



Wisdom's Toolbox – Part 8

Interacting with Earthly Governments

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Well, I would hope that every Christmas you get to recall and re-hear those amazing words of the messianic prophecy of the Old Testament some eight centuries before Christ. The familiar lines from Isaiah Chapter 9 verse 6, that say, "For to us a child is born, for to us a son is given." You remember the passage. It's often on Christmas cards, and then it gets into those four titles that show us the divine nature of the God-man, Jesus Christ. He's a "Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father," the one in charge, "and the Prince of Peace."

Well, stuck right between those two lines in Isaiah Chapter 9 verse 6 is this line, "And the government will be upon his shoulders." That doesn't seem quite so appropriate for Christmas, particularly because in the next verse, verse 7, it says, and "Of the increase of his government and of his peace there will be no end." Just an amazing statement. He'll be "Upon the throne of David ... to establish his kingdom, to establish it in righteousness and justice." That's just an amazing thing. And it will take place, it says, "From this time and forevermore."

I hope you recognize when you hear those great words that we often recite at Christmas that it just cannot possibly be packed into one advent, but that it has to remind us that Christ, yeah, he came and with those divine attributes he demonstrated his ability and his worth to be the redemptive sacrifice for our sins. But that line about the "government being on his shoulders." I mean, we can sing about crowning with many crowns and those kinds of things, but come on, that's not what's happening right now. And yet that is the hope of the second advent that the kingdom would be restored to Israel and the increase of that government it says "there will be no end," it will encircle the globe.

Well, that's an amazing promise and one that we should remember needs a second advent and we happen to be living between these two advents. In the first coming of Christ, Christ comes to establish our salvation, the second coming of Christ we will have that establishment of a government under the perfected and glorified administration of Christ. Living between those two you're going to have to deal with other governments though, other heads of state. You're going to have to deal with other people that are making laws and adjudicating those laws and deciding how much to tax you. And it won't be Christ. And the challenge is how do Christians who are giving their ultimate allegiance to Christ, this Christ who is the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," how am I supposed to live under a secular government? How do we deal with that? How do we navigate it? How do we traverse all the challenges of being loyal to a perfect Christ and yet living under some very imperfect government officials?

I suppose we could fill the syllabi of several classes across the street at the Compass Bible Institute to try and answer that question. How do we live as Christians in a non-Christian society under the authority of a non-Christian government? That is a challenge and there are



lots to say about it. But we also, as we study the book of Acts from time to time, run into passages that give us some insight. And we can, at least for a little while, as we study together on Sunday morning, pick up some wisdom and make some observations and come away with some things that I think might help us to navigate this just incrementally passage by passage.

And so this particular passage, you might remember we've been studying that Paul and Silas have been in prison, in prison for doing a good thing, very unjust imprisonment and incarceration of these two missionaries who we saw last time that God gets them out of all of that, he supplies them freedom, and then they lead this jailer to Christ. An amazing text and turn of events that no one really expected here, that here the jailer, the one in charge, the one enforcing this unjust law is now a convert and follower of Christ.

And we stopped there, a bit of a cliffhanger, and we're going to now look at what's happening next, starting in verse 35 of Acts Chapter 16. And that's where I want you to look to see if we can't learn a few things that address the question of how do we live in a non-Christian world, a non-Christian culture under non-Christian governments and yet we are Christians, we are followers of Christ. We exalt in our mind the regal understanding that Christ is the one to whom my loyalty ultimately lies. And I am a citizen of a kingdom that has yet to arrive. How do I live in this kingdom?

Paul is going to give us some insight into this as he responds to the government of Philippi, which of course, is the government of Rome. This is a Roman colony. So let me read this for you as Paul does some things that I think if you know the Apostle Paul and you've read the book of First Corinthians, you don't expect him to do in this passage. Paul isn't much for pounding the table and asserting and reminding people of his rights. And yet here we have one of these passages in the book of Acts, and we've got to understand why he's going to respond to the government that he lives under here, he's ministering under and living under in this particular season and chapter of his life and we're going to see what he does.

So let's follow along. I'll read it for you as best I can without too much commentary. No promises there. But let's start reading in verse 35. "But when it was day..." I can't get past that. (audience laughs) This is happening in a very condensed timeline. Right? Remember that? They were put in there at midnight. We have a time marker there. They were singing in stocks. They had been beaten. Their bodies were welted and bleeding. And yet they're singing praises to God. And now, this is the next day, we had this late night conversion, the earthquake, they were let out of their chains, the jailer was going to kill himself, he doesn't. They go and preach the gospel to him and his family. People get saved. They have a baptism service and now, "When it was day, the magistrates," and we met them, who are the people who were having them beaten to start with, "sent the police."

That's a word you may not expect in the Bible, but the word "police," if you take it back and you picture a guy in a black and white, you know, cruiser, that's not what's going on here, although they are similar. They're trying to, you know, enforce the law. The old Greek word is the one who carries the sticks, the one who carries the batons. Right? These are the ones



who would be doing the beatings. Right? The police are the ones who beat people and who have to enforce the laws and the orders of the magistrates. They were sent to tell Paul and Silas that they should go. They said to them go, "Let these men go.' And the jailer," verse 36, "reported the words to Paul." And you got to imagine there's a bit of a smile on his face. Right? Wouldn't you? You've just come to Christ and you get word that these guys are released. You'd be happy to tell Paul that.

"The magistrates have sent to let you go, therefore come out and go in peace." I mean, it just it's like a high-five and go and this is great and you're not incarcerated anymore. Which by the way, you might be thinking, well, weren't they not incarcerated after they had this preaching event and they led them to Christ and they baptized them and they had food set before them? Well, Paul and Silas, I mean, this certainly implies that they went back to jail, went back to jail that night, and they were submitting to the authorities who had put them in jail even though it was unjust. That's an amazing thing. More on that in a minute. But here we have Paul saying in verse 37, not, hey, that's great. I can't wait to get back to, you know, the Christians here in Philippi. He says, no, wait a minute. "They've beaten us publicly, uncondemned," we weren't tried, "men who are Roman citizens."

I have to remind you that me, Paul, this is his Roman name, Saul is his Hebrew name. Silas is a name Silvanus, it's his name that he's referred to elsewhere, a Roman name, even though they're Jews, right? They have Roman citizenship. And there were ways to prove that in the ancient world. And they had chips and things that they had that operated like passports. Doesn't matter. The point is, they're Roman citizens. And Paul says they "have thrown us into prison; And now do they throw us out secretly?"

Now, that's important. That helps us understand that the tone and the intent of what's going on in verse 35. Right? They're feeling like they've done this wrong thing. What motivated this? Who knows? Maybe they're sitting around thinking, "What did we just do? We sent these guys into prison and then the earthquake. Who knows what made..." That may have jogged their conscience, but it's like "they shouldn't be in jail. Hey, we're going to reverse this. Just go and let them out." Paul says, no, we're not going to go out secretly. He says, "No! Let them come themselves." We want the lawmakers here. You send the magistrates over and let them "take us out." So the baton carriers, verse 38, "The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid," and they should have been. They were afraid because "they heard that they were Roman citizens."

Now it was bad enough to condemn an uncondemned man, because the whole point was as Paul cast this demon out of this girl, this fortuneteller, remember. All her owners said was, you are taking away our income, but we're going to claim that you're teaching customs that aren't in keeping with the Roman culture. And so they had all these trumped-up charges, but none of them should have put them in prison. None of them should have had them beaten. And now they recognize, wow, they're Roman citizens. That's even worse.

I mean, what could happen to these magistrates having, you know, ordered them to be beaten and put them in stocks and they're Roman citizens? They didn't have a trial. And can



you look back in history and all your study Bibles should make it clear there are all kinds of historical precedents for what can happen to magistrates who abuse Roman citizens without a trial and we're not even in Rome? This is a Roman colony. Think of how much money Rome is putting into places like Philippi. All of that is at risk now, right? You've got a Roman citizen, a card-carrying Roman citizen and you've done this to them. I mean, who knows what could be at stake for the municipality and the money and the taxation that runs through Rome to places like this? This could be terrible. I mean, it could cause the death of these magistrates.

"So they came," verse 39, hat in hand to the prison, "and they apologized." Oh, I'm so sorry, you know, Dr. Paul and Dr. Silas. We shouldn't have done this. "And they took them out and they said, can you just leave now?" You got your apology, right? We're sorry. We shouldn't have done it. And just go. Verse 40. "So they went out of the prison..." and they headed to the border just as quickly as possible because they wanted to get out of the city, just like they told them. No. "They went back to Lydia's house." They get out of prison and they went to Lydia's house. She's the benefactor. She's the one who is underwriting a lot of what's going on in this missionary work in this town. She's the one hosting the church in her house. And then we got to call the brothers together, bottom of verse 40. "When they had seen the brothers," we got to get everybody together here, "they encouraged them and then they departed."

I just think there's something there for us to observe. But before we get to those observations, let's look at verses 35 and 36, remembering all that we are informed about this whole thing, "Let them go," and just make some observations about the reality of leaders, rulers, magistrates, political leaders, if you want to use our current terms, who have a problem that's just like these magistrates and it's a problem that we all really share. But it's a bigger problem when leaders and rulers and politicians and lawmakers have this problem, and that is that they're very interested in themselves. Let's just think that through. Right? They're concerned about their place, their role. They don't want to lose their jobs. They don't want to get in trouble.

Now, everyone feels that way, but they're really trying a self-preservation here, not to mention you're not going to get very far in Roman politics or any political structure even today without a lot of self-promotion, self-aggrandizement, self-adulation. Right? We certainly have a self-preservation, self-protection kind of self-advancing, to use a biblical word, a selfish ambition to move forward in this work, to even get to the place where they were. And then we certainly don't want to lose it.

Now, if we're going to think about what's the difference between this government that we've got to live under now and the government that's coming and Christ is going to rule on a throne in the kingdom of this earth that God is going to set up. Well, we know this about him. John 10 says he's a good shepherd. The Old Testament says that he's going to take up the lambs in his arms and carry them. Philippians Chapter 2 says that he lays aside the glory of heaven to serve the people who he's coming to serve. He's the Lord of all, but he's a servant, right? He cares. All of his decisions, all that he does is really for the good of his people. Oh, the glory of God. I get that. But if you want to talk about a difference between modern legislators, modern



politicians, modern people with authority in national politics, and you compare that to Christ, here's the thing you're going to see.

I mean, I guess in a word, in a three-letter word, the difference is "sin." Christ is sinless and all political leaders are sinners. And that sinfulness, I think, needs to be noted in terms of self-interest that relates to things like this: self-preservation. They're going to make decisions for their own political advancement, their own political protection. Number one, if you're taking notes, I think that's an observation worth making as silly and simple as it is. Number one, you need to "Understand the Politicians' Self-Interest." Now to ratchet all the way to the 21st century, I don't think that's a hard statement for you to swallow. Right? Our politicians have a self-interest, a self-interest.

And you say, "Well, yeah, everyone has a self-interest." You're right, everyone has a self-interest. Christians are fighting that self-interest because we're supposed to have the mind in us that was also in Christ Jesus and we got the Spirit of God living in us and we're fighting hard, Colossians 3:5, to put to death the deeds of the flesh. And so there's a lot of warfare going on as the Spirit's interest and my flesh's interest, they're constantly at war and I'm trying to be like Christ, I want to have the mind of Christ.

Now in the non-Christian world, that's not the pervasive battle. There's self-interest in every arena of life. But I want to tell you the difference between self-interest in another arena and self-interest in the politician's arena, in the rulers' and magistrates' arena. The magistrates have the club carriers. Do you follow me on this? Right? And the businessmen, no matter how powerful they might be, they don't. They may have money. Right? The head of Nike can say, "I'm going to make this shoe and I want everyone to wear it." Right? Okay. Well, I'm going to wear Adidas, so I'm not going to wear your Nikes. I mean, I can make a decision not to do it. They can have that intention. They can work hard, they can be self-promoting, self-advancing. They can even be about self-aggrandizement or self-interest and money. It can be all about them. They can put their name on the company, but in the end they can't enforce it.

The difference is when you become a leader, a political leader, when you got a lawmaker, a magistrate, when you become someone who has authority within a government and a nation, now all of a sudden you recognize they have enforcement. They have the ability to say, "You must. We're going to make this rule. We're going to make this policy and we're going to enforce it, starting with the fact that we can," as was rampant in the first century, "we're going to tax you." Right? Well, you just tell the IRS this year you don't want to be taxed. Oh, that's a nice thing to say. And you can even get ahead of it for a few years. But I mean, it will catch up to you, trust me. I know guys who have sat here and given me theological reasons why they're not going to pay taxes. Ethical reasons why they're not going to pay taxes. And they've ended up in federal prison. People that I've talked to on our patio in prison.

Why? Because here's the thing. The government has the authority to enforce it, right? They can say, you're going to do this and then you have to do it or you are going to be shot. And I mean that literally. Eventually you will be shot. You may just be in default. You may be under, you know, warning or provision. You may be cited. You may be fined. There may be stuff that



happens to you, some kind of, you know, the walls start to close in until they finally come to arrest you. And then if you say, "I'm not going to be arrested." Well, then you can fight it if you want. But they're going to bring guys with guns and then bigger guns and then tanks and eventually you will be shot, you understand. Even if you don't do something as simple as pay your taxes.

I mean, that's the ultimate extreme as you go, you know, 25 steps to the place that the government has the right to enforce. You could be a pot-smoking billionaire who makes electric cars. Right? And here's the thing. You can't force me to drive one, but the government could. Right? That's the difference. The power of the government has enforcement power. And that becomes a problem, a liability of selfishness. It's not the selfishness of the businessman, although a businessman should not be selfish. It's not the selfishness in the marketplace. It's not the selfishness in the arts. It's not the selfishness in any other category that's as hazardous as selfishness in political power. Are you following me on this? You get that, right? That's a problem. It's a big problem.

And it's a problem that we should see as a serious problem as we think about the fact that we have to live under a fallen government between now and the time that we reach the Kingdom of God. "Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God." That's what Paul said earlier in the book of Acts. And guess what his biggest problems are from the time he says that to the time we end the book of Acts. Government. Right? And that is that people and there are riots and I get it. There's stuff like we saw there was a riot in Philippi. But what ends up putting him in prison and taking away his freedom? It's the government. And so we need to say, wow, this is a problem. It's a big problem. And what we pray for is we pray for God's restraint.

Go with me to Romans Chapter 3 real quick. I just want to show you the default problem with all of us. And I say all of us, you may be a Christian here and you're regenerate and you're forgiven and you're indwelt with the Spirit. And now you're engaged in the fight of the Christian life. Great. Me too. We're in that. But the default nature of human beings is this and every non-Christian in every section and sector of society has the problem of not being righteous. And it doesn't matter, even if you have a heritage or some pedigree back to Abraham. And that's what Paul's trying to establish here, that sin is true of everyone.

Look at verse 9, Romans 3:9. "What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. We've already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin." Right? And then he starts quoting all of these Old Testament texts, starting with Psalm 14. "None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. They've all turned aside. Together they've become worthless. No one does good. Not even one." Now, that's the default position of human beings. And out of that, like Jesus said, "Out of the heart, the mouth speaks." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps," asps, the snakes, "is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

I just want to read all the way to verse 18 so that you can connect what I'm trying to say next. And that is that the ultimate restraint upon unbridled sin, which is the default desire, proclivity, penchant, you know, pattern of life, if I'm just unbridled, is that I'm going to live for myself. I'm going to do whatever it takes. I'm going to lie. I'm going to cheat. I'm going to steal. Right? If it were not for that even in the common grace of God, the businessman, the artist, the musician, the entrepreneur and the politician can start to have a little bit of that. Even non-Christians can have that last line, verse 18, "The fear of God."

Now, there is no natural inclination for you to fear God. But there is an ability for you to fear God, that God, by his grace, will give. Go back one chapter. Romans Chapter 2. In Romans Chapter 2, if you want a summary of what he's going to expand in Chapter 3, look at verse 8. He going to talk about the people who are lost and he summarizes it with this phrase, "But as for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth." So that's like the unbridled, the gas pedal is to the floor, and they're just doing what they want. What they're characterized by is, you know, self-seeking. "If it feels good do it." "You're number one." "Look out for number one." We hear all of this creeping through and yet people start to pull that back when they have something called the grace of God, the common grace of God. I'm talking about to non-Christians.

For instance, someone who had never read the Bible, drop down to verse 14. Romans 2:14, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law," they're not sitting under the teaching of the law, "by nature do what the law requires." Now, that goes against everything that I just read in Chapter 3, and it goes against the unbridled, self-seeking and disobedience of Chapter 8. I mean, there is a sense in which, yeah, that's the default and that's the proclivity, that's the penchant, that's the way people are designed to go. That's the bent of people. And yet here's the thing. There's something else that God does, even internally in people's lives, that can start to bridle that, muzzle that just a little bit, mitigated it.

Verse 14, "For when Gentiles, who do not have a law, by nature do what the law requires." Like their mouth isn't always filled with the poison of asps. Right? That they're not always self-seeking. That they are willing to actually do something for someone else's interest and not self-interest. Well, they do. "Well, they show that they're a law unto themselves, even though they don't have the law. They show that the work of the law," verse 15, "is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when ultimately, according to my gospel, when God judges the secrets of men's hearts."

So in a secret place within the heart of people, there is a conscience. And that conscience we would say is informed by wisdom. And that's really what conscience does. It says do the wise thing here. And the wise thing here is this isn't all about you. Don't make the cheapest tennis shoe that you can so that you can make the most money and be selfish. That doesn't... no that's not good. You shouldn't just go into this position of power and then just enjoy all the benefits of power. You shouldn't use it just for you and yourself and your friends, but you should have a conscience that should keep you from a meeting in L.A. saying things that you would never want anyone else to hear on a recording about how you're going to use your



political power for selfish reasons. Right? I don't know if you're up with the headlines, but the things like that, you would say, I hope you would have a conscience.

Conscience is making wise decisions and wisdom, if you know the book of Proverbs, "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God." Right? And that's the thing. Conscience is trying to remind you there is someone listening and it doesn't have to be some leaked recording a year later. It's God who is listening now and therefore I shouldn't do it. I shouldn't make compromises. I shouldn't do things that are against God's law that he's written on my own conscience. I know right and wrong intuitively. Maybe not every detail of the law, but I understand morality and I shouldn't do those things. And so we're praying for an informed conscience. But that means there must be the fear of God.

Remember when Abraham's bringing his wife into the Negeb and he gets to Gerar and there's a king there named Abimelech? And of course, Abraham is afraid because he's got a very attractive wife, and he's afraid that he's going to be killed for his wife. So he lies about his wife being his sister. And so he's going to get his life speared. Well, God steps in and God does what he does and ends up, you know, disciplining Abimelech. And Abimelech, you know, confronts Abraham, "So why did you do this?" And he said, "Because I perceived that there was no fear of God in this place." Right? In other words, you're just going to do whatever you want. You're the king. You're in charge. You're in power. And if you're in power and that power is just going to make you be the person who just is going to do whatever you want because you don't fear God. You don't fear accountability. All I care about is whether I have the power and I can do what I want.

So we're praying for this, the fear of God. And you know what? We got plenty of examples where God shows that the fear of God often prevails. Go with me to Proverbs 28. There are so many Proverbs on this. I mean, turn you to a few of these. Proverbs 28 verse 14. "Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always." Right? And everyone should fear the Lord. We as Christians fear him, you know, more in the sense that we understand that we have a Father we call on who judges each man's work impartially. But even the non-Christian can have that fear of God. It's not perfect. It's not as intense. But it informs their conscience through the wisdom that the fear of God brings. "Whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity."

So you've got two paths. You know, there's a spectrum, obviously, but at some point, leaders are going to have to decide how much they're going to think about accountability in something beyond whatever they can get away with. Now, here's the deal. "Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people." They have no recourse. They have no way to get back. They have no good attorneys, just to use modern examples of the expression of that. And there they are.

They're like a lion and a bear, and they do whatever they're told. When the lion walks in you get out of the way, right? When the bear comes in, if you're eating lunch, you step away from your lunch. You don't fight the bear. And the thing about power, if you harden your heart, you just exercise that power without the fear of God. "A ruler," verse 16, "who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days." And here's the



problem. What's the problem with the corruption of the political class in any government, particularly our government, because we hear about it in our headlines all the time, is this: we want what we want and if we don't fear God, then we'll get what we want by any means possible. We will abuse our power.

Now, that can happen within a corporation, but the corporation becomes a microcosm of society at large. Our government officials are having power and dictating what we should and shouldn't do, what we can and can't do and they have the arm of enforcement that we don't have. And therefore, I mean, we read passages like this, we say, wow, that's a problem. But what's the answer? Verse 14. "The fear of the Lord." Whatever you think God is, there has to be that sense of there is a conscience that pushes me back, that gives me restraint in the midst of my quest to live out my nature.

Proverbs 16 verse 12. Here's a passage that, I don't know, gives you some hope, I suppose. It starts without it in verse 12. But let's go through verse 19. Proverbs 16:12. "It's an abomination to kings to do evil." You'd agree with that, right? But here's the thing. "The throne is established by righteousness." Now, don't think about Sunday school and Bible verses, but doing right, which of course, is found in the Bible and you learn that in Sunday school. But you cannot go to Sunday school and still have the right decisions be made. And we can cheer it on that you made a right decision. And a king can do that. Matter of fact, when a king has that perspective and says, "I have authority over people and I want to do what is right." Well, then, when righteous lips speak they like it. "Righteous lips are a delight of a king." A good kind of king, not an evil king. "And he loves him who speaks what is right." I mean, and that's what we pray for. We want people to hear reasonable arguments and respond.

"Now, a king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it." And that's the goal. We want to. We'd like to. And that's the wisdom, by the way, we're going to see unfold in our passage. Right now, Paul and Silas are on the receiving end of the king's wrath, at least the king of the place where they're staying, the magistrates of Philippi. "In the light of the king's face there is life." Right? Even when the magistrates decide we've done wrong, I mean, I can get out of jail. They're not going to kill me. "And his favor's like the clouds that bring spring rain." And again, that makes us wonder, why didn't Paul just take the free pass, the get out of jail free card and go? More on that in a minute.

"How much better to get wisdom than gold" then? Which, by the way, is what Paul is going to put on display in Acts 16. "To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver." Right? Better to be wise than rich when it comes to even dealing with unrighteous governments. "The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life," which is true for us as citizens and it's true for our government. Here's the problem. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before the fall." Now, who's more likely to be prideful, the poor man or the official who has the power? And that's the particular temptation of political leadership. You have real power. Enforcement power. You have power to tax and confiscate wealth. You have a power to make laws. You have a power to enforce laws. You can sign something in Sacramento and then put, you know, tampon dispensers in the boy's bathrooms



in elementary schools in Orange County. Right? If anyone's tracking life in Orange County right now. Right?

Wow! You have that power. You have the power to do those things. Well, you pridefully insist on your folly and your lack of fear of God, your asinine, ridiculous, just irrational thinking. Right? Well, then that all comes before a fall, and it's going to happen. "Better to be of a lowly spirit," and that comes through the fear of God, by the way, "with the poor than to divide the spoils with the proud." You can see the special temptations of money. All of our senators, they're all rolling in the dough. And a lot of times it comes through leveraging their power to make money or even in, you know, insider trading. I mean, we can see all these things in the headlines, of course, and you can see the special temptation you would have when you have power, legislative power, enforcement power.

So it's a special problem that we have here. It's a difficult problem. And yet we understand that God has arranged leadership the way that he has. He's put us under leaders. Did you read the Daily Bible Reading this morning by the way? No. Okay. Well, you should. Our Old Testament reading started in Jeremiah 27. And in Jeremiah 27, it should have... well, you hadn't heard the sermon yet, but it should bring up, if you do it this afternoon, themes that we're teaching on here. The false prophet is a part of the discussion. First Jeremiah talks about the fact that put this yoke over your shoulders and the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, he's not a paragon of righteousness. He's going to put up a big statue in the plain of Shinar and have people bow down to it. Remember King Nebuchadnezzar? He's not a godly man.

But he says, "You are going to serve him." You're going to serve Nebuchadnezzar. Here's what God calls him in the passage, "My servant." Jeremiah 27. What? Yeah, well, the false prophet comes and goes, "No, no, no. We're not going to live under that." Matter of fact, he tries to mitigate it because already we see this looming. But he says two years. That's it. Two years he'll reign. But after that, we're not seventy years, that thing that Jeremiah said yesterday, that isn't going to happen. Right? And Jeremiah goes, "Well, I wish that were true, but it isn't true." I'm paraphrasing the Old Testament Daily Bible Reading this morning.

The point, though, is that God says you will serve him. As a matter of fact, take off because the false prophet broke the yoke of wood that Jeremiah had as this illustration in his sermon. And he said, "Great, now that you've done that, just remember the yoke is going to be replaced with the yoke of iron." You're not getting out of this. You're going away to captivity for 70 years and you're going to serve Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar is not going to last long into the 70 years. We're going to turn to Persia, Medo-Persia and Cyrus and Artaxerxes, and the rest.

But the point is, how in the world do we have this bad government? You mean the people of God who do not want the bad government to rule over them, you've just said the bad governors are going to rule over you. They're not godly and they don't want what's right. They don't love righteousness and they don't fear God. And you're saying now we have to serve them? Yes. All the way down, Romans 13, to our taxes. We have to pay taxes to them.



Listen, if you are 10 years old and your parents hire a 14-year-old babysitter and she shows up smacking her bubblegum and watching her stuff on her, you know, Instagram and TikTok and she sits on the couch. She's not doing anything that you know mom and dad would expect or want or told her to do. Right? You're going to think... you'll become, you know, quickly, you know, a guy who thinks, "I don't need babysitters." Right? I can see past the unrighteousness of my babysitter and I shouldn't have this babysitter. But in the end, you have to weigh this: that dad has put a babysitter in charge and there's authority that has been invested in her. And so you're going to have to be very careful about how to deal with and navigate and interface with this babysitter, because in one sense, this is the babysitter that's there. You cannot live with this autonomous idea that you don't need this.

As a matter of fact, you disobey and watch, like the people who have said, you know, "I don't want to pay taxes. My taxes are going to sinful things and abortion and, you know, the arts that are ridiculous and PBS that's insane. And I'm just not going to pay my taxes." Well, eventually the sword comes down and you recognize that these are the things that God has ordained. And part of it that we learn in Jeremiah 27 and 28 is that it is God's judgment upon God's people. And I don't want to harsh you out, just like no one wanted to harsh out, you know, the people of Israel in Jeremiah's day. But the truth is God decides to put leaders in positions of power. And even if they're bubblegum-smacking TikTok gals who sit on the couch and do nothing good as a leader, they have nothing but self-interest as their disposition. God ultimately says you still have a responsibility here under the authority that has been granted to the babysitter. That's hard. Really hard.

But just like Jeremiah 27 and 28 say God will judge. Matter of fact, when he says Nebuchadnezzar is my servant and you must serve him. He's serving my purpose. I understand we don't like what we have in terms of government, because the corruption of the power of government, even in our Western, you know, American democracy, quote unquote, it's bad and you say I don't like it. Well, you have to live under it. And that certainly is the problem and the tension that we have when we read passages like Romans 13. I don't have time to go into that and unpack it, but I did a five- or six-part series on it, which you can find at least some of the key sermons on the back of your worksheet. You should explore that because we have to learn to live, as I said in that sermon series, as ex-patriots under Nebuchadnezzar's reign, depending on, you know, who's leading in our country and what, you know, party is in power or however you view your political issues.

Which, by the way, can I step out of that for a minute? This sermon is a mess, I understand that, but spaghetti is good sometimes. So here, let me just say this. Do you understand, because I'm going to be accused of this. I just know it. This is just like equal opportunity offender in this sermon, I assure you. But here's the thing, right? You say, well, he's, you know, trying to talk about his party and doing it. Listen, I don't give a rip about the parties. I don't. Here's the deal. I care about God and his truth. And in God's truth, I'm going to build my political concepts based on biblical truth. Then I'm going to look around and say, "Is there any viable group of people who might possibly align with this better than someone else?" That's the only concern I have.



I think I put Grudem's book on the back, "Politics According to the Bible." That's where we start. And that's the premise and thesis of the book. Let's start with what the Bible says. And where does that go in terms of concepts of taxes or personal property or whatever it might be in political debate? And then that's all we care about because we know that we live under the Lordship of Christ and Christ has a set of principles and ideals and ethical boundaries that I'm trying to promote, and that's what I'm supposed to live for. And so when I look at a political party or I look at options of who I'm supposed to vote for, I'm just looking for who's going to align with what I am going to give my life to support and to back. It gets into our next section of Acts 16. There's so much more that could be said on this. I said it could fill the syllabi of plenty of classes at the Compass Bible Institute.

But back to Acts Chapter 16. Would you look with me at verse 37? Acts 16:37, Paul does something we don't expect. He says, "No, I'm not going to leave. If you want me to leave, you're going to have to come and get me out. And I don't want the club carriers. I want the lawmakers, bring the magistrates out." Paul said, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men throwing us in prison." Why have you done all this, right? You've done wrong here and I'm calling you out on the wrong. You need to come hat-in-hand and apologize. That just doesn't sound like Paul.

I talk about First Corinthians, First Corinthians 9, right? He talks often about rights that he's not interested in asserting his rights. Right? All he cares about is Christ. So I know that the principle of Christ being supreme in his heart and in his life, this has to relate to that. And it does as we move to the bottom of the passage. He cares about the church in Lydia's house. He cares about the Kingdom of God. He cares about the advancement of the gospel. And here's the deal. He was the visible representative of the gospel, and now he's been thrown in jail and now they're going to say, "Just leave. Can you just leave?" And no one would know what had happened. He's concerned about the reputation of the church.

He's concerned about the freedom of the church, which, by the way, is the whole point of what we should care about as citizens living under any government. And that's the concern. We want the government to do right. As a matter of fact, here's a strong word I put on the outline. Number two, you ought to insist upon it. Now there's wisdom in when and how you insist upon it. But number two, you need to "Insist the Government Do Right." Insist the government do right. That's what Christians should be all about. I want to insist that you, as my leaders, do the right thing.

Now there's a time and a place to talk to the 14-year-old babysitter about that's not what Dad wants you to do. There's a time and a place for that. Paul could have objected anywhere along the process here. Right? I know it's been a short period of time with the riot and then the beating and the arrest and incarceration. But he could have been protesting at midnight in the prison, right? Instead, no, he's singing praises to God with Silas. So this was the right time for him as kind of like the tumblers in a combination aligned, it was like here is the wisdom of doing something that allows me to speak up for what is right. And I know the purpose. And the purpose is because the church should be free to do what it's doing.



I was out doing evangelism, he says, by the riverside outside of Philippi. I was doing things that were good and godly that God has commissioned us to do, which was way more important than anything you would commission us to do. And I'm doing God's work. And now you want to act like what you did in shutting me down publicly in the middle of the riot, you're going to somehow quietly make that go away? No. Everyone needs to know that you did wrong. You need to make this right. You should do the right thing because the church is the ultimate concern. And the freedom for us to obey God is the ultimate concern because God is the one we should be concerned about.

So how do I insist that the government do right? It starts with this. And I know there are two extremes in our church, in every church. Some of you want us to be so politically active, and I said something that perhaps you took out of context already. We should be all about insisting that the government do right. When I say that, I'm talking about in my relationship with my government. I'm not talking about my life. Right? Not that you can't be a Christian and be a full-time politician. You can be. But you better be a good one who fears God. But I'm saying we as a church and as Christians, we don't want to fall into that category. We don't want to fall into that ditch. And the problem with the equal opportunity offense in this sermon is there are other people on the other side don't like any... Matter of fact, you're not going to like me. You may send me an email. "I don't like it when you when you preach about politics. I don't like it. You shouldn't do it. I'm here to learn about the Bible and God and I don't want to hear about politics. And you're talking about politics."

Both of those are wrong. Right? We are not here as a church to be an activist church. And there are plenty of those that try to do nothing but, you know, affect politics. And then there are churches that say we never want to even make you think about it. It would be sin for you not to be aware of what's going on in the political world. It would be sin. And it'd be sin for you to say, "I'm going to supplant my passion for what God's priorities are to say I'm going to make the passion in my small group, in our church, in any area within our church's sub-congregation focused on this stuff. I just want to talk about this." Right? So we got to stay out of those two ditches. Okay?

And here's one reason, let me talk to you who just don't want any of this. Matter of fact, I had him on the patio last night. "I don't like it, it is negative. I don't want to hear it. I don't want to keep up with the news. I don't want to hear what's going on in Washington, DC. I don't want to hear about the senators. I don't want to hear about all that. It's just terrible. Don't want to hear it. It's negative." Okay, let me try and gently, pastorally correct you in that. Turn with me to First Timothy Chapter 2. First Timothy Chapter 2. If you have that perspective, as I put it to some that I asked to pray for this sermon, if I put my head in the sand and say, "I'm just going to do nothing but spend my time thinking about the coming of the child that is born to us. 'The Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting God, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' I just want to focus on that."

Okay. Then I guarantee you will never obey this passage, because if you don't even know what's going on in the Supreme Court, if you don't know what's going on in Sacramento, if you



don't know what's going on with, you know, the supervisors in Orange County or you don't even know who's running for, you know, the Aliso Viejo two open spots on the city council, I guarantee you will never do this. And this passage says you should be praying for them. Okay? And I'd like to look at your prayer list real quick, because soon as we become Christians our prayer list, we put our self on there, obviously, we put our families on there, we put our friends on there.

But the Bible says this: First Timothy Chapter 2 verse 1. "First of all," he says, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for..." your friends and family. Highlight that part, "friends and family." What does it say interactive 9:00 crowd? "All people." Okay, "Well, I don't have that much time to pray." Well, then let me just at least tell you what I'm talking about, Paul says. I'm talking about that your prayers include things like this: "kings and all those in high positions." Okay. And I'm thinking right there, there should be conviction for those of you who don't want to hear the news. Right? You don't even know who's on the Supreme Court or if you can't name the vice president or something, which I can't believe that's possible. But perhaps. You can watch YouTube and see people that don't even know anything.

We should know these things because it should burden us. And I know it's negative news, but it's going to lead us to be obedient to this passage. You say, "Well, why do I want to pray for those people? I got plenty of people on my prayer list?" "That we," here's the purpose clause, middle of verse 2, "may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." We think, "Oh, that's good. I can picture that. I just want to make sure that I have a beautiful, tranquil life." That's not the point. The point here is unmolested from government. Why? For the purpose of, look at this, "It's a good, and pleasing thing in the sight of our God and Savior, who desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

Built in this, by the way, is the American experiment of freedom of our speech and of the press and of religion. Why? Because we want to be unmolested from the government to do that. That's my ultimate desire. "I desire all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." That's your passion and my passion, whether you're a plumber, an architect or a politician. Right? That's the goal. Now, it doesn't mean that you're inscribing Bible verses right on the drywall if you're, you know, a drywall guy. And it doesn't mean that you're just quoting Bible verses in every city council meeting that you're in. I'm not saying that, but I am saying this is our goal. And the means by which we do whatever we do to make a living or whatever we're doing with our spare Tuesday night, I'm telling you, this is the concern because that's all that matters 100 years from now. That is what matters, that people come to the knowledge of the truth, that they get saved.

And so I want to be unmolested from the government and that's what freedom in America was supposed to be all about. I don't want molestation for that. You stay out of our business. We're not concerned with you starting a state church or telling us what to preach or what to believe or how long to preach or what kind of book we're supposed to read from when we preach. That's not your goal. Your goal is to stay out of our business and therefore we're going to pray for you. And the only way they're going to stay out of our business is if they fear



God and have wisdom, a wisdom that informs their conscience. And that's where I am saying we've got to care about this enough to at least start by praying for it.

Paul's going to inject some wisdom into the conversation here with the magistrates. "You blew it. You did wrong." There are opportunities that that may happen for you. Here's one that we get to have in our weird thing that we have that Paul would have scratched his head at. We get to vote. Senators in Rome got to vote, right? Based on power and relationships you got into the Senate. But in our day people campaign, they put their signs up everywhere and they say, vote for me and you get an opportunity to vote. And every single person in this room that's old enough to vote should be voting, because that's our opportunity to take this to the next step, to say what we want are people who have some fear of God. And I'm going to say I want them to have an informed conscience that will allow them not to molest us and get in our way to do what we're called to do. And there are plenty people who don't want that. We are completely in a whole culture that's trying to shut down what we're doing. You understand that?

You hear the news. Did you hear yesterday's headlines? Even about charities that now in the corporate world you can't give to just because they're Christian charities. Right? I mean, that's just... it's every day. And you say, "Well, that's why I don't listen to the news." You should listen to news so you will pray for people in high positions, right? Because God can use even pot-smoking billionaires who make, you know, cars and launch rockets to say, well, wait a minute, we should have freedom to say what we want to say. Now, I don't know if he's going to do it, but I mean that's a good thing. I mean, that's a helpful thing. And I should be praying for people in high positions in that case, even when we can help accomplish the goals of us living a life that's a "quiet life, peaceful life, dignified in every way." And what are we? Emissaries of "people getting saved and coming to the knowledge of the truth."

You should be praying for these people. That's why you should know about these people. That's why you should know what's going on. You should know what's going on. You should be informed. And then when you get a chance to say, "Hey, who should be on the city council here in our town and there are two open seats and you recognize I should learn something about the people who are going for that and figure out whether or not they have the right perspective on what God cares about as it relates to the church being the church. That's the starter. And if they have enough fear of God to know they shouldn't do ridiculous things that assault God and the image of God and human life. I mean, it doesn't take long for you to figure out who you should be voting for.

And guess what? If every Bible-believing Christian cared enough to say, "We care about God and his word and they start voting, if we had a high participation in that, maybe we wouldn't have Nebuchadnezzar ruling over us. And all I'm saying is God is expecting us to take things seriously. And it starts with your prayer life and where's your prayer life. And then when you have opportunities to speak and inject truth, as Paul does here in this passage, here's what he does. "Hey, we're going to insist that you do the right thing." And there are times you should be writing letters. There are times you should be confronting. I think of Tertullian telling the emperor in the second century, you need to do the right thing.



And I love the way, and I think I wrote down, Tertullian talks about the fact that you need to remember this and he's really speaking to his insiders here. He says to Christians, you know, the emperor gets his scepter from where he first got his humanity. He gets his power from where he got his breath of life. Right? And at any point, God could do what he did do with Nebuchadnezzar, and that is touch his brain, make him go insane, and then restore his sanity. And when he comes to his senses, he can say, "Wow, you're right, I'm nothing. God is everything. And I better be more humble than I was." Is Nebuchadnezzar going to be, you know, at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. I don't know. I don't think so. But the reality is that human leaders can have a fear of God's reality and encounter that can help to do some things in life that are important.

Justin Martyr. The same thing, "We forewarn you," he says to the emperor, "you're not going to escape the coming judgment of God if you continue in your injustice." And I think sometimes it's important to say those things. I'm not opposed to you writing letters, but that should not be what you're doing is writing letters to congressmen and senators all day long and never sharing the gospel. Right? You should care because all of the thing about the government should be us insisting they do right so we can do the most important thing of all. And that is to get people to come to the knowledge of the truth and to be saved.

I mean, there's more I can say on that and I should say on that. Yeah. And even in your letter-writing, Proverbs 29:26, I jotted down, "Many seek the face of a ruler," I hope he reads this, I hope she reads this, I hope it makes a difference, "but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice." Right? In the end, all of this is just part of a means to an end. It's ultimately God who does these things. Or Proverbs 21:1. Right? "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." So I know that ultimately my prayer life is more important than my letter writing campaign. But we should have a concern and we should have an opportunity when the opportunity is granted to us to insist that the government do right.

When we even have our table out there. Again, I've had criticism about that. "I can't believe you for a table out there for voter registration." I have this because you should vote. Right? And I didn't lean in with that kind of intensity in the response to the guy who said that. But I'm thinking there are plenty of people who don't like that even. And the QR code for a voter guide. You should know these things. You should do these things, and everyone should be involved in the process.

"Are we going to put flags up on the platform next week?" No, I'm just telling you, you understand the balance in this, right? We could spend all of our time talking about politics every single week. That is certainly not the goal, nor the calling of this church. Matter of fact, I think you should though listen more to the shepherd who cares for your soul along with the rest of the pastoral team here maybe more than the political pundit that you like to listen to so much. I'm just saying, you need to get your priorities where they should be in Christ. And wow, that was a power move there to say that.



Verse 40, and I read it with enough to emphasize that you already know where we're going with this. Verse 40, "They went out of the prison," this is Acts 16:40, "and visited Lydia," right? What were they told, bottom of verse 39? "Go, leave the city." They replied, "Nah, I'm going to Lydia's house first." "And when they had seen the brothers." How long did that take? I don't know. "They encouraged them." Well, Paul, you know, we're going to learn Eutychus falling out, you know, upper rooms, Paul preaches for a long time. I mean, this took a long time. "And he departed."

He's going to do it. But he's got first things first. And the first things first is "even the thing I did with you, government magistrates, I only did it because I care about the church. I care about the truth that the church is commissioned to bring to your culture and your society. It's supposed to be salt and light, and it's bringing the ultimate light of salvation to you. So I care, you know, that's the whole reason I didn't want to go quietly. But now I'm going to show you that by my priority, I'm going to deal with the church. So I'm really not going to do what you say right now. I'll get to it. But here's the deal. I'm going to go deal with the church."

It's the priority of knowing where God's priorities lie. It's us being passionate about saying, God, what are you passionate about and what do you care about? Because in the end, as we learned in Acts Chapter 5, when it comes down to it, even a non-Christian, if they really believe that we believe what we say we believe. Did you follow that sentence? If a government non-Christian official believes that we really believe what we say we believe, then we can say what the Apostles said and Peter said in Acts 5, does it make any sense to you that we would obey you instead of God?

I mean, to quote again, you know, Tertullian, everything that you have has come from God. I care ultimately about him. So my determination, my resolve, number three, is to "Determine to Please the King of Kings," and the King of presidents and the King of city council members and the King of everybody who has any authority in this culture or in this nation. I care about God the most, and that is who I'm going to obey. And that's why we have in this last season, which has tested a lot of churches, we've disobeyed our governing authorities because, you know, ultimately it's about God's priorities. Now it's done without protesting and signs and lawsuits. And Paul, he says, I'm going to do what I'm going to do, because this is religiously important. This is spiritually important. And your political mandate is going to have to wait. And so Paul doesn't immediately obey. But he does get out of town. But the point is, he knows where his ultimate supreme authority lies, and it lies with God. And he's going to do what God has said.

By the way, just one little insight on this. Paul and Silas "they encouraged them and departed." Who would need encouragement at this point, I'm thinking? Right? I mean, think about it as they hobble in after being beaten. This is a very quick turnaround of time. It's a compressed timeline. They're in pain. I mean, I'm sure this is a time when you want to put your arms around Paul and Silas, the part of them that didn't hurt, and say, "Dude, we want to sit down and encourage you. You've been through so much." And here he is, because this is what godly leadership is about. It's about them serving the people. And talk about the example of following in the footsteps of the King of kings who lays down his life and his



authority and his majesty and the independent exercise of his divine attributes, he lays all that aside because he cares and serves.

Even the King of kings on the last night before his betrayal he's there washing their feet. Jesus says, "You see how I put your interests above my own?" That's the point. "Have this mind in yourselves that was also in Christ Jesus." That picture of service and encouragement it's great. I mean, he's out of gas. He needs a break. He needs rest. He needs to put his feet up and he's there saying, "I'm going to encourage you guys. It's time for me to do that." That's the kind of stuff that pleases the King of kings, not self-interest, not self-promotion, not self-adoration, not self-aggrandizement. It's about us doing what Christ did. And even the message of the gospel is the service, the ultimate service, of the lost society.

But please remember, speaking of Philippians 2, how does it end? "And God gave him a name, which was above every name, so at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth." The winners, the losers and the people who are alive right now. Right? All of them. "And every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," boss, King, "to the glory of God, the Father." Every single power. Nebuchadnezzar, Shalmaneser the Third, Pharaoh. Right? Sennacherib, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, all of them. Herod. Herod Antipas, right? Herod Agrippa. Herod Agrippa the Second, every leader all the way to Titus who comes in and destroys Jerusalem. All of them are going to bow, including everybody in D.C. right now. "Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess."

One last passage. Let me close with this. Go to Revelation, please, Chapter 17. Go to the very end of that. It's a trippy part of the Bible. I get it. But we're looking forward. I'm a futurist. I believe in the future of what's going to happen in Chapters 6 through 19 of Revelation. And here we are near the end of this picture before Christ comes back. And as all this is breaking loose, here is this description of a woman who is riding a beast. So weird, right? But take a look at it. Revelation Chapter 17. After all this, she's called a prostitute. Look at verse 18 the very last verse of Chapter 17. "The woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth." That's an interesting thing. It's all apocalyptic literature, but I think the definition is pretty clear here, right? We've got an authoritative woman who's now called a city, and that city is about to get a name. She's about to get a name, Babylon. And Babylon, this spirit of this woman, this adulterer, this prostitute, that's how she's pictured in this apocalyptic, symbolic passage, she has dominion over the kings of the earth.

Chapter 18 verse 1. "After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority." How much? Well, it was like fireworks. Like a flare. "The earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, 'Fallen, fallen,' is this woman who is riding all these political leaders in the world. "She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich." That's what happens when you abuse power and don't fear God. You all use it for self-advancement, self-aggrandizement, self-interest. "The merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.' And then I heard another voice from



heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people.'" Finally, here we are, this sense of hey Christians, people who follow Christ. Right? Don't be like that. Paul's not going to be like that, "'Lest you take part in her sins.'" Right?

We live under a government. We're not a part of that government. We're ex-patriots. We live for another kingdom, not for the woman who rides the beast, not for the woman that's there riding over the political leaders of the world. "'Lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she has mixed. As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a measure of the torment of mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen.' Pride comes before destruction. 'I am no widow, and mourning I will never see.'" 'For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord who has judged her.' And the kings of the earth." What are they doing now? Right? The leaders who have fought God, fought the people of God, "'committed sexual immorality, they lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. They will stand far off, in fear of her torment and they say, 'Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour, your judgment has come.'"

You may be thinking, "Well, I was okay with you just saying, 'every knee will bow, every tongue will confess.'" I understand. But this is an unpacking of all of that. Yeah. Is it going to be hard? Go down to the bottom. I won't read the rest of it and you can thank me later. But go to verse 24. Right? The problem with this system is in her, verse 24 Chapter 18, "In her was found the blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of all who had been slain on the earth."

We're in a fight. I understand that. We're going to chafe against political power. Always will. We had a respite here and it hasn't been complete. But it's been a pretty good season, a pretty good run for your grandparents and great grandparents and great-great grandparents that they've been in America. But right now, we continue to have this animosity ramped up. And all I'm saying is that we need to understand where they're coming from as sinful people that ultimately are a part of this system. But we insist nevertheless and by God's grace, we have reprieve through common grace and the fear of God at times. We have things work out for the good of the Church, and that should be your concern.

The good of the Church and the priorities of what the Church is about, which is seeing people saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. I know there's a lot there we couldn't get to, but I hope, like John Knox, who was gutsy enough to go up before Mary Queen of Scots. He was jealous for the progress of what was happening, the revival in Scotland. He has so many famous addresses to the Queen. But one little line, "Madam, I speak," he says, "in the presence of God." It's just a helpful. If you are going to sit there and say something to the gum-smacking 14-year-old, TikTok-watching babysitter. Right? Just remember, there are cameras and microphones everywhere and dad's watching. There's a time for that. I get that. And it's a small time for that. A small avenue of that is us doing our responsibility as citizens of this country. But let's do what we can. And remember how important these issues are. We'll



have to deal with them forever. We won't talk about them every week. But I trust this has been somewhat helpful.

Pray with me. God, we sang about it earlier. We should reprise that refrain that we know that you are a king, that we in our hearts crown and we live for loyalty, ultimately to you, we're expatriots in this particular society. We understand the difficulties we're going to have. We see things that make us groan and lament over what's happening in our country and other countries around the world. But God, we will continue when we have a voice and we have opportunity to insist that the governors do right. That governments do right.

And God, we do all of that because ultimately as we pray for them, as we seek to see reform, as we seek to push things forward politically, it's only for the purpose of pushing forward the gospel. So God, you are the King. We crown you in our hearts. We want to live in the presence of that awareness. And God, we also want to speak whenever we do to anyone, both in evangelism and in just speaking to the powers that be in our country we speak in the presence of God like John Knox. Give us the power and give us the vitality and the zeal even of a John Knox as we seek to advance the gospel, because that's what it was all about for him. That's what it's all about for us.

In Jesus name. Amen.