

God, Government, And Politics

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[0:00] Are you guys ready for a fun topic today? We're going to be talking about taxes. And this poor guy, meeting with the IRS agent, he says, well, we've got to start.

We're with you. Try to take depreciation on your wife. For some of you, you don't get that yet. You're allowed to take depreciation on certain things in your home. I'm not sure that you're allowed to do that with your wife. That just makes you get, I was going to personalize it and said that I had to, no, that wasn't going to go over very well.

Now, the passage we're going to look at today, you're also going to throw in there some government talk and some talk about God. And so if you're among polite company, these are all topics you're not supposed to talk about.

So I guess we're not very polite today. And we're just going to go right into this real barn burner of a passage here in Luke chapter 20.

[1:39] We're working through the gospel of Luke. And it's been over a year and a half now that we have been in Luke. Luke, I don't know if that makes, if that registers with you.

You might ask, when are we going to, are we going to finish before the rapture? I don't know. Maybe. Maybe. I don't, I don't know.

We ended last time we were here two weeks ago. We ended with this verse. The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour.

For they perceived that he had told this parable, the parable that we looked at two weeks ago, against them. And he had. But they feared the people. They were concerned.

They were already conspiring to lay hands on Jesus. This is now the week, the Passion Week. He has entered Jerusalem. Right? He has been boldly proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

[2:42] Right? It's been since Luke 9.51. He's been declaring the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. And that drumbeat has been getting louder and louder and louder. Until finally the triumphal entry.

And here he is, the king of kings. And he's making his entrance into Jerusalem. And presenting himself as their king and their lord. Will they accept him?

And of course we know the answer to these questions. Because we've been able to, for centuries now, read ahead. And be able to know the end of the story already.

But here he is. They're already trying to kill him. But now they're looking for the opportunity where that can happen. Because they're afraid of the crowds. We saw that two weeks ago. The way that they questioned him.

The way that they approached him. Even here in this verse. They're fearing the people. Because they're concerned. Alright, we've got to find a different way to do this. So even in Mark's account.

[3:43] This account that we're looking at today. Is found in all three of the synoptic gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And in Mark's account. Later they sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to Jesus.

To catch him in his words. And if you're not registering these two groups of people. These are not teammates.

They do not like each other. The Pharisees. Kind of best to describe them as a religious group. A religious institution.

Were fiercely loyal to Israel and to Jerusalem. They thought that Rome was a pagan, terrible, heathen, oppressing government.

That God intended to throw off. So they opposed anything having to do with Rome. And wanted to promote anything having to do with Israel. And the temple.

[4:41] And their form of worship. The Herodians, on the other hand. They were fans of Herod. Hence the name. Herodians. These were politically expedient fellows.

They thought that Herod knew best. And in fact, even above Herod. Rome is the one who put Herod in place. They liked Rome.

And they thought when Rome came in with suggestions. And not so much suggestions. But with commands. They were all about it. So they were all about doing the latest and greatest stuff. They didn't care about the traditions as much. And they wanted to cooperate with Herod and with Rome at every turn. They thought it was best to do that. So you can imagine these two groups. One in particular religious group. But also a political group as well. The Pharisees were also a political group. And then the Herodians, also a political group, diametrically opposed to each other. [5:45] They would have hated each other. They wouldn't have invited each other over for dinner at all. But now they have a common enemy. Because in both instances, the Herodians would have looked at Jesus as someone who was a threat.

But because if he is the Messiah, then what they wanted to see happen was over. And so they didn't want to see that happen. And of course the Pharisees wanted to keep their power and their authority.

So they were pushing the idea that Jesus was a heretic of some sort. And needed to be put down because of that. And so this common enemy of Christ now brings them together in ways to try to trap them.

There is a third political party in this as well. The Sadducees. They were also what we would call religiously or even politically liberal.

They could kind of play both sides of the equation when it came to the politics of it. But they were also liberal theologically. They believed pretty much just in the first five books of the Old Testament.

[6:49] They didn't believe in the resurrection. And so they were also involved in this as well. And they all disliked Jesus and wanted him to basically go away.

And so they're scheming and they're conniving. And they're trying to figure out how could they trap Jesus in his words. The word catch there is to trap him like he would trap an animal.

And so they're coming up with ways. They're literally trying to play chess with Jesus. Any chess players in the room, people who know how to play chess or like to play chess? Do you guys know that there's a difference between check and checkmate?

Right? There's a difference there. Because even though if you have someone in check, that doesn't mean you've won the game yet. You might be able to claim check and still lose the game.

Checkmate, if your checkmate is real, that means you've won. Your opponent has no moves. And they thought as they were trying to trap Jesus in his words, they had come up with a question that they thought was a trap for Jesus.

[8:02] And they thought in their mind, okay, this is checkmate. We've got it. It's a done deal. And, of course, they're dealing with the chess master in Jesus.

And it doesn't work like they think. So they watched him back in Luke chapter 20. They watched him and they sent spies. And they pretended to be sincere that they might catch him.

That they might catch him in something he said. So as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. Because if Jesus said something that was off, they could go either way. And they could go to the crowds and say, see, we told you he was a heretic. Or they could go to the religious authorities and say, see, we told you he was a heretic. And so they thought with this question they had him trapped.

So they asked him. And here's the question. Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly. Now I want you to notice in here the flattery.

[9:03] I mean, they are just laying it on thick.

They're just thinking this is somehow going to, you know, let Jesus drop the wall. And he's going to, you know, take him off his guard.

And he's going to, oh, these people, they love me. They think I'm wonderful. And so Jesus is going to fall for that. So they butter him up.

We know that you speak and teach rightly. And you show no partiality. But you truly teach the way of God. Oh, Jesus, you're just the greatest. You're just the best.

Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not? Now give tribute means basically pay tax to Caesar. It was an annual tax that every conquered nation under Rome would have to pay.

[10:04] A yearly tax, a denarius, a coin, a Roman coin. You had to pay with that Roman coin. You couldn't use Jewish coins. You couldn't use Syrian coins.

You couldn't use Greek coins or Phoenician coins. You had to use a Roman coin and to pay this tribute, to pay this tax because you were ruled by Rome.

And therefore you had to pay the tax. So every non-citizen of Rome, every conquered nation of Rome, man, woman, boy, and child, you would have to pay this tax on a yearly basis.

Now, this question is just so loaded because either way Jesus answers the question, they win.

At least that's what they think. You know, because if Jesus says, yes, you've got to pay the taxes, aha, the crowds would not like that at all. Because, you know, you're supposed to come in here as the Messiah and throw off Rome and buck Rome and do away with Rome and defeat Rome and Caesar.

[11:11] And so now if Jesus says, yeah, go ahead and pay the tax, what is he saying? Oh, how terrible. But if Jesus says, no, don't pay the tax, that might appease the crowds.

But now the Roman authorities are upset with him and are going to come and arrest him and put him in jail or even kill him because he's advocating. He's advocating rebellion against Rome saying, don't pay the tax, don't pay the tribute.

So what's Jesus going to do? What's he going to say? You guys, you're familiar enough with the story. Probably some of you are like, well, what's he going to do?

I don't know. Well, let's kill the suspense. Let's go ahead and fill in the blanks for you and let you know what he says. He perceived their craftiness, you think?

And said to them, show me a denarius. And so they gave him a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have? And they said, Caesar's.

[12:14] And so I'm going to show you a denarius from around this particular time. The Roman emperor at the time was Tiberius.

He was the one who was large and in charge. He was the Caesar at that time in Rome. And the inscription around the front of the coin with Tiberius's head there, and he's got quite the large, and there's a deformity on the coin there, but his nose was quite large, at least in some other depictions that I have seen from him.

And it's interesting that it says that it's Tiberius, son of the divine Augustus.

Now, if you remember Augustus from the Christmas story, Augustus was the Caesar in charge during that time. He was the son of Julius Caesar, actually adopted son of Julius Caesar.

And when Caesar had died, when Julius Caesar had died, they declared that he was divine. What's another word for divine? God.

[13:30] And so when Augustus died and Tiberius took over, Tiberius was son of the divine Augustus.

Or another way of saying that was son of God. Ah, wait a minute. Being that I'm Christian and I've read my Bible, I know that term from another person.

Jesus lays hold of that claim. Let me ask you, here we are 2,000 years later. Who do we know more about today? Tiberius or Jesus?

Tiberius and Augustus are basically footnotes in human history. Jesus dominates. I mean, we split our calendars in half, B.C. and A.D. They try to change that too, but it's still before Christ.

And I call it after death. It's *anno domini* or something like that, but the year of our Lord. But it's still, Jesus is still the only son of God.

[14:39] So this is the image that's on the front. On the back, it's some woman pagan god. I forget her name, Pixie Dust or something. And so he's asking them, hey, someone give me a coin.

So they gave him a coin, a coin that you would use to pay the tribute. Whose inscription? Whose image is on the coin? Oh, it's Caesar's. And so he said to them, render to Caesar's the things that are Caesar's.

He's not talking about pizza, by the way. And to God, the things that are God's. And it's a famous, most people are familiar with that particular quote.

Some people will use it to win arguments and things like that. And certainly Jesus did here. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And to God, the things that are God's.

It's brilliant. And as a result of this, they were not able to, in the presence of the people, to catch him in what he said. But marveling at his answer, they became silent.

[15:50] They couldn't even answer. They couldn't. They didn't know what to say. They didn't know what to do. They just turned their heads down and walked away. Because they couldn't even respond in any way to what Jesus said.

Now, I want you to notice a few things about the story, about the text here, when it comes to playing chess with the king. And first of all, the question that they ask is very much so valid.

It's a valid question. It's a valid question to them, culturally and theologically and historically. I mean, it was an important question because they would have arguments about this question constantly around dinner tables, and they would just argue and discuss.

And how do we deal with this? Certainly nobody wanted to pay this tax. Just like you and I, we don't want to pay our taxes either. I'm not exactly excited to write the check at the end of the year, beginning of the year, whatever.

I don't want to do that. And yet, here we are. Kind of the same question. The only problem that the question has itself was the motive behind it.

[17:06] Their question wasn't sincere. It wasn't real. It was just meant to be a trick. It was meant to be a trap. So that's part of it.

And yet, we can still learn from how Jesus answers this question. In fact, why would Jesus, if Jesus was indeed the Messiah, why would he not rid Israel of Roman rule?

This pagan, heathen Caesar and nation that was dominant over Israel, why would Jesus not want to rid Israel of this burden, of this rule?

Certainly God would not want this to happen. And so, why wouldn't Jesus do that? Why would Jesus then endorse paying taxes to Caesar?

Why wouldn't, if Jesus is the Messiah, if he is the king, why is he not going to now set up his kingdom?

[18:12] Why is he going to, why won't he do that right now? Why doesn't he declare himself king and set up his kingdom now? What's going on here?

Well, we have to understand that being ruled by a heathen Rome was just one of the symptoms of the problem that Israel had.

It wasn't the root problem, and that's what Jesus came for. The root problem that Israel had was not her bondage to Rome. That wasn't the big issue.

Now, according to the people of Israel, according to the people there in Jerusalem, to them, that would have been issue number one. And, hey, we've got to deal with Rome.

We've got to get them up and out of here. We don't need them on our backs anymore. But, in reality, the problem that Israel had was her bondage to sin.

[19:05] And that's what Jesus came to deal with. That's why Jesus came. And a little cursory glance at Old Testament passages of Scripture could have helped them to understand that.

Deuteronomy 28, primarily, just, hey, I mean, if you guys don't obey, then this is what's going to happen. And this foreign nation is going to come and dominate you and defeat you. And you're not going to, you know, everything is going to go wrong for you because of your sin, because of your disobedience.

That's why you're having the problem that you're having. So, when we look at this, I want to, there on your notes, then, get real practical here. So, I want to answer this question to start with.

And that's, what do we owe Caesar, then? And you and I, we have to ask that question. Here we are 2,000 years later. We need to ask this question of ourselves.

Now, we don't have a Caesar. We have a president. We have an earthly government. What do we owe our government, if you will? What do we owe our governing authorities?

[20:12] An earthly government. And so, on your notes there, the first thing, and we're going to start right where Jesus left off here, our taxes, and yes, we still have to pay them.

There's not some new loophole between when Jesus said that and today. Wouldn't it be nice if there was? But, alas, Jesus did tell us to pay our taxes, and we know we need to do that.

So, again, give unto Caesar's or render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And then in Romans chapter 13, just to clarify, Paul giving commentary, much of what Paul writes is commentary on the Gospels.

For because of this, Paul writes, because of this, because of the civil authority that God has ordained to be over you, God has ordained this institution of civil government.

It is one of the three institutions that God has ordained over us. We talked about this last week, actually. The family is one. The church is another.

[21 : 19] And then also civil government. Because of this, because of the governing authority that you have over you and you being subject to them, you also pay taxes.

For the authorities are ministers of God. Really? You mean the people who are like city council members and mayors and governors and state senators and state reps and congressional congressmen and senators and presidents and secretaries and all of that?

They're ministers? Ministers? Some are better than others in terms of ministers. But their ministry, and that's a word that can be, by the way, the word ministry means what?

We've got to dereligiousize. I don't know if that's a word, but we've got to dereligiousize the word minister. It just means servant. Okay? It's just servant. So sometimes people ask me, they'll ask me when they come in sometimes, are you the minister here?

And I used to just, you know, boldly, I don't know, I must have got old. I would say, yes, I am, and so are you. Because we're all servants.

[22 : 42] So they are ministers of God attending to this very thing. Their authority over you. Pay to all what is owed them. This uses that language.

What is owed them? Taxes to whom taxes are owed. Revenue to whom revenue is owed. That's like paying your bills. You have bills? Pay them. You just, because you're a Christian, you just can't like skate.

Well, I don't believe in the government. I'm going to be this Christian who's just, I'm going to do it my own way. And I'm going to build a fence and put some signs up in front of my yard.

And I don't have to pay tax. You're bucking what Jesus has, what the Lord has ordained over us.

And as much as I want to, you know, jump in the fence and join you so I don't have to cut these checks, it's not being obedient to what God has declared.

So, yes, we still have to pay our taxes. The second thing, and we mentioned this last week too, our prayers. No, not for their downfall. You know, because some of us are like, well, we see the command in Scripture to pray for kings.

[23 : 51] Pray for our kings, right? Well, I'm going to pray for them. Pray that he dies. Pray that he gets sick and falls. You know, that's not what is meant by praying for them.

Okay, praying for their downfall. It's actually to pray for their success. Now, there are some exceptions here. I'm not going to pray for their success to do ungodly things.

If their goal is to do ungodly things, I'm not praying for the success of that. But in terms of the success of the nation, do I want the nation to prosper?

Yes, I do. Again, we mentioned this last week. Let's take a look at some Scriptures here to talk about this. First of all, I urge then that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all people, okay, and for kings.

And all who are in high positions. This is our calling. And our calling is that we do this, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

[24 : 54] That's the goal, right? The goal is that we would be able to lead a quiet and peaceful life.

Now, when a government and when a nation begins to be degraded because of decisions that they make, we don't get to necessarily lead a quiet and peaceful life, even though that may be the goal.

We want to pray for the welfare of the nation that we live in. We want to see it do well so that we can do well as well.

But sometimes when things start going in a way, we have to take a stand. And when you have to take a stand against a governing authority that's doing something that's wrong, or when you're taking a stand against someone or just a culture that is going in an ungodly direction, you're not going to get to lead a peaceful and quiet life.

But that's what we're praying for. That's what we want to see happen. I would say we're living in a world and a culture right now in a moment where we don't necessarily get this outcome right now. There are some things that we should be upset about in our culture and in our world. Jeremiah 29.7, we looked at this last week, but seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile.

[26 : 24] This is God's instruction to Israel as they are going into captivity in Babylon. So he's telling the nation of Israel, hey, seek the welfare of the city where I'm sending you.

Babylon's a real godly city though, right? It's a real godly king, right? Nebuchadnezzar was one of the best ones, right? In the list of kings, no, no, no.

It's bad. It's bad. Heathen in every way. I mean, Nebuchadnezzar was very famous for being quite a large cucumber.

And... Or pickle. Was he a pickle? I don't remember. Some of you know what I'm talking about here. Some of you are like, what in the world is he?

I'm talking about VeggieTales, right? Some of you know what I'm talking about. And he built a giant golden statue of himself and wanted people to bow down. And Daniel's friends would not do that.

[27 : 30] And so they had to pay the price for that. Of course, the Lord Jesus himself rescued them from that. But look at what it says. I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord on its behalf.

For in its welfare, you will find your welfare. So that principle still holds true for us today. Now, we're not living in exile here. We're New Testament believers.

But yet where we live, I do believe the call is that we ought to pray for those who are in authority over us, that we would do well. Pray for the welfare of the nation that we live, the welfare of the state that we live in.

Pray that it would prosper. Pray that it would do well so that we too would do well. You guys want to do well, don't you? Okay. So this is our calling to pray for them on their behalf.

Our respect goes, we owe our respect to our earthly government simply because of their God-given position. And again, some people would say, well, if it's not, if the guy, if the gal is not of my party, then no, I'm not going to do that.

[28 : 43] But that's not the biblical mandate. The biblical mandate is that we show respect for the position. And sometimes that can be tough to do.

But still, we are to give respect. This is Romans 13, 7, continuation of what we looked at. Respect, the bottom portion, the respect to whom respect is owed.

Honor to whom honor is owed. Pay to all what is owed to them. And we owe that to our governing authority. Let I remind you, you might think that the current president, or you might think that the president of the previous administration, or whatever, was this terrible monster.

Were either of them worse than Caesar? Because you know who Paul was talking about, right? Tiberius was off the map. He was off the grid by then. You know who was large and in charge at this time? It was Nero. Nero was a lovely fellow.

[29 : 55] Talk about sin and debauchery. Wow. And yet, Paul says, respect is owed. How about this one?

Our service. And I don't have a direct biblical passage to this, but I have a pattern that's been laid down. From Old Testament.

Joseph, who was, how did you like this? Sold by your brothers into slavery. You thought your brothers were bad to you. They sold him into slavery. And still, he was faithful in all that he did, serving Potiphar, serving even the prison keeper.

And then eventually, he became second in command in Egypt under Pharaoh. Now again, Pharaoh was a terrific fellow, wasn't he?

No. I mean, this is a pagan heathen. They claim to be gods. And here's Joseph, little Joseph, just being faithful in what God had called him to do.

[31 : 03] Can we do that? Yes. Yes. And then Daniel, same thing. Daniel was called under Nebuchadnezzar and eventually, again, rose in the ranks through his faithfulness.

And God blessed him. And he got to the point where he was basically second in command in Babylon. And then when Babylon was overthrown by the Persians, the Persian king was like, Hey, I like this Daniel guy.

Let's keep him. You wouldn't normally do that. You'd kill all the previous guys. But Daniel, no. I like Daniel. We're going to keep. And Daniel served the Persian king.

Was he any better than the Babylonian king? No. No. So, yes, we can faithfully serve even pagan kings.

Now, again, we see demonstrated on both accounts that when they're called to be faithful to the Lord first, that puts them in danger with their earthly king.

[32 : 09] And we're okay with that. And if I lose my head, literally, because I want to be faithful to God over something that the king is requiring me to do that I know would dishonor God, then I'm going to honor God and put my own life in jeopardy, as Daniel did and got thrown into the lion's den.

You remember those stories. Last one, number five. Can I say that I don't think many of us like this one? We're not going to like this one.

But here it is, our obedience. What we owe to our earthly government is our obedience. This is not optional. There's one pretty big exception, though. Okay? It's a pretty big exception. But other than the one exception, it's not optional.

Okay? Now, I want you to look at this language in 1 Peter, 1 Peter chapter 2. And, again, the king under Peter at this time is Nero.

[33 : 22] And this is how he writes. He writes. To us. Be subject, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution.

And we do this because God ordained it. God is the one who places kings in their position of authority. In our case, presidents.

We struggle with that because we don't understand how this works. Because we vote. Okay? Okay? These cultures, these nations that we see during Old Testament times and New Testament times, they didn't take votes.

So, you know, how do we translate that to where we're at today? We take votes. We have a say. Right? We have a say in who governs over us.

And yet, God is still sovereign. That's a tough one for us. Okay? We talk about this. We argue about this even over salvation.

[34 : 22] Okay? Well, is God sovereign and choose us? Does he predestine us according to his good pleasure? Ephesians chapter 1? Yes. Or is it whosoever will may come?

Do I decide? Yes. You are accountable to make that decision. Well, which one is it? Yes. Yes. And we, so how do we, how do, does God place kings and presidents in authority?

Yes, he does. Do I still have an, am I still accountable to vote and participate? Well, yes, you, you are. So be subject.

For the Lord's sake. For the, notice it's the same language that Paul uses in Ephesians chapter 5 when he's talking to husbands and wives and parents and children and workers and bosses.

Right? We do this not because we like the person, but because of our relationship with Christ, out of reverence for him. When we honor the Lord, that means I'm going to be obedient to the civil authorities.

[35 : 28] Okay? It's how God has set things up. Whether it be the emperor as supreme or the governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

For this is the will of God. You might say, well, what's God's will? Well, here, here's part of it. Right here. How you doing? That by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

That way people won't have anything against you. Because if you are like, you know, building fences around your yard and putting up signs and saying, no, I'm my own government and you can't do this to me.

And you protest every civil authority. People are going to look at you like you're foolish. Peter said that. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

So live as people who are free. Not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil. There is a segment of our population that want to have freedom for the sake of doing what I want to do.

[36 : 38] That's not true freedom. That's just freedom. That's just a different bondage. It's bondage to sin. That means I'm free to sin how I want to sin. So I can do however I want to. I can live however I want to live.

That's freedom. No, it's not. And by the way, our founding fathers, that wasn't freedom to them. Freedom to them, our founding fathers in the United States, freedom to them was freedom to serve each other.

Freedom to stand in the gap for each other, to do the right thing. But living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Nero. Honor Nero. You could fill in that blank there. Honor Nero. Ooh. And we struggle with that. Back in Romans chapter 13. But if you do wrong, be afraid. For he does not, talking about the governing authority, he does not bear the sword in vain.

[37 : 43] For he is servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. God set it up this way. Therefore, one must be in subjection.

Submission. Do we like that? We don't like this terminology. Not only to avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience.

Because God set it up this way. And our hearts know this. Our conscience knows this about us. God knows that God, for the purposes of what God requires in society, he has instituted authority. Now, there are times when governments can short-circuit what God has ordained. What God has set up.

And so in those moments, we have a higher authority to be subject to, to be in obedience to.

[38:57] We see this on full display in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 5. Where the apostles, Peter, James, and John, they're standing in front of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council there in Jerusalem.

And so they are in authority. And we strictly charged you, Peter, James, and John, to not teach in this name.

And they don't even want to say it. In the name of Jesus. You're not going to do that anymore. The last time you came in front of us, we gave you this charge. Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.

You did just the opposite. We told you one thing, and we did the other. And you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

You intend to bring this man's blood upon us. So what do you think they said? Oops, sorry. That's not what they said. But Peter and the apostles answered him, we must obey God rather than men.

[40:08] Wow. That wasn't it. The God of our fathers raised Jesus. And we don't get in the text pictures.

But in my mind's eye, when I read through this passage, when Peter is saying these words, the God of our fathers raised Jesus, I see him pointing right his finger.

And I'm bony finger. You know, I'm thinking of the ghost of Christmas future and Scrooge. It's a little more quick because, you know.

Whom you killed. Was he putting the blood of Jesus on their hands? Actually, it's on all of our hands, by the way.

Any of us who are sinners, that's all of us. Whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

[41:20] And we are witnesses to these things. And so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given us. God has given to those who obey him. To those who obey him.

So God's authority, our obedience to God takes priority over obedience to governing authority. When there's conflict.

That's the exception. That's the exception to the rule. Now let's talk about what we owe to God.

Because that's what Jesus said. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

And to God the things that are God's. So what do we owe to God, our creator and our Lord? One thing. You see that on your notes.

There's just one. It's just one thing. Now it's everything. It's our lives. It all belongs to him.

Everything about us belongs to him.

[42:18] It's just one thing, but it's everything. Now there's a couple of ways that we can say this. And one of the ways is from the text that we just looked at. The very image of God inscribed upon your life.

You remember when Jesus said, give me one of the coins? And he took the coin and he said, whose image is inscribed on it? Whose image is inscribed on you?

You're not a coin. You're a person. But you have an image that's been inscribed on you. And this is pretty foundational. It goes all the way back to the first chapter. God said, let us make man in our image.

After our likeness. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him male and female. Male and female, we have the image of God stamped on us.

This is why every time, by the way, this is a little sidebar. Every time someone talks about how humans are animals, we're just different than other animals.

[43:33] No. We're not animals. That kind of thinking comes out of evolutionary, an evolutionary mindset. Nothing about us is an animal.

Even though we've both been created from the dust of the ground, we have the image of God that has been scribed upon us.

That makes us separate and unique in every way. Just a little pet peeve of mine.

So in case you want to come up to me and say, hey, Rich, we're just animals. Some of you act like animals. No. My wife says that about me. Especially around her meatloaf.

Second thing, you've been bought with a price. You don't even own yourself. You've been bought and paid for. The blood of Christ. Right? So do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

[44 : 40] He lives within you. You're not your own. You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. You belong to him. So everything about you, your life, it's his. Give it to him. Romans 12.1, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercy of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

It's the oxymoron. I've said this over and over. The oxymoron of a living sacrifice. Sacrifice is meant to be dead, but you're still alive. How does this work? You take your body as a living sacrifice. You put it up on the altar and say, Lord, not my life but yours.

You live through me. My problem is I keep resurrecting my sinfulness and climb back up on the altar and say, I want to live my life. I want to do it my way.

So it all belongs to God. Now, let's do some practical application of this, shall we? This will get fun. Application points from the chess master.

Okay, here we go. Number one, or we don't number these, whatever government we find ourselves in, and for us here in 2026, we're living in Michigan, so we're in the United States of America, in the state of Michigan, in whatever county you find yourself in, in the city and so forth.

[45 : 52] Whatever government we find ourselves in, we're called to live in a way that draws people to us, not drives them away. That's a goal for us. That's a priority for us.

We do want to win people to Jesus Christ. We are called to do that. Being salt and light, as we spoke about last week, is a part of that.

Then, let me say this. We should be known, then, more for the God that we serve than the party we defend. And when I say party, I'm talking about political party, not the party at, you know, your friend's house down at the beach, you know, whatever.

Political party. So, yeah, absolutely. Now, if you're part of a political party, absolutely defend it. But you should be known more for the God that you serve than the party that you defend.

Absolutely. Do I want to be known as a Republican? Yeah, that's kind of where I'm at. But hopefully, if you know anything about me, you know I care a whole lot more about the God that I serve.

[47 : 02] And I have no problem, by the way, of pointing out where my party, or any other party for that matter, is going off the rails.

Okay? The freedom of speech is a precious gift and right.

That is, according to our founding fathers, a right that is given to us, a gift that is given to us by who?

Our creator. Right? The Lord. And it is precious to us. And our governing authorities want to protect what God has given us.

And so we have this protection in our Constitution as a part of that. But how we use our freedom of speech is critical to the God that we serve.

[48 : 06] So, and I know that I just gave you your last fill in the blank and you're putting your notes away, but hang on.

We've got some verses to look at. And the first one I want to show you talks about this. It's Ecclesiastes chapter, Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes. At least I spelled it right. Ecclesiastes chapter 3. For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.

There's a time to, and a part of that, this is later on in verse 7 of that text, a time to keep silent and a time to speak. Right? As believers, we need to learn to demonstrate some discernment, some wisdom on when it's time to speak up and when it's time to not.

I would say when it's time to be winsome. When it's time to be, I want to drop you and a time to just be blunt. The time to just say it for what it is, say it for just to say it to say it.

[49 : 24] And to make that point here, I want to show you some other scriptures. From 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 2, Paul writing to the church at Corinth there, But we have renounced disgraceful and underhanded ways.

We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth. Sometimes, listen, we can't be afraid to just speak the truth for what it is.

And if that means we're naming sin for what it is, then so be it. Okay? We have been through a couple of decades, maybe three or four, where the church has been progressively wanting to more

beat around the bush or not say things out loud about things that the scriptures speak very clearly about.

And I think that those days are over, and God forgive us if we ever participated in that kind of mindset or we were afraid to say what was true.

He says it this way to the church in Galatia, verse 10 of chapter 1, Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or of God? Or am I trying to please people?

[50 : 56] If I were trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. There have been too many evangelical leaders, pastors of churches even, who were more concerned about what people in their congregations have thought about particular subjects, or people, even worse, people in their community, people who aren't even claiming the name of Christ.

And how they feel about certain topics. They became afraid to give voice to what God's word gave clarity to. And that gave birth to kind of a cancel culture.

You guys are familiar with that? That kind of thing? That seemed to flourish the time of COVID.

Where you had pastors who were making proclamations about shots and restrictions and saying that if you didn't follow along, you weren't loving your neighbor?

God forbid. Yes, we are called to love our neighbor. But that does not mean that we need to hide or be cautious around their sin and not label it what it is.

Not be willing to declare what it is. Some of you know that recently we've been putting clips of our sermons online on different social media platforms, Facebook and TikTok and Instagram.

[52 : 52] And occasionally we will get some comments from people. Sometimes the comments are not so nice. And you know, when unsaved, when people who are not Christians make comments, and sometimes they can be pretty biting.

The ones that are just completely inappropriate and use language that's inappropriate, we just delete those. But other comments that are just, you know, coming from an unsaved mindset, let those go.

That's fine. I really don't have a problem with them because they're just unsaved people responding as unsaved people do. That's fine.

The problem that I have is when people who wear the label of Christian and who are perhaps even faithful church attenders will get on there and will decry our stand on a particular subject and call us being unfaithful and how disappointing you are because you're not demonstrating the love of Christ because you shouldn't name that kind of sin out loud.

They don't say it quite that way, but that's what they mean. You shouldn't be so blunt. I want people to know what I'm talking about.

[54 : 27] I want people to know the issues at hand. I don't want people to have to guess what God's word says about something. And if you disagree with that, that's fine.

We can have a conversation about how we interpret God's word. But when it's a time to speak, as Paul would refer to it this way from Acts chapter 20, I did not shrink from declaring, declaring to you anything that was profitable.

And if there is an issue in our world that's happening today, we've talked about this before, issues of life, issues of marriage, how we treat sexuality, God has spoken very clearly about these kinds of issues.

So we're not going to beat around the bush around some of these issues. And we're going to tell you to repent from some of these, from these kinds of things.

It's perfectly right. And we're called to label them what they are. And to speak clearly about them.

[55 : 51] But if I want to just, okay, I'm not going to, I'm not going to speak about abortion because there may be people who've been through something like that. God forgive you.

There's forgiveness for all of us, but I'm still going to declare what God so clearly says in his word about life. I'm not going to, I'm not going to speak so clearly about gay marriage.

For instance, there is no such thing as gay marriage, by the way, it's a term that the culture has created, but God does not recognize, but I'm going to, I'm going to speak quietly around.

I'm not going to bring that up. I'm going to kind of skip over that because one of my children might be involved. Or I've got some friends who's got some kids that are involved.

And it makes it more difficult. Absolutely. But I would say all the more reason for us to declare the love of Christ, that people should repent of their sins, not because they're gay, not because they've had an abortion, but because they're sinners just like the rest of us.

[57:08] And we need the love of Christ. We need the forgiveness of Christ. They're no different. Their sin is no different than my sin. But I still need to call it for what it is.

It's sin. It's wrong. And not coddle it. And not pretend with it. And not dodge it. Now there are some qualifications here.

And as believers, we need to pay attention to these qualifications, these caveats, if you will. When we speak the truth, we need to do it in love. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Absolutely. We don't look at someone with shame and say, oh, how terrible you are because you've done this, because we could be saying the same things about ourselves. But we speak it in love.

And from 2 Timothy 2, from the same man who said, I didn't shrink back from saying anything to you guys. But the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, kind to everyone.

[58:22] Are there times where it's difficult to be kind to people you disagree with? Yeah.

Especially when they're unkind towards you. It's easy to give tit for tat.

It's easy to just, well, they did it to me, so it's just that I do it to them. No. No. Able to teach patiently enduring evil.

Boy. Correcting his opponents with gentleness. Yeah. So even though I take a firm stand, I still want to speak with gentleness.

That's hard to do. Takes discernment. Takes compassion. And it takes a right view of what God has forgiven me.

I need to remind myself constantly how much he has forgiven me. God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth. And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil.

[59:24] But this passage reminds me all the time of some of the things that you see on television or on social media. At some point, Lord, may they come to their senses.

Right? At some point, may they come to their senses. And escape from the snare of the devil.

Because that's... The people that we oppose, we use that term, the opposition, they're just victims of the evil one.

As Paul makes very clear here, after being captured by him to do his will. So the goal is that they repent.

They come to faith in Christ. They come to their senses. This is what we're called to. It's hard to do. It's hard to do. It's hard to pull off.

There are times where some of my sermons, I say things I maybe I shouldn't have said. I don't know. I might take issue with you on that. But I can be corrected. I don't...

[60:30] I'm not perfect. But let's not be afraid to speak the truth. And let's do it in love. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you so much for your word that brings clarity to us, that helps us to understand the issues that are at hand and what we face in the world around us.

This little test that Jesus was confronted with by his enemies. How Jesus answered it gives us some clarity in how we ought to view the world around us and what we owe to the governing authorities that you have placed over us.

So let us serve and let us work towards these in ways, Lord, that honor you. That even when it is time for us to be blunt, we do it not for the sake of winning an argument, but for the sake of winning a soul.

We want to see people come to faith in Christ. So, Lord, may that be our purpose. May that be our aim.

[61:56] We know that that is yours. I pray, Lord, that we would work according to your will and to your plan in that end. Help us to demonstrate love.

And as we do that, Lord, a part of being loving means that we will stand absolutely for what is true and what is right.

And when we need to call something for what it is, may we be so bold as to declare it openly and not beat around the bush and yet at the same time speak it in love.

Wow. What a calling you have given us. Thank you for living it, demonstrating it for us, Lord.

And thank you most of all for going to the cross on our behalf. We love you, Lord. We don't deserve it. But your grace is so incredible that you've invited us in and we are so grateful.

[63:09] We love you, Lord. And we ask all of it in Jesus' name. Amen.