

# Loving our country, biblically

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. We're going to be in lots of different passages this morning. I don't normally do that, so I'm going to start by reading Romans 13, 7. And if you did not get one of these, I'd encourage you to pick one up because my entire outline with all the passages that I'm reading is on this.

There's some in the back and some up here. But I guess I need to give an apology as to why I'm doing this. Now, I'm not telling you that I'm sorry for doing this. That's not what an apology is. Apology is a defense, a defense, a reason why I'm doing this. The Great Commission, Jesus says, teach them to obey all that I've commanded you.

Teach them to obey all that I have commanded you. And oftentimes, we are affected by what would be called, say, like pietism.

Pietism is just this idea that all that matters in spiritual matters are the things that are happening between me and God, and that's it. And our Western world has been inundated because of revivalism and all kinds of other things to think that the only thing that matters is your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 23 ] See if I can just throw that out there and make you all go like, what? That is an important aspect. But it is only one aspect.

When he says here, teach them to observe or to obey all that I've commanded you, Jesus' commands do not go just as far as read your Bible, pray, go to church, and that's it.

The commands go all over the place. As a matter of fact, there's one church, their motto, if you will, like our motto here is building lives that treasure Christ.

There's another church, their motto is all of Christ for all of life. And the reason for that is because the Bible speaks to everything that we deal with in life.

There is not one place in our lives, one place in our thinking that ought not be brought underneath the authority of Jesus Christ. If we're going to be Christian, then we need to think biblically about everything.

[ 2 : 31 ] And so part of what we're doing here is that I am trying to teach you to observe all that he's commanded you, and I want to teach on a subject matter and an issue that doesn't normally come up. And I'm collating from lots of things throughout the scriptures, and so this is really important that you test what I'm saying.

So that's why I've included my whole outline with all the scriptures so that you can go back and you can look at it. Because when we come to think about things related to patriotism, there are a couple of terrible extremes.

On one extreme, you all have seen, I am sure, the horrible things that happen as people who seem to hate our country will take flags and burn them.

Or they will take the graves of soldiers and desecrate them. And when we see things like that, there's a sense in us, a sense of justice, rightly so, because that's an injustice being done, that boils up and wants to say this is wrong.

But what I want us to be able to do is to understand why it's wrong. Because it's one thing for me to look at something and have a sense of justice and be offended by this thing, because, and then why?

[ 3 : 50 ] What's the reason? As Christians, the reason ought to be a biblical reason. We ought to understand how God has designed this world and designed us and set things in place so that we can know how we ought to function.

But there is another extreme. It's the extreme of the large church who on some Sunday will dedicate the entire service to the idea of patriotism.

And they will sing patriotic songs with a break in which the music minister comes out and says, We are here today to celebrate our country. Beloved, this is the Lord's Day.

We are here to celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, should we celebrate our country? Absolutely. Absolutely. We dare not get out of the lane with what we're doing. We need to have a right view of these things. And how does that work can't be based upon tradition.

[ 4 : 57 ] It can't be based upon what you've done in your life and what your parents and their parents and their parents did. It can't be based upon just simply tradition. It can't be based upon how I feel about things.

It can't even be built upon my family of origin. It can't be built upon if we don't do this, we might lose something.

In total, as Christians, it needs to be built upon the Word of God. We need to do everything we do in this life built upon the Word of God.

In case you have not guessed as of yet, I am not opposed to tradition. And I am not opposed to things that are more normally considered tradition and conservative.

What I am is I want to do what we do based upon Scripture. And I want to go back and look why. What does Scripture have to say to us?

[ 5 : 57 ] And on this issue today, I think that we can properly, biblically love our country with our whole hearts. If we understand three basic truths.

Number one, Christ is the absolute authority over all things. Christ is the absolute authority over all things.

Now we see this in the Great Commission. In which we see Matthew 28, verse 18, where Jesus says, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

He is not saying, and just think about when this was said. He's saying this to his disciples. Right? They've gathered up on this mountain right before he ascends back to his father.

So he's died. He's been resurrected. He's had time with his disciples. Now he's going back to his father. He will go sit at the right hand of his father.

[ 6 : 58 ] And he's telling his disciples before he even gets there with his father. That currently, as they're facing him, he has all authority on earth.

All authority on earth. He's not saying, I'm going to have all authority on earth one day, sometime in the future, after several thousands of years.

But he says, currently, right now, as we look at one another, I have all authority currently. There is not one square inch of this globe.

There is not one square inch of this galaxy. There is not one small particle within this universe in the cosmos that Christ is not Lord over.

He is Lord over all. Which includes this earth. Which includes right here and right now. That's just sort of this idea of his absolute authority just generally stated.

[ 8 : 02 ] Now there's sort of a comprehensive way that it's stated in Ephesians chapter 1. And in Ephesians chapter 1, the verses right before what we're going to read, Paul is talking about that he wants to pray for the Ephesians because he thinks it's important that they have an understanding of several things.

And one of those things that they need to understand is the power of God that can work in them to live out the Christian life. Now that's a great thing to know. You need to understand that you don't live the Christian life by your own power pulling yourself up by your bootstraps.

The power to live the Christian life comes from God. Specifically from the Spirit of God. And in this passage as Paul is talking about that, he lets us know that it's the Holy Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead.

It's the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Then in verse 20 says that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly places.

So there he is. That's the ascension of Christ, right? He's seated there with the Father at the right hand. And as he is seated at the right hand, verse 21 tells us, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named.

[ 9 : 22 ] Now just pause right there. That's a pretty comprehensive list. Whether you see these powers and authorities and dominions as earthly powers and authorities and dominions or whether you see them as spiritual powers and authorities and dominions or you see them as a mix, Christ rules over all of them.

There is not a single power, not a single authority, not a single entity, dominion anywhere that Christ is not over. And look what it says next. Christ is the absolute authority over all things. Right here on earth. Christ is the absolute authority over all things. As in heaven. As in the full cosmos. And not only that, but also in the age to come. In other words, he's going to go from this age to the age to come as being the supreme absolute ruler over all things without a single solitary break in his rule.

Without a single solitary change in his rule. Verse 22 says, and he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

In other words, for the sake of the church, for the good of God's people, Christ is over all. Which brings me to the third statement I want to make.

[10:54] And that is that, but it doesn't look that way. You look around. And we see all kinds of things going on. I mean, would Christ, if he rules over this earth, have Hurricane Beryl decimate Jamaica?

Is it out of his control? Would he have people who are the enemies of the cross slaughter babies? Would he have enemies of the cross?

I mean, we look at the world around us and to some degree when we say Christ, Christ is the absolute authority over all things. We look at the world around us and we kind of go like, Lord, this feels like it's spinning out of control.

That's what we are to expect, though. In Hebrews chapter 2, verse 8, it talks about, quoting from the Old Testament, putting everything in subjection under his feet.

Talking about how the Father is putting everything under the feet of the Son. Now, in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside of his control. That's a great statement there, that absolute authority.

[11:59] But then he goes on to say, at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. There is an already and not yet kind of feel to these things.

An idea in which, yes, Christ rules over all things, but the people and things are rebellious towards him. But that doesn't mean that he's not the ruler.

It doesn't mean that he's not the absolute authority. He is, and there is nothing that happens outside of his plan. And this ought to give us great hope and courage.

As we face and look at what we need to do as God's people, how we need to live our lives, the great hope we have is that Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth.

We should have great courage to be able to go into far distant lands to take the gospel to people who've never heard. We ought to have great courage to be able to take the gospel into places where normally they say to us that it's not welcome.

[13:00] It ought to give us great courage to know we can live the Christian life that he's called us to live, regardless of what the social pressures are on us to abandon him, because all authority in heaven and on earth belong to him.

We have his backing. Without understanding that thought, and I really, I feel like I'm preaching to the choir here, because I know that you believe this, and I know that you know this, and I know that oftentimes we assume this in so much of what we do and say.

But it has to be stated, because sometimes I don't think we understand fully the implications of this. But hopefully, as we go, this will begin to make a little bit more sense, because not only is he the absolute authority, but God has also instituted three authorities under him.

He's instituted three authorities under him. He's instituted the family. He's instituted the family. Or you could say family government.

Family authority. And we know this from passages like Genesis chapter 2, Ephesians chapter 5. I'm not going to read those. We've read those before. But in those places, God has instituted the family.

[14:17] He's instituted husbands and wives. He's instituted the structure of the family with the husbands and wives and children. And this is God's idea, and it is God's good gift to humanity.

In order for mankind to flourish, in order for humanity to flourish, in order for mankind to have some sort of mechanism by which our health, our welfare, and our education is secured, God has given to us the family.

He's instituted the family of God. And the family is under attack in our culture today. Absolutely. But let me show you. The family is for the purpose of being a minister of God for health, welfare, and education.

In Ephesians chapter 5, verse 29, it says, For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.

Now that is what the husband is to do for his wife, to nourish and cherish. And a part of that has to do with the health and the welfare of his wife and his family.

[ 15 : 24 ] And in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 4, Fathers, don't provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. The educational component is given to fathers. They're the ones in charge of making sure that their children are educated in the ways of the Lord.

God has established the family. He's established the head of the family as fathers. And God has done this for the good of mankind. But that's not the only authority.

He's also established the state. Right? State government. And here we'll read a couple of passages. Romans chapter 13, verse 1. It says, Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Those that exist have been instituted by God. Paul is writing that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit at a time when Nero is emperor.

Let that sink in. Nero has been instituted by God. And he was rebellious.

[ 16 : 38 ] And he was wicked. And did not at all obey God. But God is the one who establishes authorities. And those that exist, exist by God's authority. In verse 4 of the same chapter, Paul goes on to say, For he, the government or the king, is God's servant.

And that word there is the word we're familiar with called deacon. He is God's deacon for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

God has established and instituted the state, the government. And he's done so for the good of mankind because government bears the sword.

That's what government is supposed to do. It's supposed to bear the sword. What does it mean to bear the sword? It's the primary function of government to execute justice, punish evildoers, and protect citizens.

That's the primary role of government, of the state. The state is supposed to execute justice, punish evildoers, and protect the citizens.

[ 17 : 55 ] And when the state is not doing that, it's not doing what God has established it to do. When it goes beyond that, it's going beyond the mandate that God has given to the government.

Then finally, we have the church. The family, the state, and the church. And God has established and instituted the church as well. We see this in Matthew 16, verse 18 through 19.

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Now, whatever else that means, there's an authority that's been given to the church that's unlike the authority of the state and the family. And we'll get to that in just a second.

But I want you to see that God himself, Christ even himself, says, I will build the church. He's established this church as one of his authorities, one of his institutions.

[ 18 : 58 ] And the church has this authority in this kingdom of God. And they are then responsible for the preaching of the gospel, the administering of the sacraments, baptism of the Lord's Supper, and for church membership and discipline.

That's what the church is for. Now, you could call these things, these three areas, you could call them sphere sovereignty.

Sphere sovereignty, that each one has an area over which it is sovereign and rules and should not get out of its lane. If you want to look at it as a highway, we have a three-lane highway.

And the church and the state and the family are on this thing and you got to stay in your lane. Do what it is God has established and instituted you to do.

But there's a lot of people who have false ideas about this. Let me show you one. It's called sacralism. Sacralism is the idea that the church actually reigns supreme over the state and over the family.

[ 20 : 02 ] And in such a thing, it becomes a mess. Because when you look at such a thing, you have to ask whose beliefs in the church are going to then guide everything else.

And there's been times in the history of the world that this has been tried and it fails. And this is not what God has established. There's another thing. It's called Erastianism.

You don't have to remember the name, but that's just what it is. Erastianism. It's a little different. In this, it's the idea that the state reigns supreme over the church and the family. And this is what the vast majority of Americans actually believe.

Like it or not, this is what a lot of them believe. Now, you don't because you're a Christian and because you know the Bible and because I've already said this once to you.

So we're going to say it again because we want to inoculate you against the false teaching out there. This, we didn't really realize how much of our culture believed this until COVID came.

[ 21 : 10 ] And you had the government telling churches that they could not meet. Or in some ridiculous cases that when they met online and were singing together online, they had to wear masks while they were in their homes.

The government stepped out of its lane and the third way is the biblical way. This is the right way. Christ reigns supreme over all. He reigns supreme over the state. He reigns supreme over the church. He reigns supreme over the family.

And the implications of this are such that each authority has to stay in their lane. And I know that sometimes there'll be a little bleed over and sometimes you're not sure what to do with that.

But churches do not have the authority from God to set speed limits, taxes, or permits for building and construction or prison sentences.

[ 22 : 15 ] The church does not have that authority. The church does not bear the sword. Ever. But neither does the church have the right and the authority to plan the menu for a family and dictate what stores they go buy their food from.

They can't dictate career choices and paint colors for a family as they decide what they're going to do. That is not the church's purview. The church should be fixated on the things that they have oversight for and that is to go disciple the nations and teach them to obey.

The state does not have authority to set membership qualifications in the church. The church doesn't have the right to tell us when we can meet, what songs we can sing, and who our leaders can be.

Instead, they must punish criminals, set laws, and protect citizens. And the family doesn't have the right to set worship meeting places or speed limits or taxes. But instead, the family is there to make the choices that they need to make having the authority for the health, the welfare, the prosperity, the education, the legacy, and the inheritance of their families.

This is called sphere sovereignty. Christ rules over all. And each one needs to stay in its lane. And one final thought about this is that in this setup, the church itself is called to disciple the nations.

[ 23 : 49 ] And because of that, the church is to teach the family and the government what their duty is. The church cannot force the family and the government to do that duty, but the church must speak to it and say and speak truth.

And for so long, the church has been so afraid of mixing religion and politics because you don't talk about two things, right? When you get together, you don't talk about religion and you don't talk about politics. And you certainly don't want your preacher preaching on politics.

You cannot help but preach on politics. It's all about ideas. I'm not going to sit here and tell you who I think you ought to vote for. I'm not going to be campaigning.

But we need to understand these basic truths that government ought to do a certain thing and the pulpit ought to be able to be free to preach and say, this is what the government ought to do.

And just as on Mother's Day, I would say and talk to mothers and say, this is your duty, this is your task and by God's grace, you will do it and some of you have and when you fail, listen, run back to the gospel and as on Father's Day, I would say to fathers, you've got to uphold your duty.

[ 25 : 05 ] You know what your duty is supposed to be and here's what your duty is and when you fail that, this is where you go. You run to the gospel. I also would say to the magistrate and to the state and to the governor, this is your duty.

This is what you ought to do and if you will not heed the word of God, then we will remove you as citizens of this nation, this state, whatever, because you have a duty to God that he has laid out for you.

We shall not be bullied. So God has established these three spheres of authority or sovereignty.

That leads me to the third point and that is that God demands us to honor authority. God demands of us to honor authority. You know this, right? Families, children, honor your father and mother, right?

That's a pretty clear thing. You can see it in Ephesians chapter 6, Exodus chapter 20, to the state, to the state. This is a great passage.

[ 26 : 16 ] This will make everybody mad. 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 15 through 17. I'm not going to read it, but you can go read it and look at it and right at the tail end of it, it says honor the king.

It says emperor in the original, but for those of us that are not used to that, it says king. And here for us, that would be president and governor and those in authority.

Honor them. There's no bones about that. That is a command. And as a Christian, that's what I'm supposed to do is honor them.

And then the church. It's not because it's self-serving to me, but I'm just telling you in 1 Thessalonians 5, 12 and 13, it talks about elders or leaders, pastors.

And by the way, a pastor is an elder is also an overseer. It's three words for the same one office.

Our church, we have one of those. That's me. Yeah. There ought to be more, but there's just one of us at present.

[ 27 : 17 ] And God commands them to hold them in high esteem. And so as we look at these three spheres of authority, we have a demand from God to honor them.

Now honoring them does not mean that we whitewash actions. When actions are sinful and against God's order, then we call out leadership.

So long as they are in line with God and His word, then we don't have to call them out. But regardless, we are to honor them because honor is based on the position.

Romans 13, verse 7. I think I was going to read this at the beginning of the sermon and I just went past it. Verse 7 says this, Pay to all what is owed to them, taxes to whom taxes, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

This is not about them earning our honor, earning our respect, but this is about the position that they hold a position that is to be honored. And even if you vehemently disagree and find them to be objectionable and find them to be unworthy of your respect and honor, you need to remember that both Paul and Peter were writing at the time that Nero was emperor.

[ 28 : 35 ] And they say, honor the king. I had a gentleman who was in our church back in Port Lavaca. He was visiting with us for about a month or two and we were going through 1 Peter and when I got to that and I taught on that, at the time there was a different president and he pulled me aside afterwards and he says, I can never do that.

And he said, you're telling me that's what I have to do? I said, I'm not telling you anything. I'm just reading the verse. He says, well, if that's what God says, I don't want to have anything to do with him. Beloved, I know of better things for you.

I know you love the Lord and I'm not saying that honoring a king that you disrespect is easy. As a matter of fact, none of these things are easy. But not only is the honor then built upon the position, but this honor needs to be full of love.

And now I'm going to take a slight turn here. I'm going to take a little turn here because as we're talking about this idea of these three spheres, we know that in these spheres under the family, under the church and under the government, we know that there's not just the leader of those things, but there are the people that are involved.

It's not just the father, but there's a mother and there's children. It's not just the pastor, but there's deacons and there's members of that church and it's not just the king. It's not just the president. It's all the people that are there.

[ 29 : 59 ] And in that, one of the things that we see coming out in Paul's thoughts in both Romans chapter 9, Romans chapter 10, too much to read. We go back and read the first part of both chapters and we had chapter 10 up here on the screen just a while ago.

Paul speaks about and demonstrates his love for his country men. Wishing himself to be cut off from Christ for their behalf.

His heart's desire was to see them saved. You see, here's the thing. When you become a Christian and you are a part of the sphere of the church, it does not mean that you leave the state.

you're still a part of that as well. And whatever nation that you've grown up with and whatever people you've grown up with, they're still your people. As Paul looks at the Jews, he says, my

countrymen, my kin, I would be cut off from Christ for their sake.

And as we seek to honor the king, we need to also love the people. A part of us living out this is this love for them.

[ 31 : 15 ] A love that says, I will do what is necessary to bring the gospel to them. And then, it's something that is to be bathed in prayer.

Paul gives us another statement about the officials, the kings in 1 Timothy chapter 2, where he says prayers need to be made for all who are in authority.

To pray for them. God is the authority. God has established these three spheres of authority.

He's commanded us to give honor to them. And sometimes, it's just so hard.

It's hard to respect someone. That you find to be unrespectable. And the only way that we can do that in a way that honors the Lord is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[ 32 : 32 ] You see, Christ died on the cross to set us free from our sin. sin. And a part of our sin is thinking that we know better than God, thinking that we have a corner on the market when it comes to respect and honor and that we understand what that looks like.

Because if we were to follow our gut, there's a lot of people we probably wouldn't respect. need to do it. But he's called us to do something.

not to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and do this, but to surrender to him, running to the cross, recognizing our sin has been paid for, and the empowerment to do this is there in the cross.

So, what does all this mean? I want to wrap up with just a few thoughts here, just to give you some things to think about, and then we're going to come to the end.

The first is this, that understanding all these things helps us to understand how we can have a well-functioning society. If we do things God's way, even if lost people who are atheists that don't believe in God understand and allow our world to function in such a way, it will be a blessing.

[ 33 : 56 ] It will be a blessing to mankind if the state does what it's supposed to do and stays out of the church, if the church does what it's supposed to do and stays out of the state, if the family does what it's supposed to do and stays out of the church and the state, if we stay in our lane, this is how God has designed this world and it is good for humanity.

Even if someone doesn't get saved, underneath it, it's still good for humanity. I'll give you one example of what I'm talking about. There's a famous atheist who for years was railing against the church and pretty much most religions but primarily Christianity and in a recent interview as he was being interviewed, he said, you know, even though I'm an atheist, I don't believe that God exists, I consider myself a cultural Christian because I know that a Muslim country, I would not have the freedoms that I have like I do in a country that was based upon Christian principles.

What we believe matters. It affects things. And even though some of our founding fathers were not Christians, this nation was built on Christian principles and it is a good thing for people.

And so for a well-ordered society, a well-functioning society, we need to understand these things.

Secondly, understanding these things helps us to understand the importance of the family.

Helps us to understand the importance of the family. Do you understand that even though the church is the gatekeeper of the truth and teaches the government and teaches the family how they ought to function, the church and the state could never function if we had no families.

[ 35 : 41 ] Why is that? Because families populate the state and the church. Without families, there's no one to go into these places and live them out in the way that they're supposed to be.

family helps young children learn what authority is. The whole reason that in the Ten Commandments it says honor your father and mother is so that our children don't just learn to obey me but they learn to obey authority.

And when we treat our kids as though the only authority they have to obey is us, then they will obey us until they've graduated from us and then after that they'll choose.

the family. The family is necessary in order for a good functioning society. Understanding these things, third, helps us to understand the importance of the local church. The local church should be praying and preaching and depending upon God and longing to see families and government officials impacted and changed and saved by the gospel.

And nothing will impact our local county and earthly life like Christians, true godly Christians, voting and running for office. Christians, but nothing will make more Christians like preaching the gospel.

[ 36 : 53 ] Did you hear the distinction that I made there? I don't know if you caught that. I tried to make it clear. It's one thing to live peaceably, which comes about by Christian principles.

It's another thing to see someone converted and becoming a Christian. And as a church, we have the opportunity to be involved in both. We preach the gospel primarily and as we do so, we disciple people.

And as you are disciplined, you go out and you live a Christian life and engage in this world. Run for office. Vote. And be a thorough Christian as you do.

The church is to disciple the nations, which means we are making more. Fourth statement I would make is this helps us see how to disciple people.

You know, I start, this is where I started, and it's the idea that the Great Commission ought to be taken seriously to teach people to obey all that God has commanded them. It's not just, listen, pray this prayer, now get dunked, now read your Bible, now pray, now go to church, that's all there is.

[ 38 : 05 ] That's like bare minimum. That's like kindergarten stuff, right? We got to go all the way through high school and college and graduate. There's so much for us to know and learn about who God is.

That's why we preach to fathers and we preach to mothers and we preach about marriage and we preach about parenting and we preach about fighting against sin. That's why we preach about how we ought to love our country, love our nation.

Fifth and finally, seeing all of this should remind us of our top, our top, not our only, but our top priority when it comes to loving our country.

What do you think our top priority for our country ought to be? I think it ought to be what Paul's was, Romans 10 1. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer.

to God for them is that they may be saved. We must love our country and we must love them with the priority of seeing them saved by the grace of God.

[ 39 : 26 ] That they would turn from their sin. that they would see the Savior and they would trust in him.

That ought to be our top priority. Let's pray together. takeNINGNINGNINGNING