesting such violence and death, as is their constitutional right, are nevertheless being completely overshadowed by those who are trying to capitalize on racial tension by looting and destroying property, among other things, all in the name of protest. Those (whether they are white or black) who are setting fires, burglarizing businesses, and even using violence themselves in which to protest, are obviously not models to follow nor examples to emulate.

One need to look no further than our Lord Jesus Christ, when He chose not to respond to Pilate's unjust actions against Him. The Apostle Peter's words in 1 Peter 2:21-25 are a very clear path for responding to such injustices done in the name of brutality and hatred:

"²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

In that same chapter of Peter's first letter, in both our actions toward a Pagan society, and in how we are to respond to our flawed government, surely the Spirit-inspired response we should be following is a rebuke to those seeking change through these ungodly means we're seeing played out. If change is needed—and who doesn't assume this should and must take place?—the clear answer from God's Word is to utterly forsake what you and I are largely seeing displayed by those who are bent on destruction and mayhem.

Notice the completely opposite response (than what we're viewing) which Peter gives as to how we as Christians are to live in the midst of a decaying culture:

"⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against

your soul. ¹²Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Even when we see unwarranted police brutality against those who are made in the image of God, we have every right to decry the wrongs perpetrated. But remember, Peter—in between the two passages I’ve just cited—gives a straightforward and clarion call in the believer’s response to all governments of the world, including the authorities who at times do very wicked things to its citizens in the supposed name of law-keeping, but is nothing of itself but law-breaking:

“¹³Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. ¹⁸Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.”

Here then is what we must do as believers in Jesus:

- 1) Follow the clear example of our Savior and Lord when suffering at the hands of unjust punishment;
- 2) Keep our own Christian conduct honorable in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, and that for the sake of the gospel; and
- 3) Seek with all your heart to follow the will of God (even in the midst of wrongs committed by both the government and our responses to said government).

Surely, this is the right prescription in the face of evils done by both the authorities and its people. And in awaiting a peaceful outcome to all this civil unrest in our country, we earnestly and fervently pray that our lives and responses to these days will reflect the very character and actions of the One who points us to His cross as our only lasting and eternal hope for peace on earth and good will toward men.

May it be so. Come quickly, Lord Jesus

Pastor Lance