***Religious Freedom in the United States  
  
GV3A***

This is segment number five of the series on Christian Service and Human Government. Some of you have been very receptive and we thank you for your kind remarks in terms of the significance that you sense in this series that we are currently engaged in, orienting Christians in this country where they have come from, and what the position of their strength is relative to human government and the effect that that has upon their opportunity to exercise the role of their Christian witness. Christians in the United States today need to realize that they are at a crisis time in their lives. We are perhaps at the kind of a crossroads that those who have preceded us in this nation have seldom faced. We must openly choose between the paganism of secular humanism which has been detached from biblical law, or for Christian theism under biblical rules. That choice is coming into clearer focus all the time. There is one thing you cannot do. You cannot mix humanism and biblical Christianity. When that is done, the result is always a victory for humanism. That's what liberal theology tried to do, and the result is that liberal theology came out exactly where the secular humanist comes out.

To attempt to serve any other master with another philosophy than that which Jesus Christ represents is naive. It cannot be done. Christians are in effect trying to live in a way that serves two masters. The Bible says that that is naive. In Matthew 6:24, the Lord Jesus says, "No man can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." Then in Matthew 23:10, we read again, "Do not be called masters, for one is your master, even Christ." So we cannot serve two masters. We have one master and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the tension in which a lot of Christians are. They don't want to cut loose from us as Christians. They don't want to say, "I'm not going to stand for Biblical Christianity." They don't want to say, "I don't want to be part of your local congregation." They don't want to say, "I don't want to be associated with what a place like Berean Memorial Church stands for." But on the other hand, they want to keep a foot in the other camp. They want to see if they can't get along with the secular humanist viewpoint. They want to see if somehow they can't keep in touch with that power base that's out there, and with the influence that they find comes to them through association with the other side. That is foolish. It is hopeless. It cannot be you. You cannot serve two masters. You cannot stand for biblical Christianity and secular humanism both.

The modern state as we know it in this country has cut loose as we have shown you from the explicit meaning of the constitution and the higher law of Scripture. It therefore does not fulfill its role to perpetuate good government. Yet, having cut itself loose from the stability of our Constitution and from the higher law God, it is determined to perpetuate itself at all costs. That's why we're seeing, again, conflicts with the higher law as we reviewed that in detail in the previous session. The unthinkable has become thinkable for us in our day. Christians are naive to think that they can continue to go their own way ignoring what is happening in our culture because of political philosophies, and because of where we have permitted our courts to drift away from the constitutional restraints. The modern state therefore wants a silent church. It wants freedom from God and from His rules.

Christians have permitted the federal government to become the master, the very thing that the Founding Fathers carefully sought to avoid. The fault is not with the people who wrote our Constitution. The fault is ours in what we have permitted the courts and the politicians to do. We face the ridiculous situation that men who will spend eternity in the lake of fire have been permitted to change the meaning of our Constitution, and to establish their humanistic delusions as the law of the land. The Christians stood by, in all the professions in all the areas of life--we stood by; we looked at these people who are going to burn in hell; and, we permitted them to undermine what God has given when he selected us as His client nation for this age.

So it is up to the Christian who knows Bible doctrine to stop the trend of American government toward tyranny, and that's where it's going. Caesar is demanding honors for himself which belong to God alone. The state wants to be the center of all human loyalties, the dispenser of material benefits, the source of all values, and the final authority on all human destiny. Those things belong to God. They do not belong to the state. As the United States government becomes increasingly more pagan, it will become more brutal in its effort to silence the church and the Christian. It is doing that now, and it is going to get worse. Federal bureaucracies now exercise tyrannical powers over the lives of American citizens. These faceless bureaucrats have never been elected and they have never been given authority by the people. However, simply by the government itself, by areas of the government dispensing to them the authority to exercise governing rules over the people without any recourse beyond them, they are authorities unto themselves.

That, in the biblical view, is blasphemy of the institution of government. A government and its administrators are granted power conditionally. If they violate God's laws then that government becomes satanic and it must be resisted. There is a problem that we're coming around to have to face. Do we resist, and how do we resist? Failure to resist will in time mean that the unthinkable things of yesterday such as abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, rational suicide, public nudity, and dignifying sexual perversions--all of those unthinkable things of yesterday become the thinkable today. That's why we are where we are. It's because we Christians have sat around and permitted it to happen. We Christians must leave nothing in our government, in our society, and in our culture which is untouched by the doctrines of Scripture. We are at war and it is high time that we realized it.

We will of course have within the Christian community the summertime soldier, and we will have those who will be ready to enter the arena and face the lions. But whichever direction you go, be aware of the fact that you will be making the choice. We are at war with a pagan society.

**The First Amendment**

That brings us to an area on which we need some very important orientation. That is when we talk about matters of religious freedom in this country, it is very natural that our mind should go to the very First Amendment which was added to the constitution. Before the 13 colonies would even accept the constitution, they said, "Hey listen, there are certain things that we think the federal government could do, and we are afraid of it, and we want to spell those out very distinctly that they should not be permitted to do these things." One of them was relative to establishing a Church of the United States and of hindering the Judeo-Christian religion from being expressed. So they wrote the First Amendment which forbad the federal government from exercising the authority to make any law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

We had some very wise men like Madison and Hamilton, for example, who did not like the idea of adding any amendments to the Constitution. They said, "Look, we've made it clear that what we are creating is a limited federal government. The power of this nation lies in the states and in the people there. If we add one amendment, we are in effect saying that the federal government has authority to enter areas beyond these that we have spelled out." I think the Constitution has something like 21 areas of authority that were given to the federal government. Then it said that everything else belongs to the state and the people thereof, and the federal government must not touch it. In the same way, the states must not touch the areas of responsibility of authority given to the federal government, like making war; making government foreign policy relations; issuing money; and, so on. All these things were specifically spelled out.

Hamilton and Madison said, "This is a mistake. We should not add amendments. The very fact that we add these amendments on these things we call our Bill of Rights is suggesting that the federal government can at some time in the future step across the line beyond these specific areas in which we have spelled out that they may have authority." I think that time has demonstrated that they were right. Nevertheless, the people of the United States at that time were so uneasy because of what they had come through in the Revolutionary War against Britain and the encroachments on their freedom that they said, "We want to spell it out in those amendments."

So the First Amendment says, in part, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." You have to interpret the meaning of words as these men interpreted the words to know what this means. First of all, when they used the word "Congress," they meant the federal government. Of course, restraint was put upon the Congress because the Congress is the most likely area of our government to become a tyrant for the simple reason that they control the purse strings. They control the dispensing of money from the Treasury. He who holds the purse is in command of everything. So it was very natural that they should have directed this as a restraint upon Congress specifically because they make the rules. So, the word "Congress" meant the federal government.

Secondly, the word "respecting" (Congress shall make no law "respecting") means having anything to do with. They'll make no law having anything to do with, and the thing that they were not to have anything to do with, they said, was an establishment of religion. The word "establishment" means government support of a single church, or government preference--one creed or denomination over another. The idea was that the government would not make any rules respecting the establishment of a national church. Furthermore, the Founding Fathers said what we mean by the word "religion" is what all of us in the country understand by the religion we are trying to keep from becoming dominant, and that is Judeo-Christianity. That is, they wanted to avoid one denomination becoming superior to another denomination because the government took over to sponsor it.

**Religion**

James Madison said that "religion" meant "the duty we owe our Creator." Now that's Christian theism. That was the idea. That was the thing that we came to. So, in effect, here's what the First Amendment says, putting it in a little more updated language: The First Amendment, in part, says, "The Federal Government shall make no law having anything to do with supporting a national denominational church or prohibiting the free exercise of Judeo-Christian theism." I want you to get the fact that when they said religion, they meant Judeo-Christian theism. That is what's important. They didn't just mean any cult or any bit of Eastern mysticism or anything that came along. They meant Judeo-Christian theism. There were to be no rules to inhibit the expression of Christianity as we know it in a biblical sense.

Now the reason they did this is because Britain, you may not be aware, wanted to impose on the colonies The Church of England as the official Church of America, and to be supported by the taxation of the colonists. The Church of England, of course, is the Episcopalian Church, it is the National Church of England, and it is supported by taxation. They wanted to impose it upon the colonies. Unfortunately, our history books don't inform us and don't tell our schoolchildren that one of the fundamental reasons for the American Revolution was this religious issue. This was one of the primary reasons why the American colonists went to war with Britain--because they did not want the Church of England imposed as the Church of America in the colonies. This was specifically pointed out by John Adams as one of the causes for the war.

So, the framers of the Constitution provided the First Amendment to forbid the establishment of a national church of the United States, and to prevent the federal government from hindering or interfering with the free practice of Judeo-Christianity, and of course by implication, with any other religious group. But the thing that the First Amendment was trying to protect was to keep us from having a national church and at the same time keep the government from interfering with the expression of Christianity in our society. If you understand that, you are a lot smarter than a lot of politicians are still as to what the First Amendment is all about. It was to prevent the federal government from doing anything to interfere with the expression of biblical Christianity. That's what they meant by the word religion.

It is interesting that in the First Amendment, religious freedom is placed first in the list of other freedoms that are included within that amendment because religious freedom is the basis of all other freedoms. The thinking of the American founders, when they formulated the First Amendment was governed by the thinking of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of the believers. When they spoke about government not interfering with the religious expression of the people, it was because they came from the Reformation thinking of the priesthood of every believer. When you deal with the priesthood of believers, you're dealing with the matter of conscience. So, they demanded liberty of conscience and freedom to express that liberty of conscience, which was a religious freedom, to express itself in all those other freedoms mentioned in the First Amendment, namely: freedom of speech; freedom of the press; freedom of peaceful assembly; and, the petitioning of government to correct the grievances that it had imposed on the people.

Civil liberties do not prosper when religious liberty is hindered. That was the bottom line. They knew it. Those men knew what they were doing. They were experienced in these things, and they recognized that when they talked about preserving freedom in the Bill of Rights, right at the top, the very first thing they put in the very First Amendment was religious freedom for Judeo-Christianity. It was not to be hindered in any way by the federal government.

It was the reformers who pointed out that both the church and the civil government were under the authority of the Bible, the higher law. Each person, therefore, had to learn what the Bible says and what God requires of man so that he could understand how to deal with the social institutions. Deciding what the Bible taught was, of course, a matter of conscience, and that's why they had to have freedom of conscience. If you were going to know how to apply God's higher law to man's laws, you have to have that freedom of conscience, and that's what the First Amendment was all about. There was therefore no church or state authority which could dictate to the individual.

So, the citizen could exercise the liberty of conscience in challenging what he considered invalid acts of the state by biblical standards. The reformers declared that if civil government transgressed the law of Scripture, the Christian was at liberty to refuse to comply, and should do so and suffer any consequence. This was of course the pattern of the New Testament Christians. They turned to civil disobedience relative to the Roman government, and they took the consequences of obeying God instead of man.

The religion of the First Amendment then is not just any religion such as a cult or some variant of Eastern mysticism. It is the biblical religion of Judeo-Christianity that they had in mind. All other religious faiths, as a matter of fact, were virtually non-existent in colonial America. When you talked about religion in colonial America, there wasn't anything else, basically, but Christianity in the colonies at that time. So, that was naturally what people thought of when they talked about religion. So it was this Judeo-Christianity point of view which was the higher law that they spoke of as the basis of their freedoms.

Now the constitution makes no reference to God, but it was the natural implication and understanding of the framers of the Constitution and of the people that they must operate on Christian principles. They didn't have to spell it out. That was their frame of reference. The moral laws and the divine principles of the Bible were assumed to be binding upon the federal government and the consensus of the citizens. You could not violate those principles such as we looked at this in the previous segment which are God's basic moral principles.

So, the First Amendment preserved a Christian denominational pluralism all based on the Bible. It was not the pluralism which we have today which views pagan religions as being of equal value with Christianity, and therefore equally entitled to govern our laws.

For example, I remind you again that when the Mormons went out west, when the United States eventually moved out and absorbed the state of Utah, the Mormons through their prophet Joseph Smith claimed that they had a direct revelation from God. They claimed that a man who was to rise to the highest level of the Mormon heaven (and there are three levels in the Mormon heaven), the man who was to rise to the highest level of exaltation is only the man who has more than one wife. He has a plurality of wives. Polygamy was pronounced by Joseph Smith as a direct revelation from God.

Along came the United States government. Here is our Constitution. Here is our law-making body, and a religious point of view such as this that the Mormons presented from the frame of reference of God's higher law. The federal government said, "You're wrong." That is a viewpoint which is not sustained by Scripture, but which in point of fact is condemned by the Bible. Whatever you as a religious group believe in this matter, you cannot practice polygamy. We outlaw it." This is a perfect beautiful example of higher law being applied to man's law.

Since Joseph Smith did tell his people that Jesus Christ had come to the North American continent, and that he had appeared to the Aztecs and to the other Indian cultures that were on this continent after He was resurrected, and announced what had happened and what He had done for them, and that a new gospel would eventually come to them, Joseph Smith might have claimed that God had given him also the revelation that the Aztecs were performing a ritual which God desired them to perform, namely the sacrifice daily of a human beings. The Aztecs, in worshiping their god who is Satan the sun god--Satan is always thirsty for blood, the Aztecs had the custom of selecting one person, and every day the priest would lay this poor soul selected that day out on the altar and they would perform a human sacrifice.

Now what if Joseph Smith came along and said, "Yes, these Aztecs to whom Jesus Christ spoke and revealed that a new gospel was coming were also informed by God that human sacrifice is to be performed, and every day a non-Mormon is to be sacrificed to God. Non-Mormons are called gentiles. That's you folks out there. Of course, that's one way of handling that problem of conflict that you create with your points of view. Well again, the federal government could quite obviously say, "It doesn't matter what you believe you have as a revelation from God, that violates the higher law of the Bible. You cannot murder a person in human sacrifice."

Now, that's the kind of thing we're talking about. The United States Constitution spelled out in the First Amendment the protection for Judeo-Christianity as the higher law which was to govern all that this nation did in all of its governmental activities. Of course, our Constitution did not create a theocracy such as the Jews had. That's what the Mormons claimed they were--that they had a direct line of communication to God which was giving them daily guidance. The Jews had a theocracy and God was their governor. That was a wonderful system. They came to a point in time when they rejected it. They had to be like the other nations who had a human king.

So, Samuel was all broken up. He goes to tears. He just feels crushed that these people are such idiots. They want to reject God. They want to put a human king over them. And God said, "Samuel don't feel bad. They haven't rejected you. They've rejected me. I'll give them a king, and down the line they will regret turning from God as their ruler to having a human ruler over them." But when the human ruler came in, when Saul was made king, it was made very clear to Saul that he must rule according to the commandments of God. He was not to exercise his authority in a way that violated those commandments.

The United States, while not a theocracy, nevertheless was based on biblical principles. What the Bible condemns as being against the character of God and His laws are viewed as undermining the good order in society and in civil government, and therefore are to be rejected. There are many things that our society will do which we say, "This undermines the good order of society. This undermines the good order of our homes. This undermines the good order of what is beneficial for our children. This is not in keeping with the ideals of Christianity. Therefore we object to this, and we want it removed. We want it stopped." That is applying Christian principles to our culture.

The First Amendment was designed to encourage genuine Christianity without inhibiting the private rights of conscience or the freedom of religious worship of other views which did not conflict with biblical viewpoints. The First Amendment was not designed to make all religions equal. It was not designed to level all religious viewpoints to equal marriage, and then for the state to reject all of them. The First Amendment separated the institution of the church from the institution of the state, but it did not separate the Christian religion from influencing the federal government. The idea that a Christian should practice biblical principles at home and in the church but not in government and society at large was unthinkable to the men who wrote the Constitution.

So, the federal government has no constitutional authority for preventing Christians from engaging, for example, voluntarily as a group in prayer on public facilities. The federal government has no authority whatsoever to forbid that. The Bible says that God prospers groups of believers who gather in prayer. Two or three people gathered in Jesus' name have Christ Himself among them, and they gathering in prayer are a powerful influence for good. The federal government had no authority on the basis of the First Amendment to undermine Judeo-Christian expression of prayer on public property. They had the right to keep anybody from being forced to pray or forced to perform some religious ritual, but they had no authority on the basis of the First Amendment to say that you cannot pray on public grounds. But we Christians stood around and we let them violate this (these nine men of the Supreme Court--perhaps all of them headed for the lake of fire). We permitted them to violate the original meaning of the First Amendment.

When the Bill of Rights was written, these amendments were written originally as a restraint upon the federal government. They were not written as restraints upon the states. This is very important. The founding fathers very clearly said this is to hold the federal government back. That's why Hamilton and Madison said, "We don't like this idea of adding amendments. It suggests that the federal government can come in here." But the people said, "Yes, we want to be sure the federal government *understands* that it can't come in here." So, these amendments apply to the federal government.

**The 14th Amendment--The Due Process Clause**

Following the Civil War, the 14th Amendment which passed. In that amendment, the Supreme Court, in time, in the early part of the 20th century, found the loophole that it was looking for in order to give the federal government power over the states and to take the Bill of Rights and twist it around and say, "This does not apply to restraint on the federal government. It applies to restraint on the states." The Supreme Court used the 14th Amendment to do that in this way:

The 14th Amendment was passed after the Civil War to prevent the various state governments from enacting laws which would prevent black citizens from owning property. There was a very great danger that, in the states which had been in the Confederacy, they would attempt to keep black citizens from owning personal private property. So the 14th Amendment was passed for that purpose and that purpose alone. The 14th Amendment therefore states that no state (and the word "state" is used) shall deprive any person of life, liberty, and property without due process of law. Now, this amendment resulted in giving enormous power to the federal government to restrict the actions of the state government because it said that no *state* shall be able to deprive any person of life, liberty, and property without due process of law.

Now the Supreme Court, in time, made an arbitrary decision, and all the Christians stood around and let them do it, and did not rise in indignation. What the Supreme Court did in time was that it arbitrarily decided that the liberty of free speech which is guaranteed by the First Amendment is protected by the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment. Congress said, "You have liberty of free speech." The 14th Amendment says that the courts are to see that no state inhibits any of your liberties, and therefore the restriction of the Bill of Rights is against the states. It is a restriction that the states cannot deny you your liberty. The Supreme Court, the federal government, is to see to it that your free speech is guaranteed because that's what the 14th Amendment says--that without due process of law, you cannot be denied the liberty of free speech. You cannot be denied life or any of your liberties or the possession of property.

Now, since the 14th Amendment is against the state, the Supreme Court was able to rule that the First Amendment which it protects, and the other nine amendments of the Bill of Rights as well, apply not to the federal government but to the states. If you were to read American civil law, you would discover that nobody pretends that this is not so. Authority after authority will say, "Yes, when the Bill of Rights was written, including the First Amendment, it was a restraint against the federal government." With the 14th Amendment telling the federal government to protect your liberty, the Supreme Court arbitrarily said, "Now we're changing the application of the Bill of Rights to restraint upon the state, not restraint upon the federal government," which gave the federal government an open range to go anywhere it wanted to. From then on, the federal government, as the Supreme Court justices have often observed, are the ones who tell you what the law is. The law is what the Supreme Court says it is. You say, "How can that happen?" It happened because that restraint was removed from the federal government to have to abide by those specific privileges that the Constitution spelled out and said, "Now we are not restrained to just those things. We can do anything because we have to protect your liberty."

So the Bill of Rights which was once a source of freedom against federal government interference, against the states and its people, is now the very basis of the intervention of the federal government against the states and its people. Power in local matters has been transferred to a centralized federal bureaucracy. The result is the restricting by the federal government of Christian principles and the passing of laws, the taking of public stands, which are contrary to the Word of God. American society has been secularized once the due process clause was used by the federal government, by the Supreme Court, to say, "Now the restraint is against the states--not against the federal government. We the federal government are to protect you from the states rather than the states protecting you from the federal government."

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas has said, "Due process to the vernacular is the wild card that can be put to such use as the judges choose." Douglass had it right. The Due Process Clause became the wild card that the Supreme Court could use any way it wanted to, and it did, and won the game. The First Amendment provides freedom for the Christian religion. That's what they meant by the word religion--Christianity, not freedom from the Christian religion. The separation of church and state has to do with what the federal government may not do, not with what the church shall not do. The Constitution does not speak of a wall of separation between church and state, but of a limitation of government to control the church.

So, the First Amendment has been secularized, and a great tragedy has come upon this nation. Think that through. It's a little technical, but as Christians you should understand how it is that we are so burdened by a government that can exercise such enormous power from Washington over us, and that we are in such a helpless position. It all started when the Fourteenth Amendment due process clause was used to reverse the application of the restraints on the federal government imposed by the Bill of Rights.

So now you and I as Christian soldiers are faced with resisting tyranny. The unbeliever has no reason to obey civil authorities except that the state has the police force that he fears and the patronage that he desires. The believer however obeys the civil authorities because God has told him to do so. So, we begin with the fact that we are obedient to constituted government authorities. A Christian is not a rebel against authority. Only a Christian who is spiritually immature and has spiritual weaknesses would be the rebel against constituted authority.

Romans 13:1-4 says this: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. (These are governmental / civil authorities.) Whoever therefore resists the power resists the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment, for rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil. Will you then be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and you shall have praise of the same. For he (the government authority) is the minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid, for he bears not the sword (the capacity to punish) in vain; for he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil."

Now that spells it out very clearly that human government is established by God to be the umpire to maintain order within a society. Human government is to punish those who break the rules. These rulers are called ministers of God. The president is a minister of God. Congressmen are ministers of God. Senators are ministers of God. As ministers of God, they obviously must act according to the laws of God. That's the problem. We have to go to the polls pretty soon. Somebody came up to me today and said, "How in the world am I going to vote? What do I know about these men?" What he was trying to ask me was, "How do I know that this person is a real minister of God?" He cannot be a minister of God if he does not understand Bible doctrine so that he knows how to make decisions relative to laws that are not in conflict with the word of God.

However, when you do find yourself strapped with a civil authority which is working in conflict to the Word of God, then you know he is not a minister of God. He has prostituted his authority. He has violated his trust and therefore should be resisted and should be removed. He is to be a minister of God. He cannot be a minister of God if he acts in conflict with the Word of God. Now I am operating from the frame of reference that I expect you to understand that the Bible is not a book of mystery. The Bible is a book that we clearly understand. Do not insult the living God by suggesting that He would reveal Himself to us in a way that we cannot understand. This is one of the prime evidences that the charismatic movement is a fraud. It is not of God because its communications are unintelligible. They are gibberish communications, nothing like the New Testament tongues of understandable languages. God always speaks in terms that we can understand.

So we do know what the Bible teaches about the laws of God. We do know what the Bible teaches about the regulations of God. When the Bible tells us, "Thou shalt not murder," then we have a guideline for how we treat human life--and it is human life whether it's in the womb or out of the womb. We have a guideline for how we treat a life in the womb which is destined to be a human being, and not a goat or a dog or a rat. We have a guideline. Whatever else you may say about that potential human life, we have a guideline. You do not murder. You do not take that life. It is protected by the Word of God. If the Supreme Court justices had been men of the Word of God, they would have known that abortion was a very great evil, and they would have rejected it. Instead, because they had now come to where they were authorities over the states, unrestrained, they could impose their secular humanist viewpoint upon all of society. At the time they did it, most Americans shuddered and recoiled in horror because they believed that taking an unborn life was in the category of murder.

So, we as Christians, because the Bible tells us to obey government authorities, that's what we do. There are Christian limits to his civil obedience. God has not set up civil government authority independent of Himself. The civil government is not to be obeyed no matter what it does. The idea "My country, right and wrong" is a satanic idea, and don't fall for it. It is not "My country right or wrong." It is "My country with my loyalty and my obedience when it is right." As per the Word of God, it was wrong for the German Christians during the Nazi rule of Hitler to say, "My country right or wrong." It was wrong for the German Christian to permit the Jews to be slaughtered in the area that he could have protected one, that he could have saved the life of a Jew, that he could have given him assistance. That's what he should have done as a Christian even though it was the law of Germany that you must not do that. That violated the Word of God, and the German Christian should have rejected it. The civil government is not to be obeyed no matter what it does.

The Biblical principle is to render appropriate obedience to God and to the state. Matthew 22:21 says, "Unto Caesar the things that are pertinent to the institution of the state; unto God the things that are pertinent to the institution of the church." The order of obedience is to God's law first, and then to man's law. It is very important that we understand this. Our forefathers in the Christian faith, whose history we have recorded in the Book of Acts, very clearly demonstrated that. So civil government stands under God's law in Scripture. When it stands under God's law, it is to be obeyed. As long as it conforms to scriptural principles, it is to be obeyed. The state has delegated authority from God. It is not autonomous. The state is authorized to be the divine agent of justice to restrain evil in a society and to preserve freedom. 1 Peter 2:13-17 tells us that. However, when a government goes beyond its divinely appointed role of maintaining public order, and becomes a player in the game of life rather than the umpire, then it is guilty of usurping authority and as such becomes, by divine viewpoint standards, lawless and a tyranny itself.

The Bible says that human government is an institution of God. The Bible says that human government can do one thing and one thing alone. It maintains order. It maintains peace in society. It maintains protection internally and externally for all the people that they may exercise the freedoms which they have from God, and *that's all government can do.* When government steps in and says we're going to be the distributor of wealth; we're going to be the one who sets values; or, we're going to be the one who makes decisions relative to moral matters such as abortion, then government has stepped out of line. I hope you are beginning to get a feel of how loathsome has become the condition of the American democracy today; the role that government plays relative to the Word of God; and, how it is in violation of the fundamental principles of biblical morality as well as the role that government should play.

Now, next time, what do you do in facing this kind of tyranny? And that's what it is. It is tyranny. When it is out of line with the word of God, it is tyranny. Here's a government which has taken the First Amendment and turned it around. Instead of protecting us against the federal government's encroachment, it is telling us to butt out of influencing the authorities; to butt out of influencing our society; to mind our own business; and, to be silent, which is just the very opposite of why that amendment was written.

Now what are you going to do? How are you going to respond to this when it comes right down close to you, and when you have to obey Caesar rather than God? There are some steps to take and we shall look at those next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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