

Compliance With Government Authority

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[0 : 00] Hello everybody and welcome to our service here from Stornoway. I trust that as we worship God together we'll know his blessing and by his Holy Spirit that his word will find a place in our hearts.

Now because this is Remembrance Sunday, we're going to begin with a minute's silence as from now. So let's just spend this minute in silence. Thank you.

Thank you.

We'll begin our service now and we'll sing first of all from Psalm 71. That's on page 90. It's in the Singed Psalms version. Psalm 71 and singing to the tune Bonili, verses 1 to 8.

In you, O Lord, I've taken refuge. Protect me ever from disgrace. Rescue and save me in your justice. Turn to me as I seek your face.

[1 : 56] Throw on to verse 8. To many I am a cause of wonder. But you are still my refuge strong. My mouth is filled with adoration. Praising your splendor all day long.

These verses to God's praise. In you, O Lord, I've taken refuge.

Protect me ever from disgrace. Rescue and save me in your justice.

Turn to me as I seek your face. Be my strong rock and my sure refuge.

To which I always may resort. Give the command to help and save me.

[3 : 00] Because you are my rock and fort. From wicked hands, my God, O save me.

From cruel hands of violence. For sovereign Lord, you've been my refuge.

And since my youth, my confidence. From birth I have relied upon you.

You are the guide of all my ways. Out of my mother's womb, You brought me to you.

I never will give praise. To many I'm a cause of wonder.

[4 : 11] But you are still my refuge strong. My mouth is filled with adoration.

Praising your splendor all day long. Let's now read God's word.

Our first reading today is from the letter to the Romans. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 13. A short passage from the beginning, verses 1 to 7. Romans 13 at the beginning.

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God. Those that exist have been instituted by God. 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.

[5 : 19] 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. For the same reason you also pay taxes. For the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

Pay to all what is owed to them. Taxes to whom taxes are owed. Revenue to whom revenue is owed. Respect to those whom respect is owed.

Honour to whom honour is owed. Amen we pray God will bless to us that portion of his word. Let's now engage in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord.

Our gracious God, our Father in heaven, we thank you today once again for enabling us to worship you, to draw near to you, to call upon your name and sing your praises, and to give heed to the teaching of your word.

[6 : 29] We thank you, O Lord, for the peace that we enjoy to do this. And for the way in which we are able to gather together here, though we are separated by distance, nevertheless we gather together with oneness of mind.

We do so acknowledging, O Lord, that you have given us this facility and the conditions by which we can come together in this way, free from persecution or the threat of interruption.

We thank you today, O Lord, as we remember those who have given their lives in time past, in times of conflict and war, we give thanks, Lord, for the way in which they so willingly and gladly went and served their country down through the years.

We think of those, O Lord, who are left behind and those who still mourn the passing of their loved ones in times gone by. Some, O Lord, who did not know them personally and yet know that they gave their lives in a good cause.

We reflect not only, O Lord, on those who fell during the two great world wars, but also those who gave their lives and who served their country in more recent times, in all the different conflicts in which our own forces were involved and those of other nations with whom we have affinity.

[7 : 50] We thank you, O Lord, for the way in which you provide for us the peace that we have, the many privileges we have, the way that you continue to uphold our freedoms for us.

We know that these have been dearly bought. They were bought by those who gave their lives in the conflicts that secured their freedoms.

We pray, O Lord, today that we may honour their memory and that as we honour their memory here, not only in a short time of silence, but even in these days and throughout each year, as we think of them and as we think of the sacrifice they made, help us, we pray, to treasure the memory that we have of them and their bravery and the way in which they so willingly went to conflict for their people.

We ask today that you bless families who are bereft of loved ones lost in recent times. We pray that you bless them, O Lord, as they miss their loved ones and now gone from their midst.

We ask that you would be pleased, Lord, to continue to bless us as a nation and we especially remember those, Lord, who also came back from conflict, but with serious injuries and life-changing injuries and continue to this day to bear the effects of such.

[9 : 16] Lord, we pray for them and ask that you would bless them, bless to them, O Lord, the service that they gave. Help them, we pray, through the many mental traumas, as well as physical, that they carry.

And we pray that you would bless those who give counsel and minister in terms of mental health and also physical well-being. We pray, Lord, for all who are in Her Majesty's forces today.

We ask that you would be pleased to continue to provide for us in that way in the security and defence of our realm. and we ask that you would bless all who serve both on land and on sea and in the Air Force and all the various other forces that are involved in their support.

We pray for those who exercise a chaplaincy and for Sassaraz, they continue to minister to those, Lord, who serve in the forces. We pray that you would bless your own word amongst them because they do not know from one month to the next or even in shorter times when they will be called to engage with an enemy.

And we ask, O Lord, that you would be pleased to provide them with, with all at this time, to be ready in such an eventuality. And so we pray, too, that you bless us today as a nation as we reflect upon these casualties and upon these sacrifices of days gone by.

[10 : 47] We do ask that you would enable us, Lord, as a people to place our trust and confidence in the God who provides for us so wonderfully. And we ask, O Lord, today that you would continue to bless us, bless us especially with the Gospel.

Turn many back to the Gospel, we pray, who have turned aside from it and to walk in other paths. We ask today that you would bless them, O Lord, when we know so many in our country are not familiar with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and certainly not familiar with himself in a personal relationship with him.

Lord, we pray in your mercy that you would turn us as a people to yourself, to the righteousness that your word commends and to that service of Christ the King that we give not as a sacrifice, as such, for he is our sacrifice.

And we thank you especially for the willingness and the dedication that he showed when he gave himself a ransom for his people to rescue us from the thralldom of sin and death.

O Lord, today we pray that you would turn our hearts toward him as we know him now to be sitting on his throne at the right hand of the Father. O Lord, our God, we ask that he may be especially precious to us and that whatever things we experience in this life, whatever deprivations, whatever deaths we come to know of in our own experience, whatever partings, whatever challenges, Lord, help us, we pray, to know that he reigns above all of these and that we are safe in the confidence that he is our king.

[12:30] We ask your blessing for us too, O Lord, as we go on living under the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. We pray for our authorities once again and bless them, we pray, with the insight and with the wisdom that would lead us through these difficult, challenging times.

Help us to support them. Help us, we pray, to bear in our hearts the spirit of compliance and not of rebelliousness. And help us, we pray, as a people throughout the world to realise that you are speaking to us through these things and that in your providence you are calling us to take attention, to pay attention, to take note of eternal things, things that go beyond this present life and this present world order.

And so help us to look towards eternity with our trust and our confidence in Christ, where you have provided him for us not only as individuals, but as a people and as a society for he is indeed the way, the truth and the life for us.

And there is no other way to you as our Father but through him. There is no other name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved.

And Lord, we pray that you would impress this continually upon our hearts. Remember our young people and our children today, we thank you for them. We pray that they too may learn at this time of what it cost to secure their freedoms, help them to appreciate what happened during these times of war so that they may give thanks to God and that they themselves may be committed to peace and to a decent society.

[14:09] We ask, O Lord, that you bless them as they learn the things of your word today. We pray and give thanks for our Sunday school and for the teachers, for the efforts that they are going to each and every week to provide videos and teaching for the children.

Bless them, we pray, and bless them as they continue to provide such a service for us as a congregation. Lord, we give thanks for them and we pray that you would continue to bless them. Bless all who are sick today. We pray for any who may have the COVID virus. We know there are many throughout our land. We pray for the health authorities and for the nursing staff and for the medical staff in their entirety and for those who help too with mental health issues and for those who are ill.

Lord God, we ask that you bless them. Bless too those we hear of who have made a recovery in a measure from the COVID-19 infection.

Lord, we know there are many who have long-term effects and still find difficulties in going back to work and even in setting about family duties too through inordinate tiredness and other aspects of the COVID-19 effect.

[15:25] Bless them, Lord, we pray. Continue to watch over them and guide them and give them patience and give them, as we all require, to depend upon you and upon your truth.

Be with us now, we pray, and hear us in our prayer before us and cleanse us from all our sin. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, we are coming to the third of the addresses that we have on Jesus' I Ams.

Today we're looking at Jesus saying, I am the door. We turn to John chapter 10. John chapter 10, verses 7 to 9. Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

Now, this is a wonderful illustration for us because, as we'll see God willing next time, Jesus also speaks of himself as the good shepherd. Let me just tell you something of what was a common practice at those times that helps us to understand the passage and the picture that Jesus is giving us of himself being the door.

[16:46] In those days, and still the case, I think, in these parts of the world, in the Middle East, that shepherds would actually bring their flocks together in one place for safety for the night.

It would be a place with a stone wall rounded so that it would contain the flocks of a number of shepherds. And then, as the shepherds brought their flock to be kept safe for the night within these

walls, that enclosure, the fold, as Jesus puts it here, they would actually employ somebody to be the gatekeeper.

The passage here speaks earlier of the gatekeeper in the first few verses. And the gatekeeper would be somebody that was paid by the shepherds to protect their flocks because obviously there were dangers all around, not just wolves, but also thieves who would steal the sheep if nobody was looking after them.

And so, when Jesus says that he is the door, what he really means is that he is the entrance to the place of safety that the sheep went into, that his own people entered into safety through him. Now, sometimes, there wasn't actually a physical gate or a door in the opening. If you look at an old ruin nowadays, like a stone-walled ruin of a thatched house or an old cottage, just the wall standing, you'll find an opening there.

[18:10] And that's really a picture of something, what this fold, this would be like, this place of safety for the sheep. Just an opening in the wall that the sheep would go through and the shepherd would employ the gatekeeper to look after them.

Sometimes, if there was no physical door, the gatekeeper would actually himself sleep in the opening so that he would be keeping the sheep safe inside and protecting them if any wild animal or thief came along.

And that helps us to understand the picture that Jesus is giving here when he's saying, I am the door. He's the door to salvation.

It is through him that we enter into the safety of God's salvation to have our sins forgiven, to have God make us his friends, and we do that through trusting in Jesus.

He is the door. When we go to Jesus and put our trust in him and believe in him and love him, what we're doing is going through the door to salvation. He is the door.

[19:19] And he says here, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The shepherd would come in the morning. The shepherds who had the flock kept within these walls would come each morning and they would call out their own sheep.

Their own sheep would know them and they would follow them. You find that in the beginning of the chapter here. The gatekeeper opens to the shepherd. The sheep hear his voice and he calls out his own sheep by name and leads them out.

So the gatekeeper would know who the shepherd was and then he would give, he would provide the opening for him. He would move out of the opening and the sheep would then respond to the voice of the shepherd.

We'll see the voice of the shepherd when we come to look at Jesus as the good shepherd. What he's saying here is if anyone enters by me he will be saved and go in and out and find pasture. As the sheep every night went into the safe place every morning went out again to find grass and pasture.

That's what Jesus does again for us. We go through him into safety but we also find the best possible food for our souls. The wonderful food that he gives us in that salvation that feeds our souls.

[20:34] that enables us to live spiritually the spiritual life that Jesus gives. So I hope today that you know Jesus as the door in your own life as well.

That as you put your trust in Jesus and accept him and love him and have him as your saviour by that you've entered into the salvation that God has provided through him.

And you'll know him too as the good shepherd as well as the door into salvation. So let's say the Lord's Prayer now together. Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Now we're going to read again and this time we're reading from Ecclesiastes and this is the passage that we're going to look at for a short time this morning.

Ecclesiastes chapter 8 verses 1 to 9 and we'll see how there's a connection here with the passage we read in Romans chapter 13 and other New Testament passages as well.

[21:57] So Ecclesiastes chapter 8 from the beginning Who is like the wise and who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine and the hardness of his face is changed.

I say keep the king's command because of God's oath to him. Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause for he does whatever he pleases.

For the word of the king is supreme and who may say to him what are you doing? Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing and the wise heart will know the proper time and just way for there is a time and a way for everything although man's trouble lies heavy on him.

For he does not know what is to be or who can tell and tell him how it will be. No man has power to retain the spirit or power over the day of death.

There is no discharge from war nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun when man has power over man to his hurt.

[23 : 11] Again we pray that God will guide us through this passage and bless it to us. Not acting wisely in daily life is something common to human beings including myself and yourselves.

We've all seen situations or been in situations where either we've seen somebody not acting wisely or ourselves sadly have not acted wisely. Think of the football coach that abuses the referee and refuses to calm down so he has to be sent back to the stand.

Think of the driver who really goes mad when he goes back to his car or her car parked in a place that either shouldn't be parked there or else the meter has run out so he's getting a parking ticket and the warden is making out his ticket and he attacks the warden.

The fault is his own but he takes it out on the traffic warden for giving him a ticket or tries to make excuses. Sometimes sadly too you find parents who take it out on the teachers.

I've seen this happening as well. I'm sure those of you who are teachers will have experience of this or either know in your own experience others where a parent comes along and really abuses a teacher maybe using even foul language just because they think that their son or daughter is not really being educated or attended to in the same way as others or maybe some others are being in their view given priority over them.

[24 : 43] There are so many different ways in daily life in which we find ourselves and other people not acting wisely. Chapter 7 here we saw was about wisdom and its limitations the final part of it at least and in chapter 8 he still continues the theme of wisdom but the writer is now telling us some of the benefits of wisdom some of the ways in which wisdom will benefit us as we exercise it and use it in this world in daily life.

Remember as we said last time when the Bible here uses the word wise and the word wisdom it's not just it's not talking about human intellectual ability because you do find many people who have who have considerable intellectual ability but you wouldn't say they act wisely all the time.

He's talking about people who follow the counsel of God who take their cue from God's revelation people especially who seek to honour God in their lives and the way they live they are the wise people people who have the Holy Spirit people who actually have the insight that God gives to his people which really is the wisdom that's being spoken about here in these passages the wisdom that belongs to those who are under the direction of God willingly and to whom he has given his spirit.

So he's saying here first of all the personal qualities that are attached to wisdom he's giving us a few of the personal qualities attached to wisdom and then he'll take us through the matter of exercising wisdom in a hostile world because that's where we're all situated in a hostile world and it was no different in the world of Solomon if he was the writer of Ecclesiastes as he probably was.

But first of all we have some of the personal qualities attached to wisdom and first of all he tells us that wisdom sets the wise apart from others distinguishes the wise verse 1a there who is like the wise and of course the answer to that is the wise are themselves different who is like them he's really saying is there anybody like them without this wisdom well the answer to that of course is no and then in the next part of the verse we find a man's wisdom makes his face shine and the hardness of his face is changed there's an interesting thing there it's not all to do with appearance but very often you will find a person that has the godly wisdom that God gives to his people that shows in their demeanour it shows even outwardly in their face I'm sure you've all come across people whom you've said well that person is really not just godly but has an insight an ability to know how to speak and what to say and what not to say and what he's saying here is it shows

[27 : 40] I mean there's a peace and there's a joy and there's something in the face of somebody who is under the direction of God who knows God who values God's leadership who knows God's word as the basis of his or her life there's something in that person that you can see is different to

others who don't have it who can compare with the wise who is like the wise the wisdom sets the wise apart and when you go to the bible you'll actually find examples of that two of the chief examples of that are the example that you find in the case of Daniel and also in the case of Joseph you go to Daniel's book and you find Daniel when he and his friends were taken as captives to Babylon and when they were told that they would have to eat what was put before them the food that they were given and they refused to do that they knew that would be dedicated to idols and to idolatry and in Daniel chapter 1 and verse 15 when they refused that and asked for vegetables and food that they themselves wanted to eat instead they said test your servants for ten days let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by and deal with your servants according to what you see so he listened to them in this matter the person who was in charge of their lives and tested them for ten days at the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food so the steward took away their fruit and wine that they were to drink and gave them vegetables and then it says and for these four youths

God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams and you find a very similar thing said by Pharaoh in Genesis chapter 40 where you find Joseph spoken of in chapter 41 of Genesis where Pharaoh rather after Joseph had shown his insight and his wisdom and this proposal that Joseph made pleased Pharaoh and his servants and Pharaoh said to his servants can we find a man like this in whom is the spirit of God then Pharaoh said to Joseph since God has shown you all this there is none so discerning and wise as you are therefore you shall be over my house and all my people shall order themselves as you command you see they were distinguished both Daniel and Joseph distinguished by virtue of the wisdom that God had given them it set them apart and of course both of these men lived by the fear of God they lived in respect to God they lived in reverence to God they lived in obedience to God they lived in a way that loved God and loved his word and loved his provision and loved his direction and that's why they could refuse what they refused because that would be idolatrous and offensive to God the point though is that wisdom set them apart it showed them distinguished them and set them apart from others that doesn't mean that everybody that comes to have the wisdom that God gives is going to be as outstanding as Daniel and Joseph were they were singularly distinguished but there's nevertheless wisdom is still a distinguishing matter for all the people of God when God gives that to them the second thing that you find in the personal qualities attached to wisdom is that wisdom provides the wise with insight the first verse again who is like the wise and then it says who knows the interpretation of a thing of course we've seen that with Joseph and with Daniel the interpretation of the dreams that Pharaoh had and the situation that faced Joseph under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and here is the same thing emphasised who knows the interpretation of a thing because wisdom actually provides us with insight let me just remind you of what Paul prayed for with regard to the Ephesians and the Colossians when Paul wrote to the Ephesians he said this is what I am praying that the God of our Lord

Jesus Christ the Father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him of course that was to do a lot with spiritual insight into God's truth and their own growth in their spiritual lives but it didn't actually exclude wisdom in dealing with the things of the world with their daily lives and the things they confronted there so this is what the apostle prayed for that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus and then Colossians chapter 1 verse 9 so he says from the day we heard we have not ceased to pray for you asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God and you see how wonderfully that sets out in a very short passage really how this wisdom is so important how it's given by God but how it's not just for our own spiritual increase and health but also to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him in other words in the sight of the world in the experience of those who look at our lives and who see us as God's people wisdom gives us insight gives us a measure of understanding we will not know everything we won't know the answer to every question we'll still have failures we'll still have things that we just cannot fathom and don't know how to react to but nevertheless we can come to God and seek the benefit of the wisdom that he gives us now we'll see here that wisdom is needed for testing situations especially and that's what we'll find when we come to the rest of the passage today but you remember

Jesus in Matthew 10 and verse 16 he was sending the apostles out on a mission as missionaries as his as his servants to bring the gospel and the news of him to the world around them this is what he said behold I am sending you out as sheep amongst wolves imagine what that's like what a picture that is I'm sending you out as sheep amongst wolves what do wolves do to sheep they take them apart if they're not protected I'm sending you out as sheep among wolves then what therefore be wise as serpents and innocent as doves but you see he emphasized they need wisdom you're going to meet with testing situations he said you're going to be put into prison you're going to be thrown out of synagogues you're going to be actually facing persecution therefore be as wise as serpents have the wisdom that God gives his people the insight the ability that wisdom gives and we all need that in a measure whatever it is you're facing today you can face it but you need God's wisdom in order to face it and benefit from it even the most difficult things and you know sometimes it's a mark of wisdom to say to God Lord I don't know what to do I don't have the knowledge and the insight as to what to do in this situation so please help me because wisdom one of the steps of wisdom is acknowledging our lack of wisdom and our need of more wisdom and that's really what God is doing when you come to pray to God as you find in James chapter 1 verse 5 if anyone lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives generously and he will actually hear him let him ask of God we have the privilege every day we should use it every day of asking God to give us wisdom we cannot manage life without it but then God is pleased to give it to us when we come to pray for it so these are the personal qualities or some of them that arise out of the chapter wisdom sets the wise apart and it also provides the wise with insight into the situations we face in daily life that's why we need

[36 : 38] God's the God given wisdom that God gives secondly exercising wisdom in a hostile world and the main emphasis in this is compliance with ruling authority look at verses 2 to 4 I say keep the king's command because of God's oath to him be not hasty to go out from his presence do not take your stand in an evil cause for he does whatever he pleases for the word of the king is supreme and who may say to him what are you doing bear in mind that when this was written kings in that part of the world were all powerful absolute in their rule you see in verse 9 I think he's in verse 9 just casting our mind back to what he's saying here in verses 2 to 4 when men had power over man to his hurt when you're talking about a king who's absolute very often that power is used to the hurt of others to the advantage of the king himself but also to the hurt of those who are ruled by him it's not always easy in fact it's always very challenging and difficult to live under a tyrannical authority under an authority that's absolute that has in God's providence that power given to it when you go to the New

Testament that's the situation that you actually have because Romans 13 where we read together about the way in which we are to be in regard to the authorities the powers that be as sometimes it's called how that passage begins there let every person be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God and those who exist have been instituted by God therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed now it's surprising in a sense that you might find you might say Paul writing such a thing because who are the authorities when Paul wrote that who are the ruling authorities are they very kind authorities are they Christian authorities are they God fearing authorities no it's the Roman authorities it's the Roman Empire and it's officialdom they're the authorities and yet Paul is saying God has actually instituted authority because God is a God of order and even if at times in his providence he allows an authority to be an authority that's absolute an authority that's not godly yet nevertheless he is the one who has appointed that in his wisdom in his sovereignty and therefore

Paul is saying it's an authority that is given of God to keep order and so on he says let every person be subject to the governing authorities and when you go forward then to 1 Peter you'll find something very very similar Peter where he says in chapter 2 be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good for this is the will of God that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people Peter is saying the same thing be subject to every human institution whether to the emperor or to governors as sent by him notice the words there for the Lord's sake and in many ways that's really the key to Peter and to Paul's understanding and teaching on this particular matter it's an important matter for us all because when you find an emperor like

Nero reigning in the time that Peter would have written these letters you find emperors like Nero despots tyrants cruel persecuting especially Christians and yet here is the word of the apostle under the inspiration of God let every individual be subject to the higher power to the powers that be to the authorities for the Lord's sake because ultimately what your life and my life is about is the Lord and for the Lord's sake and for the Lord's honour we're duty bound to follow his order in society an order which includes the appointing of the governing authorities we come back here to Ecclesiastes you see again what he's saying keep the king's command because of God's oath to him now that's possible to translate that because of your oath to God I think that's probably the best way of taking it when you go to the likes of the appointment of

Solomon who took over from David of course as king in 1st Chronicles chapter 29 verse 24 I think that gives us something of a key into what Ecclesiastes is saying because you find in that verse Solomon's appointed king to succeed David the mighty the sons of David and the nobles and the officials of the time all pledged allegiance to Solomon as king and when we elect a government whether it's the government that we personally would have chosen or the majority otherwise have chosen whether it's in America or whether it's here in the UK these authorities are authorities that may not themselves follow the Lord's standard in their personal lives or in their policies it may indeed be pagan powers as it was in Paul and Peter's day but they're still the ruling authorities appointed by

[42 : 29] God and we have an obligation to follow God's own counsel in respect to them and in being subject to them there may very well be as there are laws enacted relationships put onto the statute which we know are contrary to God's word and to God's standard we know that that's happened in our own and is happening today in our own country in Scotland in the UK and yet revolt is not acceptable while we are not required to sin we can have all of these things in place and it's extremely sad that that's the case that you find relationships which are contrary to the teaching of the Bible not only commended but set down in law in statute so that it's legal to actually practice them and we can say we don't like that we object to that we try and prevent that but when it happens we take it that unless we have required ourselves to sin in compliance with them then we accept that for the moment and seek at some point in the future that things might be changed you have that with marriage you have that with relationships out with that as well you have all of these things that have come in in recent times and yet if you and I are not required to sin then we simply express our disapproval of that but we don't rebel against the authority we don't cause a rebellion we don't cause a revolt if I was commanded if there was a statue that said to me you as a Christian minister from whatever date it might be you have to actually marry same sex people or trans people people whose relationships or gender designation you don't accept you have to do it then I would actually say

I cannot do it I won't do it it's the same situation you find in Acts chapter 5 verse 29 where the apostles came to the point as they were threatened and as they were commanded no longer to speak in the name of Jesus they would say we must obey God rather than men see that was a command that was going too far that was a situation where they were being commanded and pressurized into something that would involve them in serious sin against God and as long as you and I are not commanded or forced into sinning against God we live with a situation we find a way as it says here in verses 5 and 6 the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way and you take that into a present COVID situation let me just mention this because there's a lot of debate about this at the moment present

COVID situation the government needs to take action in a situation like a pandemic for the protection of its citizens for the protection of their health there will be consequences to that there will be pressures along with that there are pressures along with that they will bring out guidelines or even rules that we're obliged to follow they need wisdom insight and we pray that God will give them that that's why we pray for them they don't have that wisdom themselves anymore than we do they face a situation that the world has never faced before at least not with this particular COVID-19 pandemic but when they ask us to restrict our movement when they put us into different tiers or categories depending on which area we live in and when they apply certain rules to these situations regarding our movement regarding what we can and can't do that's a very different situation to Acts chapter 5 and verse 29

I cannot see how the situation we face where the government are obliged to take measures for the protection of our health how that can be equated with the government actually imposing a ban on

the worship of God there may be times when we cannot use church buildings as we ourselves presently are not able to but friends that's not the same thing as the government forcing us not to worship God we're worshipping God here today we're not in a church building we long for the day when we'll get back to our church buildings because it's so good to be together so essential to be together in many ways but for the moment the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way we live with the situation we wait for God himself to intervene to come to change things to develop things meantime our wisdom tells us that we need to protect other people's lives as well as our own that we don't fall into the thinking of well the government just set on banning worship and doing away with the church they will never be able to do that anyway no government has ever been able to do that the church is God's the gospel is God's that's that's why we act wisely friends and act in compliance with the powers that be when they themselves have to face this situation and come out with certain restrictions and rules which are not easy and are challenging for us but it's not state persecution it's not state imposing on the church things that otherwise would be wrong for them to do so if it comes to the point

God willing hope it won't but if when all the pandemic is over let's face it our governments in the world are already saying this to Christians you're not allowed to meet together to worship your God or you have to include the worship of the ancestors or the worship of the emperor or the king or the president or whatever then we would say we're not having that that's an imposition that causes us to sin asks us to sin present situation it's not that type of situation thankfully so let's be wise about it let's pray to God for further wisdom and for further insight and this is the just way that the verse here is talking about whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way for there is a time and a way for everything for the protection of life for the protection of our own lives and those of others and for the recovery as far as possible sooner rather than later of our whole civil life and our economic life that this pandemic has so drastically affected remember

[49 : 27] Colossians chapter 4 and verse 5 where Paul is saying walk in wisdom towards outsiders that's a hugely important verse for every one of us as church people as Christians whether we're professing Christians or not the world out there knows we're the church so we have to walk in wisdom towards outsiders those who are looking in who don't belong to the church who possibly even hate the church so we have to walk in wisdom towards them we haven't we don't give them reasons to find fault with God they'll do that for themselves anyway but let's act wisely let's act in a way that follows the direction of scripture and seeks further wisdom from God for this way that we need to have and to follow at this time now the time is gone I shall have a few things at the end of the passage here we can cover quickly though man's trouble lies heavy upon not only is there compliance with ruling authorities but he's coming back here I think to just remind us that even if we are given wisdom by

God we don't know everything and we won't know of the wisdom that will apply to every situation successfully he's confessing here four inabilities a person who does not know what is to be we cannot know the future nor can we secondly avoid death we cannot set things so that we avoid the inevitability of death and there's no discharge in war I think the picture there is of somebody who's gone to serve in the army or whatever and the war has broken out and they're on the front line or engaged in the battle he can't just turn around and say I don't like this I'm going home that's desertion they say there's no discharge from war nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it supposing we should say well I've had enough of these rules I've had enough of this compliance I'm just going to do my own thing well he says wickedness that's not the answer to life's problems either wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it as we'll see in the next part of the chapter wickedness has to face judgment just as much as we all as righteous people have to face God as well so here are the personal qualities attached to wisdom it sets the wise apart it provides also the wise with insight with an understanding and exercising wisdom in a hostile world means that we have compliance firstly with ruling authority and all that's attached to that now there's a confession too along with that of our inability of our lack of wisdom and of our need of more and as I mentioned already we have the great privilege of knowing James chapter 1 and verse 5 on which we must constantly and continually act if anyone lacks wisdom that's me that's you let him ask of God who gives generously and will not withhold and he will give it to him may God bless these thoughts on his word for us today now we're going to conclude again with our singing singing psalm 37 psalm 37 again it's this time in the

Scottish Psalter it's on page 255 of the psalm books we're singing to a tune Grafenberg in psalm 37 verses 29 to 34 the just the just inherited shall the land and ever in it dwell the just man's mouth doth wisdom speak his tongue doth judgment tell so verses 29 through to 34 in conclusion the just inherit shall the land and ever in it dwell the just man's mouth doth wisdom show his tongue doth judgment tell his heart the law is of his God his deep slide not away the wicked man did watch the just and seek at him to slay yet him the

Lord will not forsake nor leave him in his hands the righteous will he not condemn when he in judgment stands wait on the Lord and keep his way and the exiled shall he see the earth to inherit when cut off the wicked thou shall see now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore

[55 : 27] Amen thank you again for joining us at this service I also just commend to you joining us again if you can at 6.30 when the service tonight will be conducted by Mr. Scott MacLeod thank you and may God bless and keep you in these days ahead good ■■■■ there finally the Ñ