

Directing Government to its Duty

FEBRUARY 14, 2021

[GraceLife Church, Edmonton](#)

Speaker: James Coates

Key Passage: Romans 13:1-4

Well, thank you so much, Joe and team, for leading us in song this morning so faithfully and powerfully.

It is a rich, rich joy and pleasure to bring to you the Word of God this morning. And obviously, we have been in John, Chapter 10, working through John's Gospel. And there is a portion at the end of John 10, that we still have not yet covered but as I anticipated this moment, I-I felt something else was needed. And I was not entirely sure what that was. But as the week progressed, it began to kind of crystallize and here we are.

So we are going to be a little bit off the map today, not in John. And I have got a bit of an introduction here to kind of set the table a little bit.

I think we can say this, that this particular time in history has exposed some deficiencies in the broader Evangelical Church. For one, it has exposed a deficient ecclesiology. Ecclesiology is the study of the doctrines of the church and encompasses everything from what the church is to the essential elements of worship. And what is apparent, at least to me, is that the church today has a very low ecclesiology; where virtual church is not only fine, it is a wonderful evolution of things.

And related to that, is two: a deficient approach to scripture. That unless scripture explicitly states certain things, there is total freedom on how we fulfill its commands. And so, unless scripture states, "Thou shalt meet on Sunday, in one gathering, in person, ensuring that all interaction takes place within six feet of the other person, without a mask, and with some kind of physical expression of affection, whether it be a hug or a handshake," we are off the hook.

And it typically goes like this: scripture does not explicitly say, and this is coming from pastors, from the overseers of the corporate gathering, scripture does not explicitly say, and so the government is not commanding us to sin, and therefore we must obey. And what that reveals, is a deficient approach to scripture. And ironically, it might even betray a legalistic approach to scripture, that unless scripture explicitly says something, I am under no obligation to do it.

So why is that deficient? Because it fails to recognize that the God intended implications of a passage are binding. It does not have to be explicitly said. As students of scripture, we are under obligation to heed its implications, and that requires a much more careful and thoughtful reading of scripture. You see, it's too much to ask that scripture would speak explicitly to our current situation. Now, it does speak to our current situation, both implicitly and explicitly. But given the unique setting we find ourselves in, much is addressed by way of implication and that requires, again, an intensely careful and thoughtful reading of scripture.

Third, I believe our circumstances have exposed a deficient theology of persecution. We seem to have an incredibly narrow and historically ignorant view of what persecution actually is. We seem to think persecution is only persecution when it is directed exclusively at the church. And that unless the church is being persecuted, it must obey government.

Now, developing a robust theology of persecution is beyond the scope of what I intend to do today, but I think we need to understand that persecution often results from doing what the state forbids; that obedience to Christ is the catalyst for persecution. And so you do not wait to be persecuted to obey Christ, it is your obedience to Christ that results in persecution.

You see, some give the impression that if we were being persecuted, then only then would it be right for us to gather, which is a strange position, especially since all you need to do is obey the government, comply with government, to avoid persecution. If you comply with the government, you may never be persecuted.

And really what that does, to say that only if we are being persecuted are we to gather as we currently are, you are basically saying that it is right to gather. Implicitly, you are saying it is right to gather, that- that according to the Word of God, if persecution were on the church, then we would have an obligation to gather. So, you are admitting that it is right to gather.

I think that is amazing because now if you say, "Well, we are not going to gather because we are not being persecuted." You are not doing that at a biblical conviction at this point in time, you are doing that at some kind of pragmatism to uphold your-your testimony in the world, which I hope is not seeking the approval of men or avoiding the disapproval of men.

But let me just say this: whether or not we are being persecuted makes absolutely no difference to me. I do not think that I could care any less about whether or not this meets the definition of persecution, that does not even factor into the equation for me. That is not the basis upon which I am doing anything. I am doing what I am doing in obedience to Christ. I am quite content to let the Lord Jesus Christ Himself decide whether or not this is persecution. He promises that those who are persecuted for His namesake will be blessed. He is the one that blesses, and I am content to leave that in His court. My responsibility is to obey Christ. Correct?

Amen.

It does not matter whether this is persecution or not, that is irrelevant -- IRRELEVANT. It does not even factor into the equation. And connected to this deficient theology of persecution, I believe is a deficient knowledge of history, both church and secular. We are awful historians, myself included. And that makes us incredibly susceptible to deception, both theological and political.

Why do you think they want to rewrite history? Why do you think they want to change the curriculum in schools? To make us stupid, to make us more gullible, that we will fail to see what is really happening, fail to be able to see what is really taking place in this day. And so, we need to become better historians.

You as a congregation, need to get into history. You need to start reading history, one book at a time, exposing yourself to what has taken place centuries past, to equip yourself for the present.

But the deficiency that I want to address today relates to the role of government. The historical time we are in has revealed both deficient and inaccurate theology of government. And it is deficient for at least two reasons.

One, we simply had it so good for so long. We simply had it is so good for so long, and therefore have not had to think deeply about this aspect of theology. It is a muscle we just simply have not worked. And two, as I have already said, we are ignorant of historical theology. Because theologians of the past thought deeply about these things and we have not significantly enough and sufficiently enough exposed ourselves to their writings.

And so to begin a conversation today that seeks to address this deficiency, I want to turn to Romans 13. Only, I want to look at it from a different vantage point. You see, instead of focusing primarily on our response to government, I want to focus on the government's God-given duty. What is the God-ordained role of government? And can we even ask that question?

And so there is a sense in which this sermon is addressed to the government. The government needs to be informed of its God-ordained purpose and if we, the church, do not inform them who will? We are the pillar and support of the truth. We are the priests of God, to mediate His Word to this earth, this world and therefore we have responsibility of informing the government of their God-given duty.

And so we will certainly touch on aspects of our response to government. But the main goal is to highlight the God-ordained role of government and so if you would, open your Bible to Romans 13, if you have not already and let us go ahead and read verses one to seven. We are going to be only looking at verses one to four but let us read verses one to seven.

"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due to them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

So the goal of our time is to further develop our theology of government to assist us in navigating our ever changing world and Lord willing, to even inform the government of its God-ordained rule. And so if you are taking notes, jot down, first, "The source of governmental authority", "The source of governmental authority". This comes out in verse one. Look at it.

"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities."

Now, what does it mean to be in subjection? Just briefly, it means that we are to arrange ourselves under the governing authorities, to be submissive to them.

Now, does submission demand obedience? Typically, yes. But it is important to note Paul does not write, 'every person must be obedient to the governing authorities'. There is certainly overlap between submissiveness and obedience, but obedience almost demands more and obedience does not take into account that there are times when we simply cannot obey the government.

And scripturally speaking, we know there are times when we cannot obey the government.

For example, there is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Daniel 3, who refused to bow the knee to the Golden image. And we have the examples of the apostles that we just read about this morning, who declared, "We must obey God rather than men."

And so then, is it possible to be submissively, or rather simultaneously submissive, and disobedient to the government at the same time? Can you be submissive to government, while simultaneously practicing civil disobedience all at the same time? And the answer is, yes, we absolutely can. We can practice civil disobedience, while maintaining a submissive posture. You say "how"? By humbly subjecting ourselves to the consequences of our civil disobedience.

Look, we recognize we are not the government, but we have a responsibility to Christ. And when that responsibility leads us into conflict with the government, we have to bear up under that conflict, graciously, humbly, submissively but nevertheless, we have to bear up under it.

They have the right before God to do whatever they believe is right, they will be held accountable for that. And when they act unjustly, God will settle the score at the end of the day.

But nevertheless, we can absolutely practice civil disobedience, while maintaining a submissive posture. How do we do that? By entrusting ourselves "to Him who judges righteously", 1 Peter 2:23.

It is important to note that practicing civil disobedience in one area does not mean practicing civil disobedience in every area. So it is only at a particular point, that civil disobedience would need to be practiced. And so how do we decide when civil disobedience is necessary? How do we decide when civil disobedience is necessary? Well, let me give you three categories. These are helpful.

One, when the government forbids what God commands. When the government forbids what God commands, for example, forbidding the preaching of His word, cannot comply with that.

Two, when the government commands what God forbids. When the government commands what God forbids, for example, commanding worship of a golden image, cannot comply with that.

And three, when the government commands what is not theirs to command -- critical. When the government commands what is not theirs to command, for example, the terms of worship for a local church, cannot comply with that, not their jurisdiction. They have no jurisdiction at this juncture, so we cannot comply with that.

Three categories that call for civil disobedience.

But all of that, of course, is geared toward our response to the government. And we want to hone them on the God-ordained role of government. And so we are going to do that in the next part of verse one, where the reason for being subject to the governing authorities is given. Look at it, next part of verse one; "For there was no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."

So the reason we are to be subject to the governing authorities is because all authority is from God. That means all authority originates with God, which means all authority is delegated authority. And that means the governing authorities are accountable - to who? - to God. In other words, the governing authorities have a stewardship from God for which they will be judged. They are not autonomous. They are not sovereign. They are servants of God, verse five, deacons of God, and servants are always accountable to their masters.

And so what must they do to faithfully discharge their duty? They must govern by the standard by which they will be judged. They must govern by the standard by which they will be judged, which is what? The Word of God. They are going to be judged by the Word of God. They are accountable to God, and therefore they must govern in accord with the Word of God.

Now, how many governments actually know they are accountable to God? Do you think our government knows it is accountable to God? Not likely, and if it does, it is suppressing the truth and unrighteousness, Romans 1:18 . And whose role is it to inform them? I have already said it. Whose role is it to inform the government of its God-given responsibility, or to call them to repentance? It is the church. Why? Because we have been entrusted with the revelation that spells all this out.

In fact, if the church refuses to fulfill this role and function, then it is walking in negligence. A negligence that is incredibly unloving. Why? Because those who are walking in governmental misconduct are actually storing up wrath for themselves for the Day of Judgment; b y not informing the government of its God-ordained role, and not pointing out when the government is out of step with that role and by not pointing out that they are actually governing unjustly, we are not loving the government. These are individuals, human beings, who are accountable to God, who need to be confronted with their sin in order to realize they need to be reconciled to God through the Son, Jesus Christ.

You see, complying with unbiblical and unjust government laws is neither faithful nor loving.

Affirming the government has an authority, it does not actually have is neither faithful nor loving.

It does not demonstrate true love for those in authority. It does not demonstrate true love for our neighbor. It does not demonstrate true love for the church. It does not demonstrate true love primarily for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church of all institutions has this obligation to call the government to its God-ordained duty.

Now, how do we do that? And this is where things get a little more difficult. Because there are many benign ways to call government to its duty: you can write your MLA, you can write your Premier, maybe a little less benign, you can do an open letter that gets some visibility. And there are more confrontational ways, for example, you can take them to court and enter into a legal dispute with them.

But you can also do what we are doing; by meeting, we are testifying the government has no jurisdiction here. Not with regard to our worship. And so by simply being open, and by garnering the attention we have, which is not our choice, but it has come, we are showing the government, they have overstepped their authority, regardless of whether they are excused is a so-called pandemic or not. And so by obeying Christ, in this way, the government is being forced to consider what their authority actually is. And it is facilitating opportunities like this, to testify against it.

Now, it is important to understand that as we look at what we are doing as a local church, it is obedience to Christ that is driving this, it is theology that is driving this, it is ecclesiology that is driving this; Jesus is the head of the church. He is the supreme authority over the church, and He governs His church, by His word, and our responsibility is to ensure that His word governs the church.

But by doing what we are doing, we are also loving our neighbor, and that too, obeys Christ. And in addition, we are loving our government because we are testifying that it is out of step with its God-given role, and that too is obedience to Christ. You see, what this season really does, and I think you will see this as we keep going this morning, is it-it broadens the picture. You want to compartmentalize spiritual life, and what it means to follow Christ, and pull that back out of the public place, the public sphere, and live your personal walk with Jesus Christ all by yourself? You cannot do that and be faithful.

This is our Father's world. We are here as salt in light. We are his representatives on the earth. Just for the record, by the way, the media continues to talk about faith leaders. I have not got the foggiest idea what a faith leader is. Please, I am not a faith leader. I am an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am a herald of the King of kings. I am here with a message from heaven. I am not a faith leader, whatever that is.

I did not intend to say that but nevertheless...

So listen, it is theological. In the context of ecclesiology, it is theological. In the context of loving our neighbor, it is theological. In the context of holding government accountable. All of it is bound up in the Word of God -- the whole thing.

Now, I have to admit that historically, I have not been very politically involved. I have voted. I have certainly preached the word which has unavoidable political implications since the Word addresses biblical morality, but that is about it. And so you might be going, "Well, James, what has changed? I mean, you seem to have changed your position on this whole matter of your involvement in 'politics'?"

Well, for one, I have got to evaluate whether or not I have been negligent. It is possible that I have been negligent, that I have not been fulfilling my God-given responsibility. I have got to evaluate that. I have got to consider that.

But here is the fundamental difference: for the first time in my ministry, the government is reaching into the life of the church. That is my domain. That is the domain of the elders here at GraceLife church. That is the Lord Jesus Christ's domain. Attempting to dictate to us the terms of worship is not the government's jurisdiction, and I refuse to give the government what is not theirs; Caesar has no jurisdiction here.

So by recognizing that God is the source of governmental authority, things begin to open up a bit. Government is accountable to God and will be judged by Him and will be judged in accordance with God's Word. And since we have been entrusted with His Word, we have a unique responsibility whereby we must call government to its God-ordained duty, and doing so cannot only be done while maintaining a submissive posture, it is among the most loving things we can do. That is the source of governmental authority.

Second, if you are taking notes jot this down: "The limits of governmental authority". "The limits of governmental authority". Look at verse two, "Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God. And they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."

So here is the logic, verses one and two. Everyone has to be in subjection to the governing authorities. This is due to the fact that government authority finds its source in God and therefore, everyone who resists this authority opposes the ordinance of God and will receive earthly condemnation from the government.

But there are some questions that need to be asked at this point, for example, is all resistance to the governing authorities opposition to the ordinance of God? Is all resistance to the governing authorities opposition to the ordinance of God? We would have to say 'no' - see the apostles, see Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we understand that but how about this? Is every government law an ordinance of God? Is every government law an ordinance of God? We would have to say no, otherwise, when government orders an evil, unjust law, God would be ordering evil.

So no, when the government orders an unjust law, it is not an ordinance of God. God does not order unjust laws.

Or in a similar way this: do all government laws come with the authority of God? Do all government laws come with the authority of God? Again, we would have to say - what? - 'No'. Since their authority is delegated to them, their laws must be consistent with the law of God, right?

Or how about this, when the government says we cannot meet, as we always have, does it come with the authority of God? When the government says we cannot meet, as we always have, does it come with the authority of God? Are we opposing the ordinance of God? If you say "we are", then you are essentially pitting God against God, that God is currently contradicting Himself. And I realize at that point, you might say, "But this is a pandemic. So, these are extenuating circumstances." And if you said that, you would be wrong on two fronts. One, it is not a pandemic, and two, you have a deficient theology of government. You do not understand the role and function of government.

And I want to see if I can address that. And this is gonna dovetail with what we will see next. And what we will see next is the purpose of governmental authority, but the limits and purpose of government authority go hand in hand.

The God-ordained purpose of something limits it. And therefore, we are going to see in a moment the government has a particular lane.

And to begin this discussion, I want you to turn to Genesis 1. Genesis chapter 1, verses 26 and following. This describes the overarching Kingdom Mandate given to mankind, that creation. And this transcends every legal document that governs a land. So, this is this transcends the charter. And in fact, I would say this, the Constitution, I think, according to its founders, sought to actually uphold what we are going to see right now.

Genesis 1:26, and following, "Then God said," - familiar passage - "'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them" - note this - "rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth". God creates men to rule over the creation. Verse 27, "God created man in His own image, in the

image of God He created him; male and female, He created them." Verse 28, "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

So, God gives to man the unique responsibility to exercise dominion over the earth, to rule and subdue the earth. What this is, is an inalienable right given by God to man. It is an undeniable right, and by right, I mean authority. God has given to men the authority to rule and subdue the earth.

And that comes with certain freedoms: the right to life - that is, the right to live the life that God has given to you up until He takes it away.

The right to work - yes, in giving to men the responsibility to rule over the earth, work is a fundamental inalienable right. Man - the Bible says, "You do not work, you do not eat." Work is a right given to men by God.

The right to have a family, the right to be with your family, the right to be with your family when they are dying - that is a God-given right, an inalienable right.

The right to acquire property, to possess property, to own that property; that is part of ruling and- and subduing the earth. It is part of exercising dominion over the earth.

Now to do that effectively, what is absolutely critical? If man is going to rule over the earth and exercise dominion and carry out his inalienable God-given rights, what does he need, especially in a fallen world?

He needs government. Why? Government is in place to protect those inalienable rights. The purpose of government is to facilitate mankind exercising dominion over the earth. The government is fundamentally there to make sure that we can fulfill our mission, to subdue the earth, to work, to worship, to be fruitful and multiply. The government is a God-ordained institution put in place to ensure law and order, and to protect these God-given rights, or this God-given authority. And so government is actually vital to man fulfilling this mission, especially in a fallen world.

Now, one of the earliest times, if not the earliest time that government is implied, is in Genesis 9 so turn there. And it is implied in relationship to murder. Genesis 9:6, "The consequence for murder is put forth," that implies government because someone would need to enforce the consequence for committing murder. Genesis 9:6, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man..." and we could assume by way of implication - government, "his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God, He made men." So as clearly, or as early as Genesis 9, we have, by way of implication, a clear reference to government. The death penalty is set forth in Genesis 9.

Now, fundamentally, what is that protecting? If government is to institute, exercise, implement the death penalty against someone who commits murder, what does that protect? So, you might be thinking, "Well, that protects life." Well, it does, but not the one who was murdered. The one who was murdered is already dead. So it is not protecting them. But it does provide a law that is to prevent and restrain murder from taking place. And so it is not primarily protecting life. What is it protecting? Rights; the right to live. Another human being does not have the right to take the rights of another individual through murder.

See, this is really critical - if you believe government has the responsibility to protect life then you are, like, buttoning up a shirt with the, you know, the wrong button, and you are going to get the whole thing wrong. Government's responsibility is to protect rights, of which life is only one.

But it is a package deal. They have a responsibility of upholding all of the inalienable rights given to men by God. Again, the death penalty functions to prevent murder, which in turn protects a person's God-given right to life, at least until God takes it away.

So again, this is critical to understanding the limits and purpose of government; man is made in God's image. God has given to men the authority to exercise dominion over the earth and this invests them with certain inalienable rights to accomplish that end. And to facilitate this, God puts in place government, and its responsibility is to protect these inalienable rights so that man can accomplish his mission, in order that it would be a minister of God to you for your good - Romans 13. Right?

If government does its job to ensure that your God-given rights are protected, are you not going to delight in government? If government facilitates you fulfilling your mission in life, in exercising dominion over the earth, through employment and provision for your family and having a family and all the rest of it, are you not going to love and delight in government? Of course, you are.

Government does not grant these rights. Instead, government is obligated by God to recognize these rights. Government does not impart these things. They are already ours by God, government must recognize them.

Now, that sets clear limits on government authority. Because when government begins to get in the way of man accomplishing his God-given mission, it is no longer functioning as God intended. Instead of that, instead of functioning that way, it is failing to facilitate the kingdom mandate that we have and is oppressing it. And what that does is it sets the table for the purpose of government. And, really to critique whether or not government lockdowns are consistent with the God-ordained role and function of government.

So if you are taking notes jot down third, "The purpose of government". "The purpose of government." Look at verse three of Romans 13. Back to Romans 13 now.

It says, therefore, "rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil."

So as we would expect, the purpose of government, based on what we just saw, is to praise good behavior and avenge evil. What is the obvious question? Who gets to determine what is good and what is evil? Whose prerogative is that? Who defines good and evil? And the answer should be obvious, both from Romans 13:1, and what we just saw in Genesis: God does. God determines what is good and what is evil and he does that by His Word.

You see, even if you take the 10 commandments alone - the second half of the 10 commandments - it is easy to see how they relate to the kingdom mandate; 'You shall not murder' which touches - what? - the right to life. 'You shall not commit adultery,' which touches - what? - the right to family. 'You shall not

bear false witness against your neighbor," which can expose them to liabilities and even death. 'You shall not steal,' which protects a person's property and possessions.

And, that Paul has these things in mind is evident in verse eight and following. Look at it. "O we nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, 'you shall not commit adultery, you should not murder, you should not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

As Paul is setting forth Romans 13, and the call to submit to government and even dealing with the issue of good and evil, he has the law of God in mind. And so good and evil aren't defined by the ever-evolving whims of culture, good and evil are defined by God. And that reinforces the obligation of government to govern in accord with God's will. Again, an obligation for which they will be judged.

And so, the limits and purpose of government are clear and unmistakable. The role of government is to protect the undeniable rights given to men in the garden and it fulfills this purpose by upholding law and order, punishing evil, and getting out of the way. Amen?

So with that, let us place government lockdown measures under the microscope of God's Word.

Is it the government's responsibility to protect us from a virus? Is it the government's responsibility to protect us from a virus? Many want to say "yes", believing it is their responsibility to protect life but that is not the government's responsibility. Especially given the fact that doing so actually infringes on undeniable God-given rights, like the right to work, the right to worship, again, the right to be with your family when they are dying; in some cases, the right to life.

I would love to be wrong on this. But with good, credible information, if an individual in the hospital right now undergoes a cardiac arrest, a nurse must put on full PPE, prior to administering CPR. So, someone is having a heart attack and they got to put on full PPE, before they administer CPR to that person. In some cases, the right to life.

And you might think "But what about war? I mean, isn't the government to protect life in the context of war? And if it is, does not that make the protection of life fundamental to its responsibility?" But even then, the government's responsibility in the context of war is to protect rights, of which life is one. War ought to take place to protect inalienable rights. See World War 2 for example. And so, to this question: is the government's responsibility to protect us from a virus? No, we live in a fallen world. Viruses are inevitable in a fallen world. And it is not the government's responsibility to protect us from a virus. What is their responsibility? To protect our God-given rights.

In fact, when you listen to our government, as they talk about these lockdown measures, they talk about trying to balance the infringement on our civil liberties with the harms stemming from the lockdowns. That is pretty significant. Our government acknowledges publicly that there are harms that are a result of the lockdown measures. Just let that sink in for a little bit.

Now, if they are trying to balance our civil liberties against the harms stemming from lockdown measures, they are out of their God-ordained lane. They are stepping into a lane that is not theirs.

In effect, they are seeking to play the role of God. Why? Because implicitly, they are deciding who gets to suffer.

And what is its justification for doing so? That our health system could - could - become stressed, might become overwhelmed, cannot say 'will', because it has not happened yet. And there is no guarantee that it will - could become overwhelmed, might become stressed.

And again, what is amazing is that our government actually acknowledges the harms of lockdown measures. They recognize there are harms resulting from their actions. And I want you to feel the weight of this. Is the virus the government's fault? No, to our knowledge, our government has no responsibility, no culpability with regard to the presence of the virus and so if someone should die from COVID-19, is the government culpable? No! We live in a fallen world. Viruses and death are inevitable.

A virus has unleashed on the world, God is sovereign over that virus. The effects of that virus are not the government's responsibility. They do not have the responsibility to protect us from the virus. There is no culpability when someone dies from COVID-19.

But what if someone dies as a result of government lockdown measures? Is there culpability then before God? I would say there is. Why? Because they are out of their God-ordained role. They are no longer functioning in accordance with their God-intended purpose. And therefore, the harms that result from their actions actually fall to them as their responsibility where they are going to have to give an account for those harms to God. That is significant.

We are just talking about Alberta right now; broaden it to the whole world, where most of the governments of this world are in lockstep in the way they are handling this so-called pandemic.

And so, what should the government have done at the beginning?

They should have equipped Albertans with the best information they have, and protect their inalienable rights: to work, to worship, to be with family, to live.

The risks of the virus falls to who? The individual. The individual gets to assume their level of risk with regard to the virus, not the government. It is not their role. It is not their function. It is not why God put them there.

You say, "Well, what if the health care system ended up actually being overwhelmed?" Well, look, that is incredibly difficult. That is no doubt a crisis. That is something surely to look at soberly and consider soberly.

But God is sovereign.

And government needs to stay in its God-ordained lane. And, they are not gonna like this answer, but you trust the Lord, and you do everything you possibly can to meet the need when it arises. You take other steps to account for that possibility, while still protecting the God-given rights of mankind. And that might even require leaning on the general public to get involved in the health care system, to serve their neighbors in the event that things got stressed.

Look, I am willing to get in there. If our hospitals are going to go and burst at the seams, I will get involved. I will serve our neighbors. I will put myself in the line of fire on that, wouldn't you? That is a much more humane, honorable, glorious solution - for mankind to really come together. Should we get to that point? Instead of this false sentimentality where we are all in this together now.

Now, let us say you are the Premier and taking that approach is political suicide. What do you do? I mean, you survey it. If you are aware of your God-ordained role and function and you go, "If I do that, I am going to commit political suicide." What do you do? You die a political death. You have a responsibility before God and to the people of Alberta who have elected you, to put your foot down and stand and protect their God-given rights.

That is what you need to do.

Now, there are examples of this, this kind of governance. Have you ever heard of Governor Christie Noem of South Dakota? She would be a breath of fresh air for you. I like to call her a rock star. I am saying Christie Noem for presidency 2024. Hey, if you cannot find a man who is courageous enough to take the helm appropriately, and rightly, then I will take a woman. Give me Christie Nolan. (I am gonna get myself in trouble here.)

[audience laughs]

Now, it is interesting. Our premier just recently wanted to talk about the death rate and how the death rate is greater in South Dakota than it is in Alberta. Jason Kenny's responsibility is not to govern the death rate. He is not responsible for the death rate. That is not his responsibility. God is responsible for the death rate. He is responsible to protect our God-given, God-ordained inalienable rights.

And so what does this mean for government?

Our government needs to repent. Our government needs to repent. If there are believers in our government, they need to repent. And they need to begin to stand up for what is right. Believers everywhere need to start standing for righteousness and calling the people above them to the right standard, even calling them to repentance.

And those who do not know Christ in government, they need to turn from their sin and believe on Him. They are storing up wrath for themselves for the day of judgment. There is a judgment coming and it will be unleashed with the full fury of God's wrath. And those who are in government right now have a responsibility, a heightened accountability. They have a God-ordained function. They are a minister of God and they are going to be held accountable for the way they carry that out. And if they do not repent of the way that they are currently conducting themselves, it is not going to go well for them.

And it is not too late. It is not too late. Put the politics aside. Forget about what has happened to this point in time, deal honestly with the situation. I would just appeal to the government. God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger. If you would just confess your sin, acknowledge that you have come short of His glory, look to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who went to the cross and suffered under the wrath of God for all who would ever believe in His name, if they would just understand that God is merciful that He says, "Come, let us reason together". That if they would understand that God is gracious and merciful, that they would come unto Christ, and be forgiven and cleansed and washed. The whole record of any guilt against them totally taken out of the way, then they are given a new heart, born from above, and they have everything they need to stand for righteousness and begin to appeal to those who are with them, above them, to do the right thing.

What about law enforcement? Law enforcement needs to stand for righteousness. Law enforcement needs to say to their... to the people above them, "No, I am not going to do that. No, I am not going to

write that ticket. No, I am not going to arrest that pastor. No, I am not going to put that person in jail." They have that responsibility; they need to do that. And by the way, they are out there. We have been reached out to by RCMP and other provinces already. There are men that are willing to stand. There are men that are in the RCMP that are trying to get their comrades to see things differently, to wake up and smell the roses. We have got an Edmonton Police Service officer in the building right now, in this congregation.

Law enforcement needs to say 'no', needs to do the right thing, needs to take a stand.

[someone from the audience speaks]

Well, I appreciate you sharing that. For those of you tuning in online, we had a gentleman just stand and, uh, just expressed that at this point in time, though he was once a peace officer, he no longer is. And that officers at present are currently violating the law by doing some of the things they are doing. Thank you for that. I appreciate that.

You know, one of the challenges here is, many of our neighbors, I mean, we can see it online this past week, for example, many of our neighbors, hate us, you know, want us dead, want us locked up. And I would just say this, that I am putting my life on the line.

And I am doing that even for those who hate me. There are people in our precious province who cannot stand me and want me dead. And I am willing to put my neck on the line for them. And I would hope that God might use that in some way, to reach them for Christ. Because what I am doing here is a minuscule fraction of what Christ did for me.

When He died for me while I yet hated Him, while I was yet a sinner, while I was in hostility to Him. And so I would just say this, to the public of Alberta, if you hate me, that is okay. I am gonna put my neck on the line, believing that I am doing the best thing I possibly can for you, regardless of what you think about it. And that is loving my neighbor, which is exactly what the Word of God commands me to do. Amen? Amen.

So let us try and bring this home.

The source of government authority is from God, the governing authorities are accountable to God and God will hold them accountable in accordance with His word.

There are limits on government authority. And that is because government authority has a particular purpose, a role, and function that goes all the way back to the garden, where government is in place to uphold and protect our inalienable rights given to us by God, and therefore, the government at present, needs to cease with its attempt to mitigate the spread of the virus through lockdown measures and begin to protect the rights and freedoms of the people of this province.

And more importantly than that, and what I would want even more than that, is that they would come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, if you are here today, I need to proclaim to you the good news. And the good news is only good news because there is bad news. The bad news is, you were born in sin. You came into this world, dead in trespasses and sins, your heart came into this world, hostile to God, hostile to His righteousness, hostile to His Son. Truth be told, you hate God, coming into this world.

And if you are outside of Christ, then you hate God now. Your indifference, if that is where you are at, it is hatred toward God, it is hostility toward God, you are being indifferent to your Creator, the one who gives you right now, life and breath. And so, what God did - here is the good news - He sent His Son, to take upon Himself human flesh, to live a life under the law of God, the law of His father, and He obeyed that law in every respect. He was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. And in obedience to the Father, not only did He live a perfect life, He went to the cross, to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin.

But you need to understand - it was not the crucifixion, it was not the-the physical suffering that made atonement for sin, that was not the issue, that was horrific enough.

It was that the Father treated the Son on the cross, as though the Son had committed the sin of all who would ever believe in His name. The perfect, eternal, unblemished, obedient Son, was treated on that cross as though He were guilty of the sin of everyone for whom He died.

After accomplishing that, He gave up his last breath, on His own authority, went into the grave, and on His own authority, rose from the grave, came to life, and is now seated at the right hand of God.

And now, the proclamation, the message of Christ given to you this day by an ambassador of Christ, is that if you would turn from your sin - if you would turn from your sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, if you would come to Christ, if you would enter through the door that is Christ, if you would enter through the narrow gate - you will be saved.

You will be imputed with the righteousness of Christ, that means you will be clothed with His righteousness. Given a perfect record of righteousness to stand before God, holy and blameless. You will be given eternal life, where you will begin even now to experience the life of God in your inner man, as you are being transformed into the image of Christ. And that life will just carry you into eternity when you die in this, and leave this body and enter life to come. And you will have hope everlasting, joy everlasting.

You will be in the presence and glory of the Savior for all of eternity, which by the way, is not merely a spiritual existence, it is a physical reality; new heavens, new Earth, new glorified bodies fit for eternity, where you are going to get to work, and have relationship and worship freely, exercising all of your God-given rights in honor and glory to Him.

And so, if you do not know Him, believe on Him this day, receive the Savior and be saved. Let us pray.

Well, Father, we just commit this all into your hands. We thank you for the privilege that you have given to us to be here this day. Father, we thank you for what you have given us by way of responsibility, what you have given us by way of obligation, even in calling the world to repentance, our government to repentance. And Father we pray that if it would be pleasing in Your sight, and if this proclamation, be faithful to Your Word, that you would allow it to go forth and bear fruit in accomplishing great work both, in this province and this nation. And so, Father, we give You the glory. We are here as willing servants. We trust You and we entrust ourselves to You, for You are great and there is none greater. It's in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.