

I think that is safe to say that most, if not all of us were disappointed by the outcome of Tuesday's election. I believe that we did what we could – we prayed, we analyzed, we told others – but God had other ideas.

I would be remiss if I did not remind you of a few essential truths as it relates to our country. And I will warn you, they may be hard to accept.

First and foremost we have to understand that for His reasons, and His reasons alone God wanted Barack Obama to be the next President of the United States. We read these words in Romans 11:33-34: *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”* We don't know why He works the way He does – but we do know His ways are perfect.

There is a very good reason that we pray *“thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...”* Notice, we don't pray *“thy will be done”* if it agrees with what I want, or who I have prayed for. God's will is perfect.

The second thing is that I would remind you of that which we already studied in 1 Peter 2:13-17: *“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”*

This is our responsibility as Christians ... *Fear God. Honor the king.* The Apostle Paul emphasizes this in Romans 13:1-5: *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.”*

Notice that there are no qualifiers in these verses ... that is, if we like them or agree with them. ... or even if they like us as Christians. Nero was in charge when Paul wrote his words. And both Peter and Paul would soon be put to death by the Romans, under Nero. But, we are still simply told to honor them ... to respect them, and for us as Christians, we are to pray for them.

And that brings us back to our study in 1 Peter 4. Turn with me to 1 Peter 4:12-19 (READ). Peter has spent quite a bit of time talking about suffering as a Christian. Remember, he is writing to people who had to flee their homes because of their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. And he tells them that they will suffer persecution.

I have said in the past, that we as Christians here in the U.S. don't really suffer for our faith. Yes, we might be subject to ridicule and even some discrimination, but we really don't have to fear for our lives and, for the most part, we are free to say and preach what we believe.

In other countries this is not the case where Christians suffer real persecution – arrest, torture and even death. Peter tells his readers, and us that it is not something unique – in fact, he says that not only will it happen, but there is a purpose to it – and that purpose is to bring glory to God. Look at what he says again in 1 Peter 4:12-14: “*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*”

Look closely at what Peter says, that it will not be a strange thing if we suffer for Christ – in fact, we will be partaking in his suffering, and again, it will bring glory to God, even though He is blasphemed.

Peter wants to emphasize that we are not to suffer for doing wrong – 1 Peter 4:15: “*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.*” No, if we are to suffer, it is for being a Christian – 1 Peter 4:16: “*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*”

It is entirely possible that someday we will not have the freedom in this country to practice our faith. If the secular left, which will be fully ensconced in power, has their way, we will not. I had to chuckle when I read that because of the election gun sales are going through the roof. And we know why that is. Freedom of religion has already been interpreted as freedom from religion and it could get worse, such as in Canada and other countries where, for example, even reading the Bible verses that condemn homosexuality is forbidden.

But my friends, there is hope – as always. Look at what Peter says in 1 Peter 4:17-18: “*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*”

Judgement is coming. Throughout history God has exercised His judgement, and it begins with His people. Just read through the Old Testament and see the times that He judged Israel for their failure to follow Him. And throughout history, we see times that God has judged the church and separated, if you will, the wheat from the chaff or the sheep from the goats.

And we know that at 2nd coming that God will judge the churches of Revelation.

But know this first, that judgement first begins in the house of God – that is, those who call themselves Christians. And Peter tells us that the Christians are *scarcely saved* – meaning that it will be difficult for both the readers that Peter is writing to, and us. In other words, we should brace ourselves for tough times if judgement comes in our lifetimes.

God will judge the churches that don't worship Him in Spirit and in truth. God will judge the churches that teach things contrary to His Word, the Holy Scriptures. God will judge the churches that teach that there is more than one way of salvation. I could go on and on. But when judgement comes, it will begin in the church.

However, the judgement for the non-Christian will be even worse. All those who mock the ways of God ... all those who reject the Gospel of Christ ... all those openly disobey God's law will be judged and judged severely.

The Bible says that we will appear before the judgement seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*

The Christian knows that he or she will have the Lord Jesus Christ there to intercede on our behalf. At the judgement seat it will be made known that Christ died for our sins in our place.

But for the non-Christian, there will be no one to intercede on their behalf and they will be open to full judgement of God. Remember, God will have the last word.

And that is why there is the very comforting last words: 1 Peter 4:19: *“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”*

Will things get more difficult for us as Christians here in the United States? I don't know the answer to that question. What I do know is that we, as Christians, have to commit our souls to Him, continue to do good, and wait for the judgement that is to come.