

Wisdom in politics: the duties of rulers

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[0 : 00] The sayings of King Lemuel, an oracle his mother taught him.! O my son, O son of my womb, O son of my vows, Do not spend your strength on women, your vigour on those who ruin kings.

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.

Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish, let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more. Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy. So we'll be thinking shortly about this passage and the other things that the proverb says about rulers.

That's 31. But again, I'm referring to other proverbs as well, so I've put them on the handout there to save you too much scrabbling around. A very famous quotation here, often misquoted, but according to what I found on the internet at least, that is the correct version of the quotation.

[1 : 38] And apparently it was said by the historian John Acton, and he wrote it in a letter to Bishop Mandel Crichton in 1887.

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men. One might certainly think of examples supporting this.

Most of the rulers of the earth that we would think of, we think of in history, have really not been good men, have they? But is it inevitable?

Is it impossible that it is possible for a ruler to rule justly without being corrupted by the power that is implicit in it?

Well, if we think of this passage in Proverbs 31, we can see that Lemuel's mother was certainly well aware of the risk, because that's exactly what she's warning her son against.

[2 : 53] You notice actually there's two particular forms of corruption he talks about, she talks about in this reading. First of all, that they exploit the power for their personal pleasure, so they just exploit the power by wine, women, and song, which doesn't explicitly mention song, but I expect that that was part of it as well, wine and women certainly, and they exploit power and become corrupted in that way.

And the second form of corruption she talks about is the subjugation of justice, presumably for some financial or political advantage. There's a suggestion in verse 5, it says, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.

So the suggestion is very much, I think, that one often leads to the other, which is an interesting observation in itself, because sometimes we don't care too much if our rulers are people of personal virtue.

But that is certainly something that Lemuel's mother thinks is important. They should be sober and temperate in their behaviour.

And yet it's clearly the second that Mum regards as more serious, that the people should be deprived of their rights, the destitute and those who are perishing and in anguish.

[4 : 28] So certainly Proverbs holds that power always risks corruption.

And there are quite a lot of other things we could see in Proverbs that talk about this. We won't go through all of them. But at the same time, it's not inevitable.

Wisdom says that counsel and sound judgment are mine. I have understanding and power. By me, kings reign and rulers make laws that are just.

By me, princes govern and all nobles who rule on earth. That's Proverbs 8, 14 to 16 in that great soliloquy that Wisdom describes herself.

And one of the things she says is, to me, by me, rulers, kings reign and rulers make laws that are just. And notice the words there.

[5 : 31] Rulers make laws that are just. Rulers do make laws, but they don't invent justice.

And so often, I think, one slips into one or other of those ideas. One thinks that there is some sort of perfect legal system and you just need to set it out and it will work in all times and places.

But that is not the case. Rulers have to have judgment in making laws in a particular society, in a particular place. And yet, but they can then move on from that to saying, well, what I say, I'm the ruler, so what I say is right.

As if there is no idea of actual justice and truth anywhere. And a more literal translation of that phrase, actually, is where it says making just laws, is to engrave righteousness.

The idea is perhaps that righteousness is out there, but it needs pinning down and putting onto, well, onto stone, perhaps, if it's engraved on stone or on metal, but set down, pinned down and made clear.

[6 : 54] And that's what rulers are to do. Their primary task, according to wisdom of a ruler, is to discover and then enforce righteousness, justice, in a given society.

Where do I get the enforcement from? Well, it does say that kings, by me, kings reign. Reigning means, of course, to actually enforce the law and to insist that it is kept to.

And this will require the development of suitable laws. And in practice, we notice from this, again, it requires that we give particular attention to the welfare of those who are in poverty or other need, because these are obviously particularly the people who are likely to suffer if the law is not properly maintained.

Of course, I don't think she's saying to her son that you only need to insist on justice for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the destitute and so on. But they are the ones who are perhaps least able to speak for themselves.

And so it's particularly clear that they need a defender, someone who will defend justice for them.

But of course, in fact, of course, justice needs to be applied to all the citizens in the society, rich and poor.

[8 : 26] This idea that the king is a servant of the people, which we find in Proverbs 31, I mean, we think of it kind of as a truism now, and we perhaps don't really think what it means, but it certainly wasn't at the time.

And if you think it really, you know, in British history, it took about 1,500 years before this really settled in. The idea that the king himself is subject to the law and so on.

And the king is a servant of the people. It must have seemed a terribly radical idea in the late Bronze Age whenever it was written. But that's what Lemuel's mother is saying, isn't it?

The king is there, in a sense, to serve the people, to ensure justice. So we could perhaps, go on to the next slide, we could mention, perhaps, to sum this up on saying, what are, or what is the mission, the central function of government, as it is seen in the book of Proverbs?

And it's the same one, really, that Paul refers to in Romans 13, to punish the injustice and to maintain order. And so the central functions are, those I've put there, making laws, enforcing those laws, and then secondarily, but it certainly seems to be implied, generally looking after the welfare of the people.

[9 : 59] So I think if we get people who say that welfare is not the job of government, we can point to this passage and say, well, no, I think it is. But of course, governments do other things, but they should be in pursuit of those central activities.

I mean, what else can we say that governments do? Well, certainly economic development, Solomon did a lot of this, most governments find it necessary to develop the economy of their countries and develop trade.

Certainly they are supposed to protect their people from an outside invader, so defence. Possibly even in certain circumstances, actual active warfare.

We could maybe think about that and talk about that. But it does seem to be, certainly Proverbs doesn't rule that out, and there are some Proverbs that talk about warfare. So that's something one might need to think about, but we won't go into it now.

When is warfare just or unjust? The sort of problems you get when you go and intervene in Afghanistan or Iraq and somewhere, all the moral problems that causes you. But perhaps that is a legitimate activity of judgement as well.

[11 : 17] And of course there are other things like education. I mean, Proverbs is all about education. It's about saying that everybody needs to seek wisdom. So certainly education is an activity.

Thank you. Now if we try and think how this works in a modern society, we realise that actually some of the things that have been set up are actually in order to try and make this function better. For instance, that we, in the ancient world, there was no real distinction between rulers and judges. The kings were supposed to execute judgement. And yet, even in that passage where wisdom talks about kings reigning and rulers making just laws, there is perhaps some suggestion of a separation of function.

But certainly in modern societies, we find it necessary to separate what we call the executives, the lawmakers, from the enforcers, the police and the military, and the judiciary who judge.

Why do we do that? Well, it actually is to try and limit the corruption of absolute power, isn't it? That by what the American revolution is called checks and balances, that things are put in balance, the law is put in balance to the executive and the military and the police so under the authority of the judiciary and the government.

[13 : 11] So there is a balance to try and stop the corruption of absolute power. And that's a good idea, I guess, and probably does help.

And yet we see today in many places it's only partially successful, isn't it? We find, in fact, corruption in all the arms of government one way or another so often.

You know, we, police in this country in the past, even when I was a child, you know, had a good reputation. I don't remember Dixon of Dot Green, well, you don't remember Dixon of Dot Green, most of you, but there was a TV programme on when we were young.

Those of us of our age, certain age, we were young. It was this TV programme called Dixon of Dot Green, which was about this friendly neighbourhood Bobby. Completely sane.

You notice that no TV policeman nowadays is actually sane. They all have problems and, you know, perhaps they're more human in that sense.

[14 : 15] But it's interesting that the change, we've changed our now attitude to the police and we find there is corruption in the police force. We find there's corruption in the government with people, you know, ripping off the taxpayer by claiming expenses and so on.

The judiciary in this country seems so far to have remained fairly independent, but we don't perhaps know what's going on in the background.

Perhaps we just haven't found out about that. But certainly, the only real way to ensure that power does not corrupt is that rulers rule by wisdom and to remember that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

And that does really avoid, so far we've avoided the vital question, how does the ruler decide what is right? Does the ruler actually create rightness or is it a matter of discerning rightness in a given case?

Yes. And part of the problem we have in Western democracies now is that over the last hundred years there's been a vital change. Up till then, the law was regarded as being of divine or at least natural origin.

[15 : 42] There was something you could say that was natural about being right and wrong, justice and injustice, good and evil. At the Enlightenment, people tried to say, well, we won't say that law comes from God anymore, but still, law must be found in the natural world.

There is justice to be found in the natural world. But the problem was that there wasn't. And so, in the last hundred years, the idea of law being based on some absolute idea of right and wrong was having some objective meaning has really been abandoned.

People still use the terms, but they don't mean the same thing as they used to mean. Lemuel wasn't free to create laws which would oppress the poor and needy because to do that would have been against divine law.

But now that check's been removed and the right and wrong are what the lawmakers declare them to me. And of course, you still get moral argument. It's not that moral argument has disappeared from discourse altogether.

But now it's all based on rhetoric and emotion, isn't it, rather than objectivity. I mean, just look at current arguments over welfare or immigration. They're almost entirely based on rhetoric and public perception.

[17 : 12] That's what the politicians really think matters is the public perception. Are the poor scroungers on the earnings of the hard-working middle class or are they victims of an oppressive and uncaring society?

Just depends whose rhetoric you want to listen to, really, doesn't it? Are immigrants a vital plank in the economy or are they taking away jobs and benefits from the British?

Even if somebody bothers to collect some actual evidence, no one takes much notice of it. The statistics are just used to bolster an already entrenched position at best.

My mind is made up, as they say. Don't confuse me with the facts. And that's how our political discourse is so conducted nowadays, isn't it?

And actually, this creates a particular corruption of power which can really only happen in a democracy. And that's the corruption where the legislature ceases to do what is right, not out of personal envy or personal arrogance, but it replaces what is right by what is popular.

[18 : 31] And so what is popular becomes what is right. The party in government holds focus groups to determine the popularity of its policies. What does the party in opposition do?

It exploits discontent to raise public opinion against the government. And the result, actually, is a new kind of tyranny.

It's not the rule of an absolute monarch or a dictator, but instead the rule by that sort of intellectual oligarchy, if you like to call it that, that elite, as David likes to describe it, who have the resources and the skill to manipulate public opinion.

The spin doctor is king. The pressure group rules. And so once again, we find that power does corrupt when wisdom is abandoned, not perhaps in the old-fashioned way.

The old-fashioned tyrant, power proceeds from the barrel of a gun and you punish troublemakers to the concentration camp. But the new government has no need of such crude tools.

[19 : 44] The media and the education system are much more effective in bringing people into line and manipulating public opinion. Of course, I'm not saying that everything is bad.

these things are always shades of grey. And most politicians probably do think, generally, they're trying to determine what is right. But it's where they look for guidance on that that is, in the end, the problem.

The fear of the Lord, says Proverbs, is the beginning of wisdom. And the wisdom of this world is ultimately self-centered and in the end degenerates into folly.

And the trouble is you don't realize that until it's too late. And yet we can see signs of it already around us in a real lack of any real belief in moral courage.

What does Proverbs, what else does Proverbs have to say about this? Proverbs 14, 34, says, Proverbs 16, Kings detest wrongdoing for a throne is established through righteousness.

[21 : 04] Kings take pleasure in honest lips. They value a man who speaks the truth. A king's wrath is a messenger of death but a wise man will appease it.

When a king's face brightens it means life. His favor is like a rain cloud in spring. Now the meaning here I'm sure is not that kings actually do this.

What he's putting forward here is what kings should be like. This is what they should do. For a state to be strong it needs to be based on righteousness and integrity.

Proverbs 17, 15, in acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent the law detests them both. Something I think is particularly interesting Proverbs 28.

When a country is rebellious it has many rulers. Certainly found that in Syria haven't they? When a country is rebellious it has many rulers but a man of understanding and knowledge maintains order.

[22 : 09] A ruler who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no crops. Everything is swept away leaving only chaos.

Those who forsake the law praise the wicked but those who keep the law resist them. That's what we find isn't it? The law is forsaken and to praise the wicked and so eventually the law is perverted to praise the wicked.

And then finally, evil men do not understand justice justice. But those who seek the Lord understand it fully. Those who seek the Lord will understand justice fully, he says.

That's a quite remarkable thing to say. And yet men who are evil cannot understand it. It just doesn't make any sense to them. And this is why we find that increasing chaos as people move away from the fear of the Lord.

So, does Proverbs give more practical advice to rulers as well? Is that basic advice? It does, yes, and I think perhaps it's worth just looking briefly at some of these things.

[23 : 28] The first one is simply to take advice. Proverbs 11, verse 14, says, For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisors make victory sure.

Proverbs doesn't actually advocate democracy. I don't think anybody had thought of it at the time, but it certainly believes in the value of having a good administration and taking advice and getting advice from as many people as you can.

The main context of this proverb actually seems to be warfare. The more people you have to figure out what might go wrong and what the enemy might do, the more likely you are to win.

But I think it applies much more generally than that, that the king always needs, the ruler always needs to take advice. And following on from that, listen to both sides of the argument.

Here's a proverb that obviously refers to the law court, Proverbs 18, verse 17. the first to present his case seems right till another comes forward and questions him.

[24 : 43] That's certainly the case, isn't it? Perhaps it's a justification for our adversarial system of law courts which a lot of people think are rather inefficient but it is good that someone will come forward and question the case that's put there.

So listen to both sides of the argument. And the third one is, again to use an English proverb, don't shoot the messenger. Or as Proverbs puts it, it's Proverbs 17, verse 26, it's not good to punish an innocent man or to flog officials for their integrity.

It's a temptation always, isn't it, that somebody doesn't agree with you, you'd want to punish them. But you shouldn't do it. Why? Well, firstly, because it's unjust, of course, but secondly, because it's stupid.

If you want yes men, then you won't get good advice, will you? If you want civil servants who have wisdom and integrity, you'll create, if you don't want that, you'll create an administration of self-seekers if you just want yes men.

If you get rid of the people who are really honest in doing their job, you'll just create an administration, as they have self-seekers. You'll never get accurate intelligence, will you?

[26 : 13] Because people are just going to tell you what you want to hear, rather than what is true. And if the lawyers are not men and women of integrity, how can justice prevail in the courts?

So, it's important that we value people of integrity, even when they tell us what we don't want to hear. And that's certainly true if you're a ruler or an administrator, or a lawyer or judge, that sometimes people will tell us what we don't want to hear, and yet we should be prepared to listen to it.

It's something we find often in these big organizations, isn't it? That, you know, people stand up in the National Health Service or something like that and say this is wrong, this should be put right. And what happens? Do they get praise for bringing, saying yeah, this was, you're quite right, we need to change that? No, they get fired, usually. Told not to rock the boat.

But we shouldn't be shooting the messenger, rather we should value those who tell us what we need to hear, even when it's not what we necessarily want to hear.

[27 : 35] And finally, the last one I think is quite interesting. Oh, sorry, not the last one, I missed one out. Yes, the next one is to think.

That may seem an odd thing to say, but certainly thinking is always a good idea. Proverbs 20 verse 8 says, when a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.

So what's that saying? It's saying that you need to try and figure out what's really going on. Don't just react quickly and make a quick, hasty judgment.

judgment. You need insight. The truth is not necessarily obvious. There's a saying, I can't remember who said it, but there's a saying that says that the truth is rarely plain and never simple.

And I think that's a lot of truth in that saying. Job seems to be getting at that as well, the book of Job. someone may present an argument which appears to be all sweetness and light, but is there a hidden sting in the tale?

[28 : 49] And in fact, we all need to do that when we listen to what our politicians and our counsellors and our leaders tell us. We need to be thinking about what they're saying.

Saying, is this really true? Does it really make sense? Is there some hidden agenda? Is there some evil going on here that we don't know about? Certainly rulers need to do that, but since we all have to vote, we all need to do that and think about what we're told.

And then finally, this is a rather interesting one I think. Proverbs 20, 28 says the following, love and faithfulness keep a king safe.

Through love his throne is made secure. Now I think you can only accept that if you remember what we just said about not having yes men all around you.

That I think is not what it means. What I think it does mean is that the king should earn the respect and the love of his people. The ruler should aim to earn the respect of his people.

[30 : 02] That's not the same thing as saying, rule by the focus group and the pressure group. Rather, the king should earn the respect of the people by a love that's based on faithfulness.

Love and faithfulness it says. Keep a king safe. Faithfulness in ensuring justice, in ruling fairly, in not shooting the messenger, not flogging those who are just doing their best and doing the right thing, men of integrity.

Do that and you will earn the right sort of love, the right sort of respect of the people. Not love based on flattery, but love and respect based on faithfulness.

And through that, the state is secure. There will not then be revolution and destruction let loose, chaos let loose in the state.

It is when the ruler loses the respect of the people, isn't it, that revolution comes. And we see that throughout history. We see it in our own day to day.

[31 : 19] It's what happened in Syria, it's what happened in Egypt, it's what happened in Ukraine. The ruler loses the respect of his people and the result is one form of chaos or another.

So, the final and the most important advice is the one which unfortunately the rulers are least likely to take.

we don't know if Lemuel listened to his mother, we assume he did, since it says these are the sayings of King Lemuel and an oracle his mother taught him. And yet what we do know is that even Solomon didn't take all this advice.

He did indeed spend too much time on women wine and drink. And towards the end of his life, that caused problems and certainly caused problems for his son when he tried to continue the rule after Solomon's death.

It's said that the Roman emperors used to have someone remind them, remember that you're not a god. God. And yet the ruler of today effectively thinks he is a god because he thinks there is no god.

[32 : 52] And so what I say is what matters. There's no absolute justice. But Proverbs remind us that it just doesn't work like that.

Proverbs 21.1 The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He directs it like a water course wherever he pleases. Or this one I put up on the slide here.

Proverbs 21.30 There's no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord. The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

Today's rulers have declared themselves gods or declared the people gods. God will not want to just engrave righteousness but they want to create it.

But that kind of absolute power will certainly corrupt a fair and a just society. And one must say that John Acton had a point. It's very difficult to find any ruler who has not been to some extent corrupted by the power that they have.

[34 : 04] It was true of Solomon. It was even true to some extent of David. And certainly the rulers of today find that they cannot really engrave righteousness.

They cannot in the end make just laws because they don't know where justice comes from. The end of the tyranny of public opinion is still tyranny.

The end of that kind of wisdom is folly. interesting historians have done to contrast the English Civil War with the French Revolution or even French Revolution with the American Revolution.

In the French Revolution the people's power was absolute and what happened was catastrophic. In the English Civil War or the American Revolution there was war and chaos.

It certainly wasn't good in that sense and yet it wasn't totally catastrophic because there was still a belief in both those places of the rule of law and the rule of divine law.

[35 : 18] And so even the chaos of war was limited. But when there is no law at all effectively except the will of the people then there is going to be tyranny and it happened quickly in France.

It happened in the communist countries, it happened in Nazi Germany and it's happening perhaps in a slightly different way even in our western democracies. They're not fascist certainly but certainly there is a move away from the true rule of the law and the idea that righteousness and

strength of society are important virtues to pure expediency.

power corrupts. Well we're told there is one king to whom all power has been given and yet he was not corrupted by it and he will one day bring true justice and peace to the earth and that king is wisdom in person, the king of kings and the lord of lords, Jesus Christ.

So I thought we might spend a little time perhaps asking any questions or discussion and then in prayer but I think before that we will sing our hymn, our last hymn which is number three to that king.

Questions or comments or disagreements? Phil? Do you want to use the mic so we can hear you? Thanks.

[37 : 04] Right, okay. So I was thinking about this is probably something that will need more thought and discussion maybe later but anyway. The Proverbs 31 wife, her husband is known in the gates when he speaks with the elders of the land and in Psalm 128 it speaks about how the righteous man will not be ashamed when he speaks of his enemies in the gate.

And I also think of other godly men in the Bible like Daniel and like John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul and also Peter who all had a voice into government.

And is it a godly thing to aspire to have some kind of voice in the way the land is governed? And if it is, what's the sort of area you should aim for?

Because there are a lot of different things you can do like school governors, town councillors and different sorts of things. And do we know anyone in that kind of position that could elaborate further maybe one day?

Well obviously Christina. Do you know Christina Summers? Oh, Christina Summers is councillor, city councillor. And she was a member of the Green Party but refused to support their stance on same-sex marriage.

[38 : 29] So it was for that and also I think on abortion as well. Was expelled from the party in fact. So it does go and just tells you the sort of problems you'll get if you do.

But yes, my answer is yes, certainly. Because if we believe that righteousness comes from the Lord, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, then we should be prepared to put that in practice.

But not in a fanatical way I think. Too often people have not thought before they've spoken, they've said the Bible says this without really thinking about what they're saying sometimes.

I think you have to be careful. And you're certainly going to get burned as Christina did. But I would say yes, but what do other people think about that?

Oh, well. Yeah, Phil's got something at the back. I think yes as well.

[39 : 44] I think it calls for a particular sort of wisdom to have an input into what the laws should be in a state which is not Christian, either statistically or theoretically or anything else.

So, in other words, if you're a Christian, you believe that it's right for people to read their Bible and pray in the morning. But I think it would be a foolish Christian that said, I want to put that on the statute book, that everybody has to do that.

Well, I mean, Puritans tried that, didn't they, and it was disastrous. Anybody else?

Particularly anything anybody wants to say or ask? I mean, it's a big subject, of course, and I've only skimmed over it. What's your input on the LAT thing?

LAT. Local action team. That has an input into government somehow, doesn't it? Well, it doesn't have an input into party politics because it's cross-party and we try to avoid being party political.

[41 : 07] I suppose it is local politics on a very bottom-up sort of level. So, I suppose it's an input into the way the city runs and the word for city is polis, from which I presume we get political.

So, it is political in that sense. But I think what that group is trying to do, or what I'm trying to do as chair of that group, is to bring together people who have an interest in the peace, in the shalom, in the well-being of the city.

And that would be the police, local councillors, council officers, residents, traders, the people who provide drug and alcohol services.

And the way it works is not to make laws, but to get those people talking to one another. people who are, and my input is to try and get them to talk to one another in a polite and respectful way, which doesn't always take place when groups like that happen in the city.

And I suppose in that sense, it is having an input into the well-being of the city. Is that the sort of thing you're asking? I suppose it's worth commenting, it wasn't actually that long ago, maybe 10, 15

years, when we did have a, when the mayor, councillor Lang, Jenny Langston, he was a believer of course, but I'm not sure how much difference that really made to the way the city was run.

[42 : 51] Okay, well, what I would suggest we do then, and scripture certainly commands us to pray for those in authority, and also to pray, come Lord Jesus, come to now, we talk about realized eschatology and future eschatology, and we need to pray for both, that Lord Jesus will come now, but that he will also soon come quickly to bring peace to the earth.

So, come on, Chris. yes, we'll pray, but I just wanted to reflect on the issue of corruption, as you touched on there.

I think we're still remarkably blessed in this country, in this issue. certainly not as bad as a lot of other places. I've been in business for 40 plus years, and the instances of corruption are so few, that when they occur, they're quite shocking, when it's happened, and people have just lost their jobs instantly, when that's occurred.

And a colleague of mine in my company has been attempting to do business in another country, and he says, it's just impossible. I can't even begin, because of this.

So, I suppose, I just thought it would be very good for us to reflect on the Lord's goodness to us, because life goes so much more easily, and encouragingly, when you don't have to have this problem.

[44 : 32] Yeah, I think that's a good point, actually. I mean, we should be thankful that it's not nearly as bad here as in a lot of other places. It is still shocking. People are still shocked when they find the MPs have been ripping off the taxpayer.

In other places, it would be, well, that's what we expect, isn't that? That's one of the perks of the job, as it were. Yeah, and we are still surprised when we find the police have been lying or something. I think that's true. So, yeah, you're right, Chris, we should give thanks, certainly, that things are not nearly as bad as they could be, although we can see that they're worse than they were a generation ago.

But, yeah, that's true. It's still largely – okay, we've provoked a discussion now, so we've got to let them. – I don't assume that we're going to be a generation divide, but I don't think they are any worse now, but I think that while whether this is a good thing or a bad thing, and it can sometimes be both, we, I don't know, we don't assume – we don't assume that people in authority or people that are older than us are right, whereas we did sort of in the 50s and 60s.

We were like, they must be right because they're in authority, they must be right because they're older than us. That's changed, but I think that, and that's sometimes good, that's sometimes bad, but I think that the government and the police were just as corrupt in the 70s, but they got away with it, and that's why now we've got, you know, with the BBC and stuff, we're only just now learning about what happened in the 70s, because now it's we kind of demand, you know, this unearthing of truths, whereas before, perhaps people were allowed to get away with some things.

[46 : 40] Yeah, I think that's a fair point, actually, although I'd, I mean, that's one who actually was there in the 50s and 60s. I mean, it's our fault, yes, in the 60s, we...

I'm not blaming anyone, but... No. I'm just saying that... I mean, it's the baby boomers. I think it's the same. Yeah, in the 60s, we said that, you know, we told the next, that there was no authority, no real rule, and then we got upset when people believed us.

So, I think there was certainly a real change between the 50s and the 60s. You're probably right, actually, that there was still that corruption there.

I think it's a good point. And yet, yeah, I'd still maintain that there is a lack...

I think I'd still maintain that it is worse in the police and in the government. It's not, as Chris says, it's not nearly as bad as other places, and we're still shocked when it happens, but...

[47 : 48] I mean, yes, okay, you can look at what went on at the BBC, and, you know, none of us knew that at the time. We all thought Jimmy Savile was slightly weird, but, you know, we didn't really realise what was going on.

But, yeah, so you may be right that it's part of you didn't see it. I think Lorna at the back had something to say first. Jesus said, says to his followers, you're the salt of the world, and I have great admiration for practising Christians who, in a spirit of servanthood, are serving members of parliament and other governing bodies.

I feel very blessed that they're there, and, yeah, they deserve our prayers, and also I feel very blessed that we have a queen who has a faith and is not afraid to say so.

And even Charles, for all his faults, was actually part of the morning service on the radio this morning, speaking up for the persecuted Christians in the Middle East.

So I feel very blessed that these things are present in Britain. Right, yes, yeah, I mean, that's true. It's not as bad as it could be. I agree. Catherine, perhaps the last one, then perhaps we should turn to prayer.

[49 : 10] This is just a comment, which is that I haven't got a solution to this one, but I think it's a bit more difficult in a democracy to be a ruler in a democracy than in a sort of system such as would have been in the Bible or even in many other parts of the world, because as a democratic leader, you are meant to be obviously a good leader according to what you think is a good leader, but you're also meant to in some sense represent or put forth the views of the people.

So I mean, for example, if all the people in your constituency think abortion is great and you think it's bad, you have a conflict because, you know, in a sense you can't, because it's a democratic system, just put forward what you want, because you are supposed to sort of give people what they want.

So I mean, it's more as part of that is what you're supposed to be doing as a democratic leader, which I assume you wouldn't have quite had that conflict. No. Although the rulers of Israel were certainly always with the consent of the people, and that's what happened, of course, after Solomon's death.

I suspect there is actually a subtle change in the way that, because there's two ways to think about it. You can think that the person is there deliberately to, the elected representative of the people is there deliberately simply to represent the views of their constituency, or you can say that the people have chosen this person as a person of wisdom and authority to rule for them, which is not the same thing.

And I think that in the past, the thinking was more than the other, that you would be electing somebody of wisdom and authority, who you trusted to do the ruling, rather than merely, you know, being your mouthpiece, as it were.

[51 : 05] Whereas maybe that's changed now. I think that sounds better, but I would imagine that, I don't know, but I would imagine a lot of people today would think more the former, like, rather than the latter. And also, of course, these days, if somebody ruled with wisdom, but which wasn't in a way which pleased the electorate, then the electorate would not vote for them next time, and that's a difficulty as well.

Yeah. I think probably overthrowing democratic government is probably a bit ambitious. I'm not sure we should necessarily be came for that.

Yeah, let's turn to prayer, and let's pray for those in authority as we're commanded. And Chris is right, we should give thanks that we do still have a certain integrity in this land, in government. It's certainly not as bad as it could be. But also pray that Lord Jesus come quickly. So let's, if a few of you would like to lead in prayer together and then we'll, then we'll, I'll close at the end in a few minutes.