

Letter to the American Church- Chapters 11-16

Chapter 11- Be Ye Not Political

Romans 13: 1-7- "...respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed."
(The "office" or the person??- hopefully both!)

Another error, Christians are not to be political- (not overly for sure. We cannot put our hope in politics and not in God Himself. We cannot make an idol out of a leader - Jesus will **not** return on Air Force One!) The cynical voice of the Devil tells us not to be "political" when speaking against abortion or slavery.

After the Peasant Revolt of 1520, Luther denounced the peasants for attacking their earthly rulers. He put an extremely strong emphasis on Romans 13.

The German Church almost made an idol out of Luther. His reactions practically eclipsed all else the Scriptures said on this topic for four centuries. Centuries later when the brutal Nazis claimed "governing authority", The Church largely fell in line...

"The *context* of the words"....it was more complicated than what Luther made it sound like in the 1520s. He had only seen some demanding princes in his day- and asked the peasants to tone down their reactions- and not make violence their first response to their perceived injustice.

There were centuries of amicable relationships between the Church and State with Kaisers who were openly Christian. 400 years later, the Church naively treated Hitler like the previous Kaisers. The use of an outdated application of Paul's words justified doing **nothing**....

What about us?? We are obliged to speak whether the culture applauds or denounces us and not be in silent fear. When "policies" are opposed by God's Will, we must speak out. Nonnegotiable issues like: murder of the unborn, redefining marriage- these are not "extra credit" - these are *basic* Christianity.

When the Church is silent- candidates get elected to House and Senate who are pro-abortion. We need to **resist**. Jesus had critics who hated Him- critics motivated by the Devil- without logic or truth. He fought spiritual battles as we do today. *We need to praise God when we are criticized.* The generation of people in Jesus' time and the one today- show little logic, much like children.

Bonhoeffer believed that God meant the Church to be the conscience of the State- the Church must exist apart from the State and be free to criticize when necessary. Disgusted with the German Church not wanting to be political, Bonhoeffer wrote *The Cost of Discipleship*: "It is high time we broke with our theologically based restraint towards the state's actions- which after all- is only fear. 'Speak out for those who cannot speak.' Who in the Church today realizes that this is the *very least* the Bible requires of us?"

He unfortunately became so frustrated with the German Church- even the Confessing Church- due to their lack of boldness that he eventually found allies outside of the Church. Tragically, he joined a conspiracy to assassinate Hitler, as he felt he was called to do that...

Bonhoeffer saw Gandhi in India, who was inspired by the Sermon on the Mount, resisting colonial tyranny with nonviolence- he felt resistance was very heroic.

Today in America we see many non-Christians courageously speaking out - some patriots - some students- some parents for their children against mandates and CRT and sex ed — some feminists who see a war waged against women- (men in the locker rooms- and in woman's sports etc), some people who were simply "cancelled". These groups see forces trying to abolish our Constitutional rights. Many **outside the Church** see the injustices and know they must fight. They are not crippled into silence, but speak out.

Like us, they see the forces within the government, Media, Big Tech, Big Pharma and their *coordinated effort* to silence anyone who disagrees. Their virtues and values are attacked and demonized - Christian, Jew, Muslim alike. They see one side presented positively, one side demonized to divide us. They too see a double standard of Justice in our courts.

Why do they speak out? Truth is truth. There is NO Christian truth- **all Truth is God's Truth.** Those outside the Church are unaware of a mistaken interpretation of Romans 13- and just speak out and tell the truth that the Emperor has NO clothes!

Chapter 12- Who do you say God is?

Bonhoeffer felt that the German Church practiced theologically based constraint= bad theology. They remained neutral, hedging their bet. Even the Confessing Church did more dithering and debating than action.

Is God a harsh judge or a loving Father? What price are we willing to pay to do the right thing? Bonhoeffer was willing to pay *with his life*.

Is what God thinks enough- or must we always have approval of others too?

At Bonhoeffer's Memorial, Franz Hildebrandt spoke on **2 Chronicles 20:12:**
"We do not know what to do so we keep our eyes on You."

p.109- Read aloud and discuss: Bonhoeffer felt he was called by God to join the Resistance- but he also knew he may be mistaken to do this.....

Discuss: "As long as he earnestly desired to do God's Work and acted from that motive, he knew the God of the Bible would see his heart and grant him peace...**if it happened he had erred.**"

God expects us to do the hard things and to step out in faith despite resistance and criticism.

Chapter 13- The Parable of the Talents- Matthew 25:14-30

"I was afraid and I went and hid your talents- in the ground- here I have what is Yours."

"You wicked and slothful servant....cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness..."

Those who "risked" were given more- the one who played it safe was condemned.....

Jesus' parable illustrates what God thinks of our "safe" and "religious" reasons - *or just plain apathy*- to not do the right thing. Jesus tells us that *God can be trusted even with our mistakes.* *The question is- Do we trust Him??*

Who do we say God is? Is He someone to be loved and trusted with grace, or a hard master Who punishes our mistakes. Jesus seems to be saying - If you treat Me and My Father as harsh masters, We will be that. The choice is yours. You chose the God whom you chose and that is your God- true God or counterfeit Accuser- Satan. There is NO middle road.

Either we rejoice in God and love and trust Him- or side with His enemies-judging Him as hard, calculated, religious, legalistic and moralistic- doomed to be slaves of fear.
(See Romans 8:15-17).

AS WE JUDGE HIM, WE JUDGE OURSELVES.

Our freedom to choose is an astonishing power and an amazing gift. Will we sink or swim? We cannot remain in the boat or we will drown!

Chapter 14- Justifying Ourselves...

“To attempt to justify ourselves before God is wishing to be God ourselves, which never turns out well.... It is a moralism trap!” (p.117)

We can also try to “fool”God with a “religious excuse”- our “safer” path... In both cases, we see God as a *harsh judge*- and live in fear.

Bonhoeffer’s *Jewish Question* made clear that the Church had an obligation to counter the State’s evil actions, and do something FAR ABOVE just avoiding sin.

Today, people may mimic the German Church with “theologically retrained objections”- preserving their own “theological *purity*” by not getting political...

During the war- those hiding Jews needed to decide- when and if interrogated by the Gestapo- if they were “victims” themselves or true protectors at any cost. “*Has a Jew imposed himself upon you and is hiding in your basement?*” Not wanting to lie.....the “victim” could sadly respond “Yes”.

In Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics*- a young girl is not required to divulge private family information to a prying teacher and dishonor her parents. She could morally deny something that was true.

The citizen with the Jew in the basement also could also lie for the *greater good*-to protect a life from the evil Gestapo. God understands these special circumstances- He is NOT The Accuser!

Rahab lied to protect the Israelite spies— as a result, she is considered a woman of faith and is mentioned in James’s Letter and Hebrews 11. Her act of faith gave her complete forgiveness and redemption from her sin as a prostitute- and she later was to be **included in the genealogy of the Messiah!!!!** (Joshua 2:1-24)

God is a Person- not a set of rules- not the “religious God “ of our *own making*. He is wildly unpredictable like Aslan in C.S. Lewis’s *Narnia*. Like Aslan He is not pious tameness- but wild- but all good.

Jesus infuriated and enraged His enemies once and for all of eternity- in this way He defeated Death itself. He calls us to follow His example. **Shall we trust Him? Dare we do less?**

Chapter 15- Religionless Christianity??

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” Galatians 5:1

We have the freedom to live fearlessly, if we choose....

A letter from prison- Bonhoeffer to Bethge read: “I wonder if we need a religionless Christianity?”

He was NOT saying a religion devoid of Christianity as critics later mistakenly claimed- but one that is not merely “religious”- one where we LIVE out our faith with every atom and breath. Post-war, Bonhoeffer was falsely discredited as a “humanist” by many as a result.

He felt that the German Lutheranism was dead as it failed to stand up to Nazi evil. They relied on church attendance, and intellectual assent to *masquerade* as Christianity.

Will we heed Bonhoeffer’s cry? Will we kick away dead religiosity? Fear based piety? The false boundaries between Faith and everything else, including Politics? Will WE speak Truth?

Truth is a Person- without bounds- Who created Heaven and earth- He died that we might live in freedom with the authority HE gave us when He died and rose again. Our Bible Studies and sermons are meaningless unless we make our learning come alive with self-sacrifice. THIS is OUR HOUR- if we live it fully we will see revival and reformation. **Many who do not know God will see us and want to know Him!**

We, the Church, are individually responsible - our pastors and leaders can only help- WE hold the future in OUR hands. We must each take the ultimate responsibility.

Are you ready? Willing? We are not here NOW by accident- This is **THE HOUR** for the American Church. We are charged with pointing American and the whole world to God. **“He has somehow allowed us the inexpressibly great privilege of representing Him in these Dark Days.” (p.129)- Will we do so?**

CHAPTER 16- THE FINAL PUSH

President Reagan visited the Brandenburg Gate near the Berlin Wall in 1987. The wall was a symbol of how evil **cancel**s voices and imprisons or kills those who might try to escape.

Unlike his weak predecessor, Jimmy Carter, Reagan was a fierce and bold leader who knew Communism and the Soviet Union regime were weaklings pretending to be strong. They were both built on lies so they were not sustainable if someone was to really stand up to them.

Despite other globalist leaning leaders like Kissinger being silent or claiming “Realpolitik”- (one must accept things as they are- too difficult to change the “status quo”) — Reagan said, “Mr. Gorbachev, Tear down this wall!” Reagan refused to be cynical- or cowardly.

Politicians accused him of being “non-presidential” and inciting tension between the East and the West. Many in government were like the Church today- comfortable with the status quo- ... accepting a “necessary evil”. Reagan would not accept this and had referred to the Soviet Union as the Evil Empire in 1983. He boldly spoke against the evil that imprisoned those in East

Berlin and millions throughout the world. What he said paved the way for the Iron Curtain to topple 2 years later in 1989 and then the Soviet Union in 1991. Politicians like Howard Baker and Colin Powell advocated the “safe approach”- which actually aided and abetted evil...

Wilberforce, Bonhoeffer and Reagan were outraged by evil and were all willing to risk everything to engage-and fight it - *whatever the outcome.*

The Soviet Union was the face of atheistic communism- some felt it was the precursor to the anti-Christ system. We cheer for David - but do we dare go up against our own Goliaths of our own time? Cultural Marxism? CRT? (The Teacher’s Unions?) Transgenderism?

Reagan knew that bullies only pretended to be powerful. He wanted to call their bluff. He worked with Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul II to vanquish the Evil Empire. All three were denounced as unrealistic, and anti-communism extremist!!!

Will we all come together and push back against the current evil that **appears** more powerful than it really is? Will we trust God or lay back like the 12,000 did? Will we watch the 3,000 fail due to the lack of **our** support? Will we too just “stay out of trouble?”

God will not force us to do what is right. Should we run for office?, homeschool?, donate to a cause that supports truth and justice?, vote?, advocate for a constitutional candidate? Will we risk our job?- or congregation? He wants us to show Him that we know that all we have is a gift from Him- and we can trust Him with it all.

God is not the “religious” God of the Pharisees- He is all good but his goodness is not tame or safe, but unpredictable.

We are certain to be misunderstood by those who cling to pieties- and worldly wisdom.

Nonetheless, will YOU be the leader God has called you to be in this way? If a holy remnant follows Him, we will see things we never dreamt in our lives. “We will see God’s hand move in our time, for His purposes, We will see God’s will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Amen.”

(p.139).