

Israel in Exile and the Church, Part 1

Last Things

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Preached on: Sunday, August 27, 2023

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Our text is taken from Jeremiah 29, beginning at verse 4, and that's on page 1,221.

4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'

The word of the Lord.

May we pray.

Lord, please bless us as we meditate on these Scriptures today. Give us an understanding for the living in these days. Help us, Lord, by the power and presence of the Spirit who gives life to the read and preached word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Now this is a striking passage of scripture. I want you to notice in verse 4 this truth. He says, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon."

This verse 4 asserts for us the absolute, total, and complete sovereignty of God. Where are you today? Well, we're right here on Robison Road. Now, where are you today? What is your life situation? What are your life circumstances? What's going on in your life financially, health-wise,

relationship-wise? You've got to understand that nothing, absolutely nothing, is outside of the sovereignty of God.

Notice here, it seems unbelievable, doesn't it, that the city of Jerusalem has been destroyed? Well, at this point it's about to be destroyed, and the people have been sent in exile to Babylon. You know, this was not a pleasant experience at all. All you have to do is read the 137th Psalm, and that's where the Jewish people cry out to God, "By the waters of Babylon, we sat down, we had hung our harps, and we wept" (Psalm 137:1), and they cry out to God for vengeance. But this is an interesting truth. What does God direct them to do, to cry out for vengeance on their enemies?

Psalm 137, "O Babylon, daughter of Babylon, how blessed will he be who takes your babies, takes them by the feet and smashes their skulls against the wall?" (Psalm 137:9)

That's the sentiment of God's people. God's people are angry. God's people are upset. They have been humiliated. They have been pushed to the edge of exhaustion. They've been stripped naked and humiliated and forced to march to Babylon and that's how they felt, and their captors said, "Hey, we hear you people have a lot of music. Why don't y'all get up and sing and dance for us?" (Psalm 137:3)

And those words were for them like acid on the top of their heads. But what does the word of God say to people who are angry and bitter and hurt and cannot believe that these circumstances in which I find myself in today, that God would have anything to do with that?

And Jeremiah says, "Listen, hear the word of the Lord. Psalm 137 describes how you feel, but my word from the Lord is going to tell you how you are to act, regardless of your hateful emotions."

(Next week's sermon will focus on how Psalm 137 is fulfilled in Jeremiah's curse on the Babylonians in Jeremiah 51:59-64. In the here and now, we pray for the prosperity of the wicked places we live, but we do so also aware, praying, and waiting for God's judgment on the wicked).

Their emotions were hateful. Can you blame them? They've lost everything. Their houses burned up, their lands occupied, the farms that had been in their families for generations, gone and occupied by other people. That's

how they feel, but what does God say in spite of their feelings? “Do this,” he says, “Remember this, I carried into exile” (Jeremiah 29:4).

So, we need to remember the sovereignty of God. We need to see something else in verse 7, very contrary to Psalm 137 is what God tells them to do. God says in verse 7, “Seek the peace and prosperity.”

Now the NIV has sought to capture the intent of the Hebrew word which is shalom (shālôm, שָׁלוֹם). Shalom, like the Arabic word salaam (سلام), means more than peace (Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner (1958). *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill), pp. 973-974).

It means harmony. It means wholeness. It means having enough money to get by. It means having enough health to do what you need to do. It means God’s blessing on relationships. In other words, it’s the whole of life under the blessing of God. And what does he tell them to do? I mean, can you imagine this? What he’s commanded these people who are full of bitterness, anger, hatred, “We want to see your babies held by the feet and smashed against the wall. That’s what we want!” (Psalm 137:9) He says to those people, he said, “Pray for the shalom, the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you captive.”

And then he says the second thing, “Pray to the LORD for it, because if it undergoes God’s shalom, you, too, will go under God’s shalom. If it prospers, you’ll prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7).

And we need to remember that. When we become angry over government and the actions of government, sometimes there rises up within a person a suicidal rage and “Just strike back.” But what does God instruct them, explicitly saying to the very people who are full of hatred and bitterness and anger and rage? He says to them, “If Babylon prospers, you will prosper,” and the converse is implied, “If it doesn’t, you won’t.”

So, he says pray for it, and he says something else, and you find this is an important truth in our time in verse 5 and verse 6, “Settle down.”

You know, I had a friend in college who didn’t like school. He was in his freshman year, he was a roommate, and he had been raised on a farm, and he told me, he said,

“You know, Bob, I think the Lord is about to return. I’m going to drop out of college and go back and work on the farm to make sure that we’re ready for the return of Christ.”

Let’s see, that was in the fall of 1965. A long, long time ago. What is God’s word to us? His word to us is this, don’t let your doctrine of last things, technically called eschatology, ever get in the way of obedience to God, because the Lord could return before the service is over.

Could he really?

Yes, he could.

I thought he was supposed to conquer all nations.

If you read the New Testament, that happened in the New Testament era. God’s still working his purpose out. He’s still drawing nations to himself. He’s still converting people throughout the world (Acts 17:6; 24:5; Romans 16:26; Colossians 1:6). But if your doctrine gives you anything that says Christ cannot return on the 27th day of August at about, hmm, 5 minutes to 12—we’re not that late yet—if your doctrine says that can’t happen, then something’s wrong with your doctrine.

So, he says, occupy until the Lord comes. How do you occupy? Build houses. Settle down (Jeremiah 29:5-6).

“I don’t want to bring children into this world.”

I have many friends who’ve told me over the years, “We chose not to have children because who wants to bring a child into this world?”

Have you ever thought about what it was like being in the Babylonian captivity for the people of Judea? You know, if anybody would ever say, “I don’t want to bring a child into this world,” it should have been the Jewish people. Wow! Or think about Christians in the first century. If anyone would say, “We don’t want to bring children in the world” —look at all the suffering and persecution they endured for 300 years.

But Jeremiah says, “Settle down,” verse 5, “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease.”

We live in an era when it’s constantly drummed in our heads, you’ve got too many children. I remember when I had first arrived in central Louisiana in 1975, and Sandy was pregnant with Brian’s mother, and so Ginny was born on Sandy’s birthday, December 6th, 1975. And after that happened, I had a kooky doctor—remember, just because somebody’s educated, doesn’t mean they’re not nuts. That’s important. There are plenty of highly intelligent, highly educated people who are as crazy as a Betsy Bug. I’ve never met a Betsy Bug.

Anyhow, he came up to me and he said, “Well, have you figured out where those things came from now?” And I **thought**, “You old goat, you’ve got about four children yourself.”

The point is, we live in an era, which is truly amazing, since World War II, that people look at other people who have children as if something’s wrong with them. But seriously, both Sandy’s parents and my parents only had two children.

God wants us to fill the earth (Genesis 1:28; 9:1).

You say, “Well, wait a minute, the earth’s filled.”

Do you know you could fit the entire population of the earth in the city limits of Jacksonville, Florida, where Sandy was born? Seriously, it’s a very big city. It’s the entire Duval County. You could fit, I’m talking about fit. I’m not talking about a lot of room, but everybody could have a chair to sit down in inside the city limits of Jacksonville, Florida. I’m not saying that we shouldn’t be careful with things. I’m not saying that we don’t need to be concerned about ecological problems and all of those things, but I am saying this, all of the problems we have from fires, earthquakes, you name it, are under the sovereignty of God. We ought to obey God and allow him to allow things to fall out where they will.

Now how do you deal with Babylon? How do you deal with Babylon? If you're living in Babylon and it's the place God has sent you, how do you deal with them? Let's turn over to the right to the book of Daniel because you'll see in the book of Daniel three clear examples of how to deal with Babylon.

Daniel 1 and verse 8. That's page 1,370. Remember, Daniel's in Babylon, and in verse 8, "Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked permission from the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

And when Daniel got a "no," did he take "no" as an absolute? No, he did not. He sought to appeal that to a lesser official and he said, "Would you at least give me a test? Would you give me ten days to show that my following, the dietary laws that I am under as a Jewish person from the Jewish Torah, the Jewish law, test us now and see how we are." And so, the man said, "Okay, go ahead." And Daniel and his friends all were healthier and manifestly so than their companions (Daniel 1:11-16).

Then you turn over to Daniel 3, and it's amazing how megalomaniacal most rulers are. And in Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar in verse 1,

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon."

He just had a vision from God (Daniel 2:31*ff.*), and he decides, "Well, wow, that's something. I'm going to build a duplicate of that." And then he says that everybody everywhere is going to have to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image when they hear all the music and so what happens is, read in verse 7,

"Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up."

Now, some people weren't doing that. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—they weren't doing it, and so people report them. Never forget. People are looking at you every day. They're trying to watch you, see if you mess up.

And sure enough, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego get reported, and look at verse 13:

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (Daniel 3:13-15)

I really like that. You see, people judge the Lord God of the Bible by the gods of history, the false gods. People don't know, by and large, people do not know who the true God is, and they judge him by an image of the god they create in their own minds. “What god can deliver you?”

I want you to remember this: you do not live in a universe where just anything can happen. I want to say it again: you do not live in a universe where just anything can happen. You live in a universe where only that which God has ordained for your good and the good of his people can happen (Romans 8:28-29).

And so, anyhow, here's what we get in verse 16:

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18)

Now, I want you to see this.

In chapter 1, Daniel is very smoothly imploring and seeking an exception to a law, but in Daniel 3, they are confronted with an absolute command of the state, “You will do this,” and what do they say? “We will not do it.”

I want you to understand that in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Christian person, the follower of God, not only has the **right** but the **responsibility to disobey government**. Let me say it again. If you're not willing to disobey earthly authority, then you're not really a true follower of Christ because sometimes obedience to earthly authority would be denial of Christ.

Notice what they do. Now, what did they not do? They didn't shake their fists and say, "You old goat, you filthy beast, you're going to burn in hell for this!"

Did they do it that way? No, they didn't. They're firm, they're absolute, they're unwavering, but they are respectful to authority.

Now, how did he respond to that? Look at verse 19,

"Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual," and that's simply a way of saying it in the way of Old Testament language. And so, he heats it super-hot. In fact, it's so hot that the soldiers who go to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into this fiery furnace are themselves killed (Daniel 3:22).

Have you ever thought about what it is to be a soldier? If you're a soldier, your job is to obey your leaders. There's a chain of command. But if obeying your leaders as a soldier causes you to disobey God's moral law that's written on the heart of every man (Romans 2:14-15), you better disobey the earthly authority. There's a time for a soldier to say, "I respectfully decline to follow this order because it's contrary to God's moral law written on the heart of every man."

Look what happens. What if those soldiers had done what was right instead of obeying their earthly authority? They would have been killed instantly, but what sadly happens to them is, they're burned by the fiery furnace, but their burning never stops! Wow! Better to be thrown into a fiery furnace and instantly die, than to follow orders and end up in a fiery furnace that never goes out (Mark 9:48; Revelation 14:11).

Now notice what happens. They're thrown in and this is what you see. Verse 19:

Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. (Verse 24) Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." (Daniel 3:19-25)

Wow! When you're in fiery trials, and sometimes God will call you to go into fiery trials, there's going to be a fourth man there. That fourth man, who looks like a son of the gods, is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Jesus will be with you (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5, 8). And they are rescued, and the only thing they lost in the fire were their bonds.

Now I want you to turn over to another example, Daniel 6, and in Daniel 6, and at page 1,382, verse 10, Babylon has now fallen to the Medo-Persian Empire and some crafty people who wanted to get rid of Daniel because he was a wise man who had been appointed over the provinces of Babylon and continued in that role when Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians, the king is craftily deceived into issuing a decree, "Nobody can pray to anybody but you for this period of time." (Daniel 6:5-9) Alright? Can't pray. Verse 10:

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel

praying and asking God for help. So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions’ den?” (Daniel 6:10-12)

Never forget, clever people love the law. I’m talking about human laws. Clever people write laws so that they get off, and you get caught. And here the man is dumbfounded. He was beguiled by his own megalomaniacal attitude about himself.

You know, it takes a little bit of narcissism to run for public office and once you get in office, and you get higher up and higher up and higher up, and you get to the point where you cannot have an honest advisor say to you, “Hey Bob, you’re out of line.” When you can no longer have a counselor who says, “Sir, please think about what you’re doing.” When you no longer can receive counsel. Solomon writes about that in Ecclesiastes. He says better a young man than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive counsel (Ecclesiastes 4:13).

And I look at America and the higher ups, and I wonder do any of these people, do any of these people in any of these parties have honest advisors who say, “Hey, what are you thinking about here?”

Wow. This king is caught on his own laws, and he is crying out, helping, and he’s all night, he’s waiting. He has Daniel thrown in the lion’s den, and what happens? “Nice kitty. Nice kitty. Nice kitty.” None of those big cats messed with Daniel at all and so when the king commands that they unseal it, Daniel is safe and sound and those that plotted against him are in big trouble (Daniel 6:24).

Now turn with me, if you would, to the book of Acts for a moment. Acts 4. Acts 4 and I want you to see a basic principle here. Acts 4 and we’re looking at verse 5, page 1,696. Page 1,696. My thesis to you, something I came to as I read through the Bible many, many times, because I’ve read through the Bible scores of times, and as I read through the Bible, I began to see certain patterns, not because I had read in theological books, but I saw the patterns for myself, and they happened to fit in with theological books I’d read.

But the principle that I saw is this: You and I in 2023 are in the same basic position as Israel was in exile. The United States is Babylon. So is Mexico. So is Poland. So is Russia. So is Great Britain and so on. We live in Babylon. How do we deal with Babylon? Look at this.

And by the way, from the time of the Babylonian captivity, Judah and Israel never regain power. Never. A group of priests rose up against some Greeks in the days that are recorded in 1st and 2nd Maccabees, but never again. From the time that Zedekiah is taken into captivity, and he's captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and then he is bound and he has his sons executed before his eyes and immediately they pop out his eyes so that he would live forever with the memory of his sons being executed (2 Kings 25:6-7) —from that time on Israel, Israel, Judah never had a king to sit on the throne again until a virgin conceived and bore a son (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21-23). But his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), and Jesus was killed on the cross, died, buried, descended into Hades, rose again from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and sent the Holy Spirit to rule and reign. But earthly Israel has never had a king ruling over it, except King Jesus, who rules solely by the Holy Spirit (Cf. how Psalm 110 is applied in the New Testament, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=82023172267947>).

So how do his disciples act? Looking here in chapter 4, Peter and John have been used by God to heal a crippled man, and it's brought great tumult. In the next day, verse 5, "The rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: 'By what power or what name did you do this?'"

Look at verse 8. Now again, did Peter shake his fist at them, "You're gonna get it!" No, what does he do? But he's bold. Do you realize you can be bold and humble? Do you realize you can be firm, but also gentle? Look, Peter, notice, "filled with the Holy Spirit."

That's the key, being filled with the Spirit. "Not with swords' loud clashing or roll of stirring drums." It's the outpouring of the Spirit that gave boldness. Peter "filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:

Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.” (Quoting from Psalm 118). “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men. (Acts 4:8-13)

Have you ever given God an excuse and said, “Well, Lord, I’m just unlearned, I’m stupid, I don’t know, I don’t understand.” Do you realize that when God’s Spirit touches you, you can share a testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ even if you can’t even read or write, that God can use you just the way you are. And he did. He used them, “ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” Anyhow, they’re trying to figure out what to do, and so what they do is, they command them not to say anything more.

Now notice verse 19, page 1,697:

But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” After further threats they let them go, because they could not decide how to punish them because all the people were praising God for what had happened. (Acts 4:19-21)

Now, they go back, they replay these things to the whole church. They begin to quote from the 2nd Psalm, and they cry out to God for help. In verse 31, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

Now, turning over, we see something else here, we discover in verse 12 of chapter 5, page 1,698:

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together

in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. (Acts 5:12-14)

So, we see this happening, amazing revival, people are coming to Christ. Do people want revival? Do they want the results of revival? If they love the Lord, they do. But notice verse 17, bottom of the page:

Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." (Acts 5:17-20)

I want you to say something. Is it God's will to break you out of jail? Sure, if the Lord breaks you out of jail. And notice what he tells them to do. He said, "Go back and do what you were doing. Tell people about Jesus," because I'm going to tell you, dear ones, "When this passing world is done, when has sunk, yon glaring sun, when we stand with Christ in glory, looking o'er life's finished story" ("I Am a Debtor" by Robert Murray McCheyne), we'll realize the only thing, the only thing, the only thing that really matters is that people come to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, as they do that, it's interesting to see that they then call them and said, "Bring those guys back here, get them out of jail and bring them here." What happens? They didn't find them and while they're questioning, "What in the world, where did they go?"

Look at verse 25, "Then someone came and said, 'Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.'" Anyhow, they go and send for them, but they don't use force because they're afraid the people will stone them.

And verse 27 at the bottom of the page, "Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest."

Look at verse 28, “‘We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,’ he said. ‘Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.’”

Look at verse 29, “Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’”

So, let’s be clear about this: Obedience to earthly authorities, whether they are the authorities of Babylon or Jerusalem or the United States, or Texarkana, Texas, there’s a time to disobey.

What is one command God gives believers? “Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together after the manner of some” (Hebrews 10:25).

What if the government says you can no longer gather together because this new variety of COVID named after the Greek goddess of division and strife, Eris, says you can’t do it? (ἔρις (A), ἰδος, ἦ, . . . “strife, quarrel, contention” (Liddell, H. G., & Scott, R. (1977), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Ninth ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 689.)

What would we do?

I’ll say what I am prepared to do. I must obey God rather than men. Nothing hurt the visible church as much as shutting down all those months, because it decimated the ranks of the church. I don’t know what others may do, but as for me and my house, we will gather together with other believers. “We must obey God rather than man.”

But does that mean I will drive to Texarkana with an AR-15?

No, sir. No, ma’am.

It means that I will submit to all the commands of government, whether at the national, state, county, parish, city-level, I will obey all their commands, but when they command me to do that which is unlawful in the eyes of God, I must **respectfully**, notice how I said it, **I must respectfully decline to obey.**

And that’s what he says there in verse 29, “Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’”

And now notice, they become furious, verse 33, and they put them outside and they're debating what in the world to do. And then we turn the page, and we're on page 1,700, and this is what happens. Gamaliel has talked to them and persuaded them. Look at verse 40: "His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged."

Now here's the deal, did Peter and John submit to the flogging?

Yes, they did.

You mean they didn't try to do what Peter would have done, because Peter probably was a man given to fisticuffs. You know, he's the one that withdrew a sword and chopped off the ear of the servant of the high priest (Matthew 26:50; John 18:10), and Jesus said, "Put that thing up" (Matthew 26:52). Anyhow, what did they do?

They humbly, meekly submitted to a beating. But not only that, "They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go" (Acts 5:40).

Verse 41, "The apostles left the Sanhedrin," now notice the next part, rejoicing, rejoicing, "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name of Jesus."

And I'm going to go five more minutes because it's important we wrap this up. Skipping Romans 13, which commands us to recognize whatever government we have as being ordained of God (αἱ δὲ οὐ̃σαι ἐξουσίαι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσὶν, "Those that exist have been ordained by God," Romans 13:1-6), we're going to go over to 1 Peter 2.

1 Peter 2 and let's see what Peter says to us here. 1 Peter 2 and we read these words, what do we do with the government? 1 Peter 2, and this is on page 1,888. Look there at 1 Peter 2:13:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant

talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. (1 Peter 2:13-14)

Always deal respectfully.

And you say, “Now wait a minute here. Wait a minute here. I’ve had Bible teachers teach me in Romans 13 that it really isn’t saying that whatever power exists is under God’s authority. It’s really saying those that do this and those that do that.”

And I’m going to answer that absolutely and irrefutably by looking at the next verse. The principle between the believer and government is the same as that of the slave and the master.

Verse 18: “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters **with all respect**, not only to those who are good and considerate, but **also to those who are harsh**” (σκολιός, ά, όν , “pert. to being morally bent or twisted, crooked, unscrupulous, dishonest, etc.,” Danker, Frederick William, ed. (2000). *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Third edition (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press), p. 930).

When you apply the principle of master and slave to civil government, the principle is the same. Whether it’s a Nero (AD 54-68), who was in power when Paul wrote Romans. Whether it’s a Nero, whether it’s a Caligula (Gaius, AD 37-41) who was also in power when Paul wrote 1st Thessalonians and 2nd Thessalonians, whether it’s a Hitler, or a Stalin, or a Putin, or a Trump, or a Biden, makes no difference. Whether it’s good government or bad government, the same principle applies.

You cannot obey government in the matter which government commands you to disobey God. You cannot. But when you disobey government, you always do so respectfully and submissively because God has instituted bad government.

“What?”

God has instituted bad government.

Let's go back to where we began, and we're going to go back to Jeremiah.

“I sent you to Babylon. I sent you to a place that's horrible, that's mean and cruel, where you were crying out to me in Psalm 137, ‘How blessed will that person be that takes Babylonian babies by the heels and slams their little skulls against the wall’ (Psalm 137:9). I sent you there. I'm in charge. There's no government that exists that I'm not over absolutely, and I've ordained that through your suffering, you will become perfected, you will become a better person, you will be a more shining, resilient witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.”

So as for me and my house, no matter what the federal government, the state governments of Texas and Arkansas and Louisiana say, I will assemble with God's people, but I will do so humbly and respectfully, and if I have to go to jail, I'll be a good witness to Jesus in jail, God willing, because suffering is that which sanctifies, and suffering is that that gives credibility to the gospel witness.

Do you know Jesus? Because this is the whole thing at the very end. We see in the example of Jesus. He says in verse 23:

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:23-25)

May God Almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit grant to all of us so to cherish the Lord Jesus Christ and the importance of his witness in the world, that we're willing to suffer, that we're willing to be violated, that we're willing to be lied about and defamed, willing to be put in prison, so that Jesus' name might be magnified throughout all the world, for there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

May we pray.

Lord, we pray that we would be followers of Jesus, never obeying government when it commands us to sin, but obeying the government in all other things, and never with a raised fist, never with a middle finger, never with railing accusations and defiance of government, never with swords and spears, never with weapons, Lord, but to submit meekly, trusting a sovereign God who has promised to work all things together for our good. For Jesus' sake. Amen.