

“#NotMyKingdom” // Romans 13:1–14 // Romans #28

[Bumper Video: FIRST, choosing to tithe even with job uncertainty]. **Cole and Sarah**

“We just got to know Jesus better.”

- Generosity is not something God wants from us but something he has for us.
- **There are aspects** of your relationship with God that you will never experience until you choose to put him first in the area of finances and generosity.

FIRST has been about examining ourselves to see who, or what is **first in our lives**.

- We asked you to **let the Holy Spirit guide you** to the commitment **he** had for you,
- and I’ve been **encouraged hearing story after story** of how you’ve wrestled with God searching for what it looks like for Jesus to be first in your life.

If you remember, our **primary goal** in this season is to see 100% of our people put God first in how they steward their time, talent, and treasure for the mission of God.

- We are excited about how God is growing us, with nearly **6,000 people making a First Faith commitment** since we began this journey last fall, representing nearly 1,000 people who have never given before! That's a huge step of faith.

Works Consulted:

Romans for You, “Romans 13,” Tim Keller

“Submit to Authority: Romans 13:1–7,” Joby Martin

“Submission to Governing Authorities: What, Why, & How: Romans 13:1–7,” Tony Merida

“Paying Our Dues to God and Caesar: Romans 13:1–7,” Erwin Lutzer

“Love and Light: Romans 13:8–14,” Tony Merida

- We’re coming into DEC: **As you’re thinking about Christmas gifts**, why not give the largest gift you’re going to give this season to the one who is responsible for it?
- Now is as good a time as ever to **begin this journey of generosity**.

ALRIGHTY, if you have your Bible, and your Romans journal--**Romans 13**. (p. 76)

Warning: This one’s a doozie. (I feel like I’ve said that a lot during this series. This passage is about **how followers of Jesus should think about government**.)

In the course of our study through the book of Romans, we’ve talked about original sin, homosexuality, predestination; for the last few weeks, we’ve talked about money. And **now this**.

It’s like I can’t win. Seriously. It’s like Paul is bound and determined to fill up my Inbox every week.

- Next week, “Would Jesus have been a **Duke or Carolina** fan?” “Just kidding. (I mean, when God makes the color of the sky Carolina blue and the mascot of the other team is literally a devil, what more do you need to know? These truths are **self-evident**, friends.)
- **But seriously: Next time in Romans** we’re going to discuss how Christians should approach controversial subjects like whether they should drink alcohol, whether homeschool, private school, or public school is the best option, HP & transgender pronoun usage.

Seriously, folks, don’t shoot me, I’m just the mailman. (Don’t **write the letters**, just deliver them)

13:1 Let everyone submit to the governing authorities, since there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are instituted by God.

² So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves.

³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. **That makes sense, right?**

- **Why do you panic** when you pass a policeman parked along the side of the interstate?
- **The other day I was with Veronica and I said in frustration**, "Why are there so many policemen on the road?" **It seems like at Thanksgiving** HP increases it's force by 600%.
- Are a bunch of people **getting all hopped up on tryptophan** and then reckless driving?
- Her response: *"Just go the speed limit and you won't have to worry about how many there are."*
- And she's **probably right**.

⁴ For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is *God's servant*, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong.

⁵ Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. (IOW, not just because of what they can do to you, but because you recognize they are *God's servant* and submitting to them is an issue between you and God)

(BTW: this is not the only authority Paul ever talks about this way. Paul tells children to obey their parents as unto the Lord. Submitting to their authority is a way of submitting to God and disobeying that

authority is disobedience to God (because for a while they stand in the place of God). COL 3: Supervisors)

⁶ And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's servants, continually attending to these tasks. (We tend to focus on all the controversial stuff government workers do, but the vast majority of government work, whatever political party the leader belongs to, provides things we are grateful for)--

- The roads we drive on
- Services like 911
- Zoning ordinances
- International trade agreements
- National defense

These things are hard work, and for that reason we pay taxes and should do even this with a measure of gratefulness. I know this is a hard teaching :)

***In fact, why don't we right now.** If you are employed by the government in any way: First responders, law enforcement, military, social workers, teachers, a representative--if you work for the gov't, would you stand up?*

We want to pray...

⁷ Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls (**Here's looking at you**, annoying camera that takes my picture every time I travel to Cary on 540. You're in Scripture.), respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.

Now, in our study of Romans, you might ask, "**Why is this section in here?**" In Romans 12 we were talking about how the gospel reshapes how we approach relationships--specifically, it makes us love the church, love our friends, and love our enemies differently--but then

we come to this seemingly random discussion about the government.

I think it is in there for 3 reasons:

1. First: **This is an application of Paul's instruction to "leave vengeance to God" (12:19).**
 - In chapter 12, Paul said that rather than taking vengeance into our own hands, we should leave it to God.
 - One of the ways God executes vengeance is through government authorities.
 - It's **not the ultimate way**, and governments certainly get a lot wrong, but in one sense governments stand in for God and execute justice on his behalf.
 - That's **what Paul says**. Gov't is his servant. (13:4).¹
2. Second: **For the 1st century church, one of the primary places they would have had to "overcome evil with good" would have been in their relationship with governing authorities. (12:18)**
 - Remember, Paul had said to "overcome evil with good" and "bless those who curse you."
 - Well, many of the people who were inflicting evil on the Christians and cursing them were governing authorities.
 - And **the way they are to overcome them, Paul says**, is by submitting, honoring and obeying them even when they don't always deserve it.

In 12:18, Paul had told them that "as much as possible, live at peace with everyone."

- **Again, this is the application.** As much as you can, live at peace with the government by honoring and obeying them from your heart wherever you can.
3. **Third reason this section is in the letter: Many scholars believe that Paul expected Caesar** (or someone on his behalf) **to read this**

letter, so Paul wants to make clear that his intentions are not to overthrow the government.

- We know that many of the religious philosophies of the world have as one of their primary goals the removal of the existing government and the replacing of it with a government led by leaders of the new religion.
- Islam (in my parts of the world) is like that. **My Muslim friends tell me that is not their intention** here and I believe them, but at least **throughout history** that has been Islam's aim.
- **Many Jews in Paul's days were like that.** They believed God wanted them to overthrow Rome and establish his Kingdom and they were just biding their time until they could pull it off. They were called "**Zealots.**" (One of Jesus' original disciples had been in that group--Simon the Zealot.)
- But Jesus had made abundantly clear that this was not his intention for his church:
 - Right before the crucifixion Peter picked up a sword to fight and Jesus told him to put it away because his kingdom was not of this world and they shouldn't use physical force to bring it in.²
 - **Jesus made it clear that his followers were to offer their lives for their enemies**, not take the lives of their enemies--like he did for us.
- **Our role is not to overthrow human governments.** To influence? Yes. To be salt and light? Yes. To speak prophetically to rulers and those in authority and rebuke them for unrighteousness and warn them of judgment to come like John the Baptist did with Herod? Yes.
- But that is different than thinking that Christians are supposed to bring in God's rule with **themselves as the rulers**.
- **Want to nerd-out for a minute? John Stott** identifies four general ways the relationship between church and state has occurred:

¹ Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT.

² John 18:36; Matthew 26:52.

- **Theocracy:** The church controls the state (think Vatican, or with Islam, places like SA). Bad.
- **Erastianism:** The state controls the church (certain parts of old Europe were like this: think China and Russia. Even worse.)
- **Constantinianism:** A compromise in which the state favors the church; the church makes accommodations with the state in order to preserve favored status. (Again, parts of old Europe were this way)
- **Partnership:** Church and state recognize that each have distinct God-given responsibilities, and they encourage and collaborate with each other in fulfilling these roles.
- (Stott says that the 4th seems to accord best with what Paul teaches in Romans 13,³ and I agree.⁴)
- **At any rate, Paul wants to make clear to Caesar when he reads this that when he comes to Rome, it is as a missionary apostle, not a political agitator⁵ and to the Roman Christians that their role is to influence, not overthrow.**

So those are the 3 reasons this section is in there.

TWO primary things we are to glean from this passage:

- The first is **I. The Responsibilities of Those Who Govern.** Paul gives us a short little "job description" for the government. That's not his main point in this section, but we can still learn from what he says.⁶

³ John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 339.

⁴ Vs. 7 implies they have a sphere in which we "owe" them something. That sphere is not total, it is assigned by God. In vs. 3 they are called God's "servants." God is what stands behind government and gives it legitimacy in the spheres he has assigned. This clearly implies a responsibility on their behalf to operate under God's moral order. If they are the defenders of what is right, that means when they are defending what is "wrong" they don't have to be obeyed.

⁵ Michael Bird, *Romans*, 443.

- Second thing we'll see is: **II. The Responsibilities of the Governed.** That's most of us. Specifically, how God wants us to relate to our governments.

Now, one **important thing to note as we dive in**--and this is **very important: When Paul wrote these things, none of the authorities were Christian**. "The 'authorities' he is referring to were at best unfriendly, and at worst actively hostile, toward the church.

This is a totally pagan and in many ways corrupt government he is talking about.

- **You see, a big question people often have when we talk about this is:** "*How can I honor a political leader when I don't approve of him or her or endorse a lot of what they stand for?*"
- **Paul would not have approved of or endorsed the vast majority of what the governing leaders of his day did** and had there been a free election he might not have voted for any of them.
- **Can we just be real for a minute?** Realtalk: You think many of our leaders are batty, and for good cause.
- But **Caligula** (who was Caesar around this time⁷) was unfit to keep a pet, let alone run an Empire. **Let me run through a laundry list of his greatest accomplishments.**
 - He had his mom and brother killed to make sure they didn't ever challenge his right to the throne
 - He openly committed incest with three of his sisters
 - He frequently would cross-dress and go out in public.

⁶ Paul's primary focus in this passage is not telling government leaders what God wants from them. His primary audience is the church, telling them how they should relate to rulers. That's not to say there's nothing government leaders can't learn from this, which is why I'll talk about it for a few minutes, just that had Paul's primary audience been government leaders, he may have chosen to emphasize different things. So, I wouldn't look at this as an exhaustive philosophy of government.

⁷ 37-41 A.D.

- He **installed his favorite horse, Incitatus**, as a senator and then **promoted him** later to consul. **Pray-tell:** What had the horse done as Senator to earn that promotion? How does a horse even vote in the Senate? All in favor? Aye. All opposed? Neigh.
- **Caligula once got mad at the weather** and declared war on Neptune, the Roman god of the sea. He **ordered soldiers from the Roman army** to whip the waves and bring home seashells like plunder from his domain
- He had the heads of statues of deities removed--and replaced them a bust of his own.
 - Imagine if **Obama or Trump superimposed** their face on every statue of Jesus in Washington.
- Often, during gladiatorial games (which were cruel enough), he would take **random people from the crowds** and throw them into the arena to be attacked by the wild animals to entertain himself.

The point is: This was no Abe Lincoln. He's not even a James A. Garfield.

- And after this you have **Claudius**, who may have been a hair less crazy but was every bit as cruel.
- And **then he hands the throne over to Nero**. By the way, when I say "handed over" the throne, I mean Nero's mom killed Claudius in his sleep so that Nero could replace him.
- **Nero, of course, turns out to be one of the cruelest**, most sadistic Christian-killers of all time!
- He **intentionally** (or at least it is believed so) **set fire to Rome** and then stood on his balcony and played his harp like he was some kind of tragic poet.
- We do know **he blamed Christians for the fire** and crucified hundreds of them. We know that **he had a party once** where he lit up his courtyard with burning Christians as lanterns.

⁸ Tim Keller, *R8-16FY*, 131–32.

- **Another time, he got mad at his pregnant wife** and kicked her to death. He felt bad about it later so he had a boy who looked similar to his wife castrated and he married the boy and called him by his wife's name.

Ladies and gentlemen: It is into this context that Paul says, "Be subject to the governing authorities and honor them."

- **So, be easy saying**, "I can't honor a political leader whom I don't respect as a person and whose policies I don't approve of."
- **Tim Keller says:** "The increasingly secular West is only just beginning to experience the level of hostility that first-century believers faced; the 21st-century persecuted church experiences it every day. It is this type of 'state' which Paul tells the Christian to submit to."⁸

So, here we go:

I. What are the responsibilities of those who govern? (vs. 4)

This is the "state's job description"⁹: For it is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For it is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong.

2 things I see in that verse: It "brings wrath on the one who does wrong."

Write that down as: **A. Punish the bad.**

- "It does not carry the sword for no reason." "The sword" represents the power to punish; to make war.
- Now, **some of you see "sword"** and wonder whether Paul is endorsing capital punishment.

⁹ Keller, 136.

- Certainly, the sword was a symbol of violence--lethal violence. You're **not getting spanked** with it. If you are disobedient to the one who wields the sword, you get stabbed with it and you die.
- **But, I do want to say**, this passage does not address all the complexities inherent in the capital punishment question—(e.g. **For what crimes** should it be administered; what is a **reasonable burden of proof**; is it **administered fairly or equitably** among social classes and ethnicities? Those are **major questions** that need our consideration.
- **But you can at least see the** Paul doesn't see the concept itself as evil.
 - (This is affirmed in other places such as Acts 25:11 where Paul says to Festus, one of the Roman rulers: "*If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die.*" (Acts 25:11). The pretty strongly implies that Paul saw some things as worthy of death.)
- **But, to reiterate, the point of this passage is not to discuss the ins and outs** of lethal force, or outline a **just war** policy, it is to say that the government bears the responsibility of **punishing the wrongdoer**.
- When they do it, they do it **in his name, whether Christians or not**: and they will be accountable to him.
- It is **his sword** that they bear. They are, vs. 3 says, **God's servants** in doing so. And so they should do that with diligence and justice.
- When **governments allow injustice** to thrive, for the **strong to trample** or the weak--whether that is a criminal with ordinary citizens, or the cause of the immigrant in the courts; the foster child in the home; the unborn in the womb; a predatory lender with the elderly; or a private individual having their religious freedoms crushed by a powerful corporation--when **governments**

allow those things to happen, they are **failing** at their God-given jobs.

- **The government bears the responsibility to protect its citizens from enemies at home and abroad**, and they are given the sword, or the gun, or the bomb, for that reason, and when they use it they use it in his name, whether they are Christians are not.

If you are in government must pursue those purposes with diligence, justice and humility. Because you will give an account to God for that.

Second thing (vs. 4): "for your good." Write that down as: **B. Promote the good**

- I want to be **careful here not to read too much** into Paul's words, since, again, Paul is not intending to lay out an exhaustive political philosophy, but **one of government's jobs is to promote the good**--the general welfare--of their citizens. That's certainly how healthy governments have seen themselves throughout history.
- **That's in our own Constitution**, right? (I snapped this pic of the Constitution when Nic Cage and I stole it).¹⁰ The founders wrote:¹¹ "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."
- This is **not the place to go into** what all goes into each category, but **Tim Keller** points out that Paul's words here avoid both extreme libertarianism or extreme liberalism: Keller: "**Christians need to be wary of extreme ideological views on the role of government.** On the one hand, it is hard to find biblical support for the very conservative view that government should do nothing

¹⁰ Promoting the good would of course be things like encouraging commerce, providing services like 911, even establishing safety nets for the extremely vulnerable.

¹¹ In particular, Gouverneur Morris. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/man-wrote-words-people-110212954.html>

but basic law enforcement. On the other hand, the Bible cannot support the very liberal/socialist view of the 'government-as-savior'."¹²

You guys still with me? Those are the responsibilities of the government. Now:

II. What are the responsibilities of the governed? (vs. 5–7)¹³

Note that Paul speaks in terms of “**obligations**” (vs. 7). I see **FOUR** of them:

A. Submit (vs. 5): Submit: obey the laws, pay your taxes and tolls, etc.

- And, vs. 5 ⁵Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath but also because of your conscience. **Not just because** they have the power to make life miserable for you if you don't, but as a way of submitting to God.
- **That means you obey them whether** you think you'll get caught or not.
- I've had **Christians tell me over the years**, “Oh, I don't worry about that on my taxes--b/c the government has no way of knowing about that income.”
- Brothers and sisters, we don't tell the truth to the government because we might get caught; I do so because we worship a God of truth, and we fill out our taxes as an act of worship to God who sees everything.

Now, one very important caveat: The government's rule is not absolute in our lives. Paul says that submitting to them is a **way of submitting to God**, which means if obeying them ever caused us to

¹² Keller, 138.

¹³ Adapted from Erwin Lutzer's sermon, “Paying Our Dues to God and Caesar”

disobey a direct command of God, we are duty-bound to practice civil disobedience.

Many commentators say that that Paul in this passage is alluding to a discussion Jesus had in Matthew 22 with the Pharisees when they asked him whether they should pay taxes or not.

- **Matthew 22: The Pharisees said**, “Hey Jesus, should we pay taxes or not?”
- Matthew says that **in asking him this they** were trying to “...entangle Jesus in his words...”
- See, ¹⁴ **in those days** taxes were paid to Rome, who had moved into Jerusalem as occupiers. And they were really oppressive. And the taxes they collected were used **not only to** fund Caesar's lavish lifestyle. They paid for the soldiers and the prisons and the crucifixions.
 - (**And, btw: bet you didn't know this:** the Colosseum, which was used to torture and kill Jews and Christians, was built during this time by Jewish taxes).
- So, **see, if Jesus says yes**, they should pay taxes, then he's saying they should give money to help sponsor oppression, and that will make a lot of Jewish zealots mad and they will want to kill him.
- **But if he says, “No, don't pay taxes,”** then the Romans will mark him a revolutionary and they will kill him.
- **So what does Jesus do? He JESUS-JUKES them.** (The original Jesus-juke!)
- He asks them to **show him the coin** they pay for the tax. **Whose image** does it have on it? “**Caesar's**,” they say. He then says, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but to God what is God's.”
- Now, when he said this, it says, **they “marveled”** (Matt. 22:22).
- **What made them marvel?** There is a subtle teaching in that message that undermines the government's claim on our lives.

¹⁴ Joby Martin, “Submit to Authority,” sermon on Romans 13:1-7. Preached at ChurchofEleven22, Aug. 5, 2018.

- The **coin** has Caesar's image on it; but **whose image do you have stamped on you?** God's.
- **So give Caesar the tax** because his image is on the coin; but **give God your all** because his image is on you.
- And that means you never obey Caesar in a way that would make you disobey God, because while Caesar has his image on the coin God has his image on you and his is the greater claim.
- As one scholar said, *"If the state commands what God forbids, or if the state forbids what God commands, then civil disobedience is a Christian duty."*¹⁵
 - **Throughout the Bible, we see examples** of believers who submit to authorities that are foolish and incompetent (think Joseph submitting to Potiphar and Pharaoh; Daniel with Neb);
 - but we also see **examples of those who disobey** the rulers when the rulers demand they do something that involves disobedience to a direct command of God. (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego; or, Peter in Acts 4 who says **"We would rather obey God than men"**).
 - Where might Christians do that today?
 - When the government requires a Christian doctor to violate his/her Hippocratic oath and perform an abortion or forces a healthcare provider to pay for it. You should obey God not men.
 - If the government requires a policeman to punish someone without due cause or pressures a judge to enforce justice in biased ways that serve the powerful. That judge should obey God not men.
 - If a boss requires you to lie to extend profits--you should obey God not men/.
 - If the government ever forced me to perform a same-sex wedding--by God's grace would obey God not men.

- If government ever forced us to be silent about the gospel or **refrain from teaching our convictions** regarding what God says about right and wrong.
- In all those situations we ought to obey God rather than men.

So, we submit. As unto God, so from our hearts, but never in a way that disobeys God.

B. Honor:

- **Notice the progression in these verses.** Submit and pay taxes, **vs. 5. Now, vs. 7,** Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.
- **For most of us**, it will be relatively easy to pay **taxes and tolls**, but Paul here talks about more.
- We are to **treat the one in authority** with "respect" and "honor."
- **Realtalk:** When you talked about **President Obama**, did you do so with respect and honor? Is that how you talk now about **President Trump**?
- **Now, I know, I know what you are saying:** What if you don't respect the person in office or agree with them?
- **Like I said, I'm sure Paul felt this way about the incestuous, mother-killin', cross-dressing, horse-promoting Caesar.**
- **But you can still**, he says, give them **the respect they are owed in their office**. And you should support them, appreciate them, and obey them wherever you can.
- **I don't see anywhere in Paul's letters** he signs off with **#notmycaesar**
- MLK was a **great example to me of someone** who attempted to honor and submit to authorities even as he defied them. If you read his **Letter from a Birmingham Jail**, you see that he recognized the legitimacy of government, even pleading with

¹⁵ Keller, 133.

them to fulfill their God-given responsibilities even as he defied them.

We can **honor even as we disobey**.

C. Engage

- This word is not directly in our text, but I'm **attempting to bridge** from Paul's context to ours, and I think it's **justified**.
- **Paul** recognizes that government is supposed to be a force for good and a source of blessing.
 - **And, in other letters, we see Paul** urging Christians to pray for government leaders to act justly. **1 Timothy 2:1–4**: Pray for gov't leaders and all in authority that we might live peaceful lives).
 - **And, we see that when Paul stands before religious leaders**, he encourages them to think biblically about their roles. In **Acts, for example**, he pleads for religious liberty.¹⁶
- **Paul** did not live in a **voting democracy**--the **Emperor was the absolute Ruler**--so that's **about all he could do**.
- But in our country, "**we the people**" **sit in the ruler's chair**, and that means **we bear ultimate responsibility for how authority** is used.
 - **The "sword" that Paul says God has given to earthly rulers** lies, at least partially, in our hands—because we have been given the prerogative to choose whose hand it goes into and how they use it.
 - **I can't see Paul urging Christians** to pray and speak out and us not to engage in the ways available to us.
 - **It seems to me that in our system of government, if we fail to be informed, and to vote**, we are every bit as negligent as

¹⁶ Acts 25:10–11

¹⁷ Here's the amazing thing: Keller says: Overall, Romans 13 gives a very positive view of the role of government. Which is surprising given the jacked up nature of

would have been a governor in Paul's day who spent all his time in leisure and never attended to the matters of state.

- **Realtalk: As it stands, only 14% of eligible adults** cast a vote for *any* candidate in the **2016 presidential primaries**. We complain about the options we ended up with but didn't do anything to affect it. Like my friend **Steve Noble says**, apathy and ignorance come at a high cost.¹⁷
- **Paul tells us in vs. 8** to "fulfill what we owe" to others.
- Electing good leaders who will enact good policy is one of the best ways of loving our neighbor, so **we owe it to them** to get engaged and vote.

One more:

D. Moderate

- (I mean this in the **verb** form, *moderate*; not the noun, "be a moderate.")
- **MODERATE** your **expectations**
- This whole passage is **built on the assumption that government's role is very limited**, and can only do so much.
- **Our ultimate hope** is never there.
- Even the best of human governments are a temporary, imperfect fill-in for God, and none of them fulfill that vision of a "more perfect union" for which we long.

(MUSIC)

- We say at TSC:
 - Our **hope** is not in politics, because **we know that salvation** didn't come to earth riding in on the wings of AF1 but cradled in a manger.
 - Our hope is not in a donkey or an elephant but the Lamb.

the rulers the unfairness of the political process. If he tells them to get engaged and support a system like the one he was under, surely he would tell us to do the same in ours! Keller, 139

- And that means **our primary work here is not in politics**. Yes, be involved. Vote. Be salt and light. *Speak prophetically*. Where you can, speak truth to power.
- And, **some of you should go into politics and make it your profession**.

But our primary work is in the church.

- We **move the world** most not through the ballot box but through prayer.
- We're **more concerned with "Who's Your One?"** then "Who's Your President."
- The **work of evangelism** is 10,000x more important than anything the NYT is paying attention to.

And, btw, as Paul shows us, **we Christians can do our work even when the people in power** would not have been not our choice.

- I say that because for many of you, you think you can only really thrive when "your people" are in power.
- You are counting down the days to **Tues, Nov 3, 2020**.
- Others of you were doing that during the Obama era.
- And you are distressed and all "woe is me" and "what are we going to do" and "what kind of country will this be for my kids to grow up in" when your guy is not in power.

Let me tell you: The early church never had the privilege of having their guy in power.

- But we **don't find them in Acts 4** going, "Oh no, Caligula is cross-dressing again, what are we going to do?" They got on their faces and said, 'Oh, sovereign God, who created the heavens and earth" and the **Holy Spirit shook** the room where they praying.
- But they **had a better King** they served, King Jesus;
- **a better country** they sought: one not made with hands;

- a **better party** they gave themselves to: Citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- **"Our guy" is ALWAYS in power.**
- Nik Ripken called *The Insanity of God*. Nik is an IMB missionary whom we've had at our church here a few times for various things:
 - He **asked believers in China** who are sometimes harassed by police there for gathering to worship, how they respond?
 - He said, **'They replied:** 'The police say, "If you do not stop these meetings, we will confiscate your house and we will throw you out into the street.'
 - **We respond, 'Do you want my house?** Well, if you do, then you need to talk to Jesus because I gave the property to him.'
 - **They usually do not know what to make of that answer.** So they say, "Well, we don't have any way to get to Jesus, but we can certainly get to you! When we take your property, you and your family will have nowhere to live!'
 - **And we respond, 'You must do what you must. But then we will be free** to trust God for shelter as well as for our daily bread.'
 - **'If you keep this up, we will beat you!'** the persecutors will tell them.
 - **'Then we will be free to trust Jesus for healing,'** the believers respond.
 - 'And then we will put you in prison!' the police threaten.
 - **By now, the believers' response is almost predictable:** 'Then we will be free to preach the good news of Jesus to the captives, to set them free. We will be free to plant churches in prison.'
 - **'If you try to do that, we will kill you!'** the frustrated authorities will vow.
 - **'Then we will be free to go to heaven** and be with Jesus forever.'"

- Our guy is always in power and we are always to follow him
- **AMEN?**

But you say:

- **What if gov't is unjust? Romans 8:28. Gen 50:20.** We serve a King above all earthly authorities and we trust his plan when they fail us.
- **What if we never get justice?** Sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared. Romans 6:3–4

Which leads me to my last statement:

- A bunch of you have **probably have been feeling pretty good** so far in this sermon. You pay your taxes, you're not a criminal (I mean, you might speed occasionally and one time you ripped that tag off your mattress that you're not supposed to, but, for the most part, you obey the rules. _
- **Here's the thing: You know what's scary?** You can be a really, really good citizen and obey all the rules and make really good grades--and your **teachers** and **parents** and the **government** can be happy with you and you can still die and spend eternity without Christ, because you **never actually gave God what is God's: YOU.**
- **Caesar's image may be stamped on our coins**, but God's image is stamped on you.
- And one day **you are going to give an account** to him.¹⁸
- **Are you going to be ready?**

Invitation

Everyone still here?

Missional Blessing + Sending

¹⁸ I'm indebted to Joby Martin for this great ending!

