

**Citizenship as Christians****1 Peter 2:13-17**

**Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.**

When it's time to \_\_\_\_\_ government officials, should Christians get involved? Does the Bible have anything to say to the Christian \_\_\_\_\_? God reveals Himself and His will for our \_\_\_\_\_ through His written Word. The Bible tells us of God's \_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_ for redeeming man. It reveals what's \_\_\_\_\_ and what's \_\_\_\_\_. God's Word reveals what will \_\_\_\_\_ us and what will \_\_\_\_\_ us. The Bible teaches us the truth, and that truth gives us \_\_\_\_\_ and purpose. The Bible is more than an ancient book; it lives and it \_\_\_\_\_ to every aspect of our lives. We need the Bible, because we need God's \_\_\_\_\_ and His guidance. That's why we study.

The founding fathers of the United States recognized God's \_\_\_\_\_ in establishing and providing for the prosperity of this country, America. George Washington, said, "No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible \_\_\_\_\_ which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the \_\_\_\_\_ of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of Providential agency."

Can we suppose this nation with all its struggles has outgrown the \_\_\_\_\_ for God's help? Can we have peace and security while we reject the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord? Do we imagine that we can prosper while we ignore the Source of all blessings? Can we assume that we have justice while we reject the \_\_\_\_\_ of the God of all righteousness? When nations \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord and live by human standards, they deprive themselves of the blessing and the righteousness that the Lord's way provides. Pushing God out of our lives is a disastrous decision. William Penn wrote in 1681, "If you are not governed by God, you will be \_\_\_\_\_ by tyrants."

**Our reading today comes from 1 Peter 2:13-17.**

Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked \_\_\_\_\_, the people groan." We shouldn't imagine that all people are \_\_\_\_\_. There's an important difference between one who sets his heart to live \_\_\_\_\_ but sometimes does evil and one who sets his heart on \_\_\_\_\_ but sometimes does what is right. Wicked rulers \_\_\_\_\_ cities and nations, while righteous rulers \_\_\_\_\_ them. Wicked people are not content simply to be wicked; they want everyone else to \_\_\_\_\_ them in their wickedness. Psalm 125:3 says, "For the wicked shall not rule the godly, lest the godly be \_\_\_\_\_ to do wrong."

When wicked people rule, they open the \_\_\_\_\_ for all kinds of evil. Corrupt rulers abuse their \_\_\_\_\_ by making laws that oppress the righteous and use public funds to do things that no righteous person could approve. How can anyone who loves what is good \_\_\_\_\_ rulers who make laws promoting evil? If I believe a practice is morally wrong, I will not \_\_\_\_\_ legalizing that practice. If I believe a practice is morally wrong, I won't \_\_\_\_\_ for or use my influence to support a candidate that will do what God says is evil. If I support an ungodly candidate, I'm giving my \_\_\_\_\_ to his ungodly ways. How can I \_\_\_\_\_ God and support what is sinful? How can I \_\_\_\_\_ for righteousness and then support wickedness?

True Christians \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord. They belong to Him in \_\_\_\_\_ aspect of their lives. It's inconceivable that a Christian citizen could vote for someone who supports a platform that contradicts the moral \_\_\_\_\_ that they hold. If we elect people who have no regard for God, we'll have to live with their ungodly decisions and ways. Tertullian encouraged the Christian minority in the pagan Roman Empire of the second century to be the "soul" of their culture. God \_\_\_\_\_ Christians today to be the soul and conscience of our culture. We can bring about moral \_\_\_\_\_ if we're willing to speak out against evil. The best way to defeat the devil is to expose his wickedness. Christians have too often retreated into silence and let evil go unchallenged.

Edmund Burke, the 18<sup>th</sup> century politician said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do \_\_\_\_\_." Many Christians have so silenced their voices that all one can \_\_\_\_\_ is the ungodly calling for more ungodliness. We are fast destroying ourselves by letting the ungodly go unchallenged. We don't speak this way out of hate for anyone but out of love for God, love for our children, and love for our neighbors. It's not bigoted to \_\_\_\_\_ for righteousness; it's not bigoted to love the truth. It's \_\_\_\_\_ to want what is right and good.

Have we forgotten God is the \_\_\_\_\_ of all nations? Every nation is accountable to Him. **Read what the Lord said in Jeremiah 18:6-10.**

The Lord has witnessed our country's ungodly disrespect for the sanctity of \_\_\_\_\_, for the sanctity of \_\_\_\_\_, and the sanctity of moral \_\_\_\_\_. Our language has become profane, and our nation is \_\_\_\_\_ with the children of unmarried parents. The more we push God and His way \_\_\_\_\_, the more empty, and hopeless, and depraved we become. God's Word still says, "Righteousness \_\_\_\_\_ a nation, but sin is a \_\_\_\_\_ to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Our national sins are disgraceful, and we have no \_\_\_\_\_. We've forgotten how to blush, and our consciences have become \_\_\_\_\_.

God's grace should \_\_\_\_\_ us to live godly and righteous lives, not remove all standards of Christian morality. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age." Should we not be so \_\_\_\_\_ for what Jesus did on the cross for us that we would turn from sin?

Today, our laws \_\_\_\_\_ some evil practices to fill this land. We no longer \_\_\_\_\_ the sanctity of life or the sanctity of marriage, as defined in God's Holy Word. We've replaced these with \_\_\_\_\_ values that are destined to corrupt the morality of our homes. We've made being tolerant of everything, whether it's good or evil, into some form of \_\_\_\_\_. In tolerating evil, our society has simply become more evil, and it's become more intolerant of God and what He teaches. Many have become intolerant of God's values found in the Word of God. They won't tolerate God's regard for the unborn as viable persons. God speaks of the unborn as people in Psalm 139; Jeremiah 1; and Galatians 1. Nor will they tolerate 1 Corinthians 7:2 that says every man should have his own female wife, and every woman should have her own male husband.

Many live today as they did in the days of the Judges of Israel. Judges 21:25 says, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own \_\_\_\_\_." Today, people have pushed God out of their thinking and \_\_\_\_\_ by their own standards. Believing we can live by our own rules is \_\_\_\_\_, but it's also destructive morally and spiritually. If what people think determines

right and wrong, then truth, peace, and morality are \_\_\_\_\_ in confusion.

Human \_\_\_\_\_, left to follow its own path, leads society to do unspeakably horrible things. Wicked men will find ways to \_\_\_\_\_ and justify themselves with every evil desire and every sin. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” Some people demand the \_\_\_\_\_ to do as they please, and they don’t care who they \_\_\_\_\_. When evil men with no conscience or fear of God \_\_\_\_\_ in society, they will lead people away from hope and from righteousness.

Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems \_\_\_\_\_ to a man, but its end is the way to \_\_\_\_\_.” God’s prophet Jeremiah wrote, “I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it’s not in man who walks to \_\_\_\_\_ his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). We need God’s wisdom and guidance. People may think they’re \_\_\_\_\_ enough to choose their own way; but any path without God will inevitably end in \_\_\_\_\_. People who \_\_\_\_\_ God’s wisdom hurt themselves and they hurt their children.

God said through the prophet Hosea, “My people are destroyed for \_\_\_\_\_ of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). When we turn against God, we \_\_\_\_\_ our children of the opportunity to know God, to know His holiness, and His righteousness. We leave them in spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

The books of Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament provide a commentary on the spiritual lives of the kings of Israel and Judah for hundreds of years. God tied the prosperity of that nation directly to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the king and the people. When the king and the people \_\_\_\_\_ God, God prospered them. When the king and the people \_\_\_\_\_ God, they brought hardships and captivity upon themselves. If we, today, push God out of our lives, how can we think God will \_\_\_\_\_ us? How can we imagine that God will \_\_\_\_\_ us?

Character and devotion to God matter in our \_\_\_\_\_. Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, and priest of Midian, gave Moses some valuable \_\_\_\_\_. Moses was wearing himself out with his duties and needed \_\_\_\_\_ to govern the people. Jethro instructed him to “look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens” (Exodus 18:21). Jethro knew that Moses would need men of good \_\_\_\_\_ to govern the people. These men had to be people that \_\_\_\_\_ would respect and follow. They must “fear God.” Fearing God meant that they took God and His laws \_\_\_\_\_. They drew their \_\_\_\_\_ of right and wrong from God, not from opinion polls. These men of integrity refused to be bought with bribes. Moses needed such men to help him \_\_\_\_\_ the people justly and honestly. We still need capable officials today who \_\_\_\_\_ God and have integrity.

Proverbs 25:19 says, “Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of \_\_\_\_\_.” We’ve all been disappointed by \_\_\_\_\_ officials who’ve brought shame to our cities, states, and nation. You can’t count on a man of \_\_\_\_\_ character. A man who shows low character in \_\_\_\_\_ will have low character in \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord Jesus said, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Some say a godly man or a Christian should never serve in the government. Joseph served as second

to Pharaoh, and David served as King of Israel. God used Moses to lead His people out of bondage and to build a new nation. The Ten Commandments are both religious and social laws on which the nation of Israel was founded. Ezra was a Jew in the Persian government and Nehemiah served as an authority for the king to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Daniel as a ruler over the whole province of Babylon and a chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. Daniel also served as a commissioner to King Darius for all of Persia. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius were pagan kings, but Daniel lived a righteous life and was respected for his faith. Queen Esther laid her life on the line to influence King Ahasuerus of Persia, who reigned from India to Ethiopia. Paul mentions Erastus, the city treasurer of Corinth, in Romans 16:23. Godly people through the years have served as public officials.

The Old Testament prophets called nations and cities to \_\_\_\_\_ of their wickedness. When people refused God and abused their fellow-citizens, God noticed and He \_\_\_\_\_ the wicked. God said through Amos, “But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24). Oh, we need to turn away from evil and turn to righteousness!

Why does all this matter? When people \_\_\_\_\_ and support the wicked, they’re actually taking a stand against God. Second Chronicles 18 tells how a good king, Jehoshaphat, made an alliance with a wicked king, Ahab, in fighting an enemy. God sent a prophet who said, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD?” (2 Chronicles 19:2).

If I vote and support an evil person who won’t stand against sin, haven’t I also said by my \_\_\_\_\_ that I won’t stand against sin? If I don’t cast my \_\_\_\_\_ for god-fearing people, wicked ones will take office. My failure to vote for what is right may \_\_\_\_\_ a wicked person to rule. “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do \_\_\_\_\_.”

Some Christians don’t vote because they believe their vote won’t make any \_\_\_\_\_. But, in 1839, one vote elected Marcus Morton governor of Massachusetts. In 1868, one vote saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment. In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In 1923, one vote gave Adolph Hitler the leadership of the Nazi party. I tell you, one vote \_\_\_\_\_ matter greatly. We must exercise our privileges wisely to \_\_\_\_\_ what is right and good. We must let our lights shine through wise and godly \_\_\_\_\_. We have the privilege to choose godly leaders. Let’s use that privilege.

Christians are first and foremost \_\_\_\_\_ of heaven. We owe our allegiance to the Lord Jesus. Philippians 3:20-21 says, “But our citizenship is in \_\_\_\_\_, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” Citizenship in heaven is a privilege and a blessing; we must not take it \_\_\_\_\_. The best decision that you’ll ever make is to follow Jesus Christ. Do it today!

To become a citizen of heaven, \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus Christ with all your heart. Repent of your sins; you can’t \_\_\_\_\_ with God and the devil at the same time. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Confession is a public declaration of your decision to \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus. Be baptized for the forgiveness of your \_\_\_\_\_. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in \_\_\_\_\_. It’s the time that we have our sins \_\_\_\_\_ away and become a Christian. When we’re baptized, the Lord adds us to His \_\_\_\_\_; He makes us His child. Everyone needs to be a citizen of heaven. Don’t wait another day! Come to the Lord!