



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sermon Series: The Gospel & Politics Part 2

Sermon Title: A Time to Resist

Speaker/ Date: Armin Sommer/ January 13, 2019

Acts 5:17–42

The book of Acts chronicles the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire during the first 35 years of the church's existence. The gospel message was largely unwelcome among the relig community. Followers of Jesus were frequently beaten, arrested, and even killed.

Big Idea: There is a time when to resist as well as a way to resist.

I. When to Resist

When the government forbids what God commands, or commands what God forbids. If the gov't commands you not to read the Bible anymore or assemble to worship, you should resist that, even if it means prison. And if the government commands what God forbids, you are to resist as well.

There is a time to resist- But not simply because you don't like the outcome of an election. How do we differentiate between a just law and one that we should resist? Martin Luther King's 1963 *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*, a masterpiece of political and moral thought stated- "A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law."

When a law is immoral, there is a moral right (even an obligation) to disobey.

II. How to Resist ("how to disagree")

Several principles are helpful.

Principle #1: Be Respectful

In Acts 4 the religious leaders ordered Peter & John "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." But they didn't get all snippy with the council.

(Acts 4:19–20)

The way we express ourselves is as important as what we believe (**Colossians 3:8 , Colossians 4:6**). Exercise your freedom of speech prayerfully, carefully, respectfully. Change the atmosphere.

Principle #2: Discern the difference between principles & policies.

The Bible offers principles that should shape our policies, but it rarely prescribes the policies that apply those principles.

Example: Immigration. (**Deuteronomy 10:18–19**). The principle is clear: Love the immigrant. But the Bible does NOT prescribe a particular immigration policy or the criteria for accepting. Don't confuse principle with policy.

Principle #3: Be more loyal to Jesus than to a political party or agenda.

You can belong to different parties and relate as brothers & sisters in Christ. Be a follower of Christ first. If your views are shaped more by your news source than by scripture, then you're not thinking enough. Resist ungodliness and promote godliness with biblical integrity. Show compassion care to the poor, the immigrant, to single mothers.

Principle #4: Be prepared to Bear the Consequences

1 John 3:13 , 1 Peter 2:20, James 4:4

Always ask yourself: Does my attitude and behavior mark me as a friend of God or of the world?

Martin Niemöller was a pastor in Germany when WW2 began. He was arrested multiple times for his outspoken criticisms of the Nazis' policies and spent the entire conflict detained at various concentration camps. During his confinement, the prison chaplain came to visit Niemöller and asked him, "What brings you here? Why are *you* in prison?" Knowing this chaplain had let his ideology hinder his theology, Niemöller replied, "And, brother, why are you *not* in prison?"

Bottom line: There is a time when to resist as well as a way to resist. Resist when the government forbids what the Bible commands, or when the government commands what the Bible forbids.

Remind yourself: The ultimate answer to our sinful society is not government, but the God who sent His Son to live within a corrupt political system, to die unjustly on a Roman cross, to bear the just wrath of God the Father against sin, so that by faith in the crucified and risen Savior we might receive eternal life, and form communities that foreshadow what we will ultimately experience when a new heaven and new earth become one.

Discussion Questions:

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?**
- **Have you ever resisted the government? Do you feel confident that your decision was correct? Explain**
- **What consequences could a Christian expect to face if he or she sides with the government over God?**
- **Name some issues where a Christian be biblically justified to resist the government.**
- **Do Christians need to be respectful of those who confront them with hostility? Why? – is it a biblical command?**
- **What benefit could come from maintaining a respectful attitude?**
- **Give an example where the government uses a secular policy to support a biblical principle.**
- **Do most of your actions and attitudes mark you as a friend of God or of the world?**