

## LCRL THEME VERSE – WITH EXPLANATION

***“For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Peter 2:15–17).***

Freedom and liberty stand foremost in many peoples’ minds as the hallmarks of democracy and the United States of America. We are free from oppression and tyrannical government. America’s founding documents ensure this freedom politically.

God promises a different, ultimate freedom in His Word. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ set people free from their sin, from death and from the power of the devil. This freedom is a gift from God to all by grace, through faith, for Christ’s sake.

How do these two freedoms intersect? How do Christian and political freedom walk together? The Scriptures teach that people have been set free from their sin to serve one another in love. This eternal freedom includes within it the serving our neighbor and honoring the government as the authority through which God works to provide for people and to curb evil.

God works — in the Church through His Gospel in Word and Sacraments, and in the secular/temporal arenas of our lives through law, reason and force. Our government promises to protect freedoms for people to speak and believe without coercion from the government. Christians rejoice in this temporal freedom as an opportunity to serve our neighbor and to speak the Word of God in the public square, not for evil, but for good.

God works — in the Church and in the government. And His people rejoice and serve in both spheres. First Peter 2:15–17 specifies that part of living in Christian freedom is to honor everyone, including those in authority. Written to Christians living under a government that was persecuting Christians, Peter’s epistle teaches Christians to suffer for righteousness, to serve as Jesus served and to love as Jesus loved. **Living today, not under the power of the Caesars, but in the freedoms of representative democracy, we have even more ways to undergird the sphere of the Caesar for the good of all.**

**God works** — in every aspect of life. Just as He reigns in both the Church and the world, He calls His people to love and serve in all places. Our government invites us to speak freely, to believe freely and to live freely. In Christ we have been set free from sin and death. Freed from selfish desires, we use our freedom in Christ and our Constitutional freedom to speak and to love in all our vocations.