

## The Biblical Purpose of Government

Various Passages

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 10, 2023

Good morning, everybody. This morning, we are continuing our series on the government. And could I just have a word of prayer with you before we began just to set the tone for what we're going to talk about? We always want to ask the Lord's help when we bring His word to the people. So let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, as we open up Your word this morning, we always want to do this in a spirit of worship. When we discuss certain subjects, there's a tendency to have our minds go into the scholastic or doctrinal or maybe even political realm, and there is a place to discuss some of those things. But Father, our hearts always need to be drawn to worship. And so as we continue this discussion of the government, I pray that our hearts would be drawn to You first and foremost. You are the one that instituted government. You're the one who is sovereign over government. You're the one who is never ever worried about government because You stand over it all. And Father, I pray that that would be the spirit of this message, and that it would be received in the same spirit, and Christ would be glorified as the King of all. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as I just said, this morning, we are continuing our series called "The Christian and Civil Disobedience." And we are in our third message. We spent the first two talking about the subject of church history. If you missed any of that it's available online. I think I spoiled you guys because some people were asking about the PowerPoint. There will be no PowerPoint today, I'm sorry; I know we liked the PowerPoint. Sometimes it's hard to find pictures in a sermon; I tried this week. But now we're going to open up the Bible together and go from that angle. So if you would, please open your Bibles to the book of Romans. That's the place we're going to this morning.

We are going to be looking at a lot of different passages today, but we're going to start in Romans chapter 13 because it was written to a church that was located in one of the most powerful governments the world has ever known, and that was the Roman Empire. And just to say a few words about this, to give you the setting for this passage because it's so important. At the time this letter was written, the Roman Empire ruled over about 100 million people or so. That's about a fifth of the world's population. So one out of every five people on the planet in the first century were within the borders of this kingdom, if you can just get your mind around that for a moment. Talk about a government; it was a very, very large government. They ruled 2 million square miles of territory without the use of the internet, computer or cell phones. So if you looked at a map, they would stretch from Europe all the way to the Middle East. That's how big Rome was. From Italy to about Iraq. It made Rome very beautiful; the city was gorgeous because all the money flowed into there. All the wealth and riches and treasures from those regions came pouring into the capital. And with it the Caesars built great buildings for themselves, like the Forum and the Pantheon where the Romans worshipped all their gods, or the Circus

Maximus, or the Colosseum where the gladiators fought, or Caesar's Palace, or Hadrian's Wall, or the Ark of Constantine, and we could just go on and on and on.

If you'd ever want to have an interesting study of history, just go Google buildings in Rome. It's fascinating. They invented concrete to build all that. They put cement out there to keep it so grand. Rome was one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was glorious, elegant, graceful, tasteful, refined, cultured, sophisticated, and it was wicked.

By all accounts, Rome was one of the most evil places to live at this time. All that money made them debauched. A few examples of their sins. They were enslaved to lust. All the Roman Caesars were either adulterous or bisexual – every single one of them. We often complain about the immorality of our leaders today and that's rightly so, they are wicked in those areas, but they were really nothing compared to these men. They slept with whoever they wanted to whether it be slave or free, male or female, married or single, young or old, they didn't care. They had no restraint whatsoever.

And they were violent. It was said the worst job in the empire was the job of Caesar. You wouldn't live very long if you were Caesar. Of the 70 Roman Empires that we know of, 50 died by violence, most of them by poison. It got so bad that the Caesars would start sipping poison on a regular basis to build up a tolerance to it, and it would create nasty ulcers on their lips. They were glutinous. There are accounts of the emperors throwing wild parties where they would purge themselves and throw up so they could eat more while the people outside starved. Some of them had rooms in their house called the vomitorium that was set aside just for the practice of puking. So they could go back and feast more.

And when you hear all that, you come to a book like Romans, and you have to ask yourself this question. What does God want us to do with a government like that? If you're a Christian living at this time, in this era in this world, what would the Lord, how would He want us to respond to the empire of Rome? It's an important question. You would think He would say rebel, right? I mean, the first thing you would think God would say is rise up and overthrow them. They're not fit to rule these people are the scum of the earth, kill them. You might think He would say get out of there. You can't stay in a country like that. They're going to influence you, they're going to taint you, they're going to spoil you. You've got to run away. What does He say? Well, if you look in Romans 13, verse one, these are the words that were written to the church, living in a government like that. And I give you that background because they seem so strange to us, or to me anyway. “Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.”

Now, you have to read that and say, “What are you talking about Paul?” Why on earth would you tell me to submit to those people? This is the most evil nation on Earth. These are the scum bags of humanity. Well, the verse goes on to tell you why, because it says, “There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” In other words, the government, not just Rome, but the institution of government was established by God, and that's why you follow them. God put the

empire of Rome where it is at this time in history in this place, in His sovereign will, and that's why you submit. You don't do it for Rome; they don't deserve it. They don't. And you don't submit because these people are worthy; they're not worthy. You do it because of Him, you realize that Rome is in a position because God is sovereign, this is what He's ordained. And you'll trust Him in that.

Now, at this point in the sermon, you've got to ask yourself this question, "Pastor Jeremy, I thought we're talking about the Christian and Civil Disobedience. Why are you talking about submission? And I thought we're going to talk about the times when we defy the governing authorities. Why are we looking at this verse?" Well, I'm doing that because we are going to talk about civil disobedience. I'm going to walk you through the Old Testament and New Testament and give you examples of times when people defied so what we can learn from them. But before we get into that, I want to give some perspective on this. And the perspective is this. The Bible says you are free to defy the governing authorities.

Absolutely. And I think after the next couple of weeks, no one should be able to refute that, but it doesn't say you're free to defy in everything. There's a balance here; there's some wisdom. There are limits to our disobedience that tell us you can go so far and not further. And what I mean is this if the government tells you to accept the sin of homosexuality, you defy them in that. You have to resist; there's no choice. God hates that sin; you have to have the same response. But if they tell you to drive on the right-hand side of the road, there's no reason to defy that. Why would you do that? Please don't do that on your way home. If they tell you to call a transgender person by the wrong pronouns, so that he is a she, and she is a he and that type of thing, I think we should defy that too. But if they tell you to stop at a stop sign, I think we should stop at stop signs. The point is, we don't ignore the government completely because they're evil. And we don't resist them in everything because they're bad. There's a give and take. There's discernment. There's discretion.

I mention this because I mentioned all the material on the internet. When you go on the internet, you see all kinds of things, some good, some bad, and some of the stuff I listened to was telling me the opposite. They were saying you don't need to submit to the government at all anymore because there's they've lost the right to rule. But that makes you wonder, well, what does that mean? Does that mean I don't drive on the right-hand side of the road? Does that mean I don't wear my seatbelt? Go the speed limit? What are we saying here? I think there has to be some discretion. Even the worst governments do some things right. And when they do, God wants us to follow them in that. You don't submit to them in their sin. You do not follow them in the wicked things they do. But if you find a place where they're doing things right, follow them there. God has a place for government, even the worst of them. Which is what we're going to talk about this morning.

We're going to look at five passages that talk about the biblical purpose of government. So if you're writing some of these things down, we're going to do an overview of this, kind of pave the way for the rest of what we'll talk about. We're gonna look at five passages that talk about the biblical purpose of government in the New Testament. We could go to the old as well and talk about some things there, but just for the sake of time, we'll focus on the New.

The first one is Romans 13. Now I'm going to spend a whole week talking about Romans 13, so I'm not going to be able to talk about everything in here. It's a very important passage on this subject. But the reason we're going to look at this this morning, and then again later is because this is the longest passage in the New Testament that describes God's plan for the government. It goes on for seven verses, starts in verse one and goes all the way down to verse seven. And as you look at them, you'll find there's several purposes for government here, let me give you three of them.

The first one is it's an authority over us, which means that God has called the government to have a position of leadership in our lives. The word authority, it's mentioned three times in this section, you're gonna see it twice in verse one, once in verse two. Verse one gives us the first use of it when it says, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities." This phrase, "be in subjection," kind of sums up what Paul is saying. It's one word in Greek *hupotasso*. It's a compound word from *hupo* under and *tasso* to put; it means to put yourself under someone. The same word is used in a lot of ways in the Bible, but it's used of soldiers who are in an army to describe how they line up behind their commander. They go to war with him, they fight a lot with him, but they don't do it however they want to they, they put themselves under his leadership. So there's a sense of order in the army. It's not chaotic, not just one soldier doing this, one soldier doing that; they're all following this leadership. Paul says it's this way with the world. There's a sense of order in the world, and as part of the order, the Lord has provided governing authorities to give guidance to it. Not ultimate guidance, that belongs to God alone; and not the final authority, that's His job, but they're a lesser one.

He adds in this verse that "this is for every person." You see that phrase there in the beginning of the verse, that means no matter who you are or where you're living, this is a command that there's no qualifications here. Whether you're in Canada or the U.S, maybe Mexico or Brazil, good country, bad one, this principle still applies. Now you may have to flesh it out in different ways in the countries, but the principle is still there.

And here's why. Because verse one says, "For there is no authority except from God and those which exist are established or created by God." Because this is Paul says this is what God has done. He's created the idea of government. And this is how He set up the world, He did it by giving the institution of the state. If you remember your Bible history, you will recall that after God made Adam and Eve, they had two sons named Cain and Abel. And Genesis 4:17, if you want to write that verse down, says that after murdering Abel, Cain went on to get married and build a city, named after his first son, that is the first city in the Bible, if you're interested in that, it's in Genesis 4:17. It was called the city of Enoch; it's the first government ever found in human history. Now how many people were in the city, we don't know. And how long it lasted, it doesn't say. But the point is, this is how old the idea of government is in the Bible, it goes all the way back to the beginning. As soon as the Lord creates mankind, this is what they do. They become husband and wife, they form a family, they start having kids, and they build a system of government. That's how God designed it. It was His plan from the dawn of time. That's what

Paul is saying here. He's not saying the governments are perfect. He's not saying they're wonderful, he's not getting into that. He's just saying this is the intention.

It brings you to another purpose of government here, and that is to be a minister of God for good. So it's an authority and it's also a minister for good, which means it's supposed to be there to help people. As you come to this next section, I want to point out the word authority, it's repeated three times in verses one through two. And the word good is repeated three times in the next section, because that's the theme here that the government is supposed to be a good authority. Verse three says, "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil, which tells you this is how you know the government is good. And that is because they don't attack you for your good behavior; they're not supposed to anyway. This is how you know they're trying to help you. They don't come after you for doing the right thing.

Now, to be fair, there are times when the government fails at this, and they attack you for the right thing, but it is pretty rare. I mean, for the most part, when you see someone get arrested, it's typically because they were doing criminal behavior, even in a fallen world like this. That's the way it usually works. Which is why the verse goes on to say, "Do you want to have no fear of authority? Well do what is good." And that can be translated, do you want to have no phobia or paranoia of authority? So you're sweating and looking over your shoulder and losing sleep at night? Okay, well do what they expect of you because verse four says the government is a minister of God to you for good. That's another way of saying the government is a deacon for good. The word "minister" is the word deacon. Paul is telling you, it's the government's job to help and serve and support you like deacons do in a church setting.

And if you're wondering, well, what does this look like? Practically, you can just think of all the services governments provide for their people, even taking a country like Canada. They provide you with a police force, military force, and fire department. They give you an army and navy and a coast guard to protect borders. They give you roads, streets, sewers, along with utilities, running water, electricity, post office, health care, all this kind of stuff. But the point is that the church doesn't do that; the government does that. You don't get it from the congregation, the body of Christ, it comes at the hands of the state. And Paul says that's why it's a good thing. It's not good because it does those things perfectly. It doesn't. And it's not good because it does them with proper motives. That's not the case. You'd have to be naive to think that. Paul says it's just good because it does it. That's all. He's not taking it further than that here.

Which brings us to another purpose of government in the passage and that is, it bears the sword which means it's there to bring punishment on those who deserve it. And this is where Paul is going to shift gears for a moment. He's gonna go from talking about the good things the government does to talking about the punitive aspects of it, because he says, "Now," if you look in your Bibles, "but if you do what is evil, be afraid." In other words, if you follow the law, don't be afraid. And if you do what the government tells you in verse three, you shouldn't have anything to worry about. If they're doing their job, you're doing yours. But if you don't, it's a different story. Because it says the government does not bear the sword for nothing. That image of a sword doesn't mean as much to us today; we don't see

governments carrying swords anymore. When you go down to the police station here in Chilliwack, they're wearing guns, not swords. But they wore them back then. And the image of a sword reminded the Romans have the fact that the government has the power over life and death. Whenever a Roman judge would sentence someone to die in the first century, they would take their sword out and point it at them to say, "This is what's coming for you. You did the crime, now you're going to pay." With this in mind, Paul says the government is the only institution on Earth that has the right to do that. It's the only organization God has made that has the freedom to kill someone for the purpose of keeping law and order.

Now, that raises a lot of questions. One question that often comes up in this discussion is, do you think the government has the right to do capital punishment? And I do. Does this imply God approves of the death penalty? Well, He did in the Old Testament. The Lord talked a lot about the death penalty in the law. The Jews had 613 commandments in the law; 36 of them related to the death penalty because that was how God was keeping wickedness from spreading in the camp. He did it through the use of violence. And this is how he kept Israel sin from taking over the nation, he did it through means of the threat of physical force because He knew if He didn't do that, they would act like almost animals with their sin. And Paul says here, it's a similar principle today. And God has given the government a sword for this purpose. He didn't give them a toothpick, that wouldn't work. And He doesn't give them something really nice like a lollipop or something. That's not the idea here. In modern terms, we might say, The Lord has provided the government with tanks and bombs and guns for this purpose. And He's given them an army and a navy and a police force because people are so depraved that sometimes the only thing they will listen to is the police.

You want a modern example of this? It wasn't too long ago that people in one of the countries over in the Middle East were complaining about their government because it was so corrupt, so they overthrew it. And what happened as a result is that it was just a total disaster. The country just plunged into chaos. And they started murdering and looting and stealing and killing each other in the streets because the government was gone. You hear people say it would be wonderful if the government was gone? Well, it's not wonderful in history. And the only thing that stopped all that mayhem was when another government stepped in and took its place, and they brought order back again.

And at this point in Romans 13, I think it would be good to stop for a moment and try to put ourselves back into the minds of Paul's audience. Because remember, this is not written to us first, it's written to them. So this is not being said to you and me in the 21st century initially. Initially, it's been said to the people in the church in Rome. And as they heard this, you can imagine what's going through their heads, they would have said, "No, wait a minute, Paul. You're telling me to submit to the government and I get that. And you're saying I need to obey, that's fine. The government's an authority. It's good, bears the sword. The problem is Paul, the government doesn't always do this. I'm reading through this passage, and I just got alarm bells going off in my head. This is not how the government acts. They're not acting like authorities. They're acting like bullies toward us. They're not being servants for good. They're being

tyrants in Rome. They're not using the sword to protect me. They're punishing me with it. What do I do? And I think if you compare this passage to the ones, we're going to look at next week, I think Paul would say you can resist them. Just be smart about it. I think he would say you can defy, you're gonna see that there's freedom for that. Just be wise. Remember who you're up against here. You're up against Rome and realize who you're messing with. You're messing with Caesar, the most powerful man on the planet. So pick and choose your battles here. Don't fight him over everything. Some Christians tried to do that in the first century. Some Christians do that today. They want to fight the government over everything. Government tells you to wear a seatbelt and they say no. Stop at a stop sign; they say no. Don't drive on the right-hand side of the road; they say no. Pay your taxes; no. Don't litter, no. Don't trespass, no. Don't fish at the Fraser River without a license, no. It's just "no" all the time. What do you think Paul would say to that? I think he would say, what's the point? What are you accomplishing when you act that way? Nothing really. So don't do it. Defy them at the right time.

See, the story is told, from the time when the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer took part in the plot to assassinate Hitler in World War Two. And he was asked afterwards why he didn't do it sooner with all the horrible things happening in Germany, and he said, "it was because I was picking and choosing my battles. I knew I couldn't do everything. I couldn't stop all that was happening. So I had to wait for the right time to act."

I think that's the spirit with which Paul is communicating all of this if we put it all together. He's not asking you to submit to everything the government tells you to do because Paul didn't do that. There were times when Paul himself disobeyed the government, so that can't be what he's saying. He's just saying don't do it every single time. And I'd like to say more about this, I had to skip over a few things here. Just for the sake of time. Let me just say if you have questions about Romans 13, I am going to talk about in a couple of weeks. This is a very important text in this discussion because it is the longest discussion of government in the New Testament. So if you could just save some questions until then we'll try to address them at that point.

But let me take you to another passage that talks about the biblical purpose of government, and that's 1 Peter chapter two. So a second passage that talks about government here in the New Testament is 1 Peter chapter two. Now that we've looked at the longest passage on this subject, we can start looking at the smaller ones. And the next one that comes to mind is found in the book of First Peter, which was written scholars believe at a time when the relationship with the government had deteriorated even further. And most believe that Nero was on the throne at this point in history, and Nero was a madman. He was responsible for burning Rome, and he blamed the Christians for it. And so he was a very evil dictator. He would line the pathway to his house with the bodies of burning Christians at night. It made things just impossible almost to even follow Christ. And if you're in the city of Rome, very difficult, not impossible, but just difficult. Which is why these words are significant here.

If you look in chapter 2:13, Peter says, in chapter 2:13, “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution.” Now, that's interesting, because he's saying the same thing Paul did, right? Paul says it in the book of Romans, Peter says it in 1 Peter. Two different authors, you put yourself under the authorities, when Caesar's on the throne, you need to do it whenever possible when Nero is on it too. And it's even more than this, because he says, “Do this to every human institution, whether to a king,” and that's the highest authority in the land; we would call that the federal government. “Or governors,” it says here, that's the lower authorities, we call them the municipal powers. It also says, “Do it for the Lord's sake,” and that's important because that means you don't do this for Nero ultimately. You don't respect the government just because of the people in power. You do it for Christ. It's primarily an act of loyalty to Him, which is why you're thinking this way.

And in the midst of this passage, Peter is going to give you several purposes of government to go along with Romans; let me just mention a few of them. The first one is the government here is sent by God. Do you see that there in verse 14? Let me read it all to you again it says, “Submit yourself for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority or to governors,” here's the phrase, “as sent by Him.” In other words, who sent you the kings that you have? God did. And who gave you this or that governor? It was the Lord. Who put the leaders in place over Canada? God did. Who put the leaders in place over the U.S.? God did. Who put a man like Vladimir Putin in Russia? God did. That doesn't mean God approves of what they do. It doesn't mean those men are serving God. They're not. Peter's just pointing you back to God's sovereignty in this. Daniel 2:21, says, “it is He who changes the times and epics, He removes kings and establishes them.” That's the idea here.

The word “sent” it's in the continuous tense in Greek; it doesn't mean the Lord sent our leaders one time and that's it, it means He sends them continually, over and over again. God is not a passive god. He's not sitting up in heaven, folding His hands while He watches the rulers of this earth come and go. He's vigorously involved in what's happening.

Another purpose of government that he mentions here, if you look in your Bibles, again, is that the government is sent by God to punish evildoers and give praise to those who do right. And that means the government is there to show justice to people by punishing and praising them, by building them up and tearing them down in the right way. I mentioned earlier, it has a sword, but it's a two-edged sword. On one side, it cuts those who break the law. On the other side, it helps those who keep the law. You could say it's the government's role to offer righteousness to the citizens and express fairness and equity and virtue in such a way that people know that there's no bias here. There's two types of people Peter says the government responds to, evil doers and those who do right, the guilty and the innocent. And he says it's the government's job to tell which is which. That's what God's sent them to do. That's their mission on the earth.

Which means that when a government fails to do this, they're failing at their mission. And this implies that when a government gets this wrong, they're missing the point of their calling. And God's not going



to bless a nation that does that. He's not going to show His favor forever to a country that punishes righteousness, and praises wickedness by supporting things like abortions and suicides and transgender operations. When a government does that, over time, the Lord will bring judgment. I don't have to tell you that's happening in this country today. It's happening in your country, the country to the south in the U.S. If you don't believe me, just go home today and read the newspaper and tell me if there's any sin that was committed in Rome that's not being committed in Chilliwack right now. The difference is just – I mean, they lie, we lie, they steal, we steal, they murder, we murder – we just do it with modern technology and make it seem more sophisticated, and the government loves it. But Peter says God hates it. He hates it. Now, I would also add to this that even in these two countries, there is a lot of justice coming from the government right now. They do punish a lot of crime, but unfortunately, they're starting to go in the wrong direction.

Billy Graham once said, If God does not judge the city of Los Angeles, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology. And I would say if God does not judge Canada, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah and apology as well. Let's pray for the Lord to change things.

And that brings you to another passage on the biblical purpose of government and that's 1 Timothy chapter two. If you want to turn over there, I told you that we are going to a lot of different passages this morning. And I meant that. We are going to look at several different ones because I want to show you another place where it talks about government, and it's 1 Timothy 2. And it goes along nicely with what Peter said because after showing you an area where the government is failing in many ways, I want to show you what you can do about it. And Paul says you can pray. That's what this passage is about. When you see the government doing things that are wrong, you don't have to sit there hopelessly wringing your hands, wondering what do I do? Paul says, you can call out to the Lord. Do you ever do that? Do you ever pray for your government? We did that earlier. That was wonderful. I didn't even ask Richard to do that. That was great. But you should. It's a biblical thing to do. And in this passage, Paul doesn't just tell us to pray for our leaders, he says it in the strongest way possible. In 1 Timothy 2:1 it says, “First of all, then I urge that in treaties,” or requests, “and prayers” or regular prayers, normal prayers, the kind when you bring someone's name before the thrones, “and petitions,” it's almost like beggings, “and thanksgiving, “that's prayer from four different angles. Pray, pray, pray, pray is what he's saying, “be made on behalf of all men, for kings, and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life.” And you can stop there because this is the prayer request.

In this passage, this is what Paul wants you to ask God for. So that you may lead a tranquil and quiet life. That's the purpose of government in this passage. It's their job to help you live in peace and quiet. That's what you should be praying for. It's not their job to harass you. It's not their job to bother you. It's not their job to come over to your house and play big brother and that type of thing. It's their job to help you live in peace. The idea here is that if you're doing what you're supposed to do as a Christian, and the government is doing what they're supposed to do, in all these other areas that we've talked about, you kind of shouldn't really know they're there. There's no reason to. If you're following the law, paying your

taxes, not causing trouble, they shouldn't give you trouble. Why? What's the point? Why would you bother a citizen like that? Why would you bother your next-door neighbor like that? I've had a lot of next-door neighbors. I like this kind of next-door neighbor, don't you? I want to live behind the quiet people. Loud people can go back to Promontory; I live in Sardis now, quiet people live in Sardis.

The phrase "quiet life" it sums up what this is saying because it gives the impression of a life that just says "Ah." It's the kind of person that comes home and they're content. They're content with their job, they're content with their family, they're content with their home, they're content with their kids, they're happy with their salary, they're happy with it. They're just happy people. Paul says the government needs to do everything it can to build up that kind of person. Now, to be clear, you need to do everything you can to be that kind of person. And you need to be praying that you'll make every stride to be content in the Lord instead of complaining all the time. And saying no over every little thing and making it hard for the government. Pay your taxes. "No." Don't litter, "no." Wear your seatbelt, "no." Don't be like that. But on the other hand, they need to do what they can to help you act that way, instead of being a nuisance.

I would say that after studying the topic of church history, over the past few weeks, I did a lot of research into the history of Canada. And I found that for the most part, Canada has done a good job at this. I think it's been a peaceful place to live in its history. Someone gave me a book this past week that talked about the battle for religious freedoms in Canada and for many years there weren't too many. There were battles, but there weren't too many of them. But I think we would all say with the arrival of Covid that began to change right. Now all of a sudden, the average person couldn't come home and live a quiet life anymore. The typical Canadian could not look at their situation and say, "Ah." There was there was interference from the government, there was invasiveness. For a few years you had to wear a mask, and practice social distancing, and get a passport vaccine passport, get one shot and then another one before you traveled certain places. And I know the government said they had good reasons for doing that initially, but I think we would all say this as well, it went too far.

Now that leads to the question that Paul is wrestling with here, what do you do in times like that? Well, one answer is in this text, you pray. And you don't just pray, but you pray for the peace to return. You pray for the Lord to restore a sense of order back to the country. In many ways, order has come back because the restrictions have lifted. But in other ways, it's not because people are still on edge right now. They're really concerned about what the government will do next. And it should be a reminder for us to cry out to the Lord, in this verse. Verse three says, if you look in your Bibles, again, you need to do this because this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who desires all men to be saved. And that means we want to live this quiet life and pray for it and all these things, so that our nation's leaders would be saved. All men, and the "all men" that he's talking about, if you look at the verses ahead of this is the kings, and the governors, and those in authority. And it happens when we pray. In fact, when you put all this together, God wants you to pray to live like this so your leaders can look at

you and notice a difference. So the authorities can see what you're doing and tell themselves that there's something unusual about these Christian people. Their families are different, their homes are different, their marriages are different, their lives are different, because they're content. They're just, they're at peace, no matter what happens. I wonder why. And it should lead them to the Lord.

It brings us to another passage to talk about this subject of government, and that is Matthew 22. If you want to turn over to Matthew 22, which takes you to another part of the Bible and that is the Gospels. You can't just talk about the issue of government by looking at the apostles. You want to hear about this from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And that's what He does in Matthew 22 because here He's going to talk about a very practical issue, and that is the issue of taxes. Anybody ever wondered, "What do I do with my taxes?" Well, we all have, right? Every time you talk about government, this question comes up, do I have to pay my taxes or not? The government abuses them, it uses them for things that shouldn't use them for. Well, apparently, that's not a new question. People asked it in the first century.

And here in Matthew 22, this question is asked by two groups of people that were known as the Pharisees and Herodians. Another way you could refer to them is the conservatives and liberals, those who sided with the government or King Herod the Herodians, and those who didn't, the conservatives, the Pharisees. They both hated Jesus. No matter which side you landed on, they both wanted Him dead, so they asked Him about this issue to trap Him. Because the Herodians believe you should pay taxes to Rome; Rome is good. Rome was our friend. Rome is our big brother. The Pharisee said, No. Rome is out to get us. Don't pay taxes.

So they approach Him to back him into a corner over this and this is what Jesus does. If you look in verse 18, it says, "but Jesus perceive their malice." He was the Son of God; He knew what's in their hearts. And He said, "Why are you testing me? You hypocrites." He always really kind of went straight to the point. "Show me the coin use for the poll tax, and they brought him a denarius." And just to explain this, a denarius was the equivalent of one day's worth of wage labor for a Jew. I looked it up and in British Columbia that comes to about \$300, give or take in the modern currency. The reason they brought it to Him is because as the verse indicates, the poll tax was worth several of these. The poll tax was about 3% of your annual salary. So depending on how much money you made, you had to give a couple of denarii to the government. And as Jesus looks at this coin, verse 20, says, he asked them "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And his enemies say Caesar. So he says, "render" that means give back, pay back, reimburse Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and God the things that are God's. Because you owe certain things to Caesar financially; you're indebted to the government for certain goods and services, so pay them back. You use their roads, pay them back for the roads. You use their police, pay them back for their police. You use their fire department, pay them back for the fire department. But at the same time, give God the things that are God's and what that means in the context is that in Jesus' mind, and you need to hear this, there is a difference between Caesar and God. Do you see that? Does that make sense? In Jesus way of thinking, there's a distinction here, the two things are not the same, which you hear that, and you go "Well, of course." They didn't think that way. On the

denarius coin, there were some words printed on the front of it, that said, in Latin, “Caesar Dei, Augustus,” underneath a picture of him. And that meant Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Caesar, Son of God. That's how the Roman Emperor looked at himself at the time. He thought he was God. He believed he could do whatever he wanted to. He was Lord over heaven and earth. And Jesus says, he's not. As He's holding a denarius coin in His hand, He tells the people, that Caesar is just a little Caesar, and that's all. There are limits to the government's power.

What he's saying is it is the purpose of government to stay in its lane at times and realize that there are certain restrictions as to what it can and cannot do. There are boundaries that it cannot cross. There's parameters here. There's a fence He's putting up, that says, you can go so far and no further, if you're the government. And it doesn't have unlimited power, this balances out Romans 13, doesn't it? They don't have boundless authority. God has put constraints on this.

I know there are some governments that don't believe that today. They didn't believe it in Jesus' day. And there are nations that think, especially communist countries, or places like that, everything belongs to them. Your house belongs to the government, your wages belong to the government, your body belongs to the government, Jesus says it does not. There are certain things you give to Caesar, there are certain things you give to God. Caesar cannot have both.

This is why when you look at history, you find that the church has always had to keep the government at arm's length, in some regards. The true church, it's always had a wary eye on it. If you read about the saints in the past, you find that they did submit to the government, they did follow them, at least in the first several centuries, looking from the book of Acts onward. They put themselves under their leaders as best they could, but they always did it with some discretion. They couldn't let down their guard because they believed it was not the government's job to take over everything. That's how we feel about it here at Grace. That's how I feel about it as your pastor. It's not the government's job to come into the church and tell us what songs to sing and what doctrines to believe and what versions of the Bible that we read from. We defy them if they do that. We resist. We also believe it's not their job to tell us who can be saved, and who can join the church and who can be called a Christian. There are governments that have done that. We put our foot down on that. It's not their job to pick our pastors, it's not their job to pick the sermons, it's not their job to say what you can and cannot preach. They should give us freedom in those things. But it goes back to the teaching that our Lord is laying down here. And the teaching is that Caesar and God are not the same. The Empire and church don't go together, and they never will. Not until the Lord comes back and establishes His kingdom, and then they will be the same.

One church father, Tertullian said that “We have for Caesar the image of Caesar, which is impressed upon this coin. But for God there is the image of God impressed on human beings.” And so the principle is give Caesar your money that he asked for in taxes, give everything else to God and make sure you don't get them confused. There's only one Lord that we bow down to in everything, and that is Jesus Christ. Amen? It's not Caesar.

And that brings you to one more passage that talks about the biblical purpose of government here. Just to review some of these other ones, we've looked at Romans 13, which says the government is an authority, and a minister for good and it bears the sword. And we've looked at 1 Peter 2, which says it is sent by God to punish evildoers and praise those who do right. It's the government's job to uphold justice, which is why 1 Timothy 2 says to pray for it. In a sense, that's also why Matthew 22 says to give taxes to it financially because the government can't function without some type of finances from its citizens. But that brings you to one more passage to round all this off, and it's a good one. I think this is a good place to end this, and that is John chapter 18.

The reason this is a good passage to end on in John 18 is because this is a statement Jesus makes to the government. And we've looked at passages where He talks about the government. This is where He talks to it because He says something unusual to a government leader named Pilate. Remember him? Pontius Pilate. And the entire conversation takes place right after He's been arrested by the governing authority. So it's got government, the beginning, middle and end of this; government's all over the place in this chapter. We started talking in this sermon about good things the government does in Romans 13. Well here is some of the bad that they did toward Jesus.

If you look in chapter 18:3, it tells you that at Jesus arrest, Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches, and weapons. The term "cohort" in Greek is *spera*, which refers to a detachment of 600 men. So there's 600 armed men or Roman soldiers coming to arrest Him here. And it says that the officers or guards of the chief priests and Pharisees were there, which would bring the number up, because if the Romans brought 600 men and the Jews wanted to balance that force, there could have been over 1,000 guys here to arrest one man. You want to talk about government abuse. That's government abuse. And as they come to Him, verse six says, Jesus throws all of them to the ground. You don't arrest God on your feet. And you don't capture the King of Kings standing up, you do it on the ground, that's where they landed. And when they got up, I mean, the whole story is fascinating. You would think they would have said, "Okay, I'm done with this. I'm going home." But they don't. Verse 12 says they proceed to arrest him. Verse 13 says they lead him to Annas.

And John doesn't say this here, but this is the beginning of Jesus' first trial. It's not the end of them. He's going to be tried six times before He's crucified: three of the hands of the Jews, three at the hands of the Romans. And He's going to stand face to face with the government at every single point. He's going to look at one politician after another politician, and I would add that all of them are crooked because what they do to him is illegal. They're breaking their law; they're not being a good government. They're not punishing evil and praising good; they're doing the opposite. For example, according to Jewish law, you are not supposed to accept the testimony of a man who had been bribed, and they did that. Judas was bribed. That should have thrown the whole thing out of court. And according to their law, you were not supposed to arrest a man before he went to trial, and they did that too. They had Him handcuffed as He

went to trial. You're not supposed to do that. You're not supposed to try a man at night, and they did that. You're not supposed to try a man in private, and they did that. You're not supposed to do it on a feast day like Passover; they did that. You're not supposed to hit Him. You could face massive fines in Israel at this time, if you struck a man who's on trial. The point is that this was not a nice government Jesus is dealing with here. It's a crooked government on every level and it sets the stage for this conversation he has with Pilate.

When He appears before Pilate, if you look down in verse 33, Pilate asked Him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" And the reason he says this is because if Jesus said, "No," Pilate is off the hook. And if Jesus said, "I'm not King of the Jews," he would let them go. But Jesus doesn't. And He says in verse 36, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Now. What does that mean? We've all heard that expression, probably before. What's He saying though? Well, in Greek, it could be translated, "My kingdom is not out of this world. My kingdom is not part of this worldly system. Pilate, there is this world, and then there's My kingdom. There's you and your throne and your rule and all the wicked things you did to Me by beating Me to a pulp, and then there is Me." He says, "My kingdom is real. It's true. It's powerful. I will not deny that, but it's not like yours." And that's what makes it greater. It's not a kingdom bound by worldly rules, worldly philosophies, worldly principles. It's not a kingdom run by sinful values, sinful morals, sinful men and their sinful politics that would take an innocent man and treat him like this. It's higher than that. And if you want to see how high His kingdom is, if you look in chapter 19:11, He tells Pilate later on that "You would have no authority over me unless it had been given to you from above." And the implication there is that you're not the one calling the shots here, Pilate, I am. And you're not the one in charge of this government and this kingdom, that role belongs to Me too.

The final purpose of government, friends, is to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. We started off this sermon talking about how we need to submit to the government where we can. This is how the government submits to Christ. It does it by serving as an instrument of His Lordship. Jesus says, "You're not in charge of Me Pilate. You're merely serving the will of My Father." Same thing goes for everybody in here in this chapter. I mean, if you do a survey of this chapter, you find that in chapter 18, Jesus is arrested, and as He is, God takes a wicked man named Judas and uses him for His purposes. Jesus was heading to the cross, Judas just served as an instrument to get Him there. Then He will take a wicked man named Annas and do the same because he will put Him on trial. And even though Annas doesn't know it, God will use him to help His Son die on the cross for the sins of the world. Then in chapter 19, they'll take Pilate and do the same. Then in all these chapters, you'll take a wicked group of Roman soldiers and let them beat Him and bruise Him and humiliate Him and nail Him to the cross. But that didn't happen randomly. It happened according to God's perfect sovereign plan. Acts 2:23 says it happened according to the predetermined plan, and foreknowledge of God because He's the one who led them all the way.

I've heard it said that the most wicked thing in human history is when these people crucified Jesus. And if God was sovereign over that, He sovereign over anything. Listen friends, God is not worried about the crazy things happening in the government today. And God doesn't lose any sleep over what's happening with the Coronavirus, or restrictions, or Justin Trudeau, or Joe Biden, or Vladimir Putin, or the members of parliament, or the House and Senate because He has it all under control because He's God. That's what is being said here in the Gospel of John. The one who is standing before Pilate, bruised and beaten is none other than the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the King of the Jews. He's one with the Father, the Son of God, the Blessed Trinity. Born of a virgin, took on flesh and lived a sinless life. And with that sinless life, He allowed the Father to crucify Him for the sins of all those who would believe and take your sins and mine and pay for them there. But the thing you want to know here is that it happened, because Jesus is Lord of all. He is God over these lesser nations. The Book of Isaiah says the nations are like a drop in a bucket compared to God; they're not even dust on a scale. You don't get on a scale and say, who put the dust on there, and that's what all of this is to God. We want to remember that this morning.

In fact, the story is told of the time that Pilate would later repent and believe in Jesus. Now I don't think that's true, but it was written about in a book called *The Martyrdom of Pilate*, it was written in the fifth century. It's apocryphal, it's fictional. The Bible never says that happened. But the book says, after Jesus was sentenced to be crucified, he changed his mind. And he was asked why. And he said, "Because I never met anybody like him. I saw kings and rulers and Caesars before, but Jesus was one of a kind." Now that book is false, but that sentiment is true. You can put Jesus next to any king and ruler in the world today. He is greater. Amen? He's always greater. Do you believe that today? You should. And I think that's a wonderful place for us to end and transition into the Lord's Supper. So let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank You Lord, for Your Word. And we thank You that as we've read all these things and thought about these things, it's a reminder that we're not the first people on the earth to deal with a wicked and crooked government. Others have before. They've dealt with all kinds of dreadful things, and You've brought them through it. Your church has sailed on stormy waters. You have been sovereign, You have been King, You have been God, and we rest in that today.

Lord, I pray as we've studied these things, it would help us to keep this balance where we are not afraid of things that are happening today. At the same time we don't want to be fools and begin to call sin good and wickedness okay, and compromise; and we can't do that. We pray for Your help in striking this balance.

And Lord, as we come to the Lord's table, would we remember the Christ Who was crucified for us? The One who's looked at Pilate and told him straight, "I am the King." Lord, we worship this King and as we come to the table now, we pray He would be honoured and glorified in it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.