



Life Group Study Notes

“Who's In Authority Anyway?”

Ps. James Lowe - July 24, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- How did your parent(s) respond when you complained as a child, “That’s not fair!”?
- How do you tend to react when you experience something you think is unfair?
- Have you ever misused authority entrusted to you? How did it affect others?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

1 Peter 2:11-17 ESV

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep 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. 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. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

- God calls us to honorable conduct among all people. We are to be full of good deeds toward all people, not just those who love us.
- God calls us to respect the offices of civil authorities and to submit to them. Submission is greater than obedience. It involves a righteous attitude of the heart. We should honor authorities even if their conduct or actions are not righteous. Not all Roman officials were righteous in their administration of their duties. Yet the apostle Peter calls all believers to honor them and submit to them.
- We should never do evil, even if those in authority do evil. God has called us to fear him, and do things his way.

1 Peter 2:18-25 ESV

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When 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. He 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. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

- If we are punished and suffer for doing what is unrighteous, we have nothing to complain about.
- If we suffer unjustly and are unjustly punished for doing good, we have God's favor and approval. God's own Son endured the same, and was rewarded by the Father for it. God will not leave our unjust sufferings unrecompensed. He will reward us, if not in this life, then most assuredly in the next.
- We must remember that God's ways are higher than our ways. Our anger at experiencing injustice does not achieve God's righteousness. God's anger is always holy and righteous. Yet his heart is longsuffering and seeks reconciliation.
- Over time Christ's ways succeeded in transforming the Roman Empire. The godly conduct of the early Christians in the face of persecution actually led to more and more people becoming Christians. Eventually the size of the church grew so significantly that it is estimated that as many as half of all the people in the region of Asia Minor were Christian by the end of the 3rd century. With Constantine's profession of faith a few years later, Christianity was legally permitted to take hold and transform the empire. In the same way God can change our present society.
- Christ suffered and conquered. He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sits on heaven's throne with authority over all creation. He will return to earth on God's appointed day to save his people and to punish those who refuse to submit to God and obey him. God cares about injustice. He will not permit it to continue indefinitely. He judges and punishes at his appointed times, in measures in this age and in fullness in the judgement to come when Jesus returns.
- We must know the spirit in which God wants us to respond to all of the issues of our day.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- How does God want us to respond to the current issues of injustice? What kinds of response are not pleasing to God?
- How does the example of Jesus speak to us about God's way of responding to injustice?
- What can you do within your sphere of influence to positively change the political and social atmosphere?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Confess God's sovereignty, goodness, and wisdom in providing ultimate control of the course of human history. Worship and exalt him for working all things together for the fulfillment of his plan of redemption.
- Pray for our nation and the upcoming elections. Pray for mercy for our nation and for the fear of the Lord to come upon our candidates.
- Ask God for open doors to speak to people about God's truth, God's love, and God's redemption.