

The Tyranny of Totalitarianism

Scripture: Romans 13:1-4

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And it's at this time that we now come to the preaching of God's Word. And we're going to be taking a little bit of a break from the Gospel of John. I've been tasked with preaching two portions of Scripture at a conference later this month, and one of them is Romans 13. And so I'm eager to bring Romans 13 to you this day. It's where my mind has been. And though I've addressed Romans 13 previously, there's still quite a bit yet to say. And so if you would open your Bibles to Romans 13. And we'll begin reading in verse 1 and read down to verse 7. God's word reads:

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 them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

We find ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic. But the pandemic isn't a virus, it's government tyranny - tyranny that stems from a totalitarian view of government, where government is the supreme authority over and above every other sphere; over and above the home; over and above the church and over and above the individual.

And so instead of seeing each sphere of authority as a God ordained sphere, with God given autonomy and sovereignty, the state sees itself as the sole sovereign, having ultimate control over every other sphere; where God given rights become state given privileges. Privileges it can withhold at its own discretion.

And sadly, this isn't just the view of the broader public. It's seemingly the view of much of the professing church; where the Church of Jesus Christ is essentially looking to the government for permission to be the church. And this plays right into the hands of a government seeking to establish total authority over society. Because to accomplish this in a free and democratic society, it must subdue every other sphere of human authority and convince them that their God given rights are actually state given privileges.

Governments seeking total authority would rather not use force. At least not initially. The use of force would expose their agenda. Instead, they'll use infiltration, indoctrination and demonization. They'll flood every human institution with their ideological allies: every level of government office, the judicial system, law enforcement, the health system, the school system. They'll buy the media, obliterating the free press and effectively making media state run. They work in cahoots with big tech in an effort to control the information their constituents have access to. And then they'll use division, segregation and vilification to divide and conquer; and will both demonize and penalize any and all who dare to dissent.

And we're there. Are we not?

And what's the goal? To dismantle an otherwise free and democratic society, one founded on a biblical worldview, no less, and usher in a status utopia of government control and tyranny. All in the sanctimonious garb of *this is for your good*: whether it be health and safety, whether it be some existential threat to human existence, or whether it be national security, or some other manufactured threat.

And when it comes to opposing this tyranny, the church has an incredible opportunity. Not to mention an incredibly important role to play. And yet all the church has to do is what? Be the church. All the Church of Jesus Christ needs to do in this time and space is be the church: to preach the whole Council of God, to preach the gospel, to gather for worship, to pray, to uphold justice, to disregard government overreach, to call our governing authorities to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. And as such, to be salt in light in this fallen world.

But seemingly, standing in the way of all of that is what? Romans 13 - a poor theology of government. And so the church needs a sound and robust grasp on this critical text.

But even before getting to Romans 13, there's something else we need to do. Romans 13 wasn't written in a vacuum. It's not written divorced from the broader biblical context of all of Scripture. And so we need to establish the biblical God ordained spheres of authority, because doing so will ultimately set the limits on governmental authority.

And the preeminent sphere of authority that existed prior to all other spheres of authority is the family. It's the only sphere of authority that existed pre-fall. As you think about the role of government and the role of the church, you don't need government or the church in a perfect world. You only need a church and government in a fallen world. The family existed pre-fall and predates both the church and the government. And that means the fundamental building block of society is what? The family. Which is why it's no wonder it has been and is so under attack.

And so, what's the biblical basis for the family as a sphere of authority?

Well I'm going to give you some verses as we do this and you can just take them in. No need to flip to them. Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." That verse recognizes two expressions of household authority. It recognizes the authority of the original household and it recognizes the authority of the household established through the new marriage.

And within the authority structure of the household is the authority of the husband. Ephesians 5:22 and following, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." And so in the same way that Christ is the head of the church, the husband is the head of the wife. The relationship between the husband and the wife is to picture the relationship between Christ and the church. It's to be a gospel reality.

And also within the authority structure of the household is the authority of parents over their children. Ephesians 6:1 and following, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL

WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.” So children are under the authority of their parents.

And so the family is a distinct and autonomous sphere of authority where the husband bears ultimate responsibility for directing family affairs, and where children are subject to the authority of their parents.

And that means this: children don't belong to the state as tyrannical left-wing ideologies want to claim. They belong to their families, where even education is the ultimate prerogative of who? the parents.

Now anytime you have a God ordained sphere of authority, you have a delegated authority. And that's because all authority originates with God. And that means that every sphere of authority is limited, directed and governed by His Word. This is our Father's world, and He both defines and governs each sphere of authority. And that means the government has no legitimate right or authority to infringe on the autonomy of the home. To do so is to usurp an authority that isn't theirs, and God will judge all abuses of authority.

Now that said, the government does bear the sword. And that means it has the responsibility to punish crime committed in the home. And so there is a degree of overlap within these spheres. Though each sphere is distinct, and though each sphere has a degree of autonomy and sovereignty, there is a measure of overlap. Even where the church overlaps with the home just a little bit. And where the governing authorities certainly have oversight over punishing evil with respect to crime in both the church and the home.

And so there's a measure of overlap in these spheres, but the government has no right or authority to define good and evil. Good and evil are not fluid. Good and evil are defined by God and His Word, and His Word is settled where? In heaven.

But what about the biblical basis for the authority of the church? Listen to Ephesians 1:22 and following, “And He [referring to God] put all things in subjection under His feet [referring to Christ], and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” So God raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him far above all rule, authority, power and dominion, and appointed Him as the head of the church - whereby He is the authority over the church.

And so how does He exercise His authority? Through His Word - which is why Paul urges Timothy, saying, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” And so it's through the Word of God that Jesus Christ exercises oversight, headship and authority over His church.

How does He ensure His Word is that which governs the life of the church? Through biblically qualified elders. I could give you a number of passages, but let me give you just two.

First Thessalonians 5:12 and following says this, “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.” And so Jesus delegates authority to pastors, elders, to govern, to lead and direct the life of the congregation to whom He has allotted to their charge.

We see the same reality expressed in 1 Peter 5:1 and following: "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge," - look at that language again - "but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

So the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the one to whom belongs all authority in heaven and on earth, has invested biblically qualified elders with the authority to ensure the Word of God is that which governs the life of the church.

Or to borrow from the apostle Paul, "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Pastors and elders are stewards of the mysteries of God. "In this case, moreover," Paul says, "it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."

And so what are the implications of this? The implications of this authority structure? Well, *one*, this is a distinct and autonomous sphere of authority. The government has no legitimate authority over the life of the church. The government cannot dictate to the church the terms of worship. And that's because, *two*, everything related to the substance of the church's worship and its ministries as defined by God's Word is entirely under the jurisdiction of the church. The government has no jurisdiction with respect to these things.

And *three*, even the presence of a virus changes nothing. It alters nothing. The government can certainly come to the church and appeal and make a polite request that we do certain things to assist them in mitigating the spread of a virus, but they have no authority to dictate to the church that it must close its doors or restrict access to its gatherings or not sing or anything else. That is a jurisdiction reserved to the Lord Jesus Christ and it's His Word that governs this jurisdiction. Viruses are inevitable in a fallen world.

And so we could ask the question, as we did with the home and even alluded to already, where's the overlap? It's the same with the family. In matters of criminal activity, when a crime is committed in the context of the local church, the governing authorities ought to be notified, and the governing authorities ought to enforce the law. That's their role and function in society. To punish evil. And praise those who do good. And that's because the church does not bear the sword, right? The government does. The church bears the rod of correction, the proverbial rod whereby the church's role and responsibility is to deal with sin.

And there are obvious limits on church authority. Elders have no authority to tell you where to work, where to live, what Car you can drive. That's elder overreach. Those are matters which fall within the jurisdiction, of what? - the home. And congregants are under no obligation to submit to that. That's a misuse of authority. In fact, elders have no authority to bind your conscience on anything the Word of God doesn't. Where the Word of God is silent, a pastor or elder cannot bind your conscience. We are stewards of your conscience. Our responsibility is to inform your conscience with the Word of God. But where the Word of God is silent there is liberty. And a pastor enters into pastoral malpractice the moment he binds the conscience of another on a matter the Scripture is silent on.

So we've dealt with the home, we've addressed the church. What about the individual? Even individual autonomy has fallen on hard times. And so is there any biblical basis for individual autonomy? Indeed,

there is. Genesis 1:27, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." And so every human being, male and female, is created in the image of God. And of course, your gender is assigned to you at birth and corresponds with your biological gender. And so because men and women are created in the image of God, there is autonomy that comes with that. Individual and even bodily autonomy.

Now legitimate expressions of that autonomy are limited by both Scripture and the other spheres of authority. But individual and bodily autonomy most definitely rules out both forced and coerced vaccination. Especially when the government attempts to coerce vaccination by withholding a person God given rights. Not only is that government overreach, it's government malpractice. One of the express purposes of government is to uphold and protect God given rights.

And yet we still haven't defined the government's sphere of authority. Although we've already begun to set the table for it, and we're going to define it now. But we're going to do so from Romans 13. And so if you're taking notes, jot this down: *the sphere of submission*.

Look at verse one: "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities." To be in subjection is a command. You could render this 'every person must be subject'. It calls for submission involving recognition of an ordered structure and calls us to willingly arrange ourselves under the governing authorities.

The governing authorities are those in high places. The powers that be, whose authority and office are inseparable. And the reason we're to be subject to them is given in the next half of the verse: "For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." So the reasons given are twofold. (1) God is the source of all earthly authority. All earthly authority originates with God. And (2), those which exist are sovereignly established by Him. Both the office and the officer exist in accord with His sovereign will.

And with that, at least three implications result. One - *all authority on Earth is delegated authority*. All authority on Earth is delegated authority, and nowhere is this better expressed than in John 19. There, when Jesus remained silent, Pilate said to him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" To which Jesus replied, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above." Pilate had authority that had been assigned to him from God. Did that absolve Pilate of any guilt? No, in fact Jesus went on to say, "for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." So who has the greater sin? Well, the Jews for delivering Jesus to Pilate. But did Pilate sin? Most definitely. Why? Because he failed to fulfill his duty in accord with the revealed will of God. He had a responsibility to uphold righteousness and justice. And so he sinned against God by washing his hands of Jesus and allowing him to be crucified, even though simultaneously that was fulfilling the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God.

What man intends for evil, God intends for good, right? So government authority is divinely delegated authority.

The second implication is that *each governing authority is accountable to God*. Each governing authority is accountable to God. Each one will be judged. For every act of injustice, justice will be served. And apart from repentance and faith in Christ, (it) will result in eternal damnation. So government authority is divinely accountable authority.

And the third implication is that *government authority is limited authority*. Government authority is limited authority - its authority with both a specific sphere as well as a specific purpose. Which means it must respect other God ordained spheres of authority and must be faithful to its God ordained purpose. Government authority is divinely limited authority.

And so this command here in Romans 13:1 doesn't give government total authority. It's not granting to governments total authority whereby governments have authority over every other sphere of authority. It's not giving them authority over the home. It's not giving them authority over the church. It's specifically addressing each of us as individual citizens and our civic duty to government. This is not addressing the corporate entity of the church. It's not giving authority to the government to dictate the terms of worship to the church. It's not giving the government the authority to restrict the preaching of the church; to govern the content of the songs that we sing. It doesn't give the government any authority over that. It's simply addressing each of us as individuals and our civic duty and responsibility in relationship to government.

In fact, you'll note that Paul says, "Every person." Every person. And though he primarily has the recipients of this letter in view, it rightly applies to absolutely everyone - including the governing authorities. The governing authorities are subject to the rule of law which not only includes the law of the land, but even more so, the timeless and transcendent law of God.

And this is evident from two examples in Paul's life, the very author of this portion of Scripture. In Philippi, Paul and Silas had been publicly beaten and jailed without a trial. And when the chief magistrates ordered their release, Paul said, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." So Paul held the chief magistrates accountable to Roman law. They had violated Roman law. In fact, Acts 16:39 says, "and they came and appealed to them" - that is, the chief magistrates. "They were afraid when they [found out] that [Paul and Silas] were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city." Did they leave immediately? No. Paul first went and saw Lydia, encouraged the brethren, and then he left. The governing authorities, aren't above the law.

The second example comes in Acts 22. Paul was in Jerusalem and after preaching the gospel to the Jews in Hebrew, a ruckus ensued and they wanted him dead. And when that happened, a Roman commander ordered that Paul be scourged. And he wanted him to be scourged, to find out what it was that had made the Jews react the way that they did. And as Paul was being stretched out with thongs, he said to the Centurion, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?" At which time the Centurion went to the commander and said, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman." And when the commander had confirmed it, Paul was immediately released and the commander was afraid. He had violated Roman law. He's not above the law. He's subject to the law and subject to the rule of law.

So even the apostle Paul, the one who has written this portion of Scripture, has held the governing authorities accountable for to their lawlessness. And so even the governing authorities are subject to the rule of law.

Now the irony, of course, is that at least in principle there's virtually unanimous agreement that government authority is limited, and that there are inevitably going to be times when civil disobedience

is warranted. The problem is that for most the threshold for that is so narrow. And so narrow that it's almost purely theoretical. That when you actually look at the criteria and threshold that must be met to warrant civil disobedience, it's almost circumstances that would never come to fruition.

For example, many say the threshold is being forbidden from preaching the gospel. That the government can't forbid us from preaching the death and resurrection of Christ. And so long as we can proclaim that message, we must obey government. But that's a severely deficient view - entirely unsupported by Scripture. Not even Acts 5 supports that. Because, there, the apostles were forbidden not merely from preaching the gospel, but from teaching in Jesus' name. What does it mean to teach in His name? It's to proclaim who he is. It's the teaching in a manner consistent with His character, with His identity and who is He? He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And so preaching in His name means declaring that Jesus is Lord, and that has implications because that means Caesar isn't Lord. Caesar must bow the knee to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

And it's not enough to merely declare that Jesus is Lord. You must live in light of His lordship. You can call him Lord, but if it's not evident by your life, then what is that? To teach in Jesus' name is to declare that He is Lord and to live in light of His lordship.

And so, really, it's quite possible that there's never been a time in all of church history when persecution revolved around simply not being able to preach the gospel.

Others say the threshold is persecution. But for them, persecution is only persecution when the church is being singled out. So if government is oppressing everyone equally, we must obey. And again, that too is a severely inadequate position and also borders on being purely theoretical. When governments seek total authority, they don't just oppress a single segment of society. They seek to oppress every segment of society, and in particular those segments of society that resist their tyranny. Totalitarian governments want total allegiance to the state. They want you to declare the state is Lord. They want you to acknowledge them as having every right over your life to command whatever they want, whatever they want, and however they want. And so the threshold isn't even persecution to begin with, and certainly not such a deficient view of what persecution has been defined as.

And so, when is civil disobedience demanded of us? When is civil disobedience demanded of us? Well, we're going to answer that in the second point. If you're taking notes, jot this down: *the obligation of opposition*. The obligation of opposition - which is somewhat provocative. And I think you'll see why in a moment.

Look at verse 2: "Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God." This is rather straightforward. Since all authority originates with God and since all authority is established by God - to resist that authority is to stand in opposition to Him and specifically in opposition to the ordinance that every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. It is God Almighty Himself that demands this of us. And there are consequences for opposition - next half of verse two: "and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves." What kind of condemnation? Condemnation from the governing authorities. As Paul says, middle of verse 4, "it does not bear the sword for nothing" - or in vain. And since government is a minister of God, when government wields the sword in accord with true justice, heaven is in agreement. In those moments, government is fulfilling its God ordained purpose in society, doing exactly what it's supposed to do as a minister of God.

And when you look at that, you might be thinking, well, that seems pretty total. That it would seem that if I resist the governing authorities on any issue at any point that I would be opposing the ordinance of God. And so it might be helpful to pose some questions. Is it wrong to resist evil government edicts? Does God require that we obey evil? Do wives need to obey the evil edicts of their husband? Do children need to obey the evil edicts of their parents? The answer to each of those questions is a resounding no. In each case one is duty bound to disobey - to disobey the authority.

And so how can we identify when government overreach must be opposed? How can we identify when it is that we're obligated, responsible, required to oppose the overreach of government? Well, let me give you 3 principles.

Answering the question: When does God require that we oppose government overreach?

(1) When government usurps the authority of another God ordained sphere. When government usurps the authority of another God ordained sphere. For example, when the government seeks to usurp the authority of parents over their children, opposition is obligatory. You have a responsibility of standing between the government and your children. It's your responsibility as the head of the home to protect them. And so, when there's government overreach into another sphere of authority that usurps that authority opposition is obligatory.

(2) When government either demands disobedience to God, or restricts obedience to Him. When government either demands disobedience to God, or restricts obedience to him. And for this I want to turn to Matthew 28 for a moment. We're going to go to the Great Commission. And I want you to notice the language that Jesus uses in the Great Commission that's to govern the whole of our mission - all that we do. And make special note that when we're here together as a local church, this is part of the Great Commission. What's happening right now is the Great Commission. The Great Commission doesn't end at someone coming to Christ. The Great Commission, in a sense, just begins when someone comes to Christ. Once they've come to Christ, they now need to be taught and you'll see that in a moment.

Matthew 28, in verse 18, Jesus makes this glorious declaration, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." All authority. So Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. That means that even the delegated authority to all earthly authorities comes from Jesus, God the Son. All authority has been given to Him, in heaven and on earth.

Verse 19 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Note this, verse 20, "teaching them to observe [or obey] all that I commanded you." All that I commanded you. Not part, not a portion, but all. In the Great Commission we have a responsibility to not just bring people to Christ, but to teach them. To teach you to obey all that Jesus has commanded - everything. Nothing is exempt. Nothing is left out of what Jesus is referring to here.

And that makes it clear. When it comes to the local church and the authority of the church under Christ, a church is under a distinct, autonomous and sovereign jurisdiction whereby it is paramount - whereby it is required that the Word of God dictate and drive everything; all obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, not only do we oppose government when government usurps the authority of another God ordained sphere, we also oppose government when it either demands disobedience to God or restricts

obedience to Him. And it should be abundantly obvious that in the last two years the government has been restricting obedience to Christ. Amen?

And (3), when government either demands worship or prevents worship. When government either demands worship or prevents worship. And for this I want you to turn to Mark 12. I don't think we've made a single reference to this portion of Scripture in all our discussions on this subject, but we need to. In Mark 12, the Pharisees and Herodians come to Jesus to try and catch him in a statement. And Jesus just runs circles around them. And there's an important principle that comes out of that. Mark 12:13, "Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth" - that's so disingenuous. And then they say this, "Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?" And they're thinking they've got Jesus now. If He says yes then they've got something on Him - they can take to the Jews. If he says no, they can go to Rome and say Jesus is advocating that you not pay taxes, that we not pay taxes.

And so what does Jesus do? It says, "But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" That word likeness is image. Whose likeness and inscription is this? "And they said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus said to them, "Render [or pay back] to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him."

So on that coin, had the image of who? Caesar. That coin then belonged to who? To Caesar. Where was God image? Yeah - on the inside. God's image isn't on a coin. God's image is in man. Man is created in God's image. What does that mean? What's the principle? That we owe God our worship. That he has the right for our worship. For us to love him with all our mind, soul and strength. And so what do they owe God? They owed Him their worship. And so, when government demands worship (see Daniel 3), or prevents worship (see the last two years) you are duty bound to resist and oppose the government and to render unto God what is God's. Amen?

That's the obligation of opposition.

And now third and finally, the travesty of treason. The travesty of treason. Look at the verse 3: "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." Now who defines good? Is good subjective? Does good fluctuate with the whims of an ever evolving culture? Again, the answer is a resounding no. It's worth pointing out the construction rendered *good behavior* is literally good work. And contextually the word *good* reaches all the way back to Romans 12:2. And I want you to begin reading with me in verse 1. Romans 12:1, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Where do we renew our minds? In the word of God. What defines good? God does in His word.

And so, when Paul describes in verse 3 the function of rulers and the reality that they aren't a cause of fear for good behavior, he's describing how it ought to be. He's describing how governments ought to function. Government is to punish evil and praise good. Which is why Isaiah pronounces judgment on Israel when he says this, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for

light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight... Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right... For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." That was a judgment being pronounced on the ruling class of Israel who had failed to ensure the word of God govern that nation.

And so, when government punishes good and rewards evil, it is not only abandoned its purpose, it is under the woe of God's judgment. In fact, it's treason. And this comes out in verse 4: "for it is a minister of God to you for good." A *diakonos* - we get our word deacon from that. Government is a Minister of God, a servant of God. And it's intended for our good to uphold law and order, to uphold justice, to protect our God given rights against tyrannical governments. Instead, our government is hostile to God. And is essentially assaulting all of His creation norms. Every aspect of His sovereign rule over the world - and He laughed, so there's no concern here - but every aspect of His creation, every aspect of His sovereign rule over the earth, they are attacking that. They are hostile to God. And now good behavior is a cause for fear. And they give hearty approval to those given to evil.

It's supposed to be the other way around. Government is supposed to avenge real evil, and that comes out in the next part of verse 4: "But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for [again] it is a minister of God, [note this] an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil."

And by the way, in that word *avenger*, you have your contextual clue on why Romans 13 is where it is. To see this turn back to chapter 12, verse 19. The same word that - only the verb form is used in verse 19, where it says "Never take your own revenge." So, Paul is telling Christians never take your own revenge. He says, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord." And so we aren't to take out our own vengeance. It's not our sphere of authority. That that responsibility is given to the governing authorities. They're the ones who avenge evil. They're the ones that have the sword. Their responsibility is to carry out that judgment. And so we're to recognize that God has established government for that very purpose.

Now it's amazing even when you look at sinful, ungodly governments... In most cases they still continue to punish actual evil. We can look at our country as well. I mean, there's no question that our governing authorities continue to punish that which is actually evil. The problem is they seem to be on a continental drift away from their true role and responsibility, and are more and more legislating evil into law.

And so when it comes to the role and responsibility of government, it's pretty clear. There to avenge actual evil - evil as God defines it. They're a servant of God. That's their role and function. And when you consider for example, just our government response to the virus, it is anything but that role. They're clearly outside of their God ordained purpose. They're trampling on God given rights. They're destroying people's livelihoods. They're destroying the economy. They're giving money away, as though that's their prerogative. They're coercing people to get a vaccine they don't want. They're creating division and segregation in society. They're fear mongering. They're demonizing all dissenting views. They're censoring information that contradicts their so-called science. And they admit they are implementing measures that inflict harms on society. They admit it. In reality, the harms of their measures may, in the

end, far surpass the harms the virus ever would have caused all on its own. And they're using this virus to establish totalitarian rule over society.

Now this is a wonderful opportunity for the church. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Church of Jesus Christ to stand tall, to let the light shine, to preach the gospel, to preach the whole Council of God, to call all men everywhere to repentance. And this is a wonderful opportunity for us in society to serve our nation, to serve our province, to serve our city, regardless of whether they appreciate that or not. We know the truth. We know what's right and what's wrong, and so as we function as the Church of Jesus Christ, we have an opportunity to show the world how significant, how practical, Faith in Jesus Christ actually is. That it's not some pie in the sky, worship in the clouds kind of a thing - that we have a practical religion where we follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and we obey Him, and accord with the truth, and let His word govern our lives, and whereby we function as salt and light in this fallen dark world. And so we have a wonderful opportunity ahead of us if the church would just wake up and seize the day.

And when it comes to our country. You know, I don't know where we're headed. It would either take an act of God to stem the tide, or do you know what it would take? It would take Canadians all over the country to stand together united - whether conservative or liberal, vaxxed are unvaxxed and look the government in the eyes and politely say, "no." We don't need a revolution. We don't need violence. We don't need to overthrow our government. We just need to stand together as a country and say, "no." And that would stem the entire tide of this totalitarian effort to turn Canada into a communist country.

Now that said, even if we did stem the tide as a country and nation, it would make no difference to have your civil liberties but remain dead in your trespasses and sins. And so civil liberty might allow you to have your best life now, but it's going to accomplish nothing with respect to the life to come. And if anything, it's going to just increase the wrath that you are storing up for yourself for the day of judgment. And so, you need to realize that when you look at the world today and you see all of the evil in the world - the corruption of our government and even the evil in society - once you, once you have that in view, look within. Because the very evil you see on the outside is alive and well on the inside. You can search your heart and know that you have sinned and come short of the glory of God. You know in your heart of hearts that you have sinned and done that which is wrong, that you have violated the law of God, and that you would be justly condemned to an eternity in hell if all of that were brought against you. And with that, under the conviction of that, understand that God the Father, in His goodness and grace, sent his Son into the world to live as true man, true God and true man in this world to live a sinless life under the law of God. And to go to the cross. And on that cross to suffer under the wrath of God. To provide forgiveness of sin. And he died upon that cross. And he rose from the grave. And now if you would turn from your sin, and lay hold of Jesus by faith, your sin will be forgiven and you'll be delivered from the wrath to come. And you will have real freedom in Jesus Christ to be the man or woman God has called you to be - whereby you will know your creator and fulfill the purpose for which you were created. And have the hope of everlasting life ahead of you - eternal hope, eternal life, forgiveness of sin, a perfect record of righteousness, not your own, because it'll be the Lord's righteousness reckoned to you. And you'll be in the Fellowship of God the Father, God the Son and God, the Holy Spirit.

And so, if you are under conviction even now in this moment then confess your sin. And look to Jesus Christ. Confess him as Lord, believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Receive him now as your Lord and Savior. Be reconciled to God through him. And if you would do that, He will be yours.

And you will be His. And you will have the wonderful prospect of hearing on that wonderful day, “well done, good and faithful slave.”

We've been faithful, so far as a local church, have we not? Hasn't been easy, has it? And by God's grace He'll keep us faithful. Let's get all the way to the end, to the glory of God. And the glory and honor of Christ. Amen. Let's pray.

Well, Father, we thank you for your Word. Father we thank you for the blessing of being able to mine its riches. Father, we thank you for your goodness and grace toward us in Christ. We thank you, Father God, for freedom in Christ. We thank you for the way that you have used us over the past year. And Father, we pray that you will keep us faithful. All the way to the end. To the honor and glory of Christ. It's in his name we pray, amen.

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