

Serving the People

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Preacher: BK Smith

[0 : 00] Dear Holy Heavenly Father, we just thank you so much for the blood that was poured out for our iniquity that allows us to be righteous in your eyes, O Father.

We thank you for the gift of your Son, O Father. We thank you for your Son who is so willing to go to the cross. Father, there is no shame in saying that we were and are a desperate people.

We are desperately in need of you. We are in desperately need of forgiveness. We are in desperate need of grace. But it was your blood that atoned for our sin and allows us to come before you, to be adopted as children, to sit at the banquet table with you, to not be regarded as sinners but to be regarded as saints.

Father, we thank you for this. And I pray as we live this life we would understand our identity is in you and not in ourselves. It's not in our flesh.

It's not even in our blood family. But it's in our spiritual blood that was poured out for us. We thank you for your word in this time of worship. We ask you to bless this preaching.

[1 : 29] May it bring understanding to our minds. May we hear it correctly. And may it direct our actions. We ask these things in your most holy, precious, and everlasting name.

Amen. Please be seated. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 13. Romans chapter 13.

In case you are just visiting us during summer vacation, welcome. Thank you for joining us for this Sunday time of worship. My name is BK. I have the pleasure of serving here as one of the pastors.

We pray that you will connect. We've got coffee and no shortage of people here who would love to engage you. If you are moving to the city and you're considering a church, please make yourself known.

Talk to us. Get to know us. And prayerfully consider that as if you are looking for a place that indeed holds up the word of God and worships God.

[2 : 35] So this morning, happy Canada Day weekend, right? Yay. Yay. I think I spot two reds. What's going on here, guys?

Three little burgundy in the back, you know? Not a lot of flair this year. I don't know why I'm not going to preach on it. But anyway, if you're new visiting, one of the things that we're doing, we have a sermon series.

And the sermon series is basically on our statement of faith. What we believe and why we believe it. Just kind of sit in the undertone for what directs us. We obviously started with a series on the Bible.

And then we moved to our understanding of God. And today, because it was Canada Day, I thought it would be very appropriate to talk about politics.

All right? All right. Maybe not so much politics. But I wanted to talk about what is the government's roles and responsibility to government. Roles and responsibility to government.

[3 : 39] Let's be honest. I believe the church and the Canadian government have had a pretty good relationship. But even a little bit before COVID, there seemed to be a little bit of cracks forming.

A little bit of division going. Government wanting to go one way. Churches wanting to go the other way. And there seemed to be a little bit of head-butting. Previously, I was pastoring in Victoria.

And the mayoral race several years ago. So they were trying to make this an issue whether they were going to tax churches or not. And that became a really big, strong point.

They were trying to make things political. So you can imagine many of the candidates were at our door knocking, going around, saying, Hey, we want your vote.

We're going to vote against it. So all of a sudden, it became a tool in their kit to get people to vote for them. Unless you have been living maybe in the Antarctica for the last six years or so, there's been this thing called COVID.

[4 : 46] And with COVID, that kind of brought a lot of government decided to come against a lot more of the freedoms. And it brought up a lot of church government issues.

Right? Churches have been shut down. Churches have been boarded up. Churches have been arrested. Churches have been arrested. Churches have been imprisoned in maximum prisons.

What is going on? How bad is it, really? Well, if you pay attention to the news cycle in the States, even Fox News took up the claim of what's going on in Canada.

A few times they introduced us. But it got so bad that in the U.S. Senate, the U.S. Senator Josh Hawley sent a letter to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, urging the Commission to consider adding Canada to its watch list for the government's heavy handedness in dealing with responses to the COVID restrictions.

In June 2021, he wrote, watch list.

[6 : 34] Watch list. So given that we have seen these actions, the question that obviously comes up is, what are we to do?

What are we to do as a church? What are we supposed to do as church people? How are we as Canadian citizens to relate to our government, especially in times where it appears the government isn't always our closest friend?

Well, it may interest you to know that we actually have some statements in our affirmation of faith of relationships with the government, specifically K, L, and N, if you're paying attention.

And I will read you these quick statements. The first statement is called the church and state. It says, both church and state have divinely ordained functions to perform in obedience to God, but the two are not to be confused.

The state is responsible to seek public justice for the good of all, not to give a special status to any particular religious community.

[7 : 51] Now, what this statement is essentially states, the statement essentially states, all right, you're with me, that the government has this role, but one of the roles is to seek justice for all, whether you are at church or not church.

But one of the things, it's not just for Christians that are supposed to get special status, but all citizens and all those who reside in Canada. The verse that we use to support that is the pericope in Matthew 22.

Remember when Jesus is confronted with the taxes, and they give him the coin, and he just simply asks him whose head is on it, you know, render unto Caesar what is Caesar, render unto God what is of God.

So there is a special government, isn't responsible in some areas, the church is responsible in other areas. You with me on that? So that's where it is.

Problems start to happen when one starts to impose their will on the other. The other aspect that we have, it's entitled religious liberty.

[9 : 04] It reads, although God calls all people to believe in him and to come to him through Jesus Christ, this profession is to be of genuine personal response and not one imposed by civil law.

Therefore, every person should have the civil right to practice and promote their own beliefs. What we believe is that as Canada, the government should not be imposing what people should be believing, nor should we at church be imposing what other people should be believing, but we should be opposing those who are trying to do so.

So an example would be in Iran. Iran has a state religion. There's only one religion in Iran, and it's Islam. It's an Islamic state.

It's also known as a theocracy. We, in our statement, do not believe that that's what it's called to do, and I'll explain a little bit more why later. In our last section, which I think has a very interesting caveat to which I'm going to spend some time on today, it's the aspect of civil government.

It says, civil government in its various forms is designed by God as a means to protect the welfare and good order of society as a whole.

[10 : 32] Christians are responsible to pray for those who are given this awesome responsibility and to conscientiously obey the laws imposed by those governing authorities.

There's really no pushback on that, right? We want to pray for those who have the either blessing or curse of ruling in politics. Whatever, but we have this last paragraph, which is interesting.

It says, however, in view of the fact that Jesus Christ is the ultimate Lord of all and the ruler of the earthly authorities, laws which are opposed to the revealed will of Christ must be disobeyed by his followers.

And this is where it gets interesting. This is the exception, not the rule. However, and such civil disobedience must occur only as a last resort when it is absolutely necessary.

That's kind of an interesting statement. Note, must occur only as a last resort when it is absolutely necessary.

[11 : 46] The obvious question is, what is a last resort? Right? Right? Is a last resort when the government starts putting people in special camps?

Is it when the government enslaves part of its population? Is it the government causes people to die? Is that a last resort? Or is a last resort when the government asks a church to shut down?

Or when the government asks a church to shut down to stop the spread of an infectious disease? As you can imagine, there's a lot of big, there's a lot of space between those last resorts or what people can believe are last resorts, right?

You with me on that? You can say yes. There's a lot of space there. There's a lot of space there. Some people, it gets down to the government simply doing something I disagree with.

And that's a last resort. Well, this morning, what I want to do is I want to start looking at what is considered to be last resorts and what God calls us to as believers in Christ.

[13 : 09] But I'm going to give you a few examples. There's some last resorts are not so, how do I say it, visceral. We don't get so much passion about it.

But then there's other things that go on in our government that kind of gets our blood to boil. So let me give you a few examples. And it was kind of interesting. I was looking at an older book.

It wasn't really even that old. But even the examples that that had of government impeding in Christians' lives was somewhat tamed into what is going on today.

So one of the questions that this book has had is what do you do when government institutions, or let's just say schools, sanction alternative lifestyles?

Now, as we all know, it's gone much further than sanctioning alternative lifestyles. It's gone to promoting alternative lifestyles.

[14 : 05] In fact, in some areas, some schools are advocating the taking away of parents' rights to know what is going on with your children.

And just so you know, this isn't a big fight that's going on in Never Never Land. There's a big fight going on in Chilliwack, which is pretty far. There's been a fight at the Student Council or Education Council.

A lot of these school boards are blacklisting parents from being able to come. Recently, a father was well-known to say, he says, when the school wants to give my child some Tylenol, they've got to call and ask me.

If my child wants to go on a field trip, they've got to call and ask me. But if my child decides that they are of another sex and they want to transition, they can't call me.

Right? There's a big disparity in what is going on. Now, that should make your blood boil. In the province of New Brunswick, my parents' home province, the good old Acadians are fighting back against that thing.

[15 : 14] Basically, the premier has made it a political point. He's gone to is what we are going to stand out. We're going to make a government mandate. Schools need to communicate with their parents.

parents deserve the right to know. Government institutions promote the death of unborn babies. Well, that used to be before an abortion, but now we have government institutions that promote the death of the elderly, sick, the poor, and whoever finds that life is too hard to live right now.

And by the way, we will also harvest your organs so other people can live. Right? A few summers ago, our government made the issue that if you wanted to hire a student and you needed a grant, you had to demonstrate that you were not pro-life.

If you were, you were denied help. And then the last one I'll just mention is when it comes down to expressing political opinions.

If you happen to be for Black Lives Matter, you were given a free pass to meet when the COVID restrictions were in place. The Prime Minister kneeled down before you and you were able to give money, which incidentally has all been stolen by the way.

[16 : 38] However, if you were to support a trucker convoy, you were considered to be evil. Government did not want to meet with you and your bank accounts were simply frozen by giving to an ideology that you believed in.

So obviously, the government is showing preference for some ways of life more than others. You with me on that? So there's a favoritism that is going on.

And at various times by various people I have been asked, what is the church going to do about it? my question back is, what are you going to do about it?

I do believe we have two separate roles in all of this. One is that we do live in a democracy. We do have the power to vote.

We do have the power, legal representation to do many things. We've got a court system. All those things are before us. But this morning, I want to write to you where how are we to live as Christians in a world that doesn't favor us?

[17 : 51] And I don't want to rely on what our affirmation of faith says. I don't want to rely on what we may think seems right to us.

And no, I don't even want you to rely on my wisdom or any other wisdom that a religious leader might offer you. I want us to look at God's word and see what God's word has to say on the matter.

Thankfully, the Bible does speak into these areas. In fact, there's many passages of scripture that give us much wisdom, much guidance on how to manage our relationships with the government in what we perceive to be absolutely necessary situations.

Christians. Now, before I get into what scripture says, there's one thing that has come up in the news quite a bit, and that is the idea of Christian nationalism. Christian nationalism, our goal is to create a Christian nation.

And that is starting to, that talk is supposed, increasing in many different circles, that we are to advocate for a Christian nation. The thinking is we leave it to the world, there will be secular ways of thinking, but we as Christians need to take control of certain things.

[19 : 15] And in all of that, I'm not obviously against some of it. We have the right to run in politics, which I believe more Christians should. We need to avail ourselves of our democracy so we can be a part.

We do need Christian lawyers. We do need Christian government officials. We need Christian police officers. We need all of those things. But more importantly, I want to explain to you four points about what we are not called to.

First, God isn't looking for human means to reform society and establish Christian values. God is not looking for human means to reform society and establish Christian values.

This means that God is not looking for Christians to take up arms, to overthrow the government and get them to take our way of thinking. Nowhere in Scripture is that advocated for.

If you're wondering if it ever happened, think the Crusades, right? Crusades, all of Christendom was going to force people to come to the Christian faith by the sword. That is not a biblical way to go.

[20 : 29] Now, think about it this way. What would that say to the world about what we think about our God? if we felt we had to force our way? How weak would our God appear to the world if we needed to be the ones to bring war on people?

What does that say about our view of God's sovereignty? What does that say about our view of God's providence? Do we truly trust God?

God? Has God simply lost all sense of control that he needs us to get it back for him? That this society in Canada is so running amok that it'll never straighten itself out unless we take up arms?

I find it crazy when Christians feel more compelled to give money to political causes than to spiritual causes. More money is given to political causes in the name of Christianity than are given to churches.

Friends, people care more about the souls of the people in this country than their freedoms, believe it or not. Second thing I want us to understand, God isn't seeking to bring biblical values to our culture by changing it through fleshly means.

[21 : 53] God isn't seeking to bring biblical values to our culture by changing it through fleshly means. This is the question I have for you. Are you ready for a really uncomfortable truth?

Nowhere in scripture does it tell us that God's intention was for us to be comfortable in our nations, in our culture. Imagine if we set up a culture where people were all comfortable.

Do you think they would feel a need for Jesus at that point? If everything was perfect, let me ask you personally, when do you grow the most? We tend to grow the most when we're under pressure, amen?

When God is bringing trials into our lives, that is the time that drives us to our knees. Yes, there are times when we are experiencing joy in God's blessings and we are thankful and we love that God has allowed us to live in beautiful, sunny, squamish, but there's not a desperation to our prayers, is it?

It's only when we start to have the mind of God do our prayers truly become intense. There is depthness that is creating in our relationship with God when times are tough.

[23 : 19] The third truth is God isn't seeking moral followers. God is not seeking moral followers.

The idea of a Christian nation formed under Christian laws might bring a lot of peace, might bring a lot of justice to this land, but there's no guarantee that it will bring people closer to Jesus Christ.

Forcing people to adopt to our biblical standards of morality, only brings superficial change and hides the real issue. That real issue is people have sin and they need a Savior.

Amen? People have sin and they need a Savior. If we have a nation that we set out, if you do these things, you're okay with God, how many people are going to think they're right with God when they truly aren't?

God. The reality is we are to give an account for our lives before the great throne of judgment at the end of time. And the question that God is going to ask us is, did you, or the question he's not going to ask you is, did you live a life of traditional Christian values?

[24 : 40] that's not going to be the discussion point at the great seat of judgment that be my throne. The only question that's going to truly matter is, how did you respond to Jesus?

How did you respond to Jesus? And the fourth aspect is, God doesn't want our reputation to be a curse to our society.

God doesn't want our reputation to be a curse to our society. The reality is, God calls us to be a blessing to where we live.

Imagine if our reputation was don't cross with those people. If we were a people that protested everything, always trying to force our way about everything.

The fact is, if we begin to think that government is, that we are fighting them at all points, then we will be seen as a curse to society.

[25 : 46] But the biggest problem is when we appear to be a curse or we see society as an enemy of God, we start to see them as an enemy of God.

You know what we do? We cease to pray for them. We cease to care for them. They're the enemy. We're to hate them. that's not what God calls us to.

God calls to us to love them, to care for them, to share God's good news, that there is freedom in Christ as well, to pray for them.

the person across the hallway or across the street where we live, are they evil, or are they simply lost in need of a savior?

Here's a fun fact. The world is sinful. The world is lost. Why do we have such high expectations of people who desperately do not know Jesus?

[26 : 47] Sometimes we hold them to a standard that is our standard, but they don't know any better. You know what? We can go back 40 years in this country, and you know what?

Most people knew the Judeo-Christian code of conduct, but we now live in a world where people have no clue who Jesus is. They don't.

Ten commandments. What's that? Always fill up your car at half a tank? What? What's the good commandments to live your life, right? Why do we act so surprised and shocked that the world is sinful and they are lost and they do not know how to act?

The fact of the matter is the Bible clearly teaches people are blinded by the powers of darkness and have absolutely no spiritual discernment. They don't even have a little.

They've got none. done. So there's two main passages in Scripture. There's some minor ones we're going to look at, but the two main passages that respond to how we're supposed to conduct ourselves is, first one is 1 Peter 2, which you're not going to spend any time with, but the other one is Romans 13 1.

[28 : 03] So please look at your Bibles. Look at your Bibles. I'm not going to say all there is to say on this subject today because it would be Canada month or Canada summer or whatever.

I just want to spend today on this. So the book of Romans, as you all know, or if you don't know, is written by Paul. Paul was writing to the believers in Rome.

Let me give you a little bit of context to the society at that time. One, it was a society steeped in slavery. Experts, historians, scholars, whatever you want to call them, estimate that there was actually three slaves for every free person in Rome at that time.

So it wasn't like it was in the back dark hallways of certain neighborhoods. It was everywhere. So Paul is preaching to a group of people. Many of them are slaves living in Rome that there was a world of slavery.

Two, it was a world of absolute rulers. The Caesars were the emperors. They were gods to be worshipped. That's how they did. There was no vote.

[29 : 17] What they wanted to do, they wanted to do. Yes, they had a senate that backed them up if you know anything about your history. But the emperor was still God and he got his way.

And that obviously is small g God. Third, it was a world of high taxes. High taxes. It's kind of interesting. And some of you guys know you've lived in different countries.

People complain about high taxes. The only reason we know about high taxes is because we happen to live next to the United States. I still remember back in the 80s paying \$8 for a coke over in Europe.

We've got no clue what high taxes are. But in Rome, even higher taxes. And what's interesting that rulers of provinces, they were chosen because their ability to keep the peace, but primarily to get the taxes flowing to Rome.

If there was no peace, you couldn't get the money going to Rome. So they took some very strong leaders that made sure there was peace with the objective of making sure all the money was going back to Rome.

[30 : 29] And third, Rome is a world of persecution. World of persecution. Here's the thing. Foreign people meant nothing to Rome.

Rome. In fact, if you were a woman, if I was married and I didn't like my wife, I could kill her. There was no repercussions. If your neighbor happened to be playing the stereo a little loud, he wasn't a citizen, I could go over there and shoot him.

No penalty. If he was a citizen, I'd have to answer for that. So unless you were a citizen, you had pretty much no rights. You looked at a Roman soldier the wrong way.

He took your life. Too bad. That's the world that they lived in. So they lived in a world of slavery. There was absolute horrendous rule, high taxes, and that there was high persecution.

A bunch of soldiers wanted to capture you in a certain part and sell you elsewhere. You did not have your local ombudsman to write a letter. Dear sir, please help me.

[31 : 38] Please fight for my rights. There was no legal courts that was going to look after your complaint. Here's the other thing. The Jews, and if you were with me through the life of Christ, in all of the Roman Empire, you know who the most hated people by the Romans were?

The Jews. They hated Israel. Because in case you didn't know it, guerrilla warfare originated in Israel. Jews always fighting back.

They are always revolting. Sedition. They hated. In fact, Rome had to make many concessions just to keep the peace in Palestine, Israel.

One, the Jews were allowed their own religion. They weren't forced to worship all the other gods. No other place in the Roman Empire was that allowed. But they were such a headache for Rome that they had to allow it.

Two, every other country had to serve in the Roman army. Guess what? Jews didn't. So you might say, hey, look at that. They got their religious freedom, right?

[32 : 45] And they got their political freedom. Do we see a lot of people being won over by their faith? No.

They were hated within the Roman Empire. Now, this is the world that Jesus is born into. It helps us understand why they wanted to make Jesus king. His miracles were unheard of and they were so spectacular that the people believed that only someone as Jesus in the miracles that he did could overthrow Rome.

But Jesus didn't. In fact, he runs away from any idea of the fact that they were going to make him king. Instead, Jesus goes to the cross.

He dies. Three days later, he rises again. Demonstrate not only was he, some people call him a prophet. He was far more than a prophet.

[33 : 48] He was the son of God. He had power over life and death. He lived for 40 days showing people who he was. He ascended to heaven. Acts 1 tells us that the spirit comes down at Pentecost and a new form of person is created.

A Christian. These Christians live in the exact same world as the Jews do. But they will live very differently than the Jews.

This letter is now written by Paul, a Jew who's also a Roman citizen. So let's look at the text. Romans 13, verse 1.

Simply says, let every person be subject to the governor authorities. That whole word, every person. He's actually talking about not groups of people.

In case you don't know, in Scripture, when it says that all mankind, sometimes it's referring to different types of people, meaning different nations. But what Paul was saying, let every person, he's talking about every individual.

[34 : 58] What does he say? Be subject. Same word, be submissive to the governing authorities. That whole idea of be submissive is actually a military term.

It means to line up under. If you got a general, you get your colonel, your captain, second, first lieutenant, second lieutenant, and everybody else.

There is a certain line of authority that you have, and you're always under some one. Now, notice the condition that is in this verse.

Do you see the condition? There is none. There is none. There is no condition for a particular person. There's no condition if you're of good character or of bad character.

This isn't a condition of solely those who are in the army. This isn't a condition for people whose names start with the letter D. This is for all persons, every person, each person to line up.

- [36 : 02] Who do we line up under? The governing authorities. That word also means someone who is ruler or authority. Notice it doesn't say line up under good rulers, line up under honest rulers, only line up under really funny rulers.

No. It doesn't even disqualify stupid, bad, harsh rulers. It's an all-inclusive term.

And here's the thing which differed the Jews from the Christians. What brought Christians eventual acceptance was their submission to the bad rulers and unfair laws of the land?

You see, their character was seen and respected. And then we have, continuing, what is the reason why God gives them this order, this imperative?

Notice it says, for there is no authority except from God. God. And those that exist have been instituted by God.

- [37 : 14] That's the condition. The reason you line up under these authorities, bad, good, not so good, stupid, incompetent, is because I am the one who placed them there.

Nobody rules by accident. Nobody is ruling because God, because God wasn't strong enough to stop them from ruling.

There is a purpose why some have been allowed to rule. So God has placed us in a part of this world at a certain time that we are to submit to the authority he has put in place over us.

So what does that mean to submit? Like, what is our duty to such a government? So we know we're supposed to submit, but what does that look like? Well, I'm going to take you, and I think we got, Ryan can bring it up, 1 Timothy 2.

1 Timothy 2, verses 1 to 3. It's our new technology. We've moved from candles to lights. We're getting there.

- [38 : 27] We're getting there. But you guys will have to trust me when I read it, all right? Or you can turn to me in your Bibles, or if you have it on your phone, it's a lot quicker. 1 Timothy 2, 1 to 3. Paul writes, he says, first of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people.

For kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God, our Savior. Paul, later write in Timothy 3, says, he's telling Titus, remind the church to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

Amazing, right? We're called, actually, Scripture tells us, we are called to live a peaceful and quiet life, that we live a life that is known to be godly and dignified in every way, to be obedient, to be ready to do good work, to speak no evil of anyone, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward people.

So when people ask, how are we to make an impact in the society that we live in, this is it. Right? To be meek, humble, forgiving, kind.

- [40 : 15] Why? Why are we to do this? Well, let's look back again at Romans, the text, and I'm just going to read it from verses 2 to 5.

It says, Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval.

For he is God's servant 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.

Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience.

[41 : 15] I'm going to give you, and this is one of my former pastors pointed out very aptly, that it tells us what a government is supposed to do. This is what a government is supposed to do. Verse 3, government is to restrain evil.

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Anywhere you go, even in badly run countries, we know those who do evil, the government comes against them, right?

It's not just Christians, but people who do evil, the government comes against them. It says that proper government will not be a terror to good people.

Proper government will be a terror to those who do not do good. I know we talk about rights and freedoms. We often think about rights and freedoms being affected, like we were being terrorized.

But often is the case, we were mostly inconvenienced. We had to line up and wait outside Costco for 30 minutes. Oh, the horrible government.

[42 : 22] Take them down. I'm going to wear this mask, which we all know does absolutely nothing. But we do it. There's peace and order.

Second function that a government has, verse 3, it says, government protects and support for rulers and not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. But would you have no fear of the one who is in authority?

Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval. For he is God's servant for our good. Just like I said, historically, government treats people who do good kindly, favorable, and fairly.

It provides security. There's an army that keeps other people from coming and robbing us of our riches. Our government protects our trade. When we go to market, we sell our goods.

It makes sure that we're getting a fair exchange. Paul, time and time again in Acts, used man's law to his advantage.

[43 : 25] The government gives us roads. It gives us electricity, clean water. Even how this building is created, there's safety codes that are meant to protect us.

That's all a part of God's blessing. Even now, food chains, we complain that prices are expensive, and they are. But at the same time, we're getting clean food, right?

We get a warning if there's a salmonella. So those are all the things that God has put in government in place for. And the third aspect is the government punishes lawbreakers.

Even non-Christian governments know that murder, stealing is wrong, and that's what they try to do. What's interesting, and in case you didn't know, I used to work for the Canadian government.

Oh, I'm the bad guy now. But I was in high enough levels that when we were dealing with national policies, one of the areas that I had a lot of work to do was Iraq and what was going on with Saddam Hussein.

[44 : 30] So I was one of the guys that tracked all the horrible things that he and his family did, right? So I met with a lot of people that had been persecuted by him. And what's interesting is that now that Iraq has fallen and there is no leader, it is absolute chaos in Iraq.

Murder rates have gone through the roof, rape, pillaging. It's absolute chaos. U.S. foreign policy has been now to remove dictators.

We've seen this in Libya, Afghanistan. There still isn't a government in those places. And for some of you who have lived in other parts of the world, what we might consider bad government is nothing compared to what they've seen.

Right? Even high levels of corruption corruption is at least getting you some goods in safety. But even the worst judgment that you could ever have on a land is anarchy.

It is a horrible place to live in a land of anarchy. And even bad government protects people from that.

[45 : 44] So, the main question is, when are we allowed to? If God calls us to submit at all times to all these things, what is the exception?

How do we know when civil disobedience is called for? Let's turn in our Bibles to Acts chapter 4. Acts chapter 4. We're going to look at Acts chapter 4, 13, 20.

The context is Peter and John are preaching after Jesus rose again. They're preaching about Jesus. Beginning in verse 13, I'll just read you the text.

It's pretty straightforward. Now, when they, that is the religious rulers, saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.

And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who has healed standing beside them, because there was a man who needed to be healed, and they healed him with a word, the man who had healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

[47 : 00] But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, what shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

We cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

So they call them and charge them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.

For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. Now turn the page to Acts 5. Well, they didn't listen. They kept preaching.

Lives started to get changed. And they get called in before the courts again. Acts 5 verse 27 simply says, As for when they had brought them, they set them before the council.

[48 : 04] And the high priest questioned them saying, We strictly charge you not to teach in this name. Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. Amen, right?

And you intend to bring this man's blood upon us. But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men. Two principles that we can take from that.

One, first principle is the government has no right to tell us to do something that God has told us not to do. Second principle, the government does not have the right to tell us not to do something that God has told us to do.

You with me? God's given the command. His authority overrules the government's authority. And also the government can't tell us to do not something that God has specifically told us to do.

Now here's the rub. A lot of people during the COVID era started to think that God had commanded certain things and that had made it a matter of their conscience.

[49 : 10] So when, and I'll just explain to you a little bit of the discussion that happened with the leaders here at our church. When we were approached about shutting down over COVID, the discussion was we believed the government did have a complete right to protect the citizens of Canada from this widespread disease.

Right? That's what they really believed what was starting at the very beginning. There was a lot of panic what was going to happen. So they asked us to close down the church which we did. We obeyed them in that.

But after a time you start to think that maybe this pandemic really isn't what it is. but we really believed that the government was acting rightly. They do have the right to protect the citizens and if they want to say that the citizens can't go out they do have that right to say that.

Our rights do not supersede the rights of everyone else. But then there was this other tension later on. They started to ask us not to sing.

I don't know if you remember that. You could come to church but you couldn't sing. But there was a different infringement that for us because it meant they were telling us how to worship. You with me?

[50 : 21] There's a tension. There's a difference between asking us not to go public and then coming into the building where we would be holding church. But they were starting to instruct us on how not how to worship.

We really believe they didn't have that right to do that. But what we elected to do is to continue doing the video sermons and encouraging you to sing at home.

That was our our thinking for that. So we elected to continue on video. Then the government came with another asking that the only people we could allow to come to assemble were those who had a vaccine passport.

And the way they said it is if we had more than 100 people or a certain percentage we couldn't do it. And we in our contact as elders we agreed we weren't going to do that.

We did not have the right to bar anybody from worship. There's no rights in scripture that give them that ability. And we kind of didn't count. Right?

[51 : 24] But we agreed if more people were coming we would just have two services. It wasn't a hard thing to do. Now many of you might know that some of the churches in Canada decided that they didn't want to go that way.

They believed the government did not have the rights. Like when the government said we had to check vaccines that wasn't our role. If they wanted to show up at the door and check vaccine passes they were free to do that but we weren't going to do that.

We're my role here and role as elders is to spiritually shepherd you not to see if people are adhering to those laws. But some people believe that there was a commandment to meet and I don't know if you know I was actually on a panel a couple weeks ago for Gospel Coalition and that was one of the issues that came up and one of my emphasis is this is church right?

We're coming together we're worship together but this isn't the only time we're church amen? We're church from Monday to Saturday as well. We still had Bible studies people were able to learn there was still some fellowship it wasn't perfect but we're able to work.

Now some people went that extra mile and said the government did not have the right to prohibit or limit the amount of people coming to church. For rightly or wrongly they decided to make that decision that's why some of the pastors went to prison because not because they were preaching God's word really they could have just had more services they went to prison because they were breaking the health laws and not ultimately submitting to that governing authority.

[53 : 05] The tension though that exists now and it's believed by many different Christian leaders is the government and it happens everywhere around the world in every other country government always seeks more control.

Always seeks more control and at some point there's other ways that we are to push back in the legal means that we have before us.

So like when people talk about schools I always say get your kids out of the schools you have a legal right not to put your kids in public schooling. If you really believe they're advocating for lifestyles that are outside the Christian faith get them out.

Just like if you had a job which is asking you to do something illegal get another job right? You have those freedoms to do so. all right I'm just going to conclude with that ultimately God has called us to be known for our good conduct.

And I have no our listen I don't get I don't think protesting is a bad thing I think it's a good thing. Why? Because the government allows us to do it. Do what the government allows us to do it.

[54 : 13] To let our voice known that is how change happens at the government level and I always encourage everyone to use what the rights that they have been afforded to them by the government.

But I know some of you guys come from different countries. We talk about freedoms it's a lot different than what we think. So sometimes we have a lot we have a lot more to be thankful for and we have a lot more reasons to be sober minded about what is the true reality of what freedom and not freedom is here.

Let me pray. Dear Heavenly Father I know sometimes we're talking about some issues here that somehow go beyond ourselves and they affect so many aspects of our lives and there's visceral responses to what goes on in our society.

There's some things we hate and the reason why we hate them is because they're clearly against you and your word and it hurts and we see the damage it does.

But at the same time you're not calling us to hate but you're calling us to pray. The incredible spiritual weapon of prayer to bring your word of truth into darkness.

[55 : 25] Nobody wins an argument by yelling. We win arguments by how we live our life and how we share truth and how we listen and understand where people are coming from.

even in this crazy world of what we see before us and the acceptance of all sorts of alternative lifestyles.

For some people they just believe anything being prejudicial against any type of lifestyle is so wrong because they at one point were prejudiced against for another reason and their hearts just feel compassion for those people.

But all too often they have very little spiritual discernment in understanding what they're truly advocating for. They don't have the ability to point people to Genesis 1 and to explain to people why and how we were created in God's image and that how we are created male and female and how we are created to form families and how to live in the fear of the Lord.

This world has no idea what that is. Yet often times we hate them for it. We truly should have compassion and pity for them.

[56 : 57] Father I pray that if anybody has heard anything that they do not understand and pray that they'll just be free to talk to one of us elders about it or even if they had a problem with how we responded to COVID or what's going to happen in the future I pray that they would see that we responded both in prayer and just weighing what was before us and looking at what scriptures teach us.

But Lord just when I look at us and I'm so very thankful for the churches here in Squamish who worked together to make sure that we were encouraging one another building into one another and protecting one another and we did believe and do believe we were protecting your witness but at the same time we desire to be bold and declaring your truth and calling people out of darkness.

Father I continue to pray that you give us much wisdom and much knowledge of your word to apply it so that we could live these type of lives that are known to be good kind caring and that even we look back at Jeremiah 29 11 that was taught to us a couple of months ago that the Jews were called to be a blessing to the Persians and the Babylonians who would enslave them and even Daniel who resisted just because they threw him in the lines that he didn't protest he accepted and God brought many blessings through that.

Father I pray that you would give us that strength to stand up for our convictions and accept the due punishment that the government would want to bring against us. At the same time I ask that you would protect us.

So Father in a convoluted world we live with a how shall I say it a clear savior who is a clear word. We're not lost we are in the light.

[59 : 03] Your word is a lamp unto my feet and therefore allows us to walk with confidence that your word instructions in how we must live.

Thank you for our country. We pray for our MPs our MLAs and the council that is here in Squamish as they try to make decisions in regards to livability and trying to be discerning and how to provide housing and homes for everybody.

We pray that you bring wisdom to the members of parliament and our prime minister that you give him a sense of what is right what is wrong that he pursue righteousness and not promote evil.

God and Father I pray that your power would be seen in elections and even if it doesn't go the way that Christians want it to go may they just see it as it just reinforces the need for a greater mission field in a greater stronger voice that needs to be preached.

In all these things we ask for your prayers and blessing in your most holy and precious name. Amen.