

4th of July- Our Daily Debt as a Good Citizen

Big Idea: The Christian is to be the best citizen, being a little Christ in their nation.

I) A Good Christian Citizen has been made Righteous.

A) Righteousness = Free from Guilt or Sin. Are you 'RIGHT' with God?

"I had nightmares every night," says Louis Zamperini, the subject of Laura Hillenbrand's bestselling book **"Unbroken."** The nightmares followed Zamperini home like a crazed hound from hell. "No one knew about it, because I looked perfectly normal," he says. "I covered it up by drinking."

His wife Cynthia suspected something was terribly wrong, because Zamperini often woke up in a cold sweat, shouting. One night he dreamed he was strangling The Bird. In fact, he was on top of his pregnant wife with his hands around her neck, choking the life out of her. "I woke up and couldn't believe it," he says.

His life spiraled downward as he began to chase other women at local bars, where he and his Olympic buddies often got free drinks. "I began to fall apart," Zamperini recalls. "My wife decided she wanted a divorce."

About that time, a new couple in their apartment building talked about a young evangelist preaching in a large tent in downtown Los Angeles. "In those days 'evangelist' was a dirty word because there were so many crooked ones," Zamperini notes. . .

Something Graham said about people "at the end of their rope" who turned to God triggered a flood of memories. He thought about his ordeal in the Japanese P.O.W. camp, when he and the other men prayed daily. He promised God then "If you get me home alive I'll seek you and serve you."

"What a heel I've been," he muttered to himself.

Instead of heading for the exit door, Louis turned and walked toward the prayer room. There, he fell to his knees and gave his life to Christ. "The Holy Spirit came into my heart and I became a member of the true church, the Body of Christ."

Something unusual happened as he knelt humbly before God. "When I was still on my knees I forgave all my guards, and I knew I was through smoking, drinking and chasing women."

B) The Roman Road to Righteousness. ***"The righteous will live by faith."***

- 1) Righteousness Needed, 1:18–3:20; See 3:11
- 2) Righteousness Provided, 3:21–8:39; See 5:6
- 3) Righteousness Vindicated, 9:1–11:36; See 10:16
- 4) Righteousness Practiced, 12:1–15:13.

II) As Good Citizens we are Involved in the Political System.

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience." Romans 13:1 & 5

A) Paul 's main view of the state was that in his day, as he saw things, the Romans Empire was the divinely ordained instrument to save the world from chaos. Ours is a stewardship government. God gave this government to us. We ought to view it as we view other gifts God has given us and work to take care of it.

B) The Bible calls us to bring our Christian values to the political process. "No person can really disassociate themselves from the society in which they live and have a part. No one in good conscious can opt out of the nation. We enjoy many benefits from being a part of our country."

C) Martin Luther taught the important role of the state and honorable men serving therein. And he placed a great importance on educating the young for civil service. In the Large Catechism, Luther writes, "If we want qualified and capable men for both civil and spiritual leadership, we must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and mankind."

- D) Our founding fathers certainly supported this theory. William Penn said, "Though good laws do well, good men do better." Noah Webster is quoted as saying, "When a citizen gives his [vote] to a man of known immorality, he abuses his trust and he sacrifices not only his own interest but that of his neighbor. He betrays the interest of his country."

Life Point: Vote, support political campaigns, protest unjust laws.

III) As Good Citizens we pay our taxes.

"This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." Romans 13:6-7

- A) Taxes are a part of life, in the Roman Empire and in the USA.
- "I'm proud to pay taxes in the United States; the only thing is, I could be just as proud for half the money." ~ Arthur Godfrey
 - "Taxes, after all, are dues that we pay for the privileges of membership in an organized society." ~Franklin D. Roosevelt

B) Paul insisted that the Christian must pay his tribute and his taxes to state and to local authorities, how galling these taxes may be. Even Jesus paid the taxes he owed.

IV) As Good Citizens all we do is based on love not hate

*"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. **Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**"* Romans 13:8-10

- A) Yet all we do we do out of **love not hate, love** not violence. We are little Christ's in the political system.

"A Christian must be a sign of contradiction in the world . . . a Christian is one who all their life chooses between good and evil, lies and truth, love and hatred, God and Satan . . . Today, more than ever, there is a need for our light to shine, that through us, through our deeds, through our choices, people can see the Father who is heaven." Father Jerzy.

- B) We work out of love because Jesus paid the debt that we owed for the bad things we have done.

"Men tell us in these days that sin is what you think it is. Well, it is not. Sin is what God thinks it is. You may think according to your own conscience. God thinks according to His. –John G. Lake

- C) To be that good citizens we need to **discipline ourselves to daily walk** with God in Word and Sacrament.

"People do not drift toward Holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated." --D.A. Carson

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