

Church and State

Today I'm breaking away from the "Find joy" series for a week to address an important and timely matter. This morning as we sit here in this building, as the church, we have seen some really ungodly bills passed last week by the house and senate.

One of the arguments you always hear when someone stands up for what is right, is the good old "separation between church and state" which is always used to tell people to check their morality at the door.

Do you know that the "separation between church and state" is not found in the Constitution? Do you know that it was a statement made by Thomas Jefferson in a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802?

Do you know that it's meaning is not that the church can't impact the government but that the government can't impact the church? They can't tell us we have to be a certain religion or denomination or when and where we can worship or for how long...and they can't tell us what is moral...but we can certainly tell them what is moral.... (king and prophet)

Psalm 24:1 (NKJV)

The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell therein.

He created all....it's His! No government is above God. No man is above God.

Jesus is above all rulers, powers, principalities....

And WE as His people....are to be devoted to Him above ALL and we should take that devotion with us everywhere we go and it SHOULD influence everything we do! Our faith is not a private matter....it's a consuming matter.

But I think most here already believe that....so how should we be responding to these government matters?

Matthew 22:17-21 (NKJV)

Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"
18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the tax money."
So they brought Him a denarius.
20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"
21 They said to Him, "Caesar's."

And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

One denarius each per year, this was heavy taxation by Rome. These funds were used to finance the occupying armies. One denarius was a day's wages for a Roman soldier. This tax was hated among the people because it suggested that Rome owned even the people who believed they and their nation belonged to God.

Caesar's image was on the coin. He was in authority and he said the people owed taxes to pay for the soldiers that were there to keep them under Roman rule.

"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Let's be clear here. Render (give away) to the government the things that are the governments. Obey the laws, Jesus is a God of order and obedience and until laws actually oppose the Word, do what they say.

Caesar's image is stamped on the coin but God's image is stamped on the person.

Temporarily we are subject to the laws of this land and state but above all and forever we are subject to Jesus and one day every man and woman will stand before Him for judgement....

Romans 13:1-7 (NKJV)

Let **every soul** be subject to the governing authorities. For there is **no authority** except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

*"Let **every soul** be subject to the governing authorities."*

How many souls? EVERY.....it doesn't matter who you are or where you are in the pecking order, you are to be subject to your governing authorities.

We go straight to the government...every person in the government has accountability, a person or group of people that THEY are subject to...or that they should be subject to...

The Greek word for subject hypotasso (hoop-a-tah-so) means to obey, to submit one's control. This was used to describe a soldier's absolute obedience to his superior officer.

*"For there is **no authority** except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."*

Now you might be thinking... "no way God would put some of these immoral people in office". This is not to suggest that God approves of corrupt government, ungodly officials, or unjust legislation.

But sometimes He does allow these people to rule as consequences of our actions. The people sometimes get what they want but with that we get punishment for sinful choices and God allows evil rulers to have authority for a time.

But make no mistake about it, they are given the authority to "do good", that is their purpose... but how they exercise that authority is up to them.

So what are we to do when we don't like our government? Do we rebel or submit?

I'm going to deliver a hard truth today. One that many of you might disagree with. Your job, in most situations is to submit. And if you don't...

"whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."

When you rebel against authority, you rebel against God. This goes for all authority, not just government.

God has instituted 4 earthly authorities:

1. Government over all citizens
2. Church over all believers
3. Household - Husbands over the whole house, Parents over children
4. Masters (employers) over all their employees

When we go against these systems in rebellion, we actually rebel against God.

See they are ministers of God...for good. Their job, their role is to help restrain evil and protect life and property.

We don't always like the way they do this. And sometimes they do it very poorly or fail to do it all together. But in most cases it does not give us a right to rebel.

"Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake"

We obey the law for 2 reasons:

1. To avoid wrath (not God's, but the government's), to avoid punishment by fines, jail, etc.
2. To keep a clear conscience before God, I may not agree but at least I'm at peace with Jesus!

So I've been careful to say this is the case in "most situations". When is this NOT the case?

- When it clearly and directly opposes the Word of God.

Acts 5:27-29 (NKJV)

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Here Peter and the gang disobey the governing authorities. Did they sin? NO. Did they bring judgement on themselves? NO.

Here's why...they were clearly directed by Jesus to preach the gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, baptize believers, and to do it all in the name of Jesus.

God's authority ALWAYS supersedes government of every form. There are no exceptions.

Now...we need to be careful here. Don't let your emotions play the role of God's Word. Don't twist the scriptures to support your desire.

There can often be a difference between what you "feel" and what is biblical. Your "feeling" is not the Holy Spirit. Your feeling is in your soul, the Holy Spirit is in the spirit....learn to discern between the two...

I've got to say that in the last week we have seen the house pass bills to make prison's polling places for prisoners. I disagree with it personally but I don't find where it is wrong morally. We've seen a bill passed to increase cost and difficulty to own firearms and while I disagree with it personally, I don't find where it's wrong morally. We've seen a new tax bill passed where they are taxing everything under the sun and while I disagree with it personally, I don't find where it's wrong morally. It's actually within the guidelines of the authority they have been granted.

Fight the urge to submit to your emotions and thoughts.

What does the bible say? Submit. You can disagree, yet you have to do it in submission otherwise you are literally rebelling against God Himself! I know it doesn't make sense...but that doesn't make it not true!

You know you can continue to fight against these bills and others. You can debate, you can write and call your elected officials but at the end of the day, what is made a law that does NOT clearly and directly oppose the Word of God, you must obey it...

Now we've also seen a bill passed to allow the most liberal "women's rights" in the country. Make no mistake about it, this is not a "women's rights" bill. It's an abortion bill. It allows 3rd trimester abortion, underage abortion without notifying parents, it basically makes the public statement that the unborn child has no rights whatsoever under the law.

The third trimester is 28-40+ weeks or months 7, 8, 9 of pregnancies. The earliest a baby has been born and survived is 21 weeks and 5 days. But at 28 weeks their eyes begin to open. This law says they can be aborted.

Here's the thing, for decades the argument has been at what point is it a life. Many radicals have argued that it's not a life up to this point but how can argue with open eyes added to the already beating heart?

Psalm 139:13-16 (NKJV)

For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
15 My]frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.

A baby is life at conception. Any law that does not honor this, is a law that goes against God's Word because it would be ending a life.

We DO NOT have to obey or submit to this law. Not on an individual level, not on a professional level, not on a governmental level, not on a religious level. We can and should rebel.

Abortion at any level is ending a life that God created...Jesus is Creator, you can't have life without Him!

To those who have had abortions. if you are in Christ, your sins are forgiven. You are NOT condemned and I do not want you to feel like me or the church is coming against you. I'm speaking to the redeemed people of God, here....your sins were paid for by the precious blood of Christ! He loves you, we love you, and we are here for you. You are not alone.

We will pray for healing, we will hug you, we will stand beside you.

As the church goes forward in response to all of these bills....keep a couple things in mind.

1. We still have to look like Jesus. We have to respond in submission to the Spirit not the flesh, not the soul, what does God want and how do we respond in a way that honors Christ? Truth and grace. With boldness and love.
2. We are dealing with people who are NOT thinking spiritually but they are heavily influenced by the enemy in the spirit of deception and division.

"In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. - Jude 1:18-19

Our fight is spiritual....don't ever, ever, forget that. And that means all the things that you think and feel....if you haven't voiced those things to Christ, Lord over all, Whose authority we stand in, Whose hope we trust in, Whose Spirit we submit to.....

If you haven't spoken to Jesus about it, do you have any right or authority to speak a word to man about it?

1 Timothy 2:1-3 (NKJV)

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,