

## Balance

"The truth, out of balance, always leads to heresy." This quote, which I heard many years ago, has helped me stay vigilant in my teaching and preaching. Some might use the quote to justify unbiblical teachings but it is meant guide us to the scriptures themselves to find God's own teachings in their fullest and truest sense.

With that in mind, I want to address the current lockdown orders issued by various governmental entities from federal down to the local levels. The question on the table here is, "Should Christians ignore lockdown orders that demand we not meet for worship?" (A sensitive issue indeed.) "What saith the scriptures?" Roman 4:3.

On the one hand, we are commanded to worship and not forsake the assembling ourselves together (Hebrews 10:24, 25). And we must not allow anyone, government or otherwise, to tell us we cannot share Jesus with others. On the other hand we are commanded to obey civil laws where we live, Romans 13:1-6. For now let's focus on I Peter 2:11-17:

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

The challenge becomes quite clear: what shall we do when government edicts collide with God's word? In Acts 5 the apostles chose to break civil law and continue to speak about Jesus. God's word must, in our minds, hearts and hands, take precedence over man's law. *But is there a middle ground without ignoring scripture? I believe often there is.*

In Acts 5 the Roman authorities were trying to stamp out Christianity. In our current lockdown the authorities are trying to stamp out the corona virus, Covid-19. I see these *temporary* stay at home orders as good and proper quarantine procedures as we see in Leviticus 13 and 14. We see the practical working of that separation in Luke 17:12, wherein the man with leprosy stood away, *social distancing*. You may agree with me or not, but I believe the *biblical* balance here would be to follow the governmental mandates for the lockdown *for a while* to help curb the spread of this virus. *If government officials, at any level, were to try to use this situation as an opportunity to stop our worship or evangelism indefinitely, I would choose to ignore those mandates as Peter and John did in Acts 5:27-32.*

Remember, it is also God's law to obey our laws as much as possible (Romans 13:1-6), to keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles (non-believers here), and to honor the king (I Peter 2:17). In balance, we must not ignore God's laws, nor the laws of our nation. In balance, we must follow both. In balance, we can *almost* always find choices that keep us in the proper context of submission and obedience that pleases God. So let us be diligent, honest, dedicated, careful and faithful as we navigate these challenging waters so that can, "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

Ray Wallace