

NEWSLETTER
MAY - 2023

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH

SPEAKERS

May 7: Ken Storm, *Holy Communion*

May 14: Ivan Niemela

May 21: Ken Storm

May 28: Nathan Ruonavaara, *Potluck Meal Following Service*

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Sunday Service: 11:00 a.m.

**Wednesday Bible Study:
7:00 p.m.**

CONTACT

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The Law of the Land

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God...” - Romans 13:1-4

Our text shows that God controls this world, even to the point of approving leaders to all levels of government which then obligates their citizens to submit to their laws. But being subject to earthly leaders does not excuse anyone from obeying the Word of God. When earthly leaders are appointed by God to their positions of authority they become His servants and, as such, are to combat evil and promote good in His sight. If anyone resists a righteous law of the land, that person becomes guilty of resisting the ordinance of God and can expect God’s judgement in return. Thus, we are to obey our government provided its laws do not contradict God’s Word.

The Bible shows that earthly leaders and the laws that they enact are not always righteous. Consider Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who found that they could not submit to all Babylonian laws even though its evil leader, king Nebuchadnezzar, was God’s handpicked servant (Jeremiah 25:9). They and many other Jewish teenagers were captured by Nebuchadnezzar and were required to embrace the Chaldean way of life, including its pagan religion. To effect this conversion, Nebuchadnezzar subjected these captives to a 3-year indoctrination program: their Hebrew names were changed to Babylonian names to reflect the land’s pagan gods, they were taught Babylonian customs to erase past knowledge of their Godly heritage, and they were appointed a daily provision of meat and wine to make them dependents of the state. Interestingly, all captives, except for Daniel and his three friends, readily submitted to the entire indoctrination program, most likely to avoid incurring the king’s great wrath.

Of the demands placed on them, Daniel and his three friends refused only one demand, the requirement to eat the king’s food. We might wonder why they didn’t also question the rest of the indoctrination program which was even more egregious to their faith. They probably viewed the food to be spiritually wrong and an unacceptable submission to the king especially if it translated into permanent welfare. In this case, the free food could be more spiritually defiling than the rest of the indoctrination program because it could undermine their independence and trust in God to provide for their daily bread. On the other hand, they could worship God on their own time when not in the Babylonian school system. Notice how Daniel treated this situation: “...*he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself*” (Dan 1:8). He didn’t revolt or protest, but he politely asked the eunuch to test them for ten days to verify that eating their customary food would make them healthier than those captives who ate the king’s food. Daniel and his friends were subsequently proved right and were permitted to eat their own food.

Winning the right to eat the food of their choosing rather than to protest the more pressing matters facing them might appear at first take to be misguided or at least to be a very hollow victory. Why did they not fight for their Jewish faith? They did not fight because God did not ask them to do so. Rather, because Daniel and his friends prayed to God for guidance, even in this seemingly small matter amongst the greater concerns, “...*God gave them knowledge and skill in*

all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (Daniel 1:17). (These God-given skills would prove to be very useful later on.) God had just tested these four youths in a small way to prove whether they would trust His Word or not. Because they did trust God they grew stronger and stronger in their faith as each successive test came along. As Jesus later said, *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much”* (Luke 16:10). Think about this, they were elevated to increasingly higher positions within the very government that sought to brainwash them as they continued to meet dangerous challenges. Thus, rather than withdraw from society or fight it they engaged it, trusting that God would guide them every step of the way in the pagan culture in which they now lived. He did.

Today, we face these same decisions: either submit to ungodly laws or face persecution from our government and neighbors. This is a tough situation to be in, but without a firm foundation in God we can easily lose our undying soul to this world. Whenever such troubles arise God does not ask us to retreat from society nor to condemn it; He merely asks us to explain to our oppressors the way of salvation through the blood of Christ. It is this blood that gives new-birth to a penitent soul who confesses his sin to another child of God and believes the word of reconciliation preached to him: *“...be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee”* (Matt 9:2). All believers have this authority to preach forgiveness in the name and shed blood of Jesus: *“Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them...”* (John 20:23). Unfortunately, there are many today who would rather not mention confession and forgiveness of sins in this manner to avoid causing an offence—remaining silent is an easier path to take. But whether a law or social-norm should be obeyed or not has little to do with our opinion or that of others. Instead, we must search His Word for wisdom to handle the challenges that come our way, even if they seem insignificant or do not agree with popular thinking. Thus, as a born-again believer, ask God to give you the opportunity to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus to the lost.

God's Peace,

Charles Korhonen