

By Faith Lesson 36

Patriotism and the Government

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (Prov. 14:34)

The fatherland: God's gift

God has given our people a common home, a fatherland. The Finnish nationality forms in it one completeness. It is united by a common language, culture, good manners inherited from the fathers and mutual work for the benefit of the fatherland.

Finland has its own history in the group of nations. God has guided its phases throughout the centuries. Once, "the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people." (Dent. 32:8)

This included also our land. Here lives a nation to which we belong with the bonds of blood; people whom we understand and who have the same traits of nature that we do. Into this land and people our roots have penetrated and our hearts attached. These roots should not be torn. What a gift it is that we can hear our own dear Bible in our own mother tongue!

The right patriotism

As Christians, we thank God for our temporal fatherland, but we see as the greatest gift and reason for thanksgiving that God has given our people a time of visitation. In our midst the Gospel of the kingdom of God resounds. In this country, there is freedom of faith and freedom to perform the work of the kingdom of God. In this light the true patriotism is revealed.

The fatherland, above all, means freedom to us. We have the freedom of religion and of conscience, bodily and moral inviolability, freedom of thought and expression of opinion and the right to work and establish a home.

The government

Maintenance of the order of law has been entrusted by God to the State. All of what the State needs to maintain order of law and life which builds the fatherland is included in the word, government. Thus, government consists of earthly and spiritual administrations with many different names, beginning with the leader of the country.

The function of the government is to enforce and control, so that the people follow justice and order, prevent criminal deeds, make criminals responsible, punish wrongdoers and protect the land and people from internal and external attack. In addition, the government should guide and support all honest work for the establishment of our land and people.

The Constitution

At first, the law of our land was founded on the Bible. Today, laws have been passed which are without Biblical foundation and which actually conflict with the Word of God. Such laws are always wrong. In the case of such laws, the child of God rather listens to the voice of his conscience, which is bound to the Word of God. "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

The child of God prays on behalf of the government

The Word of God instructs us to honor order, justice and the inviolability of every person as well as to resist disorder and violence. The citizen has responsibilities which he has to fulfill. One must be subject to the government and pray, appeal and praise on its behalf. (Rom. 13:1-7, I Tim. 2:1,2) The government maintains Defense Forces to protect internal and external security and the inviolability of our borders. Here, too, "the government does not carry its sword in vain."

A nation consists of individuals and families. We are a part of the nation. Each of us gives his own contribution to our national home. If we are unsatisfied or bitter, we plant it into our surroundings. But if our inner life is balanced, it also shines into our surroundings. The child of God endeavors to walk in a way that is acceptable to God at home and while visiting.

God's blessing to our nation has been great. He has preserved this land on the map of the world even at a time when the borders of many small countries did not mean anything. May the prayer of all believers still be that, that we could continue to live in the security of that blessing in our fatherland.

Exercises

1. The Bible tells of events in which children of God on account of a good conscience could not follow the command of the government. These cases are lessons for us, also.
 - a. Read Exod. 1:15-20. How did the believing midwives relate to the command of the Egyptian king to kill all the male children?
 - b. Read Dan. 1:8-21, 2:14-23.
In what way did Daniel listen to God more than to man? How did God bless obedience?
Consider what belongs to the government of the school child.
2. In view that government has been given by God himself and that it serves His intentions can be found not only in Paul but throughout the Bible. That is why the Christian responsibility is to be subject to the government holding power. Already in the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah exhorted the members of the nation that had fallen into forced captivity that they pray on behalf of the city, for the success of the city was to be also their success. Read. Jer. 29:7
3. From a few Bible passages we can see that God gives power unto whom He wills. Read
 - a. Dan. 4:22.
 - b. The Book of the Wisdom of Solomon 6:2-4.
4. Luther taught that God rules the temporal domain with the sword of the government in the same way as He rules His spiritual domain with the Gospel. Here, he compares the Gospel and the government. On the other hand, believers want to remember even today what is written in Acts 5:29. Write this sentence in your notes!