

What is the Christian's Duty to God vs. Government? – Part 2...

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Host: David Wheaton 00:08

What is the Christians Duty to God vs Government?

Today is Part 2 of that topic right here on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host, *The Christian Worldview* is a non-profit radio ministry funded by listeners like you, and also our national sponsor Samaritan Ministries, to provide a biblical, and frankly far better, alternatives to mainstream health insurance. You can find out more about *The Christian Worldview* or Samaritan Ministries by calling our toll-free number 1-888-646-2233 or by visiting TheChristianWorldview.org.

As the COVID-19 virus spread across the world in 2020 governing authorities mandated shutdowns on businesses, schools and churches. We were promised that it will be just “two weeks to stop the spread”, or a month to “flatten the curve”. Well, two weeks turned into 24 months of shutdowns, mask mandates, gathering and movement restrictions and “get vaccinated or else” and while the virus has retreated for now, just wait for the next variant to arrive and the vise will be tightened again.

One perspective became abundantly clear during the mandated lockdowns; the government views in person church gatherings as “non-essential”. Meanwhile, liquor stores and big box stores like Walmart were allowed to stay open as “essential”. The duplicity and ineffectiveness of these measures was obvious to any discerning observer. In the midst of all this, a large church with a well known pastor in Los Angeles, that would be Grace Community Church and John MacArthur, and a small church with a little known pastor in Edmonton, Canada, Grace Life Church and James Coates arrived at the same conclusion. They must obey God rather than government and reopen their churches in obedience to what Scripture declares, particularly in Hebrews chapter 10, where it says, “*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He, God who promised, is faithful. And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near*”, that's Hebrews 10:23-25.

Both of these churches and some others opened in defiance of government edicts. National media covered the story, certain Christians sniped at them how these churches were “not loving their neighbor”, or were, “disobedient to Romans 13”. The government, for its part, levied threats and fines, even arresting and jailing Pastor Coates for 35 days. We spoke with him last week in the program. The dust has settled for now, but perhaps the most important result has been the church having to arrive at a deeper understanding of its duty before God and government.

Nathan Busenitz, elder at Grace Community Church in Los Angeles, and co-author of the new book *God vs. Government: Taking a Biblical Stand When Christ and Compliance Collide*, joins us today on *The Christian Worldview* to discuss this increasingly relevant issue. Let's get straight to the interview with Nathan Busenitz.

Nathan, thank you for coming back on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program. It's been a while since you were on the program. And so I thought it'd be good to start out by reminding us how you came to saving faith. I know you grew up in a home where you have strong Christian parents, I believe your dad was a seminary professor, an elder at the church. How did you avoid second generation apathy or rejection that is so common that you see today?

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 04:19

I did have the privilege of growing up in a Christian home and I'm so grateful for that. I grew up in a wonderful church, in fact, I grew up at Grace Community Church under the teaching ministry of John MacArthur and in a home where my dad did serve at the Masters Seminary, so I was very well taught. I think the reality is that for any sinner, whether they grew up in a Christian home or not, it is the work of the Spirit of God, taking the truth of His Word and applying it to each individual heart. So it's the recognition that the Christian faith is not something that you inherit by being born into a Christian family. You're not Christian because your parents are Christian or because you are in a Christian environment. You're only Christian, because the truth of the gospel has pierced your conscience, pierced your heart, and the Holy Spirit has taken that truth and he's used it to transform you, and to deliver you from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, and to create a new creature in Christ so that you are now a new creation. It's the recognition that saving faith is something that must take place on an individual level.

For me, living in an environment like that, growing up in an environment like that, I was surrounded by that truth. So I think it's that emphasis on “this has to be an individual and personal work of God in each heart” that moves it from, “oh, I'm just a Christian, because I

grew up in a Christian home” to knowing “the Lord saved me from the wretchedness of my self righteousness, when the truth of the gospel became real for me through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the truth of His Word, and I was born again”.

Host: David Wheaton 06:12

What age was that Nathan?

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 06:14

Yeah, so as a very young child, I knew the truth of the gospel and affirmed it. But I don't think it was really tested until I was in my junior high and high school years. It was in those years that I came to really understand the implications of the gospel. I grew up and went to Christian schools for many years, but then went to a public high school, and the Lord used that experience to really test my faith, to demonstrate in my own heart, that this was something that was genuinely a conviction of mine, and not something that I just believed because my parents believed it. So I would put that right around age 13, or 14, when the truth of the gospel really became real for me.

Host: David Wheaton 06:58

Nathan Busenitz is our guest today on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program. He's the co-author of *God vs Government* and we're doing part two of this topic today. Last week, we had his co-author on James Coates, the pastor from Canada, who was imprisoned. The topic is What is the Christians Duty to God vs Government? So let's get into that pressing issue, now, Nathan, and I'd like to go to a very well known passage of Scripture: Romans 13, I think the first seven or eight verses there and just have you briefly explain the various sections, I've divided into three parts. So I'm just going to read a couple of verses. And I'd like you to comment on what this passage means and then we'll get more into the depths of it as you explain how it played out with Grace Community Church during the COVID mandates and the lockdowns and how your church responded, and so forth, that's told in the book, *God vs Government*.

So the first couple of verses of Romans 13, say, *“Every person has to be in subjection to the governing authorities, for there is no authority, except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority, has opposed the ordinance of God. And they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves”*. Is it correct to understand that God has directly ordained our current leadership, let's say of America, and that really is motivated and leads in a way that is directly rebellious against Him? And if so, the question is, why would He do that?

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 08:31

God is sovereign over all things. He is on His throne, and He appoints all governing authority. In fact, in the book, we get into a section where we talk through biblical principles, and one of those biblical principles is the principle of “sovereign appointment”; that God appoints governing authorities and He raises up human rulers to accomplish His sovereign purposes. God is working all things together for His glory, and for the good of believers. In fact, a little earlier in Romans, in Romans 8:28, we have that great promise that, “God works all things together for the good of those who know Him, who loves Him, who are called according to His purpose”. So yes, the Scripture teaches that God is sovereign. It teaches that God is the one who ordains and appoints those who are in positions of authority and He sovereignly orchestrates all things, including those things that happen within the context of a fallen world. He uses all of those things within His sovereign purposes, to direct all things to His supreme glory and to accomplish all things for the good of His people.

Host: David Wheaton 09:47

Now, let's go on to the next couple of verses in Romans 13. Starting in verse 3, *“For rulers are not a cause of fear for [d]good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.”* and that seems to be in more of a way that the government should operate. It praises good and it punishes evil. But our society today has this backwards. Christians are punished for not participating in what God calls evil, like so called homosexual weddings, or the government doesn't punish those who violate the social order. You write about in the book, about the riots and looting, what took place in the summer of 2020, that there wasn't a whole lot of consequence for that: “Defund the Police”. There's a constant deception coming from governing authorities, constant lying, the mis-characterization of the January 6 protests at the capital as being an “insurrection”; there were no weapons, there was no overtaking of government there.

So there's a constant deception, lying, promoting of what is sinful by government. So what do Christians do when governing authorities are doing exactly the opposite of what they're called to do here in Romans 13?

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 11:13

Well, I really think that these verses underscore the accountability that governing authorities have before God. So even going back to the verses you read earlier, because God is the one who appoints every governing official to that position of authority, those governing officials are ultimately accountable to Him, for the way in which they govern. And those verses that you just

read, they really illustrate the way that God intends for government to function, that government when it's properly functioning, it exists to uphold the good and to protect the righteous within the context of society. And when governing authorities fail to do that, the one to whom they are accountable and the one to whom they will one day give account, is God Himself. And so this passage is not just an instruction for believers to have a submissive attitude towards government, which of course we should. It's also a reminder to governing authorities that they have an authority above them to whom they will one day answer.

Host: David Wheaton 12:25

Nathan Busenitz with us today, here on *The Christian Worldview*, the co-author of *God vs Government*. We're going to tell you how you can get this book today for a gift of any amount to The Christian Worldview. Now let's just do one last part of this passage from Romans 13 before we get into the story of what happened at Grace Community Church during the COVID lockdowns and our role, our duty, the Christian duty to God vs government. verse five, Romans 13, "Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing".

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 13:21

I think it's as simple as saying that God established human government as a structure within society, so that governing officials would function in a way that, again, would go back to promoting the good and protecting the righteous. And when they serve in that way, when they operate according to God's design for government, they really are functioning as they've been deputized with God's authority to do that. So in that sense, they are functioning as servants of God, in again, accomplishing the purpose for which He has sovereignly ordained them.

You know, that last verse that you read about rendering honor, to whom honor and all of those things. I really think that even points back to Matthew 22:21, where Jesus said, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's", which underscores this principle of what we call "spheres of authority", that Romans 13 applies to the governing authorities operating within their proper jurisdiction. And we render to them the submission that they are to do within that "sphere of authority". But ultimately, we render to God the things that are God's. Which brings us back to the thesis of our book, which Acts 5:29, there may be times when we have to obey God rather than men. Our obedience to God sometimes requires us to disobey the government.

Host: David Wheaton 14:55

Yes, and we will get into some of those things. The subtitle of your book is “Taking a Biblical Stand When Christ and Compliance Collide”, and that's what happened, we're gonna get into that story.

Now Nathan Busenitz is our guest today here on *The Christian Worldview*, the co-author of *God vs Government*. Two years ago to this weekend, Grace Community Church, shut down, stopped in-person services due to the the government California mandate during COVID. This was the, I was out at Shepherds' Conference that year, the big men's, pastors, elders conference at your church that takes place every year. The very next weekend, that's when church, in-person church, stopped at Grace Community Church and that continued for 19 weeks, all the way till July 26. So they were 19 weeks without services. People at the church members of the church started attending on their own. They didn't wait 19 weeks to come back. But there was no official services until July 26. And in the book, you talk about the fact that the church was unclear about how deadly this virus was, you know, this was a new thing, Covid, no one knew what it was like, and so out of an abundance of caution that the church was closed down.

So is the implication there, if the virus had been more deadly than it turned out to be, in other words it was being overstated by governing authorities, would the church have continued to comply with a government mandate? In other words, did you just reach a conclusion that, look, the governing authorities are telling us something that's not as dangerous as they say it is, therefore we're going to start meeting again,

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 16:29

Situations like pandemics or plagues, which have occurred throughout church history, this isn't the first time that Christians have had to think through these kinds of situations. Obviously, there were some unique things about COVID-19. But in any of these kinds of situations, there is an element of wisdom that elders have to apply as they consider what is happening in real time, in an effort to protect and shepherd their people. Our elder team was simply exercising that wisdom in asking the question, okay, as we apply these biblical principles, and the main biblical principle was Hebrews 10:24-25, that we as believers are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, we're not to fall into a pattern of forsaking gathering for church.

We believe that we can have a temporary hiatus if there's an emergency that demands it. But as a general pattern, this isn't something that should characterize us as Christians. And so as elders wanting to meet, wanting to be faithful to those, that, to that command in Hebrews

chapter 10. We did take a temporary hiatus to assess the situation. And upon realizing that the situation was not as severe as the initial projections had made it sound, our elders became convinced for that, and a number of other reasons, that we needed to start meeting again.

Had the situation been more severe. I think our elders would have exercised again, principles of biblical wisdom in assessing that situation, and thinking through okay, how can we, in faithfulness to Hebrews 10:24-25 restore the gathering of believers in a way that shepherds our people effectively and doesn't put them at risk?

Host: David Wheaton 18:31

The book is *God vs Government*. One of the co-authors, Nathan Busenitz, is with us today here on *The Christian Worldview*. You can get the book for a gift of any amount to *The Christian Worldview*. Just get in contact with us the usual ways: place an order at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org or call us toll free 1-888-646-2233, Rosie, will take your call.

Okay, we need to pause for a moment you are listening to *The Christian Worldview*, I'm David Wheaton. Are you signed up for *The Christian Worldview* weekly email or annual print letter? If not go to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org.

Featured Resource: God vs. Government

[Tucker Carlson] Pastor James Coates was arrested and sent to prison a couple of weeks ago in Canada. What did he do? He held a church service."

[Pastor James Coates] "And it isn't the government's responsibility to protect us from a virus. What's their responsibility? To protect our God given rights.

[David Wheaton] Two days after that sermon, Pastor James Coats was arrested and imprisoned. He has now co-authored an important book titled *God vs Government: Taking a Biblical Stand When Christ and Compliance Collide*. *God vs. Government* is a 208-page softcover and retails for \$17.99. You can order a copy for a donation of any amount to *The Christian Worldview*. Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233 Or write to PO Box 401 Excelsior, MN 55331. That's 1-888-646-2233 or TheChristianWorldview.org.

David Wheaton: Program Announcement

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Host: David Wheaton 21:15

And welcome back to *The Christian Worldview*, I'm David Wheaton. Visit our website, TheChristianWorldview.org where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print letter. You can order resources for adults and children and support the ministry. Now back to the interview with Nathan Busenitz, co-author of *God vs. Government*.

You've talked about a statement in chapter three of the book Nathan, I'll just read it here the elders meeting on the evening of Thursday, July 23. Now we're 19 weeks into this shutdown of the church and you're going to reopen here. "And the chairman of the elder board said, 'Men, we all need to understand that this is a big deal'. And he said with these words, the chairman of the board looked slowly around the room at the 40 other elders of Grace Community Church who had assembled, he said, 'I want to go around the room and ask each of you if you are willing to affirm this statement. At this time, we do not know what the implication or consequences might be, our church would likely be fined, we might possibly be arrested and put in jail as James Coates was in Canada. At the very least, we could face criticism for the stand we were about to take'. But we understood obedience to Christ is paramount, even if it meant non-compliance with state and local health restrictions." Now, when you did the statement, this made news all over the country and Grace Community Church is, of course, a prominent church, in part because of John MacArthur being the pastor. He was on CNN, I think, and Fox News and this, this wasn't the only church who did this, but it was one of the few, was the minority and it was a big one. Tell us about behind the scenes of what went into this Grace Community Church statement and what you were trying to express.

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 23:00

Rewinding the tape all the way back to March of 2020, you know, we had originally been told that we were gonna, we meaning the American people or at least us in California, we were told that it was going to be a two-week hiatus, it was 15 days to "flatten the curve". And then 15 days, you know, expanded into 30 days to "stop the spread". And all of a sudden days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. But when it became clear that the situation, again, was not what we had been told that it was going to be and there were things that happened in

May and June with the protests and everything else that made it clear that there was a bit of a double standard on the part of governing officials in terms of the way they were applying these health mandates.

All of that played into, okay, we want to open our doors as soon as we are able to do so. And as you had already mentioned, we had people coming back to the church even before we were officially open. It wasn't just our elders who wanted this, it was our congregation who wanted this. But we also understood that by taking the stand that we were going to take that there would be potential repercussions.

Looking back on it now, it's easy to say we had nothing to worry about, but in the moment we didn't know how it was going to play out for our elders. You mentioned Pastor John MacArthur, Pastor John really led by being so courageous and his courage was built on those biblical convictions. It was a biblically grounded courage, by which he said, "Men, this is what the Word of God commands us to do. So this is what we must do." And it was that biblical conviction that enabled all of our elders in unanimity to say, "Yes, we're willing to stand by the statement, even if it means we're going to be fined, even if it means that some of us might be arrested and put in jail". It was a sobering moment. It's a moment I'll never forget.

Host: David Wheaton 25:14

Nathan Busenitz with us today on *The Christian Worldview*, the co-author of the book, we're discussing *God vs Government: Taking a Biblical Stand When Christ and Compliance Collide*. You can order a copy, highly recommended, for donation of any amount to *The Christian Worldview*. Just get in touch with us to order it the usual ways: through our website or by phone. We'll give those throughout the program today.

I want to go fast forward in the book here to page 150, where you write about the response of others, including Christians. So you're going to have a legal challenge to this, then we'll get into that in a second. But in the meantime, there was also a challenge from others in the Christian community that you're not "loving your neighbor", if you're opening your church up, because people could get sick and die. And we need to show above all love for neighbor. You say on page 150, "During the lockdown, we were sometimes accused of being a bad testimony to the watching world. We were told that we were not loving our neighbors because we were gathering each Sunday for church". Next page you talk about some principles for this, "Consequently, we believe it is right to prioritize love for God, the greatest commandment over love for others, the second greatest commandment. Insofar as a perceived conflict exists between these two priorities, our love for God must have first place. To state this commitment

another way, our efforts to fulfill the second greatest commandment must never be at the expense of our duty to the greatest commandment.”

And Nathan, when I read that, that that is such an excellent point because we are hearing that constantly in society from Christians, Oh, we love our neighbor and keep your church closed, that kind of thing. But the greater commandment is to love God first and foremost. So talk about that and why the motivation, here, why church is essential and why it's, it was so important to open up, because churches isn't an optional thing. This is essential, not only for the worship of God, but to be able to help people who are hurting.

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 27:19

Yeah, David, you're, you're absolutely right. Mark 12:30-31 is one of the places in the gospel where the greatest and the second greatest commandments are listed out. And of course, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. And, and we did hear a lot of that feedback like, “Hey, by having church, you're not loving your neighbor”. And our response to that was at least twofold: the first, was what you've already articulated that we're not going to subjugate the first commandment to the second commandment in a way that would mean we would be unfaithful to the greatest commandment, the greatest commandment is to love God. God has commanded us to meet and to gather, and therefore we must obey Him. So it was that commitment, first and foremost, to the greatest commandment. And our belief that the second great commandment could be consistent with that. It became very clear to us that when churches shut down, society got far worse, the protests and riots and all that happened in May and June of 2020, along with all of the other negative effects of the lockdown; social isolation, depression, suicide rates, all of these things, I would see those as directly connected to the absence of the influence of the local church in American society, because churches that all shut down, the absence of the church's influence had a negative impact on American society.

The way that the church demonstrates love for neighbor first and foremost is by being a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. How can we be a witness in the community if we're not assembling, if we're not meeting, if we no longer have that kind of impact? I think by being faithful to meet, and by demonstrating to the community around us that we were not afraid of a virus because we're not afraid of death because we have the hope of Jesus Christ, I think that testimony actually did more to show love for our neighbors, than if we had cowered in fear and stayed home.

Host: David Wheaton 29:39

Nathan Busenitz with us today on *The Christian Worldview*, the co-author of *God vs Government*, an excellent book, very relevant at this time in human history. You can get it for a donation of any amount of *The Christian Worldview*, just call 1-888-646-2233 or go to TheChristianWorldview.org. In the book you talk about past examples where Christians have had to obey God versus government. You talked about the Reformers during the time of the Protestant Reformation. You talked about the English Puritans, and also the Scottish covenanters. Tell us what was going on then where they had similar choices to make, as your church did.

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 30:22

The Reformation, itself, just real briefly was born out of the conviction that Christ alone is the head of the Church, which means that Christ alone has jurisdiction over what happens in the church in terms of what we believe and how we worship, that precludes government from getting involved in those matters, because those are matters that belongs solely to Christ. And Christ has appointed leaders in the church, who are accountable to Him for how they govern and shepherd His people. So as we move into the 16th and 17th centuries in England, the Anglican Church was under the oversight of the monarch of England. This goes all the way back to Henry the VIII, who was appointed the supreme Head of the Church of England, and then his daughter, Elizabeth, the supreme governor of the Church of England. And the English monarchy really was involved in what happened in the churches in England through something called *The Book of Common Prayer*, which included some things that still felt very Roman Catholic, especially to the Puritans.

Over time, the Puritans resisted the use of *The Book of Common Prayer* because they didn't see those things as being biblical or being faithful to what Christ wants to have happen in the church. Well, in resisting *The Book of Common Prayer*, they were resisting the English monarchy, they were resisting the influence of secular government and its intrusion into the worship and the liturgy of the church. In resisting that, when we get into the mid-17th century, we have many Puritan pastors who lost their jobs because they refuse to use *The Book of Common Prayer* in church. And in Scotland, we have really an entire nation that came under attack, because they were unwilling to use *The Book of Common Prayer* in the churches of Scotland. So it was that resistance to government intrusion in England and in Scotland that really marked both the Puritan and the Scottish covenant or movements.

Host: David Wheaton 32:40

Nathan Busenitz again, with us talking about the book he co-authored *God vs. Government*, you talk about exceptions to obedience to government, you list five, and when government

orders us to do what is wrong, like in the Old Testament worship the golden image, and they didn't do that; Shadrach Meshach and Abednego.

Number two, another exception is in order to stop doing what is right. And this would be the situation with Grace Church, the government is telling you to stop meeting as a church as something that the Bible commands us to do or like praying, like Daniel in the Old Testament, so there's an exception to obedience there.

Number three, there's an order that contradicts another level of civil authority. So if we're getting conflicting orders from government.

Number four, an order from government to stay silent in the face of evil, there's an exception to obedience there.

And number five, in order to turn yourself in, that you don't have to turn yourself in, you can flee oppressive governments, if they're oppressing you for reasons that are against your faith based on the Word of God.

Most people listening would agree with all those. Those are very clear cut in the New Testament. You see the apostles told not to preach about Jesus and we must obey God rather than men. I think most Christians would understand that, that we don't have to obey those kinds of commands. But what about issues that are more a matter of God-given liberty, sort of the right to bodily integrity for yourself, or maybe your child, you know, when your school says you have to get this vaccine to come to school or else we're going to turn you into social services, and maybe have your child taken away? Or what about situation where government, and this could be coming in the future with home education, or disciplining your children, corporal discipline of your children, that's against the law? Or even the God-given, I believe it's a liberty, to defend yourself from someone else, where the government says we're going to confiscate your ability to defend yourself by taking away a firearm that you use to defend yourself and your family? How do you think through those issues when government starts infringing on those kinds of individual liberties? Or is there room for disobedience in those things?

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 34:51

Yeah, David, that's a great question. I think there are two principles that apply to those kinds of situations. One is something that we addressed in the book actually, in the previous section before the section that you just mentioned, and it has to do with the "spheres of authority", again, going back to Matthew 22:21, where Jesus bifurcated between the sphere of

government's authority and the sphere of God's authority, recognizing of course, that all of it is under God's authority, but He designated the difference between the secular and the sacred when He said, "render to Caesar that which is Caesar's and render to God, that which is God's".

Building on that principle, we would see that there are at least three major spheres of authority within society; there's government, there's the church, and there's the family. Government needs to stay within its own jurisdiction in order to be operating in a biblical way. So some of the examples that you mentioned are where government would actually be intruding into the sphere of the family, that would be an inappropriate intrusion on their part, because it is for parents to make decisions about what is right for their children. It's not for government to make those kinds of decisions.

The other is the role of conscience and as Protestant evangelicals, I mean, the principle of conscience has been something that has been part of our heritage going all the way back to the Reformation, when Luther said that he would not go against his conscience. And it's something that's biblical, it's taught in Romans chapter 14, we are not to violate our conscience. And that fits under that principle of if government commands you to do something that's contrary to the Word of God, then you have the right to not comply, because we must obey God rather than men. So if government tells you to do something that violates your conscience, and God says, do not violate your conscience, Romans 14, and we have biblical justification for not complying on the basis of an appeal to conscience. So it'd be spheres of authority and an appeal to conscience. I think those two principles would help us think through on a case by case basis, the kinds of questions and scenarios that you brought up.

Host: David Wheaton 37:15

Our guest today is Nathan Busenitz, the co-author of *God vs Government*, also the Vice-President of the Masters seminary, *Taking a Biblical Stand When Christ and Compliance Collide*. He was right there in the midst of what happened at Grace Community Church. His co-author was James Coates, the pastor in Canada, which we had on previously on the program who was actually imprisoned for keeping their church open. You can get this book. we have it for you for a donation of any amount to *The Christian Worldview*, just call us toll free 1-888-646-2233. Otherwise, the easiest way to order is going to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org. Okay, we need to take a brief pause here.

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Whiteness causes blackness of heart.

That message that they're going out and taking the world is not, “you need to repent of your sin, receive Christ”, instead the message that you actually have is, “they are under the weight of racism, or sexism, or homophobia”.

The preceding is from *Enemies Within: The Church*, a two-hour documentary film that exposes how social justice ideology is infecting the church. You can order the DVD for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview, go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call 1-888-646-2233, or write to Box 401, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. That's 1-888-646-2233 or TheChristianWorldview.org.

Host: David Wheaton 40:23

Thanks for joining us today on *The Christian Worldview*, I'm David Wheaton. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website

TheChristianWorldview.org. Transcripts are also available. Now back to the interview with Nathan Busenitz, co-author of *God vs Government*.

Nathan, I'd like to get your thoughts on what a Christian's recourse is to unjust commands or laws, like the vaccine mandate. Let's just take an example, a real world example, of what took place in Canada recently where truckers weren't allowed to cross, to come into America without having the vaccine. They couldn't come back into the country unless they were vaccinated, or they have to quarantine for two weeks, which essentially would just take them out of their work.

What is the Christian's recourse in a non-violent civil disobedience way? In a situation like that these Canadian truckers went to Ottawa, they parked their trucks, they blocked traffic, they blocked bridges, they honked their horns. Is that something permissible for the believer? And how far can that be taken? When government goes beyond their sphere of authority? Is this what you were just talking about in what should be the Christian response? What can it be?

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 41:36

So when we look at those biblical passages that talk about the believer's relationship to government, and the attitude of submission that we are to have, I think we have to be very careful before we just go out en masse and start protesting. Those passages would be Romans 13, I Timothy 2, which commands us to pray for our governmental leaders, Titus 3, which talks about walking, actually, in obedience to the government and I Peter 2, which talks about submitting to those who are in various levels of authority above us.

So when government persecutes us, it is the believers joy and reward to actually suffer for Christ, in the way that Christ Himself suffered when He was unjustly arrested and persecuted, and ultimately put to death. Rather than immediately shifting into a mode where we say, hey, we have our rights, we have to go protest, believers, when they suffer well for Christ when they endure the consequences, no matter how unjust, that in itself is an act of worship to the Lord, and a powerful testimony to the watching world.

So in terms of recourse we do live in countries where we have all sorts of legal means of pursuing justice, here in the United States, it's through the legal system. Even when I cannot comply with a certain mandate the biblical pattern is always, "I'm willing to accept the consequences", in a way that is gracious, in a way that is respectful, in a way that suffers well for the sake of Christ.

Host: David Wheaton 43:28

Nathan Busenitz is with us today, co-author of *God vs. Government*. Just going to read a short paragraph here that is toward the end of the book that your recent message at Shepherds' Conference included about what gives someone the boldness to live for Christ, to obey God rather than man or government, during the times in which we live. That can be scary.

There can be, like you mentioned, there can be suffering involved, suffering for Christ. You talk about here, "by remembering our God-given mandate, our Christ-centered message, and our Spirit-empowered mission, we can exhibit the same kind of gospel courage that the apostles demonstrated so powerfully in Acts 5; the courage to speak, to stand and to suffer for Christ."

What is your exhortation for Christians today listening? How they can have this boldness in this conviction, to live for Christ in a world that's very contrary to them?

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 44:26

The answer boils down to remembering the Great Commission, that our Lord gave at the end of Matthew, that we are to be witnesses for Him, that we are to go and make disciples, that we are to be really an aroma of the gospel, a light in a dark world, salt and light to the world around us.

So it's about remembering who we are, that we are followers of Christ. Even the word "evangelical" comes from the Greek word that means "gospel"; we're about the good news. And so everything that we do, we want it to be an act of worship to the Lord and a testimony of His grace to a watching world. And so our behavior needs to be consistent with that. So I'm going to obey God rather than men, because my life is about an act of worship, of sacrifice of worship to Him and I'm going to respond with gentleness and reverence, as I Peter 3:15 says, because I want my life to be a testimony to the dark world around me. And that verse is such a great verse, maybe that's a great way to even end, I Peter 3:15. We are to sanctify Christ as Lord of our hearts. That's worship, always being ready to give a defense to anyone who asks about the hope that is in us. That's our witness. And yet we do it with gentleness and reverence. That's the conduct that is so countercultural that when people see us respond in that way, they're going to ask, "How can you do that?" And the answer is because of our hope, which is centered on the person who we worship, and that, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Host: David Wheaton 46:21

Nathan, thank you for coming on *The Christian Worldview* Radio Program today, and thank you for this book. It's very insightful about something that's becoming much more relevant, at least for us in the West, as believers in the biblical foundation. That is the thread that runs

through the entire book, *God vs Government*. Thanks again, and we wish all of God's best and grace to you.

Guest: Nathan Busenitz 46:41

Thank you, David. Well, we hope that interview with Nathan Busenitz was helpful to help all of us better understand our duty and role before God vs government.

Now, if you missed any of the interview, you can go to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org, where you can hear the audio, or you can download or order a transcript. And again, the book is our new featured resource on *The Christian Worldview*. Nathan Busenitz is the co-author along with Pastor James Coates. It's titled *God vs Government: Taking a Biblical Stand When Christ and Compliance Collide*. It's a 208-page softcover, retails for \$17.99 and you can order it for a donation of any amount to *The Christian Worldview*. Just go to our website, TheChristianWorldview.org or call us toll-free 1-888-646-2233, Rosie will take your call. If you don't get someone, you have to leave a voicemail, she will call you back. You can also write to us at PO Box 401, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. And all that information will be given immediately following the program today, in just a few minutes.

Now, just a few follow-up comments on this topic. When government oversteps its God-given authority and purpose, in other words, gets out of its lane and tries to usurp authority that's not its own, that God hasn't given it, there are many options for Christians. There's prayer, there is written or verbal appeals made to those in authority, there are legal lawsuits, there's voting, that's a way of trying to express our views to government. There are non violent protests, maybe holding a sign on the street or at some rally and then there are more highly-resistant forms of protest like civil-disobedience, like what these two churches we've talked about the last few weeks in the program have done. They just defied the unjust laws that government set down, or in a more extreme version, was the Canadian truckers how they drove their trucks in to block traffic bridges, honked horns, that kind of thing, basically broke the law to try to get their point across to the Canadian government about their unjust mandates on the COVID vaccine.

And then finally, there's the ultimate in protest which is armed resistance. Now, Christians with differing consciences are going to arrive at different conclusions on what is permissible before God. Obviously, early American Christians, some of them at least, concluded that armed resistance to a British king was justifiable. Or during World War II, Lutheran pastor and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, concluded trying to assassinate Hitler was the best way to save millions of lives for which he was hanged, by the way. But we need to keep in mind whatever we do, that there are consequences from God and also from government. And so we

must search the Scriptures carefully. We must act wisely. Ideally, in all but the most extreme situations we are put in, we should strive to live in accordance with what it says in I Timothy 2 where Paul writes, *“First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made in behalf of all people, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

That's where we should want to be living our lives as Christians, not to be agitators over everything. Now, I completely understand that certain situations call for different responses. But that passage I think is where we want to live our Christian lives. The reality is, though, that Christians, no matter what they choose to do to resist government, in certain situations, we're going to suffer unjustly just as the Lord Jesus Christ suffered unjustly. But the good news is, even if we get to the point of suffering, so unjustly, that we die or are killed, death is no enemy for the believer, but rather it's just the entry into life everlasting, with God in heaven.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:55-57, *“Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*. What an amazing hope that the true believer has, that this life is not all there is. A much better life, the perfect life, with God in heaven is what's coming ahead. But that's only for those who have received God's offer to be reconciled to Him.

God in His grace is offering to forgive us and to give us eternal life in Heaven. And we can receive that gift through putting our faith in the provision that God has provided, which is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who bled and died on the cross, was buried and rose again and ascended into heaven. The Philippian jailer said, “What must I do to be saved?” and Paul's answer was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”. You can find out more about how to do that by going to our website TheChristianWorldview.org and clicking on “What Must I do to be Saved?”.

Thank you for joining us today on *The Christian Worldview*. Thanks also to you, our listeners, and Samaritan Ministries for funding today's program. In just a moment, there'll be information on how you can hear a replay of today's program, order transcripts and resources, and support this non-profit radio ministry.

Let's remember we may live in a challenging world where government often goes well beyond its God-ordained authority. But the authority overall is Jesus Christ. He and His work are the

same yesterday, and today and forever. Until next time, Think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm.

The mission of *The Christian Worldview* is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript or find out "What must I do to be saved?". Go to TheChristianWorldview.org or call toll-free 1-888-646-2233. *The Christian Worldview* is a listener-supported non-profit radio ministry furnished by *The Overcomer Foundation*. To make a donation, become a Christian Worldview Partner, order resources, subscribe to our free newsletter or contact us visit TheChristianWorldview.org call 1-888-646-2233 or write to PO Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. That's PO Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

Thanks for listening to *The Christian Worldview*.