

RENDER

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INI - SDG

Matthew 22:15-22 ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in *His* talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. ¹⁷ "Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites? ¹⁹ "Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription *is* this?" ²¹ They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²² When they had heard *these words*, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

The Jews hated Rome and because they hated Rome they despised the tax-collectors who served Rome. Throughout the Gospels we see evidence of this hatred in passages like Matthew 9:10.

Matthew 9:10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him

So odious were the tax collectors to the Jews that they are consistently spoken of in this way as the ultimate example of sinners. Even prostitutes are not mentioned specially but tax collectors are.

For this reason the Pharisees felt they had the perfect trap. If Jesus told them to pay taxes to Rome the people would hate him. If Jesus told them not to pay taxes the Herodians would report him to the Roman authorities.

One thing was certain, there was no way that any Jewish teacher could make a compelling reason to pay taxes that the people would except.

Except Jesus does. Jesus calls for a denarius. It would have looked exactly like the coin on your bulletins this morning. The emperor at the time was Tiberius Ceasar and that is Tiberius' image on that coin.

"Whose image and inscription, is it?" Jesus asks.

"Ceasar's," is their reply.

"Therefore give to Ceasar what is his."

Not only does Jesus make a case for willingly and gladly paying taxes to Rome, but he does it in a way that leaves the Pharisees speechless with astonishment.

Jesus response is one that caused the Pharisees to marvel and which we certainly ought to ponder.

What does Jesus mean by “render to Caesar?” On the surface it seems like he is telling us to pay our taxes, but the statement goes deeper. It is not just taxes that we owe the government but it is also honor and respect. Jesus shows that we not only should give these things to those in authority but that we should do so willingly, gladly and without excuses. To render means to give back. It means to do so willingly. It means to do it without excuses.

To render means to give back

The Greek for Render is *apodotae*. This word can mean to give what is due but it also means to give back. In the context it is clear that Jesus is making use of that second meaning. "Give what is due because you are only giving back what belongs to Caesar in the first place."

In other words, Jesus is emphasizing that you are only returning to the government what was theirs in the first place. If you borrow your neighbor's mower, or grinder, or car, the right thing to do is give it back. It's not yours to keep.

Paul explains that it is not just taxes which we owe the government:

Romans 13:7 **Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.**

Honor, respect, obedience and taxes, Paul explains that these things belong to the government, because God has given it to them.

Romans 13:1 **there is no authority except from God**

These are not things that belong to us. These are things which belong to the government because God has given them to the government, and we ought to render, return, to them the things that are theirs.

Render: Give back what belongs to them

Render: To give back willingly

Because it belongs to them and not us, we should also do it willingly. In Romans 13:5 Paul explains:

Romans 13:5-6 **5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.**

There are different words in the Greek for obey or submit. For example:

Douloomai - means to be a slave

Stenochooreomai - means to be confined, bound, limited, in prison

Hupakouoo - means to listen and do, this is the word used of children who are to obey, listen and do, what their parents tell them.

Romans 13 uses none of these words. It is not the forced subjugation of a slave. It is not the unquestioning obedience of a child. The word Paul uses is upotassoo, which is a willing choice on your part to follow their lead, and to honor them.

God isn't asking you to make yourselves slaves to the government, or to blindly follow. He is asking that you willingly choose to honor them and fulfill your responsibilities to them and your neighbor.

We have a word in English for what Jesus is talking about here, duty. Duty is not what we are forced to do, but what we choose to do because it is your responsibility, and it is what we owe our neighbor.

It is the duty of our military to stand as a wall protecting us. What is our duty to them?

It is the duty of our police to protect and uphold the rights of all citizens. What is our duty to them?

It is the duty of our governor, our president, our legislators to make very difficult decisions. What is our duty to them?

The bible reveals that in all these cases it is our duty to pray for them, willingly and gladly pay our taxes and honor and respect them. Why? Because these are the things that God has given to the government, and we ought to return to them what is theirs.

Render: also means without excuses

Notice there is not one word here about what the government owes us. Jesus only speaks about what we owe. Jesus doesn't ask if Tiberius is doing a good job. He doesn't ask if Tiberius is a moral person. There are places in scripture where God discusses how those in authority should act. But that has nothing to do with our rendering.

The government's failure, our belief that they are wrong, even their moral depravity is not an excuse for my sin. It may at times mean that I cannot do what they demand, but it is not an excuse to refuse to pay my taxes or to refuse to give them honor where I can.

This is the sinful attitude of our hearts which often makes this a confusing situation. We point to their failures, or to our belief of their failures and use it as an excuse to not "render." This is not just the case with the government but with essential every sin we commit. We are usually too busy worrying about what someone else owes us to worry about what I owe.

Satan tempted Eve by claiming that God was keeping something back from her. "You will be like God."

Marriage fights almost always being, "You did, or you didn't, or you said." As though my spouses failure is an excuse for my anger. When spouses sin against each other they often use the excuse of their spouse's failure as justification.

Jesus says simply render. It is his image on the coin. It belongs to him. You render to him without excuses.

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God that things that are God's

What do we owe to God? So far we have discussed what we render to the government but Jesus also wants us to consider what we owe God.

The law says:

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart

This is important not only with regard to what we owe God but also with regard to what we owe the government. We owe the government taxes and honor. We do not owe them our hearts. Our hearts belong to God.

This is part of the problem with the Pharisees. They aren't tempted to give their hearts to Rome, but neither have they given them to God. They have given their hearts to their nation. As long as what was first in their hearts was their own nation, they could not honor Rome, which had taken control of that nation. If our nation is first in our hearts, we are going to have problems honoring those we see as destroying that nation.

By contrast we see the example of the Apostles Paul, Peter, John and others. They had no problem showing respect and honor even to the Jewish leaders. They knew what Jesus told Pilate: "You would have no power over me unless it was given to you from above." They trusted that God was in control.

When we give our hearts to God it is an easy thing to honor and respect our government even when they are wrong. We know that ultimately God is in control. When we give our hearts to our nation it becomes much harder to honor those whom we feel are destroying "our land."

According to the Law we owe God our hearts. This is especially outlined in the first three commandments.

But we are not under the law but under Grace. And so the answer becomes, "NOTHING." We owe God nothing. Jesus reminds us:

"I did not come to be served, but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many."

Jesus did not come to receive anything from us, but to give to us.

God told Abraham to bring a cow, a goat, a ram, and two birds. Abraham cut the animals in two. In ancient times this was a solemn oath between two parties. "If I don't keep my side of the bargain, may I be cut in half like these animals." Abraham waited all day, keeping the birds away. At evening when God appeared God did something astounding. He did something more incredible than opening the red sea or sending fire down on Mt Carmel. He and he walked through, "a smoking firepot and a blazing torch." God and God walked through, and Abraham did not.

In so doing God declared to Abraham and through him to the whole world, that we owe God nothing. It is a two-sided covenant in which God does both sides. Our debt is paid. God has done his responsibility and ours.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

What does this mean "all things are of God?" It means that God has taken all responsibility upon himself. God has done all things that need doing. There is nothing left undone. You are free of your responsibility under the law, for Christ has put himself under the law for you.

In Luther's explanation to the first article, he speaks about God creating, protecting, and preserving us. He concludes that "for all of this it is my duty to thank, praise, serve and obey him."

In his explanation to the second article he speaks about how Jesus has done something greater. He has redeemed us from sin and death. One would expect therefore a greater duty on our part in response. Yet there is not a single word about what I owe, or about my duty. It is only from beginning to end "He has . . . He did . . . He is."

We are not under the law which demands that we give to God what is owed to him. We are under Grace which proclaims that everything is accomplished and nothing more is owed.

Nevertheless, if you desire to give to God a thanksgiving offering out of the gratitude of your hearts. One of the gifts you could offer is that you willingly render to all in authority honor and respect.

In Christ Jesus our Lord the question is not what do I owe, but what has Christ done, and how do I freely and gladly respond. AMEN