

## Mark 12:13–17 — Should I Pay My Taxes?

**February 16, 2020**

As we start to think about filing our 2019 taxes, one man in Oregon man doesn't plan to file. He says his Christian beliefs about abortion forbid him from paying his taxes. He doesn't want his tax money to fund Planned Parenthood and government-funded abortions. Michael Bowman has refused to file a tax return since 1999. As a 53-year-old engineer, he cashes his work checks and keeps his bank balance low so the government cannot garnish his wages. The government claims he now owes more than \$356,000 in back taxes. When the government took him to court, his famous line was, "If a woman has a right to choose to abort her child, I should have a right to choose against funding her abortion."<sup>1</sup>

What do you think? Does Michael have a right to not pay taxes so he can be sure his money is not used in ungodly ways? As a Christian, does he have a responsibility to not fund that ungodly practice? When you think about it, our government engages in many ungodly things besides abortion. Our government engages in unjust wars, lavish spending, and constant pointless litigation to make sure there is always something to talk about on the evening news. As Christians, should we withhold our taxes so we don't support these ungodly things? We will answer that question this morning.

Turn in your Bible to Mark 12:13. While you are turning, let me remind you what happened last week in the Gospel of Mark.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/oregon-man-income-tax-abortion\\_n\\_5ad0d44de4b077c89ce82b90](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/oregon-man-income-tax-abortion_n_5ad0d44de4b077c89ce82b90)

Last week, in the presence of the religious leaders and the people, Jesus told a parable. It was the parable of the tenant farmers. It didn't take long for everyone to identify the characters in the story. The vineyard was the people of Israel. The evil tenant farmers were the religious leaders of Israel. The servants who came looking for a harvest but were treated so poorly by the tenant farmers were the prophets God sent to his people in the past. The son that the owner of the vineyard send as one final effort to change the tenant farmers' hearts was Jesus, the Son of God. Just as the corrupt tenant farmers killed the son in the story and sealed their destruction, the religious of Israel sealed their destruction when they killed Jesus, the Son of God. The parable ends with this line.

And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away. Mark 12:12 (ESV)

Everyone understood the meaning of this story. The religious leaders understood the meaning of this story. The religious leaders' decision to kill Jesus would spell their end.

At that time, instead of repenting, the religious leaders walked away in frustration. They didn't stay away long. They walked away to develop a new plan to trap and kill Jesus.

When we come to Mark 12:13, the religious leaders returned to try another way to destroy Jesus. They knew their problem was Jesus' popularity with the people. Jesus popularity left them powerless to do anything against him. They needed to turn the will of the people against Jesus and to turn the Romans against Jesus. They knew they could not kill Jesus, but the Romans could.

So the religious leaders in the Sanhedrin put together a new plan. They would send three delegations to Jesus. Each delegation would try to trick and trap Jesus. The Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish ruling council, consisted of three groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes. Pharisees were the right-wing members of the council. They were the most religiously conservative. The Sadducees were the left-wing members of the group. They were also the largest group in the Sanhedrin. Last was the scribes. They were the Bible lawyers in the group, almost like our judiciary branch.

Each of the three delegations would try to trick and trap Jesus in his words to turn the people and the Romans against Jesus.

This week, we will look at the first delegation, which was a group of Pharisees. Next week, we will look at the second delegation that tried to trap Jesus, which were Sadducees. The following week, we will look at the delegation of scribes that tried to trap Jesus.

Let's begin with the delegation of Pharisees who tried to trap Jesus by turning the people and the Romans against him.

And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him. Mark 12:13–17 (ESV)

First, we will study the text, then we will apply the text. Let's begin by studying these verses.

And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. Mark 12:13 (ESV)

When it says “they,” we are talking about the Sanhedrin. It says they sent a group of Pharisees and Herodians. This is an awkward alliance. The Pharisees and Herodians were about as opposite as you could get in the first-century political spectrum. The Pharisees were the most devout religious group in Judaism. They memorized most of the Old Testament. They were anti-Rome. The focus of their lives was theology. The Herodians were the least religious group in Judaism. They were pro-Rome. The focus of their lives was not theology. It was politics and how to please the Romans.

A crisis sometimes produces awkward alliances. The common desire to get rid of Jesus led to the Pharisees and Herodians working together for the purpose of getting rid of him.

Why did the Pharisees and Herodians join forces? The Pharisees wanted to get rid of Jesus because they didn’t like his theology. They also knew that what Jesus taught about God and his relationship to God would not be enough to get the Romans angry at Jesus. Their goal was to put Jesus in a political position where he would be forced to make anti-Roman statements in the presence of the Herodians, who were a pro-Roman group. If Jesus came off as anti-Roman around the Herodians, they would go right to the Romans and tell them that Jesus was undermining their power. The Romans already knew Jesus had a huge following. If they saw Jesus as leading a rebellion against Rome, the Romans would arrest Jesus and do away with him. Jesus would be gone and the Sanhedrin would be happy. That was the plan.

That is why it says they wanted to trap Jesus in his talk. The word *trap* in this verse is a unique word. It is the only time this word is used in the Greek New Testament. It traditionally referred to hunting animals by setting a trap for them. That is what we have. This whole thing was set up to trap Jesus like an animal. These were not genuine questions.

And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God....” Mark 12:14 (ESV)

What is the bait they put in the trap? It is flattery. They called Jesus “Teacher,” which was a term of respect. I am sure it was hard for the Pharisees to say these words to Jesus, but they spoke them because it was a set -p. “Jesus, you always speak the truth and don’t care about other people’s opinions. I know the Herodians are here with us and listening to your answers but I am sure you will tell the truth when we ask you a hard question.” They were laying it on thick. None of this was because they genuinely believed in Jesus. All of it was because they wanted to manipulate Jesus into answering their questions in a specific way so they could do away with Jesus once-and-for-all.

Interestingly, they didn’t need to flatter, manipulate, or pressure Jesus to speak the truth. Jesus always spoke the truth. They were the ones who didn’t speak the truth. They were the ones who changed what they said based on who was listening.

Here comes their question that was a trap.

...Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” Mark 12:14 (ESV)

Should we pay our taxes or shouldn't we pay our taxes? To us, it sounds like an easy question. Of course we should pay our taxes. To them, the answer was not as straightforward. The question was, should we pay taxes to these Gentile, idolatrous, wicked, invading Romans who have taken over our country? Imagine the Russians invaded and took over America and we had to pay taxes to Moscow. Would anybody have a hard time paying their taxes? That is what the Jews in Jesus' day felt about paying their taxes to the Roman invaders. Remember how they laid the flattery on extra thick? "Jesus, we know you will speak the truth on this one even if it hurts. By the way, we brought along some Herodians to hear the answer."

In the mind of the Pharisees, they had already decided there was only one right answer to this question about taxes. The answer was, "No." If you asked the people in the crowd that day if they should pay their taxes to Rome, they would also have said, "Absolutely not." The only reason they paid their taxes was because they were forced to pay them. Remember Jewish tax collectors were Jews who sold themselves out to the Romans to receive a tax franchise. Tax collectors were the most hated people in Jewish society because they collected taxes and gave the money to the Romans. To ensure the tax collectors could get their money they had a local mafia of sorts who strong-armed people that refused to pay. It was pay your taxes or get your fingers broken. Those were your choices. That is why the Jews paid their taxes, even when they didn't think paying taxes to the Romans was the right thing to do.

The Greek text reveals the particular tax talked about in this situation was the poll-tax. It was also known as the head tax. Everyone who was alive was forced to pay this tax once a year. It was one denarius a year. A denarius was a day's wage for a common laborer. For this particular tax, you worked one day a year to pay it. If you had a large family and needed a tax break, that was unfortunate because the larger your family the more you were taxed. This was not the only tax the Romans collected. There were a lot of Roman taxes to be paid. The Romans taxed grain, oil, and wine. There were import taxes, export taxes, city gate taxes and local taxes. People were not just frustrated about paying taxes to Rome, but they were frustrated because they had so many taxes to pay.

Let me share a little history on the poll-tax talked about in these verses. Around the time Jesus was born, in 6 A.D., there was a man named Judas the Galilean. This was not the Judas who betrayed Christ but another man born earlier in history by the same name. He led an uprising against the Romans, specifically in protest of the poll-tax that is talked about in this passage of the Gospel of Mark.

Judas didn't agree with this tax that was levied on everyone for just being alive, so he led a rebel in Galilee against the Romans. This did not go well. The Romans did not like when people didn't pay their taxes. The Romans killed Judas, and the rebellion against paying taxes went away. We can read about this in the book of Acts when Gamaliel refers to this.

After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. Acts 5:37 (ESV)

While Judas was killed and his followers scattered, his actions developed a settled hatred in the heart of the Jewish people that paying taxes to Rome was wrong. The killing of Judas led people to the conclusion that the Romans were a godless, oppressive, occupying people that were a plague on society. This belief in the wrongness of paying taxes to Rome was the settled belief of the Pharisees and of most ordinary citizens in the days of Jesus. This frustration with Roman taxation resurfaced in Jerusalem 60 years after Judas the Galilean was killed. In 66 A.D. the people of Jerusalem decided to stop paying their taxes to Rome. They declared themselves a sanctuary city of sorts.

The Romans did not like when Jerusalem declared itself free from Roman rule and the Jews refused to pay their taxes. This is what led the Romans to send an army to Jerusalem. The Romans tried to negotiate with the people of Jerusalem but were not able to make progress. This led to the complete destruction of Jerusalem four years later in 70 A.D. So the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was not an arbitrary act by the Romans. It was in response to Jerusalem declaring itself a sanctuary city and refusing to pay the hated Roman taxes.

That is why, at this point in the story, the Pharisees were positive Jesus would say, “No, don’t pay your taxes to the Romans. They are a godless people.” That is what every Jew believed about Roman taxation. The problem is that once Jesus said people shouldn’t pay their taxes to Rome, the Herodians, who were pro-Roman, would run to the Roman fortress called Antonia, which was on the

north side of the temple only a hundred yards away. They would go and tell the Roman soldiers that the super-popular Jesus was telling people to not pay their taxes, like Judas the Galilean. The Romans wouldn't stand for that. Before the end of the day Jesus would be arrested by Romans soldiers and most likely killed.

If Jesus went the other direction, and told people to pay their taxes, his popularity would decline with the people because nobody was in favor of paying their taxes. Remember, people only paid taxes because they were forced to pay. That is the trap they set for Jesus.

But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." Mark 12:15 (ESV)

It says Jesus knew their hypocrisy. The Greek word for hypocrisy was used in ancient theaters to describe what actors did on stage. They were play acting. They weren't sincere. That is what Jesus said about these Pharisees. He knew the whole thing, their question, and the Herodian friends they brought were all an act. All of it was false. It was a trick.

Jesus said, "Bring me a denarius." The Jews refused to carry this coin in their pockets so the Pharisees wouldn't have had one on them. The denarius was a Roman coin used from 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. It was minted in silver. Only Roman emperors had the power to mint coins in silver and gold. All coins minted by the emperor bore the image of the emperor on one side and some other identifying description on the other side.

And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Mark 12:16 (ESV)

When Jesus asked whose likeness and inscription was on it, everyone knew the answer: “Caesar’s!” You can almost hear the grumbling of the crowd as people said Caesar’s name. Let’s

assume this coin they brought to Jesus was a coin currently in use at this time in Roman. If it was a current coin, it would have been minted by Tiberius Caesar, who was



ruling the Roman empire. Here is what that coin looked like. On the front of the coin it had Tiberius’ picture and said, “Tiberius Caesar, Son of the Divine Augustus.” Augustus was Tiberius’ father. The Romans considered Augustus a god. That meant Tiberius Caesar, his son, was also considered a god. If you flipped the coin over there was a picture of Livia. Who was she? Livia was the mother of Tiberius. So Tiberius loved her mom enough to put her face on money. She was considered a goddess by the Romans. So, this coin had a picture of the emperor and his mother. They were considered a god and goddess. Around the edge of the coin were the words “Pontifex Maximus,” which means greatest priest or high priest. The Romans called their emperor the high priest.

Knowing this background, you can see why the Jews struggled to even handle this money and why they refused to carry it in their pockets. In their minds, the money violated the first and second of the Ten Commandments. The Roman emperor who called himself a god and his mother a goddess was a violation of the first commandment to have no other gods before the one true

God of the universe. The words high priest on the edge of the coin were a false claim to the priesthood. In addition, the money itself violated the second of the Ten Commandments about not having a graven image of God. The picture of Tiberius and his mother on the money was definitely a graven image of people who claimed to be a god and goddess.

The Pharisees were convinced Jesus would hold the same conviction about Roman taxes and about carrying these little coins as they did. If they could just get Jesus to say those convictions out loud in front of the Herodians, their work was done. The Romans would get rid of Jesus.

At this point, Jesus said something they didn't expect.

Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him. Mark 12:17 (ESV)

This is not the answer they expected. Jesus told them to pay their taxes. "Give Caesar's money back to Caesar. You owe it to him. It is his money. It belongs to him. After you give to Caesar, the things that are Caesar's, focus on giving to God the things that are God's."

This answer by Jesus has become the basis for the separation of church and state in our country. It also became the basis for the rest of the New Testament's teaching on the relationship between Christians and their country. Jesus was saying you don't have to agree with everything in your country to still be loyal to your country. Allegiance to God does not mean you have a right to skip paying your taxes if you don't like your government.

Let's take these two statements of Jesus apart and see what they mean.

## **Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.**

What did Jesus mean by this? Human government, even imperfect and flawed human government, is better than anarchy. A poorly run state is better than no state. Try living in Somalia where there is anarchy and no government so evils are left to run unchecked. That is terrible. A poor government is better than no government. Even if our government is flawed, we should still give our loyalty and our taxes to our government, even when we don't agree with the government.

Government's job is to keep evil in check. At times, the government will do that imperfectly. At times government will do evil but that is not all the time. Government is part of God's common grace upon mankind and exists to keep evil in check, even when it does that imperfectly.

Let me show you how later parts of the New Testament expand this teaching by Jesus. Probably the most famous teaching on this topic comes from Romans 13.

## **God raises up governments, even unjust ones.**

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:1-4 (ESV)

There are four important parts in those verses from Romans.

**1. God has given us our government.** It is God who puts people in governmental power. In an ultimate sense, it is not the people of the nation who put a president in office. It is ultimately God who puts a president in office. It is God who has put the governmental authorities over us, even when they are imperfect and ungodly, like the Roman government that was in power when Paul wrote this letter. Government's purpose is to protect people and keep evil in check. That is what the Roman government was doing. That is why there was the Pax Romana in society in this day.

Daniel also says that God is the one who raises up our government.

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; Daniel 2:21 (ESV)

The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men. Daniel 4:17 (ESV)

The first point Paul made about government is that God is the one who establishes it over us as gift of his common grace, therefore, we must be subject to our government.

**2. Those who resist the government, resist an authority God has established.**

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. Romans 13:2 (ESV)

Those who resist the authorities God puts over them will incur God's judgement. This includes unjust governments, like the Romans. It includes governments which are not promoting godly values. Government does need to be perfect government to be supported by Christians who act as good citizens.

Let's see this from a historical perspective. In the Old Testament, when God's people were sinning and living in rebellion against him, it says God raised up the evil and cruel Babylonians to conquer his people and bring them into exile. Then, because of the cruelty and evil of the Babylonians, God raised up the Medo-Persian empire to conquer the Babylonians. Both were godless, but they were raised up by God. When the Jews were living in exile in Babylon, most of them wanted to fight and stay away from the city. God told them the opposite. They were to get involved with the city and work for the good of the city so they could be a light for God in that society. They were not to despise the godless Babylonians that conquered them but to work for the people in the city.

Paul said to resist the governmental authority put over us is to resist an authority God has put over us. It is to resist God. This means disrespecting police officers, calling them pigs, throwing water on them and harassing them is not just an offense against the officers and the government but it is an attack against God, who put them in authority over us to keep evil in check and provide order in society. God promises that fighting against our government will incur the wrath of God. This also means sanctuary cities that work against the national government and against ICE to keep criminals in our country so they can victimize more people is working against an authority God has instituted over them. Things will not go well if cities continue on that path.

### **3. If we are doing good, we do not need to fear the government.**

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval... Romans 13:3 (ESV)

I realize there are exceptions to this rule. Hitler took law-abiding Jews to concentration camps. For 99 percent of the time, if we are doing what is right, we have nothing to fear from the authority over us. People who buck authority are usually bucking authority because they have something to hide and do not want to be held accountable for their sin.

I sometimes chuckle in our current political climate when everyone gets up in arms over someone being investigated for corruption. Here is what Paul said in Romans. "If you have done nothing wrong, let people investigate you for corruption. You have nothing to fear. You only fear being investigated for corruption when you have corruption."

Am I saying the government is always right? Absolutely not. Am I saying police officers, DNR officers and military personnel always make right choices? Absolutely not! Sometimes wrong decisions are made by our government. Thankfully we do not live in the first century world where there were not options when your rights were violated. Today, we can stand up for our rights. We can have our day in court so a judge and jury can decide. The judicial system is a gift of God to deal with the overstepping and errors of our government. The point I am making is there is a difference between disagreeing with our government and disrespecting our government. We can disagree with our government and pursue a legal resolution but we have no right to disrespect our government since it is an authority God has put over us for society's good and protection.

**4. God gives us earthly government as a gift of his common grace for our good.**

...for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:4 (ESV)

Remember that government, even imperfect government, is a gift of God's common grace. If we didn't have police officers and soldiers, our country would not be safe. If we didn't have an army, our nation would be overrun by evil nations. If we didn't have paved streets, we wouldn't be able to drive here today. If we didn't have laws that keep everyone on the right side of the road, we would have been in an accident on the way to church. If we didn't have government, the roads would not be plowed. If we didn't have government, we wouldn't have free public education. If we didn't have government we wouldn't have running water. If we didn't have government, we wouldn't have our sewage processed. We wouldn't have our trash taken away. We wouldn't have emergency services like firefighters and the ambulances to help us in times of need. We wouldn't have nice public parks free of trash and litter. If we didn't have government, we wouldn't have anybody working to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. Is our government perfect? Absolutely not. There are many things wrong with it, but an imperfect government working for the good of society and to keep evil in check is better than no government at all.

Since we are beneficiaries of so many good things from our government, not just all the bad things, that is why we pay our taxes.

For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. Romans 13:6–7 (ESV)

So we are to pay our taxes. Michael Bowman, the man who refuses to pay his taxes because a small amount of his tax money is used to fund abortions, is wrong. He drives on streets that are paid for by tax money. He has electricity in his house that comes from an electric infrastructure paid for by tax money. He has clean water in his sink because of tax money. He has security in his neighborhood and police protection because of taxes. His children went to public school because people paid their taxes. Since he participates in all the other benefits of the good things from his government, he needs to pay his taxes even if he doesn't agree with all things in his government. If he wants something changed in his government, thankfully he can work in his legislature to get those things changes. He has options that are far more constructive and healthy than choosing to not pay his taxes.

The Bible tells us some other things we are to do for our government as Christians.

### **Pray for our government**

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior... 1 Timothy 2:1-3 (ESV)

We are not just called to submit ourselves to the government over us and to pay our taxes but we are to go out of our way to pray for our government's leaders, even if they are not Christians and can be people with whom we strongly disagree, we still pray for them. Paul told us how we are to pray. We are to pray that our leaders would make good and wise decisions so we can live peaceful and quiet lives.

## Be known for doing good in society.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 1 Peter 2:13–15 (ESV)

Peter said something similar to Paul, which was similar to Jesus. We should be subject to every human institution, whether that is our local or our national governments. God's will is that as Christians, we should be known for doing good in our society, not for resisting or undermining the government in our society. As Christians, we are to be the best citizens, even when our government is flawed. We are not to be the worst citizens who make a stink about paying our taxes.

Think of all the good Caesar did for the Jews that they refused to support when they stopped paying their taxes. Caesar built bridges. He built roads. He built aqueducts and brought water into Jerusalem. He protected Jerusalem. He provided the Pax Romana so everyone could travel the world in safety for the first time in centuries. Caesar made a massive Roman road system to make travel and commerce better. Even though the Romans would soon kill Jesus, Jesus still instructed people to pay their taxes to the Romans.

While we should be supportive of our government and model citizens that pay our taxes, the Bible tells us there are time it is OK to resist our government.

## When should we resist the government?

### 1. When government asks us to violate one of God's commands.

When the apostles were arrested for preaching the good news of Jesus, which is what Jesus commanded them to do, the Jewish leaders arrested them

and told them to stop teaching about Jesus. It was a clear contradiction. Were they to obey the government or to obey the words of Jesus? Here is how Peter answered.

But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29 (ESV)

If the government someday tells us to stop praying, if the officials burn our Bibles and seize our building in hopes of turning us away from Jesus — like they do in China and many other Muslim countries in the world — we will continue to pray. We will continue to worship. We need to obey God rather than man.

If one day the state tried to force the church to hire homosexuals as clergy or threaten us with losing our tax-empt status, we will obey God rather than man.

If one day, as a pastor, I find myself dragged into a lawsuit because I refuse to perform a homosexual wedding, a lawsuit that dwindles my retirement and life savings down to nothing, I will say, "I must obey God rather than man." As Christians, we should expect to suffer. We should expect persecution. We should even expect persecution that could end in martyrdom. That is normal when we choose to obey God rather than man.

## **2. When the government asks us to violate our Christian conscience.**

But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Romans 14:23 (ESV)

A few years ago, when the Obamacare legislation first went into effect, one of the stipulations was that employers were to fund the reproductive health costs of their employees. As part of that, employers were forced to fund the morning after pill that causes abortions of newly conceived children. Hobby Lobby, which is a privately held company owned by a Christian family, had a

crisis of conscience on this issue. The family members could not justify being forced to fund medication to their employees that would take the life of a child. They disagreed with the government. They didn't disrespect the government. They went to court on this issue, and they won. We are so fortunate to have those legal channels in our system where we can bring the wrongs of government to court. This is a great example of Christians handling an evil of the government that violates their Christian conscience correctly.

### **Render to God the things that are God's.**

We don't have much time, so let me cover this quickly. What does God want from our lives? Two quick answers.

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)

God wants us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The great satisfaction of our lives is not to have a new car, a new house, or a new relationship, it is to be him. God is most satisfied in us when we are most satisfied in him.

The second commandment is that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are to go out of our way to love other people like we want others to love us. If we are at church and we wish the church was more welcoming, we are to be that welcoming person to others. We are to love other people like we want people to love us. We are to treat other people like we want other people to treat us.

Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” John 6:28–29 (ESV)

The other thing God wants us doing is to love Jesus the Son like we love God the Father. Jesus the Son is the one who died for us. He is the one who humbled himself to take on a body forever so he could die for us, save us, and rise from the dead for us. God wants us to have heart bursting with joy and gladness for Jesus.

### Application

Does God want us paying our taxes?

- Yes, we are to pay our taxes, even when our government is not acting in Christian ways. We know God raises up all governments and their leaders. The purpose of government is to provide a civil society for the people. We are also not to be known for resisting our government and fighting police but for being model citizens under our government.
- Resisting our government is to resist an authority God has put in place for our good. We are to pray for our leaders, even if we don't agree with them.
- We are to be known for doing good in society, not evil in society.
- Thankfully, we have the option of getting involved in our government and working to change things that are not glorifying to God.

More important than our allegiance to our government is our allegiance to God himself. We want to give him what we owe him, which is to love him above everything else in this world, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We are to love other people like we love ourselves.

This week, let us give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.



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