

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

## An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 20- Luke 20:19-26**

### 304- The Relationship Between the Christian and Human Government- Part 1

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February 28, 2016

#### **Luke 20:19-26**

**19** The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

**20** So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they *could* deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.

**21** They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.

**22** "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

**23** But He detected their trickery and said to them,

**24** **"Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?"** They said, "Caesar's."

**25** And He said to them, **"Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."**

**26** And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

To the Glory of God

In the Bible- God has told us to do some things that, on the surface, *appear* to be contradictory. For example, in **1 John 2:15-17** God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle John to tell us to not love the world, but in **Luke 19:13**, He tells us to "do business with this" or "occupy" on this earth until He returns. According to **Matthew 6:13**, we

are to pray that God will deliver us from the evil one; but according to **Psalm 73**, we stumble when we see the wicked prosper. According to **1 Timothy 6:10**, we can't love money, and yet according to **1 Timothy 5:8**, we are worse than an unbeliever if we do not provide for our families.

Now I don't believe for a minute that these Divine Commands are contradictory. But they *can* be confusing, and so they have to be studied and discussed and analyzed and prayed over and considered and pondered so that we can understand them and so we can obey them.

And the issue of the relationship between the believer and human Government is one of those issues that may appear on the surface to be contradictory, and so has to be studied and understood because on the one hand we are told over and over in Scripture to be a good citizen, and yet in **Hebrews 11:13** we are told to remain as "strangers and exiles" on this earth, as people who are only passing through this life because this world is not our home.

And down the through the centuries various people who laid claim to being saved migrated to one extreme or the other trying to obey two seemingly contradictory Commands. Some completely withdrew from society altogether and lived as hermits, while other cast aside all separation and mingled with this present evil world with no restraint whatsoever.

Now for my entire life I have heard the mantra of "Separation of Church and State" on the evening news and in the general political debate about who should hold the power that is constantly raging in this country. And most of the time I have heard that phrase during my lifetime- it has been voiced by the political *liberals* of our country to protest everything from prayer in schools to abortion to other moral laws like adultery and homosexuality. These people do not want the Church dictating to the rest of the population how they have to live their lives.

But imagine my surprise when I discovered by reading Church History that for the first 175 years of our nation's existence- the phrase "Separation of Church and State" was the hallmark of Protestant preaching and teaching, *especially* from noted Reformed groups like the Puritans. These men- who are the ones who *formulated* the various Protestant traditions that we know today as the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Baptists- remembered what had happened over

in Europe and did not want the power and the force of the Government *oppressing* believers by passing laws that would punish faithful believers in actually living out what the Bible taught.

For example, it was in *this* vein that the Founding Fathers wrote this into the very First Amendment to the US Constitution that says:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”<sup>1</sup>

So, right off jump street, this Amendment is very narrow in what it says. The only entity that is limited here is the Congress of the United States. Now the Congress is comprised of two “houses”, the House of Representatives and the Senate, that is made up of “citizen representatives” who patriotically, but reluctantly, leave their homes and go to Washington to serve their country for either two or six years, and then leave Washington to go back to their homes to live underneath the laws they passed.

That is the Congress. And that is the only entity that was limited in this Amendment. And so this Amendment has nothing to do with Government, in general; it says nothing about the Executive or the Judicial branches of Government. This Amendment has nothing to do with State Legislatures or Governors or Teachers or School Administrators or local Mayors or actions by City Halls. The only entity that is limited in the First Amendment is the Congress. And the Congress’ sole duty is to “make legislation” or to pass laws after careful deliberation.

And so this Amendment says that the Congress does not have the power or the right to “make a law” that “respects”, which is 18<sup>th</sup> Century language for “upholding” or “promoting” or “advancing” or “favoring”, a particular religion over another one.

And this part of the First Amendment was put in to prohibit the Federal Government from creating a “national religion” that was the norm over in Europe. And then this Amendment goes on to say that the Congress also does not have the power or the right to make any law that would *prohibit* the free exercise of religion by those citizens who follow it.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Bill of Rights*; US Constitution

Now that is very clear and that is very simple and that is very narrow. And yet over the next 230 years this simple and narrow Amendment that restricts only the Congress has been used to end prayer in schools and to prohibit teachers from allowing students to ask legitimate questions about Creation and of banning Nativity scenes at City Hall and of forcing businesses to make wedding cakes for homosexuals.

And so during my lifetime- the phrase, "Separation of Church and State", that was originally used by the Reformers to end Governmental oppression against Christians has been confiscated and used by the secularists to abuse and distort the very simple and very clear and very narrow meaning of the First Amendment to resemble something that is hostile toward Biblical Christianity. And that is why we have laws being passed today that prohibits the free exercise of our faith that is supposedly based on an Amendment that says that there can be no such law.

Now aside from a lesson on civics, the point I am making by bringing this up today in Church is to illustrate that many people have become very confused about the subject of just what is the relationship between the Church and the State, or even better put, what is the correct relationship between individual believers and their civil Government.

And for the answer to this question, I really don't want to read from the Founding Fathers or from previous Presidents or from politicians or even from historians. I want to read and study and think and struggle with the infallible and inerrant and inspired Words of Scripture, so that even with *this* subject we will develop a Biblical understanding of the relationship between the Christian and the Government.

So I want to linger here and spend some time and think deeply and biblically about Jesus's Words here in verse 25:

**... render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**

...because these Words raise two issues:

1. The issue of Church and State

2. The issue of the Christian's relationship to the State in connection to his relationship to God.

Now the background of this section of God's Word is that this is the last week of Jesus' earthly Life. And so we are about in Wednesday of that last week, and the Pharisees are trying to entangle Jesus in a trap so that they can not only discredit Him and His entire Ministry, but so they can have cause to kill Him.

Now remember these religious hypocrites believe that Jesus is of the devil. By this time, they have completely rejected not only what Jesus taught, but they have rejected Jesus *personally*. And so Dr. Luke tells us in verses 19-20:

**19 The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.**

**20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they *could* deliver Him to the rule and the authority of the governor.**

So this is what you call "Killing the Messenger". And it is done all the time, even in our day. People who engage in this don't like something that somebody says. And so they wrongly conclude that if they kill the messenger, then the problem goes away. But when you are talking about Divine Truth, "killing the messenger" only *compounds* the problem.

For example, what determines if a Doctrine or a Teaching or a Belief is true is not how many people agree with it or whether it sits with us. What determines whether a Doctrine or a Belief or a Teaching is true is if it is in agreement with Scripture. But because we are fallen creatures, we don't always like what Scripture says. And that tendency is inherent in sinful creatures. But the indwelling Power of God the Holy Spirit will empower the believer to struggle against those rebellious lusts of our flesh so that we will overcome that resistance and humbly and joyfully bow to the Authority of scripture in our daily lives, all to the Glory of God.

But to unsaved people, a Doctrine or a Belief or a Teaching can be absolutely true and absolutely in accord with Scripture, and yet deeply

and profoundly trouble or offend them. And simply killing the Messenger doesn't stop that Doctrine or that Belief or that Teaching from being true. And it doesn't stop those who kill the messenger from being held accountable to it. But when they kill the messenger, thinking they are fixing their problem, they are not only guilty of being at odds with Scripture about that subject, but now they are also guilty of murder.

Yet, this is *exactly* what the Pharisees are doing here. Dr. Luke tells us here that these religious leaders intend to hang Jesus on the horns of a religious and political dilemma. And that is why they asked Jesus this question. They had no intention of seeking after Truth so they could adjust their lives to live in accord with it; they simply wanted to trap Jesus so they could discredit Him and have grounds to have Him murdered.

So look how they begin the conversation in verse 21:

**Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.**

Now, this is what is called "buttering somebody up". They are bragging on Jesus so that they get Him to lower His guard so they can trap Him. And this heralds back to what Jesus said in **Luke 6:26a**:

**Woe to you when all men speak well of you...**

and

**Matthew 7:15**

**Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.**

Now people did this to Jesus all the time. You remember when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and said to Him:

**John 3:2**

**Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.**

But Jesus wasn't fooled by this "buttering up", and so He cut right to the chase and confronted this ruler of the Jews with his own utter lostness by saying to him:

**John 3:3b**

**... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

Now by Jesus saying this he was telling Nicodemus that all his religious labor, all his sacrifices, all his prayers, all his ceremonial worship, and all of his keeping of all the religious rituals had not made him any closer to God than a prostitute.

So Jesus was categorically attacking Nicodemus' religion at the very point at which Nicodemus valued it the most. And that had to be *amazingly* insulting and offensive to this man! I mean, just Who does Jesus think He is to talk to a ruler of the Jews like this and insult this man's religion? I mean has Jesus even had the decency to read this man's brochure?

And notice that Jesus never even gave the man credit for at least *trying* to earn his own righteousness. Jesus never said, *"You know Nicodemus, I know you've tried so hard to go to heaven based on what you could do for yourself in obtaining all your religious trinkets and going through all your religious activities, but you're just a little bit off on your theology so let me help you get this right"*.

No, Jesus talked as though none of the meticulous effort that Nicodemus had expended his entire life to make himself acceptable to God mattered one whit to God. Jesus said that this man's position as a ruler among the religious elite was worthless, that his lifelong effort to earn his own righteousness was fruitless, and Jesus said that unless and until he was born again by a sovereign miracle of God, Nicodemus would never see the Kingdom of God.

Now how do you respond to something like that? Well, people who hate Truth and people who hate God respond by hating the messenger and wanting to kill Him. And those who have been chosen by God from before the foundation of the world respond by falling before Jesus and agreeing with Him and by crying out for Mercy to save their wretched souls.

So these men wanted to kill Jesus. And Jesus knew that. And so He didn't call their effort to trap Him an "honest mistake". Jesus didn't say that they were basically "good" people who were just a little bit off on their theology. Jesus didn't say that these men were working very hard to be holy and were just confused about a few things. No, Jesus called them:

### **“hypocrites”**

Jesus knew that what they were doing was malicious, because they really don't give a rip what Jesus thought. They meant to entangle Him and to trap him. How? By putting forth a complicated issue concerning the relationship between God's people and Human Government. Look again at verse 22:

### **Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?**

Now keep in mind who were there that day. Standing before Jesus that day were the Pharisees and scribes who represented the religious leaders of the false religion of the Jews of that day. And standing next to Jesus were His Apostles and Disciples. And then there was a huge crowd of people all around comprised of both Jews and Herodians. So this was a politically super-charged situation.

Now the Pharisees are the guys who have a focused allegiance to the Old Testament and to the people of Israel. But the Herodians are, by name, "Herod supporters". Now you remember that Herod was a lackey governor of the Roman Empire who were the ones who were the occupiers of Israel. So the Herodians were not popular among the Jews. And so you were either aligned with the Pharisees and put Israel first, or you were aligned with Herod and put Rome first, but you couldn't do both.

For example, the reason that the tax collectors were so despised was because they were Jews who had bought a tax franchise from the Romans Government and who went about collecting confiscatory taxes from the Jews to give to Rome. And so in the mind of the average Jew a tax collector was the "lowest of the low" because he had betrayed his own people to do business with the pagans.



This is the logic behind why a person who says they are saved and yet refuses to submit his life to the authority of Scripture, even after many attempts at bringing him to repentance, is to be considered a "publican" or a "tax collector". Because by his refusal to walk with God in humble obedience to Scripture, he has not only betrayed the people of God, but he has also betrayed the Lord.

And so their question to Jesus is a "set up". And they know that *whatever* Jesus says will hang Him, because if He says, "*Yes, pay taxes to Rome*", then Jesus is supporting a pagan Government to the detriment of God's people and would be exposed as being a traitor to the Jewish Cause. Remember the Jews seethed under the Roman occupation. They hated the Romans and prayed for their destruction. And this was so prominent in their daily lives that the Pharisees taught that whenever the true Messiah would come he would vanquish the Roman Army militarily and restore the Kingdom of Israel back to its former glory that it enjoyed under King Solomon.

So, if Jesus answered that they were to pay taxes, He would be answering in favor of the Roman overlords, which would infuriate the Jews.

On the other hand, if Jesus says, "*No, don't pay,*" then He becomes a revolutionary against Roman rule and would insult the Herodians who would then tell the authorities who would come and put Jesus in jail.

So the Pharisees think that they really have Jesus trapped by this question. They think that Jesus is in trouble no matter how He answers their question. So what will Jesus do? Look again at the first part of verse 24:

**Luke 20:24a**

**Show Me a denarius...**

Now over in **Matthew 22:19**, which is the "sister passage" for this same event, we read:

**Matthew 22:19**

**Show Me the coin *used* for the poll-tax."** And they brought Him a denarius.

Now the Jews didn't like to carry these coins because they were Roman coins, and it was like having a little idol in your pocket. And so the Jews usually carried copper coins and Hebrew shekels. But when they paid their taxes, the Jews had to use the Roman denarius.

Now a denarius originally got its name in about 300 years before Jesus was Resurrected because it represented the value of ten donkeys. But by the time that Jesus walked the earth a denarius had been devalued to represent a day's wage for the average laborer.

And a denarius was made out of silver, or sometimes gold. And they were used for about 6 centuries within the Romans Empire, from 300 B.C. to about 300 A.D. And depending on who was the emperor, he had his image on it.

So, all the long line of Caesars had their faces on the coins that were minted during their own reign. They bore the engraved image of the emperor on one side, and then the inscriptions and identifying information on the other side.

So Jesus asked them to get one. And in the middle of verse 24 Jesus asked:

**Luke 20:24b**

**... Whose likeness and inscription does it have? ...**

... and at the end of verse 24 the Pharisees replied:

**Luke 20:24c**

**... Caesar's.**

... and then Jesus dropped this bombshell on them in verse 25 when He said:

**Luke 20:25**

**Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**

Now, if Jesus had stopped at the *first* part and only said:

**render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's**

... that would have indicated that, Yes, faithful believers were simply to pay their taxes to a pagan government that was brutally and unjustly persecuting and dominating and subjugating the Jews. And that would have put Jesus out of sorts with not only the Jews who were truly saved, but with the unsaved hypocritical but patriotic Jews who also despised the Romans.

So as Jesus began to make this statement the self-righteous Pharisees were thrilled because it appeared that they had been successful in trapping Jesus because He just hung Himself on one of the horns of this dilemma.

But then Jesus turns their victory to utter confusion as He continues His Statement and says that in addition to rendering to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, the Lord said:

... **And [render] to God the things that are God's**

Now what just happened? What did Jesus say? There are many people both throughout history, and even now, who think Jesus wasn't doing *anything* here except to very cleverly dodge the question. These people say that Jesus was simply being politically shrewd in order to escape from the dilemma that had been set for Him by these unbelieving Jewish leaders.

So is that what this was, an artful dodge by the Savior to avoid a dilemma? I don't think that is true at all, and I say that for two reasons:

1. **Jesus never shied away from difficult positions.** He made statements all the time that got Himself in hot water with the religious elite. And I would suggest to you that it was what Jesus said as well as what He did as to the reason why He was murdered.
2. **Jesus was God Almighty in human flesh.** And as God, Jesus was Omniscient, and so He knew about this trap before He was ever born. Jesus understood exactly what this set up was before God ever made the world. Jesus understood the false religion and patriot desires of the Jews, and He understood the blatant brutality and racism of the Romans better than they did. And so there was no pressure on Jesus here, no concern, no angst, and no worry.

Jesus didn't begin to panic internally, and there were no beads of sweat on Jesus' Forehead as He began to give this Statement. Jesus never asked Himself, *"Oh boy, what in the world am I going to do?"* He spoke very calmly and very precisely and very purposefully, not only answering their immediate question, but to lay down a spiritual Principle that is eternal and that not only affected the Jews of His day, but which governs believers in our day as well.

Now it is certainly true that Jesus didn't give the Answer that the religious hypocrites were looking for. And it is also true that Jesus didn't give the Answer about the relationship between Caesar and God that we might want like:

"Here are three steps for how believers are to relate to the State."

... which is usually what people want- because it eliminates any struggle on our part to try to figure out deep and profound issues. But Jesus never defined the scope of the things that belong to Caesar here. And He didn't define the scope of things that belong to God either. He left both of them open. And what we have to understand is that He left this open on purpose. So Jesus didn't define the relationship. He only says:

**...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**

So what is going on here is that Jesus is looking us right in the eye and saying: *Think about what I am saying. Am I really dodging the issue here? Aren't I really giving you the Answer that you need?*

So let's think for a moment about His Answer. And let us do this by asking and answering a series of questions:

## **1. Government belongs to God**

Jesus said in **Luke 20:25b**:

**And [render] to God the things that belong to God.**

And that Statement makes us ask another question. *"What belongs to God? Well, everything belongs to God, including me. The Bible makes the claim in **Hebrews 11:3**:*

**By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.**

The Bible says that what our children are being taught today in Science and Biology and Physics class in public schools is a lie. That the universe is *not* the product of billions of years or random and accidental evolution, but was instantly and miraculously created out of nothing by the spoken Word of God.

And let me tell you just how important this issue is. You cannot have it both ways. If the Bible that reveals Creation in great detail is wrong or is merely a fantasy or is nothing more than the ignorant ramblings of unsophisticated nomads from 3,500 years ago and is not the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of the living God, then you have no basis by which you should believe what this same Bible teaches about the Salvation of your soul. Because if you can't trust what the Bible says about things that you *can* see and things that are *temporary*, why in the world would you trust what it says about things that you *can't* see and things that are *eternal*?

Now I am a reasonably educated man and I have personally taken the time to read everything I can get my hands on concerning Darwinian Evolution. I have traveled long distances to listen to the most educated people in the world talk about this issue. And I have come to one conclusion: Darwinian Evolution is the single most *unscientific* and *anti-intellectual* hypothesis I have ever heard. It doesn't work because it *can't* work, and it isn't true because true Science dictates that it is a lie and a fraud.

And make no mistake about this, dear friends, you are kidding yourself if you don't think that the public school system of this country is not indoctrinating your children to disbelieve the Word of God by force feeding this garbage to your children, because they are.

So regardless of what pagans and unbelievers and pseudo-scientists say, I belong to God and everything about me belongs to God; my breath, my intellect, my ambitions, my emotions, my body, my time, and all my possessions belongs to God. And because I am saved, even

my eternal soul belongs to God. And that means that I really own nothing and that God owns everything.

So, I am really not the owner of anything. I am merely a “steward” who has been temporarily gifted with a certain amount of what God owns, and somebody who has been commanded to use what God has given me according to His written instructions, and somebody who is held accountable to that.

So, in addition to God being the sole *Creator* of everything that has been made, God is also the sole *Owner* of everything that has been made. And that means that I do not have any “individual rights” apart from God. I belong to God and everything I have also belongs to God.

But we can't even stop there. Because since that is true, it is also true that I don't have the right to operate or to live or to function in this life apart from the way that God has instructed me to live and to operate and to function. And that means that I am *accountable* to God for how I live and how I operate and how I think and what I believe and how I function in this life. And that means that God can and will judge me if I live or operate or think or believe or function contrary to the way He has instructed me.

But let's go even further because since it is true that everything belongs to God, then this also means that Caesar belongs to God. And that also means that in addition to Caesar himself belonging to God, everything Caesar has, also, belongs to God. So all of Caesar's rights and all of his authority and all of his power and all the influence that Caesar has, because he is Caesar, also belongs to God.

So, by saying it this way, Jesus is *forcing* us to linger here over the implication that since everything belongs to God, that Caesar is part of that which belongs to God.

So the first Eternal Principle that Jesus is establishing here is that Human Government is of God. Human Government was God's idea. And God established Human Government because of evil that fallen human manifest. So through the means of “Common Grace”, God established Human Government as a way to *minimize* evil so we won't annihilate ourselves.

And God has said that Government is better than “self-rule” or “anarchy”. And, even though this is a hard sell to those being oppressed, God has determined that “bad” Government, even “evil” Government, is better than no Government at all.

So, Government is of God. It is not *separate* from God, but flows out *from* God, and is, therefore, accountable *to* God. Now it is true that Human Government is separate from the *Church*, Government is *not* the Church and is different from the Church and should not be *run* like the Church, but Government is *not* separate from God. And so all the authority that Government rightfully claims is merely *derivative* from what God has and what God claims.

Now please turn with me to **John 19**. Remember Pilate and Jesus. Jesus is on trial for His Life. And Pilate marvels because Jesus is not afraid. Jesus is not groveling at Pilate's feet begging for His Life. And this impresses Pilate, and in verse 10- Pilate says:

**John 19:10b**

**... You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?**

... and look what Jesus said in the very next verse:

**John 19:11b**

**... You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above**

And this means that Caesar and all of his lackeys, along with every Government of every nation on the planet, *do* have *some* degree of authority, but only to the degree that God has sovereignly *given* them that authority. And that means that Human Government is *not* supreme, but that God is supreme. And that means that *whatever* power or *whatever* authority or *whatever* rights that Human Government can claim, they can only claim that authority and those rights and power *derivatively*.

## **2. Human Government is Limited**

Again Jesus said in **Luke 20:25b**:

**And [render] to God the things that belong to God.**

And this implies that Caesar's sphere of authority is *limited*. Now please turn with me to **The Acts 5**. Here the Apostles are being told by the ruling authorities to quit teaching in Jerusalem about the Resurrection of Jesus. And beginning with verse 29, look what they say:

**The Acts 5:29b-32**

**29 ...We must obey God rather than men.**

**30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.**

**31 He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**

**32 And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is* the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.**

Now keep your finger there because we are going back to that in a moment. But we need to know that this *action* by the Apostles was just as inspired by God as their *words*. And these inspired words that *motivated* this inspired action on the part of the Apostles established a *second* eternal Principle regarding the believer and Human Government:

**Human Government is Subservient to God**

The Apostles said:

**We must obey God rather than men**

... and that is not merely the rebellious rant of unruly people. It is the reasoned conclusion of godly people who understand that Government is *not* supreme but that God is supreme. A statement like that flows out from an understanding of the Biblical Principle that says God has *superior* Authority, and the authority of all Human Government is *limited* and is *subservient* to God.

So no matter how powerful a man might be and no matter what kind of authority a Government might wield, there is *always* a limitation put on human power and governmental authority. Always. And that means that no human and no government is absolute. God is absolute, but not any man or any government.



And so, if any human or governmental authority commands us to do something that contradicts what God has commanded us to do, we say, *"No! You are not supreme, God is supreme, and you are limited!"* And then we are to knowingly and willingly *disobey* the command of that person or that Government, and we are to *continue* to obey God.

Now having said that, keep in mind that there will no doubt be repercussions when you do this. So now look at **The Acts 5:33**:

**But when they [the rulers] heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them [the Apostles].**

And in verses 34-39, just about the time the Government was going to kill the Apostles for disobeying their Command not to preach anymore about Jesus, a respected Jew named "Gamaliel" stood up, and God used him to spare the life of the Apostles. But then look what happened in verse 40:

#### **The Acts 5:40**

**They [the rulers] took his [Gamaliel's] advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them.**

Now here is an interesting development. Even though they had no biblical compulsion to obey the Government by disobeying God concerning preaching, the Apostles *were* breaking the law. And even though it was an *unjust* law, since the Government has been charged with enforcing the law, the Apostles were punished; they were flogged.

Now what is amazing is that the Apostles seemed to understand this dynamic because there is no record where the Apostles even protested the beating that they took from the rulers. Instead look what they did in **The Acts 5:41**:

**So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name.**

So on the one hand, the Apostles *refused* to obey the Government and stop preaching because they understood that Human Government was limited and that they needed to obey God rather than Man. But on

the other hand, these same men rejoiced at the beating they took for *not* obeying the Government and thought this was perfectly within the authority of the Government and in line with the persecution that Jesus had promised.

And then after they were beaten, the Apostles *continued* to function in direct violation of the Government and the law as illustrated by Dr. Luke in **The Acts 5:42**:

**And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.**

But notice that there was no bellyaching among the Apostles, no murmuring, no feeling sorry for themselves, no feeling that God had abandoned them, no protest marches on the Capitol or boycotting Roman stores. The Apostles acknowledged the supremacy of God and the limitation of Man by refusing to disobey God by obeying a sinful Command of the Government. But they also received persecution from that same Government with joy!

And all of this is shaped by the fact that God owns everything. So we do render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. **Romans 13** is all about why and how we are to submit to Human Government as God's people. But our submission to any government is always shaped by the fact that God owns everything. Now please turn with me to **1 Peter 2:13-17** says:

**13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,**

**14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.**

**15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.**

**16 *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.**

**17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.**

So we are told here to submit to every Human Institution. So we are to submit to things like Bosses at work and Parents at home and Elders at Church and Teachers at school and Policemen on the road.

And as faithful believers, the Apostle Peter, moved along by God the Holy Spirit, tells us to also submit to Human Government. And so we are to submit to Mayors and Governors and Presidents and even Kings.

But notice that our submission is not *absolute*. Notice that little phrase at the beginning of **1 Peter 2:13b**:

**... for the Lord's sake...**

So we don't just submit. Our submission to Human Institutions is not *blind*. It is not *absolute*. And that is because no Human Government is absolute. *All* Human Institutions and all Human Government are *limited*, and God alone is absolute. So we submit "for the Lord's sake" or for the Lord's Glory, or in accord with God's Reputation and for His Name's sake. So that little phrase, "for the Lord's sake," is a banner flying over all submission to all human authority.

So, generally speaking, Christians should be a humble and submissive people. We should keep the speed limit. If we are children, we should obey our parents. If we are church members, we should submit to our leaders. If we are wives, we should submit to our husbands. If we are employees, we should get in on time, and leave on time, and not fudge on what the employer expects of us. And in the Church, we are told to submit to one another. So without any doubt at all, Christians are a people who submit.

But we do not submit *absolutely*. We do not submit because any human authority claims us. They don't. We submit for the *Lord's* sake. So Government doesn't have absolute authority over us. Our Boss doesn't have absolute authority over us. Parents don't have absolute authority over their children, and Husbands don't have absolute authority over their wives. So if our bosses or our teachers or our parents or our husbands or our Government wants us to sin against God, we are to disobey them and obey God.

Therefore, if I render to Caesar the things that are Caesars, and Caesar asks, "*Why are you doing this?*" I will never say, "*Because you have final authority over my life.*" I will never say, "*Because you are God.*" I will *always* say, "*I am rendering allegiance to you, because I do it for the Lord's sake*".

So our submission to Caesar is real and it is far reaching, but it is never absolute. And as soon as Caesar claims to be God, as soon as Caesar steps in to assume *total* allegiance from us, we end our submission.

So as Blood bought, Spirit filled, Bible believing, Sin hating, Heaven bound bond-slaves of Jesus, our natural and normal disposition is to submit and obey. Christians are not rebels; we are submissive to all sorts of authority under God. Christians are law-abiding people. We pay our taxes. We drive the speed limit. We keep our grass cut. Our disposition is to comply.

But we never render to any Human Institution *absolute* allegiance. We never give unlimited, unconditional obedience to Man. We never say, *"I submit to you because you are my final authority."* We always submit *for the Lord's sake*, which turns our obedience and submission to human authority a glorious worship to God.

Now, William Tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the New Testament from Greek into English in 1536, because in the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century it was a capital crime to allow people to read the Word of God in their own language.

But Tyndale had been awakened to the glory of the Gospel of Christ by reading the Greek New Testament (especially **Romans**) for himself instead of reading it through the ceremonial, sacramental, legalistic, glasses of the Medieval Roman Catholic Church, and through the Latin mistranslations of the New Testament that, for example, displayed "penance" instead of "repentance".

So Tyndale broke the law and published the New Testament in English. And he was arrested by the Government and tried and found guilty of sedition. But while Tyndale was being persecuted, another guy by the name of Erasmus was also publishing religious books into English and was being praised.

But there were huge differences between Tyndale and Erasmus. Because Erasmus never saw the central Doctrines of the Gospel that set Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and Tyndale free with thousands of others. For all his biblical learning, there was a great omission in Erasmus' writing and thinking and believing.

For example- Erasmus never wrote anything substantial on Paul's Letter to the **Romans**.<sup>2</sup> Because **Romans** was the "dangerous" Book.

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<sup>2</sup> David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 162.

**Romans** was the Book that interpreted most fully and most unmistakably the meaning of Christ and His Life, Death, and Resurrection to justify sinners by faith alone. **Romans** was the Book that the ordinary people of England must never be allowed to read for themselves, even if the visible church at that time had to burn people at the stake to prevent it.

Because when the book of **Romans** was finally allowed to be read with clear eyes- the whole system of Roman Catholicism exploded, and the Reformation was born. The concept of Purgatory was annihilated, not because of some human logic, but through the clear meaning of sacred Scripture. The practice of Penance exploded. Indulgences exploded. Baptismal regeneration exploded. Papal infallibility, Eucharistic transubstantiation, Sacerdotalism, the Treasury of Merit, the Mediatorial Role of Mary, all of these religious fabrications were utterly demolished because one man understood that our allegiance to Human Government, even Church Government, was not absolute.

Tyndale understood that God was absolute, and so he went ahead and broke the law and gave the Holy Bible to the people in a language they could read and understand, and was burned at the stake for doing it by the very Government he defied.

And just before he died, Tyndale cried out, *"Lord, open the king of England's eyes!"* And just three years later God answered that prayer, and by 1539 every Church in England had a Bible in the pew that Tyndale had translated.

So, yes, we are to submit to Human Institutions. So we submit, "for the Lord's sake". And so, no, our submission is never *absolute*. God is absolute. And so, yes, we are to render to Caesar that which is Caesar's, but *only* because we are to render to God that which is God's.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.