

June 21st, 2020

The Church of God in the City of Man

1 Corinthians 1:2

What we need in this hour

It seems like 2020 seems to be getting worse and worse. Each headline seems to reinforce Orwell's dystopian future he wrote about in 1984. The temptation I feel is that we would spend out time here responding to many of the things we see. Perhaps you feel a similar temptation—the devil whispering in our collective ears—asking: 'what does *this* preaching, *this* ancient letter, *these* words have anything to do with the current crisis we find ourselves in? Shouldn't we be focusing on the here and now?'

But to give into that temptation, to set aside the expositional preaching of God's Word in order to address 'more pressing concerns' would demonstrate two things about us. 1) It would demonstrate that we don't believe that the Word of God is **relevant**—that His Word can't *speak* to the current situation. And 2) It would demonstrate that we don't believe that the Word of God is **sufficient**—that His Word can't *support* us in the current situation. Dear congregation, this is where must fight against the devil's lies. The Word of God is the most relevant book in this age or any age, and it is the only book sufficient to meet our needs. It is only through the Scriptures that God "...granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness..." (2 Peter 1:3). What we need in this hour is to ask but one question: "What does the Scripture say?"

Like no other society on earth

What does the Scripture say this morning? Last week we looked carefully at our author—the Apostle Paul. This week we are looking carefully at who Paul was writing to—the Church in Corinth. This description that Paul gives of the Church in v.2 is the most "elaborate description of the church...than in any

of his other letters.”¹ He calls her the *church of God...those sanctified in Christ Jesus...[those] called to be saints...those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*. What does this mean? It means that you belong to the most special, most unique, most blessed society in the universe. There is no society of people, no ethnic group, no mission, no nation, no dynasty, no kingdom that surpasses the privilege of the Church of God. One author has said this:

“The Christian society is a kingdom, set up by express Divine appointment, and differs from every other society on earth in this remarkable fact, that the builder and maker of it is God.”²

No other society, has God sent His Son to die for. No other society has God sent His Spirit to teach, comfort, help and indwell. No other society has God given His great and precious promises to. No other society does God call ‘My people.’ And no other society besides the Church will see His face and dwell with Him forever.

The Church of God in the city of man

It is vital that we remember our method from last week. We cannot rush past these first few verses. A house’s foundation cannot be rushed. If it is built wrong, the house will come crashing down. Likewise, our understanding of the rest of this letter depends on the foundation that is being built here. This morning we are looking at how the Church of God relates to the city of man. What is the relationship between church and state? Are both these institutions from God? If so, where does the authority of both start and stop? How are we think about our citizenship in these two different societies?

¹ Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), pg. 55

² James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ: A Treatise on the Nature, Powers, Ordinances, Discipline, and Government of the Christian Church*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2016), pg. 22

The Big Idea...

God is the author, administrator and advocate of His Church, therefore we must join her, defend her, and rest in God's preserving her

- ☆ The Author of the Church of God
- ☆ The Administrator of the Church of God
- ☆ The Advocate of the Church of God

I. The Author of the Church of God

ἐκκλησία

Please look with me **v.2**. Paul writes “To the church of God...” To the ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia* of God. *Ekklēsia* come from two root words *ek* meaning “out of” and *kaleo* meaning “to call.” So *ekklesia* means “the called out ones.” It carries the idea of an assembly, a group of people gathered together that is separate from the general population for a purpose. The word was not restricted to a religious sense in the ancient Greek world. In Acts 19, there was a riot at Ephesus because of the gospel that Paul was preaching. In **v.32** we read “Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the *assembly*—the ἐκκλησία—was in confusion.”³ The town clerk stood up to quiet them down and said that if they wanted to bring charges then fine, but that it needed to “...be settled in the regular *assembly*—the ἐκκλησία.” So the Greeks used the word to describe a public assembly.

ἐκκλησία: the old and new Israel

When the LXX was written—which is the Greek translation of the OT—between the 3rd and 2nd century B.C., ἐκκλησία was used promiscuously to

³ also cf. v.39 and v.41

describe Israel. **1 Chronicles 29:1** “David the king said to all the *assembly*—the ἐκκλησία.” **Deuteronomy 31:31** “Moses spoke...in the ears of all the *assembly*—the ἐκκλησία—of Israel.” Consequently, Stephen applied this word to Israel in the NT. **Acts 7:38** “This [Moses] was in the *congregation*—the ἐκκλησί—in the wilderness.” Israel was called the ἐκκλησία not only in the LXX but in the NT. Why is this relevant? Because the apostle Paul took this word and applied it the NT people of God. Why? Because he wanted these early Christians to see themselves as the New Israel.⁴ Not because the NT people of God *replace* Israel, but rather because we are simply an extension of God’s redemptive plan throughout history. “There is neither Jew nor Greek...for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring...” (**Galatians 3:28-29**).

1 Corinthians: a letter on ἐκκλησία

Paul uses the word ἐκκλησία 22 times in this book—more than any other book in the NT. If Paul’s focus in Romans and Galatians is on Soteriology—the doctrine of salvation; if his focus in Colossians and Philippians is on Christology—the doctrine of Christ; if his focus in Thessalonians is on Eschatology—the doctrine of the end times; then certainly his focus in 1 Corinthians is on Ecclesiology—the doctrine of the church.⁵

The ἐκκλησία of God

Now notice *the very first thing* that Paul says about the church here in v.2. He says “To the church *of God*.” This phrase “of God” is in the genitive case. When a noun or pronoun⁶ is in the genitive case, it shows possession or

⁴ Kim Riddlebarger, *The Lectio Continua: Expository Commentary on the New Testament: First Corinthians*, (Powder Springs, GA.,: Tolle Lege Press, 2013), pg. 3

⁵ For a breakdown of all Paul’s letters, cf. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church Vol. 1: APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY: From the Birth of Christ to the Death of St. John, A.D. 1-100*, (Peabody, MA.,: Hendrickson Publishers, Reprint 2011), pg. 752

⁶ or adjective

ownership. So in **Matthew 24:1**, it says of Jesus: “his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple”—the word “his” is in the genitive case, modifying the word “disciples.” Meaning, Jesus possessed these disciples, they belonged to Him, they were “his disciples.” Here in **v.2**, Paul is not simply distinguishing the ἐκκλησία of God, from the ἐκκλησία of Artemis—the goddess of the Ephesians, or from the ἐκκλησία of Venus—the goddess of the Corinthians. No he is saying something much more profound. He’s saying this ἐκκλησία—this assembly—belongs to God. This means two vital things. 1) God is the **author** of the Church. As Carl Trueman said “The church is God’s creature, not the invention of human beings.”⁷ 2) It means that God is the **master** of the Church. “The church is a body of people who belong not to themselves or to any leader or group but to God.”⁸

God is *especially* the Author and Master of the Church

You may say to me: “That’s not saying very much, because God is the author and master of all things.” **Deuteronomy 10:14** says “Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.” Therefore saying that He is the Author and Master of the Church isn’t saying much. I would respond by saying, ‘Yes it is true that God owns all the world, *but* in a special way, a peculiar way He owns the Church. Peter tells the Church in **1 Peter 2:9-10** “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession...once you were not a people, but now you are God's people...”⁹

⁷ quoted in Bannerman, pg. xiii

⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Publishers, 1984), pg. 5

⁹ This verse reinforces what I said earlier about the ἐκκλησία in the NT being the New Israel. In this verse, Peter applies titles used of Israel directly to Christians—cf. Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; and Isaiah 43:20.

Why is the Church *especially* God's own possession?

There are two reasons why we can say the Church is *especially* God's own possession. 1) Because God *chose* all of her members. That's Paul's point at the end of this chapter. Look at v.26 "For consider your calling, brothers..." v.27 "God chose..."; again halfway through v.27 "God chose..."; v.28 "God chose"; v.30 "And *because of him*, you are in Christ Jesus." The Church is God's because He chose its' members. 2) The Church is especially God's own possession because He purchased it at the cost of His own Son.¹⁰ Please turn to 6:19-20. Look at the very end of v.19: "You are not your own, *for* [v.20] you were bought with a price." "We are not our own, individually or collectively, but have all been bought with the price of Christ's blood."¹¹

The Latitudinarians¹²

Now in our very individualistic age, Evangelicals can affirm *all of that*—that God is the Author and Master of the Church, that God chose her members, and purchased them through Christ—*yet* they can still conclude that in terms of "doing" church together—the Christian church is *simply* a human society "owing its [functional practice] to voluntary agreement among its members."¹³ This was the view of the Latitudinarians, a group in 17th century who believed that any particular way of doing church was "a matter of mere human arrangement."¹⁴ In other words, they could affirm that God has done something miraculous with the individual, but He has left the social aspect of being a Christian up to personal preference. I would suggest to you that many Evangelicals today, especially here in the West have a Latitudinarian spirit when it comes to the church of God. They feel they are at liberty to go to church or no; to become a member or no; to

¹⁰ Acts 20:28 "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, *which he obtained with his own blood.*"

¹¹ MacArthur, pg. 5

¹² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latitudinarian>

¹³ Bannerman, pg. 22

¹⁴ *ibid*, pg. 200

partake in the sacraments or no; to submit to church leadership or no. Either explicitly or implicitly they treat the Church of God as if it is all personal preference. The Holy Spirit and the Bible is sufficient for them, and besides the Bible doesn't have any express commands regarding 'how to do church.'

What does God's Word say?

How do we answer this? With Word of God. What are the express commands regarding how to do church?

God commands us to gather corporately. **Hebrews 10:25** "...let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together..."

God commanded one day in seven to be given for corporate worship. **Exodus 20:8** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Jesus commanded that disciples be taught and baptized. **Matthew 28:19** "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

God commands that the LORD's Supper be done according to the apostolic rule. **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

God commands us to practice church discipline and carefully guard the membership of the church. **Matthew 18:15-17** and **1 Corinthians 5**

God commands us to install pastors and deacons as officer bearers in the church and gives us specific qualifications. **Titus 1:5** "...appoint elders in every town as I directed you."

God commands us to submit, obey, respect and honor the leaders in our church. **Hebrews 13:17** and **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**

God commands that preaching must be the priority. **2 Timothy 4:1-2** “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season...”

God commands what types of prayers we should make. **1 Timothy 2:1-2**

God commands what types of songs we should sing together. **Ephesians 5:19** “...addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart...”

God commands us to do all things in the church in order to edify and build up others. **1 Corinthians 14:12** “So with yourselves...strive to excel in building up the church...[v.26] Let all things be done for building up.”

God has left us with no choice¹⁵

Do you see beloved? God has not merely saved the individual and left him to his own personal preference thereafter. No. God has commanded us to do things that cannot be obeyed apart from the ἐκκλησία of God.¹⁶ As the 19th century Scotsman James Bannerman once wrote:

“It is not a matter of choice, but of express obligation, [that] a Christian man join with others...The command is ‘to confess Christ before men;’¹⁷ and upon

¹⁵ “Without the existence of a Church, or of a body of believers, as contradistinguished from believers individually, very much of what is contained in the Bible would be unintelligible, and without much practical application.” Trueman quoted in Bannerman, pg. 2

¹⁶ “That community is one, therefore, of Divine institution; and in the duty laid upon them, not as a matter of choice, but of express command, to become members of it, we see the ordinance of God for the existence and permanent establishment of a Church on earth.” Bannerman, pg. 21

¹⁷ Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; Romans 10:9

the ground of that command, then, is laid the foundation of a society, each member of which is called upon, whether he will or will not, to lift up a public testimony for his Savior jointly with other believers.”¹⁸

Experimental ἐκκλησία

So let’s test ourselves here. How do you view Church *of God*? Do you view this society as a supernatural work of God or as a *mere* human society?¹⁹ Are we here this morning out of *mere* tradition? ‘This is how other churches have done it for years so we will follow suit.’ Or do you understand that we are here because of God’s express command, and that the things that we are doing are expressly commanded in the Scripture? Do you realize that a solitary Christian is a contradiction in terms? In **1 Corinthians 1:27**, Paul says “Now you are the body of Christ.” He is not saying that to the individual believer, but to the whole church. No individual is the body of Christ. It’s a contradiction. If you are standing outside of the Church this morning, doing this thing called Christianity according to your own personal preferences, just know that you are standing against the express commands of God. It is not the Church of Michael, or Susan or Daniel, it is the Church of God. That’s our **first point**. God is the Author and Master of the Church and we are not at liberty to shape it and fashion as we like.

¹⁸ Bannerman, pg. 21

¹⁹ “Christianity is not *merely* a personal religion, but in its very nature a social one.”
Bannerman, pg. 195

II. The Administrator²⁰ of the Church of God

The city of man

Who is the administrator or the manager or the ruler over the Church of God? This question is a vital question to answer. Let's look again at v.2. "To the church of God that is in *Corinth*..." What is Corinth? *Corinth* is not a landmark, it is not a geographical feature like a mountain or a river. It is a city. And a city is a very particular thing. A city is a public society, and every public society necessarily has three things: 1) civil officers that lead that society; 2) laws that regulate that society; 3) a defined membership which informs who is included or excluded in that society.

The three things public society must have

Please turn with me to Acts 18. The first 17 verses of this chapter deal with Paul's first visit to Corinth. What I want you to see here are three things that necessarily belong to a city. **First**, a city must have civil officers that lead. Look at v.12 "But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal." Gallio was a proconsul, that is, he was appointed by the Roman Senate to govern the people on behalf of Rome. He was proconsul of Achaia which was the province in which Corinth was the capital. Now why did these Jews bring their charges against Paul to Gallio's tribunal? Because Gallio was the civil officer in charge. Cities must have civil officers. **Secondly**, a city must have laws that regulate that society. Picking up in v.13, the Jews said "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to *the law*." But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of *wrongdoing* or *vicious crime*, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about *words* and *names* and *your own law*, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a *judge of these things*." Gallio, as the civil authority, was entrusted with applying laws to

²⁰ One who administers, or who directs, manages, distributes, or dispenses laws and rites, either in civil, judicial, political, or ecclesiastical affairs. Webster's 1828 Dictionary

that society. There was a constitution and a bill of rights—*so to speak*—that every one had to abide by in Roman territory. Gallio used the law to judge whether crimes were committed or not. Cities must have laws. **Thirdly**, a city has a defined membership which informs who is included or excluded in that society. Look at **v.1-2** “After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, *because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.*” Now this didn’t happen in Corinth but in Rome. However the point remains, Caesar decreed that the Jews were no longer allowed to be citizens in Rome proper. He defined by inclusion or exclusion who were lawful members or citizens in Rome. Cities must have a defined membership or citizenship.

These three things = government

Now these three things **1)** civil officers that govern; **2)** laws that regulate and **3)** a membership that demarcates *just are* what a government consists of. Every society necessarily has a government of sorts. And what do we know about human government? All human government has been ordained by God. **Romans 13:1** says “...there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” In **v.6** Paul calls the governing authorities “...ministers of God.” God “rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will...” (**Daniel 4:17**).²¹

God has ordained two societies

Why is this significant? Because in this little phrase in **1 Corinthians 1:2** “To the church of God that is in Corinth” we find the only two kinds of public authority that God has ordained in this world: the church and the state. And no matter where a particular church of God finds herself, she is always going to be located with in the boundaries of the state, or the city of man. And this creates an immediate crisis of sorts: if the Church as been ordained by God, and

²¹ Also cf. 1 Peter 2:13-14; Daniel 2:21; 4:32; Proverbs 8:15-16; Acts 13:21-22

if the state has been ordained by God, then which society has supremacy? To get this answer wrong causes great devastation and death in the world.²²

Who has the supremacy?

So then what's the answer? Who has supremacy, the church or the state? The answer is that the church and state have been entrusted with *entirely different things*. In other words, they have authority over different *spheres*.

The state's authority

Let's consider the **state** first of all. God has ordained the state in order to support "the outward order and good of human society."²³ Peter says in **1 Peter 2:14** that God instituted government "...to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good." In other words, God graciously gave humanity the state in order to protect persons and their property, in order that their rights and privileges from God would not be injured. God gave government for the outward man.

The church's authority

On the other hand, God ordained the church in order to promote and advance the inward work of grace. It's proper sphere is "the understanding and the conscience."²⁴ Whereas the state has the power of the sword, the power of the Church is entirely spiritual. God gave the Church for the inward man.²⁵

²² "...to claim the temporal along with the spiritual authority, and to grasp the double sword of civil and priestly power; and among the merchandise wherewith she has trafficked with the merchants of the earth, and made herself rich, in addition to the treasures of gold, and silver, and precious stones, there have been found both 'the bodies and souls of men' (Rev. 18:2-13). Bannerman, pg. 245

²³ Bannerman, pg. 105

²⁴ Bannerman, pg. 233

²⁵ "The civil government is an ordinance of God, founded not in grace, but in nature...on the other hand, the Church, as an ordinance of Christ, is founded in grace, not in nature." Bannerman, pg. 104

Gallio knew where his authority ended

Go back to Acts 18 again to see how these different authorities play out. Remember the Jews brought their charges against Paul to Gallio the Roman proconsul. How did Gallio respond? Look at v.14-15 “If it were a matter of *wrongdoing* or *vicious crime*, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about *words* and *names* and *your own law*, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be *a judge of these things*.” Do you see? Gallio is saying in essence “If you would have brought things to be that belong to my sphere, then I would answer you, but these things have nothing to do with me.” Perhaps you can sense ridicule in Gallio’s answer, but it matters not. It doesn’t matter what his motive was here. What matters is whether he realized it not, he gave the right answer. The Jews were trying to use the state to answer a question that belonged to the Church.

The Church v. state

Consider how deep the differences between the Church and state run.

The Church and state have *different office-bearers*. The state has mayors, senators, congressman, judges etc. The Church has pastors and deacons (**1 Tim 3:1-13**).

The Church and state have *a different constitutions*. The United States for example has the Constitution of the United States. The Church has the Word of God, and we are told in **1 Corinthians 4:6** “...not to go beyond what is written.”

The Church and state have *different memberships*. State citizenship springs from mere birth or the process of naturalization.²⁶ According to the end of our verse

²⁶ Naturalization is the legal act or process by which a non-citizen of a country may acquire citizenship or nationality of that country. It may be done automatically by a statute, i.e., without any effort on the part of the individual, or it may involve an application or a motion and approval by legal authorities. [Wikipedia](#)

this morning, the Church *visible*²⁷ admits all those to her membership “...who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Church and state have *different powers of removal*. The state will lock up, or extradite or execute it’s citizens who break the law. The Church has been given the power of excommunication. Paul tells the church in **1 Corinthians 5:5** “to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”

Do you see? The jurisdiction that the Church and the state have are entirely different from one another.²⁸ **Their office-bearers are different.** “The office-bearers of the state are not [recognized] within the Church; and, on the other hand, the office-bearers of the Church are not known within the state. **Their constitution or laws are different.** A nation’s constitution is written by men and can be changed, and either followed or ignored. The Church’s constitution is the inspired, inerrant, unchangeable living Word of God. **Their membership is different.** Though every Christian is by definition also a citizen of the state, not every citizen of the state is a member of the Church of God. “The state... owes it origin to God as the universal Sovereign and Ruler of the nations...[but] the Church owes its origin to Christ as Mediator.”²⁹

²⁷ I make this distinction, because the Bible makes a distinction between the invisible church (all the elect); the visible church (all who outwardly profess the faith of Christ); and the local church (those believers who live in a particular place and are associated together in the worship of God).

²⁸ “There are, in short, two visible and separate departments in God’s one universal government over His human creatures, marked out and divided from each other by deep and indelible lines.” Bannerman, pg. 235

²⁹ Bannerman, pg. 104

Listen to how the Larger Catechism puts it in Q.45

Q. 45. How doth Christ execute the office of a king? A. “Christ executes the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them...” Also cf. WCF 23.1-4 of the American Revision

Render to Caesar & render unto God

Therefore it's not a matter of which institution—church or state—has the supremacy. It's a matter of distinguishing between what things belong to the province of the church and which things belong to the province of the state. This distinction is illustrated most wonderfully by Jesus Himself. Please turn to Matthew 22. In this account we have two groups of people tempting Jesus—the Pharisees who, for lack of a better phrase, were pro-Church; and the Herodians who, were pro-state. Please look with me starting in v.17 ““Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”” But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, ‘Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.’ And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, ‘Whose likeness and inscription is this?’ They said, ‘Caesar’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.”

What was happening here? Jesus was being tempted to either deny the authority of the state by refusing to pay taxes—which would have favored the Pharisees’s position; or to bow the knee entirely to Caesar thus denying the authority of the Church—which would have favored the Herodian position. He did neither. Jesus made the distinction most perfectly between Church and state, recognizing the authority the state has over man’s outward estate, and the authority the Church has over man’s inward estate.

The two errors in Church history

Throughout the history of the Church, this debate over the Church and state has been a fierce and sometimes bloody one. There are two main errors that both erase this distinction. On the one hand, we have the error of the Roman Catholic Church. Rome sought to subordinate the state to the power of the Church. One only needs to look at the history of the Reformation, and England and Bloody Mary to see how when the Church is armed with the sword, death follows. That is not the province of the Church.

On the other hand, we have the error of Erastianism.³⁰ Erastus lived in the 16th century, and he taught that the powers of the Church were subordinate to the state. “The office-bearers in the [Church] were *merely* instructors, or preachers of the Word, without any power or right to rule, except what they derive from the civil magistrate.”³¹ Erastianism can be felt in three ways: 1) When the state presumes to dictate to the Church the doctrine that she can or cannot teach. 2) When the state unduly interferes with the Church’s obligation to worship in the gathered assembly in Word and Sacrament. 3) When the state imposes its own ideas of membership—of inclusion or exclusion—upon the Church.

The shooter

Each one of those deserves their own treatment, but perhaps I can borrow an illustration from something Doug Wilson wrote recently:

“...suppose a worship service is in progress, and the cops interrupt it because there is a sniper holed up across the street, and the police want to evacuate the area. The immediate and instinctive response of the elders should be that of full and complete cooperation. They are not surrendering the keys of the kingdom because they urge their parishioners to exit immediately through the fellowship hall, without the Lord’s Supper, and without the benediction. Who cares? There is an active shooter out front. And not only should we exit, we should exit in obedience.

But [now] suppose...your congregation has been ushered out through the fellowship hall for six weeks in a row now, and there has been no sign of an active shooter anywhere yet. There are plenty of signs that the cops, for some

³⁰<https://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/christianity/christianity-general/erastianism>

³¹ Bannerman, pg. 109. This is essentially the error of Anglicanism.

reason best known to themselves, are lying to you. Okay, so at what point do the elders meet the cops at the door with some kind of “wait a minute?”³²

Do you see what Wilson is getting at? Yes we owe obedience to the state in the sphere that God has committed to them. But when they overstep that sphere, another course of action is required. So let’s apply this.

Render unto Caesar

First of all, it is imperative that we see the state as a gift of God. Like the Church, government it is not an invention of man, God created it and ordained it for our good. A bad government is always better anarchy. Where would you rather live under the Communism of China or under the anarchy of a village in Nigeria always looking over your shoulder to see if you are going to be hacked to death by Islamic terrorists? Policemen and politicians are a gift from God, and we should thank God for them, and pray for them as God commands us in **1 Timothy 2**. It is sinful to unduly rebel against the state. **Romans 13:2** says “Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.” The zealots of Jesus’ day received justice when Rome hunted them down. The Anabaptists who rebelled against the authorities in Germany during Luther’s time were crushed with devastating consequences because of their fanaticism.³³ So we must see the state as a gift from God that is to be obeyed within it’s sphere.

Render unto God

However, on the other hand, God doesn’t require *absolute obedience* to the state. The Peter who said “Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors...” (**1 Peter 2:13-14**) is the same Peter who disobeyed the authorities in **Acts 4:19-20** saying

³² Source: <https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/romans-13-and-the-covid-19-virus.html> Accessed June 20, 2020

³³ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Peasants%27_War and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Münster_rebellion Accessed June 20, 2020

“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” He understood the state was overstepping its bounds. He understood that Caesar was trying to claim for itself what only belonged to God.

Experimental obedience

Are you and I prepared to say and do such things? I believe there is a strong temptation in the Church to just go along with whatever the state says. I feel it. Why? Because to go against the state, even for righteousness' sake will cost us. Maybe it will cost us our reputation. That will be hard for some of us, because we love to be loved by others. Maybe it will cost us our personal wealth. That will be hard, because prosperity is a blessing from God, and to have it taken away will hurt. Perhaps at some point it will even cost us our freedom, or if God wills, our lives. Have we counted the cost of belonging to the Church of God in the city of man? Beloved, the Christian Church needs to gird up the loins of their minds, because there is a time coming, it seems very soon when we will be forced to disobey the state in order to obey God. That's our **second point**. God is not only the Author and Master of the Church, He is the Administrator and Ruler of it, and He calls us to render unto Him the things that are His.

III. The Advocate of the Church of God

The privilege and the terror

This text places an incredible responsibility on us. We are not a club or coalition. We are unquestionably unlike any other society on earth because we are the “Church of God.” That is both a state of privilege and terror. To misquote Paul “...we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men (1 Cor. 4:9).” Will we represent God and His kingdom rightly? Will our witness win others to the gospel, or will we repel them? Frightening questions.

The Church of God?

And so perhaps the most amazing thing about our text is that Paul called *these people* the “church of God.” “To the church of God that is in Corinth.” We need to remember the kind of people they were.

They were boasters — **1:12**

They were carnal — **3:3**

They refused to discipline gross sin in the assembly — **5:1-2**

They were suing each other — **6:1**

Some were still going to prostitutes — **6:13**

Some were sinning against their weaker brother’s conscience — **8:11**

Some abused the Lord’s supper — **11:20**

Their corporate gathering was chaos — **14:23**

Some denied the resurrection of believers — **15:12**

These were serious sins. On what grounds could Paul call this a “Church of God.” On the same grounds that he calls us a Church of God! Why could they be considered a church? Because they called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of all their sins, they trusted Him, clung to Him, hoped in Him, and therefore they were not put to shame.

Don’t you see? The Church of God in Corinth is really a parable of every church. Why did Paul write to them? Because they belonged to God. Why did Paul correct their many faults? Because they were bought with a price (**1 Cor. 6:20**). Why didn’t Paul throw up his hands and just start over? Because they were the body of Christ (**1 Cor. 12:27**) “which cannot be torn away from Him and will last as long as even the Head itself...”³⁴ Beloved the Church would fail if left to herself. You and I would fail. But we are not left to ourselves. We belong to God and His Son Jesus Christ. He is our advocate. “...if anyone

³⁴ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Vol. 3*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 1997), pg. 42

[sins] we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 **John 2:1**).

The Church is the only society that will last forever

Dear congregation, remember that when you go back out into the world this week. Preach to yourself these truths. “I belong to the Church of God. I belong to a society that will last forever. Nations will dissolve. Human government will cease. Human marriage will come to an end. But the Church of God is everlasting. How long will this current age last? Only as long as it takes for the full number of elect to be attained so that the Church of God is complete. Then when the harvest is ready, and the last trumpet sounds, the Church of God will be brought to God Himself. “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”

No salvation outside the Church

If you are here this morning, and you don't belong to the Church of God, you can't be saved. Just as those out side of Noah's Ark were swept up by the flood and destroyed, so all those who don't belong to the ἐκκλησία of God will be face the second death. There is no salvation outside of the Church. Not because being in a building saves you, or because going to this or that local church saves you. But because God doesn't save anyone apart ingrafting them into His peculiar people—which is the Church. Do you want that? Do you want to belong to God? Do you want to be cleansed from your sin, and made righteous in the sight of God? Then here's the promise: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” If you believe that, then you will gain a Father who will never condemn you, a Son who will never forsake you, and a Holy Spirit who never cease to comfort you. If you believe that, then you belong to the Church of God.