

WORD AT WORK

VOLUME XLI NUMBER IV
Weapons of Our Warfare II - Righteous Dissent

THURSDAY, APRIL 1

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 20:15

When the freedom to conduct an impartial, accurate election is thwarted by deep darkness we must discern how to fight. There is no doubt that evil is gaining ascendancy. This month we are continuing our series on Weapons of Our Warfare. Most of us would agree that we need to fight the onslaught of evil. There is a book by an Iowa pastor called 'This Day We Fight!' which is relevant to the fighting spirit we must build in ourselves to resist evil in the last days. What a strong title that book has, and what a message it conveys! The American Founders fought for the privilege to establish a free nation and indeed our only option may be to fight in the coming months, years or even decades to keep that nation. There is no doubt that darkness is on the rise in our culture and that we may be on the precipice of the end-times, or at the very least, the beginnings of a dark period. Does that mean that we are simply going to roll over and turn our future generations over to the evils of social media, cancel culture, materialism, globalism and the occult? Absolutely not! At Word at Work Ministries, we are warriors. Our primary battles may be in the spiritual realm on our knees before the throne of God, but that doesn't mean that we are ignorant of the other tools in our arsenal. This month let's explore one of the staples of dissent that our enemies have engaged in for over a century, and one that will become absolutely necessary for us to resist tyranny moving forward: civil disobedience.

FRIDAY, APRIL 2

Scripture: Acts 4:19-20

One cannot discuss modern civil disobedience without taking a long hard look at the consequences for civil disobedience. It wasn't so very long ago that dissidents in the Soviet Union were shipped off to gulags to be tortured for refusing the dictates of the party. We should be aware that modern Chinese Christians are currently at risk of imprisonment and torture by the government, up to and including disappearing in the middle of the night never to be seen again. We've all heard whispers in the mainstream news of what supposedly happens to the Uighur Muslims in China. Relocation to ghettos, reeducation, organ harvesting. The truth is that atrocities are happening to Christians in China at a much higher rate. The more tyrannical a regime becomes, the more extreme the punishments that it metes out to those who refuse to bend the knee. When coming to the conclusion that civil disobedience is necessary to war against injustice, the first thing we need to realize is that there are consequences to disobeying the government. Our first step is to have our lives focused on building a committed, ongoing relationship with God that includes a vibrant prayer life and a solid knowledge of the Word! Then, we must lean on the God's direction for His particular assignments for us. As believers, are we are willing to suffer the consequences of our actions in service to our faith? Sadly, nearly the entire church in the West has become so accustomed to their creature comforts that any threat to those comforts is met with a "flight" response. And its long past time to begin retraining our "fight" response.

SATURDAY, APRIL 3

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24

We must gain the courage needed to fight against giants of present day - Materialism and Entitlement! For the

past century, we were sleeping as these giants gained in size and influence. The economic systems of the late 19th and 20th centuries enabled an explosion of wealth and prosperity in Western nations. Even the peasants of the 20th century lived like kings or lords of old. Instead of worrying about where our next meals would come from, we learned to worry about where we would get our next entertainment. And this isn't a new trick that the global elites have concocted to keep our minds occupied and our hands busy only with idle work. *Panem et Circenses* goes the ancient Roman phrase attributed to the poet Juvenal, referring to the only things the elites need to provide the masses in order to stay in power. Bread and Circuses, or Food and Entertainment. Let's be honest... How many of us are content with our lives so long as we have enough food to eat, and enough things to do? The vast majority of us are perfectly contented. Christ, on the other hand, calls us to do more, to be more! Complacency, in the Kingdom of God, is never a good thing. The Spirit of antichrist is at war with church! Communism and socialism are not mainstream values, but are being pushed by outspoken leaders who are connected to the antichrist spirit whether they realize it or not.

SUNDAY, APRIL 4

Scripture: James 2:22; Ephesians 2:8-9

Much is made of the doctrinal tension between faith and works. Many a cult has cut its teeth by using the book of James to suggest that one has not, and indeed cannot have salvation without works. The other side quotes Paul in saying, truthfully, that salvation is through grace alone, by faith alone and not of works, so that no one can boast. Faith without works is dead, the supporters of James will retort! Both are right. If our faith is not spurring us to action for the kingdom... some action... ANY action, there is something wrong. Difficult seasons need vibrant, faith filled volunteers. Not everyone is called to be an evangelist but all of us are called to use our giftings redemptively! Christ established the five-fold ministry in recognition of the differences in human personality and ability. The frail widow who faithfully watches ministry teachings on her iPad and prays from her favorite chair is acting out her faith every bit as much as the well-known minister who jets around to different venues to spread the Word, or the worship team member who gets up before the congregation every Sunday. To know where your heart is before the Lord is necessary to know what kind of steps you are willing or able to take for the Kingdom.

MONDAY, APRIL 5

Scripture: John 15:18-20

Have you ever heard the names Jack Phillips or Baronelle Sturzman? Both of these people are heroes of the modern faith who were told to violate their faith or face the power of the state. Both of them took a stand against something significant which violated their moral conscience based on their Biblical stand, and both were severely punished by the state for choosing to follow their faith rather than the demands of an unjust government. Both are still embroiled in lawsuits after more than a decade. While neither Jack nor Baronelle have faced prison time yet, both have lost their businesses, and look likely to lose their homes without intervention of the Supreme Court. How about David Lynn? You likely haven't heard of him either, but he is another hero of the modern faith, arrested and prosecuted for daring to preach Christ's love to a group of gays in Toronto. How about David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt? They are undercover journalists who exposed Planned Parenthood's sale of body parts from aborted babies. Their reward? Kamala Harris, recently (s)elected Vice President of the United States brought numerous criminal charges against them for their recording the Planned Parenthood officials confessing to the crimes of selling baby parts, and they each face up to life in prison. These are just a few prominent examples from the past five years. Persecution has existed since the beginning of the Christian faith, and we can look back at almost any period from the past two-thousand years to find that we are not alone if and when we suffer for Christ.

TUESDAY, APRIL 6

Scripture: Matthew 23:23

Step back to the 1950s and we can look to the Civil Rights icon Martin Luther King Jr. as an example of willingness to suffer for the faith. King's movement eschewed the violent hateful rhetoric of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party in favor of nonviolent demonstrations. King's nonviolent demonstrations led to his arrest on a number

of occasions, and it was from arrest at such an event in Alabama that he wrote his famous Letter from Birmingham Jail, which contains a very poignant segment on just laws versus unjust laws. Has the vision that Martin Luther King had for racial equality been perverted and usurped by present day extremes? King's convictions and life regarding justice and injustice are worth looking at, since as we know from the Word, God hates injustice. Martin Luther King knew that doing what was right was much more honorable than doing what was safe. And he gave his life for leading a righteous cause. What are we willing to do for a righteous cause or to preserve a righteous nation?

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7

Scripture: Isaiah 5:20-21

When society is being run by the wicked, there is no longer clear recognition of right from wrong. Deceptive leaders may even promote wickedness and call it justice, while declaring righteousness to be unjust. Thus, the current social agenda may even determine that discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice are good things, so long as they are directed at the right groups. Even segregation is making a comeback on some college campuses and in the federal workforce thanks to the social justice warriors, with so-called safe spaces set up to keep out disfavored groups. As believers we know that hate is sinful, and we all are guilty of it to one degree or another. But currently the social justice movement tells us that racism exists only in one place, and that only one group is guilty of it. These are lies, pure and simple. Is the answer to bigotry MORE bigotry, or the solution to discrimination MORE discrimination? Only the father of lies would suggest that. It is sad to say, there are a large number of people in the church who are being drawn in or captivated by these lies. How do believers keep from being captivated by these lies? Are we being 'preached' a new 'religion' which denies the fundamental tenets of Christianity?

THURSDAY, APRIL 8

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 19:7

So what does an unjust law look like? When should we obey an unjust law, when should we resist, how should we resist, and when is the system so hopelessly corrupt that it needs to be brought down? Let's look at some examples of laws both modern and ancient and see if we can't reach a consensus on what is just and what is unjust. First, let's look at some ancient examples of just laws and recognize the laws which were established by God Himself. The Ten Commandments. Each of these laws is just, and all of them implicate some fundamental aspect of human nature or the Natural Law. Take for example the prohibitions against theft and murder. The intrinsic value of life, and the innate right to enjoy the fruits of one's labors are at the heart of the Natural Law. God's design for the family is reflected in the prohibition against adultery, and the commandment against covetousness, which is key to the Natural Law, as a reflection of the relationship that God desires with humanity through the Church. Because our God is a God of justice, truth and righteousness we should always carry the framework of His truth in our hearts as our Godly compass! Psalm 119:151-152 in The Passion Translation says, "*God, you are near me always, so close to me; every one of your commands reveals truth. I've known all along how true and unchanging is every word you speak, established forever.*" Most people in America in past decades have, through common sense and decency ascribed to the values represented in the Ten Commandments. We need to ask ourselves, has our society moved away from God's Biblical 'common sense' approach and an ability to distinguish truth from lies.

FRIDAY, APRIL 9

Scripture: Romans 2:15

For those who have Holy Spirit-enabled wisdom in discerning truth, unjust laws are easy to spot. There's just something that seems off or wrong with them. Even when they are cloaked in positive sounding language, like "The Equality Act" or the "Affordable Care Act," when we dig into the details and find out more about what the laws actually do, we should discover that the laws are not always right. Some promote evil or make things 'more fair' for one group at the expense of another. As Christians, there are two spheres of law with which we MUST concern ourselves, and those are the Natural Law and Scriptural Law. Paul points out that we are no longer bound by the Mosaic Law, but as

Christ Himself said, not one jot nor tittle will pass away from Scriptural Law as a result of the new covenant. What does that mean for us? Are we subject to the law? Are all things lawful? As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, all things may be lawful, but not all things edify. On a practical level it means when we walk in the Spirit we fulfill the law. However, as with the tension between faith and works, we also find here that the more one loves God, or is at the very least a person of integrity, the more one wants to live in one accord with the Natural Law, and the more one wants to follow the rules that God set down.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10

Scripture: Hebrews 10

The Natural Law as defined by William Blackstone encompasses “The Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God,” as Thomas Jefferson would later paraphrase from Blackstone. Most of these laws are laws which were written into the fabric of the universe and therefore into the fabric of the human spirit. This includes everything from the laws of gravity, physics and chemistry, to the intrinsic moral knowledge that murder and theft are wrong. The Scriptural Law can be separated into two parts, the Ten Commandments, and the Ceremonial Law. The Ten Commandments are best understood as a codification of the parts of the Natural Law most relating to man’s relationship with God and man’s relationship with man. The second part of the Scriptural Law is the Ceremonial Law of Moses laid down in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The Ceremonial Law was a special set of rules for the nation of Israel which was intended to help set the Jews apart as God’s people. While we are all under the Natural Law at all times, we are not subject to the Ceremonial Law, except as it may be beneficial to us to follow it. The last sphere of law is the Law of man, this encompasses all of the laws and regulations which men enact as between individuals, groups, and the state. Some of these laws mimic the Natural Law or the Scriptural Law, while others are wholly manmade. The question we must ask about the Law of man is whether an individual statute or regulation deals with an area which is a sin, or not.

SUNDAY, APRIL 11

Scripture: Romans 13:1-6

Areas of the Law of man which implicate the Natural Law or Scriptural Law will hopefully be **just** rather than **unjust**, though the current trend in the West is to upend this millennia-old tradition in favor of manmade laws which actively transgress the Natural Law. When a manmade law is in harmony with the Natural Law or Scriptural Law, we who believe are required to be obedient. When a manmade law requires behavior that is immoral or prohibits behavior that is moral, the Christian is bound to obey the Natural Law rather than the manmade law. This is the moral framework for Civil Disobedience. Many Christians reject the very notion of civil disobedience, ignorantly citing Paul’s admonition in Romans 13:1-6 to obey governmental authority. We know that all scripture is in perfect harmony, even if we can’t understand it with our earthly minds, so what do we make of Paul’s admonition? Let’s remember what the early church leaders said to the religious elite and their edicts and regulations.

MONDAY, APRIL 12

Scripture: Acts 9:28-29

Let’s start by analyzing Paul’s behavior. How did Paul comport himself? We know that Paul was fearless in proclaiming the Name of Jesus, suffering stoning at least once, and being left for dead, with many other beatings and plots to kill him which came to various failures. But did Paul actually disobey any authorities in his preaching of Jesus? The Romans weren’t as keen to punish native populations for native religious infractions. Pilate was reluctant to involve the Roman justice system in the Jew’s murder of Jesus for religious crimes, and preaching the Gospel was not directly outlawed by the Roman system until much later. But from the book of Acts, we know that the Sanhedrin had indeed criminalized the preaching in the Name of Jesus by the time Paul was positioned in leadership. Paul definitely would have considered the Sanhedrin an authority over the people. So what did he do in Jerusalem? Acts 9:28-29 says, “*So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.*” We see from this passage that Paul did not hesitate to violate

the law that the Sanhedrin had set down when it conflicted with Christ's commandment to go and preach the good news to all nations! Many brothers and sisters across the world risk their lives to illegally smuggle Bibles into dangerous places, some teaching in underground meetings to train and refresh oppressed saints in 'illegal' assemblies. The heart of the Apostle Paul is still alive in these surrendered saints. Some of us know some of them!

TUESDAY, APRIL 13

Scripture: Romans 13:7

Paul's admonition to respect governmental authority comes with examples which are set down in the conclusion which is Romans 13:7. He states, "*Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*" Just as the Jews during Christ's ministry groaned under Roman rule, obviously they were groaning under Roman rule during Paul's time. The chief complaint was likely the burdensome taxes, which were usually made burdensome by the tax collectors tacking on their own percentages to enrich themselves as both Matthew and Zacchaeus had once done. Paul's chief example therefore, deals with paying taxes. He also mentions paying customs, and the giving of fear and honor to representatives of the government. Being willing to fear those who punish the lawbreaker most tracks with having a healthy respect for law enforcement. Giving honor to whom honor is due tells us that we should have a respect for the offices that public servants hold, even if we do not respect the current occupants of those offices. In understanding that honor is due, let us simultaneously take note that Paul does not tell us that we should obey every edict or whim of those in power.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14

Scripture: Daniel 3; Daniel 6, Proverbs 28:1

Paul is not the only example in the Bible of the elect choosing to obey God rather than the laws of man. Look no further than the accounts of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When an unjust law was passed to trap Daniel in his righteousness, Daniel paid no heed to the unjust law. Despite King Darius' commandment that no one was to pray to any gods but the King himself, Daniel continued offering his worship to God. When the consequences came in the form of the lion's den, Daniel went willingly. Could we say that Daniel's obedience to the Lord God Almighty activated the Lion of all lions, Lion of the tribe of Judah! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego likewise knew Nebuchadnezzar's commandment to bow before the giant statue, but they refused to obey the law of man where it conflicted with God's law. They knew the penalty for their refusal, and bravely chose to obey the laws of God while defying the laws of men! They had settled the issue of the worth and truth of standing even unto death for the God they represented. May God give us the courage that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had! Proverbs 28:1 says, "*The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion.*" May the boldness to represent our Savior well be His gift to us!

THURSDAY, APRIL 15

Scripture: Luke 13:10-17

Jesus himself was no stranger to righteous dissent. His overturning of the tables in the temple and his attack on the vendors there would have violated all sorts of rabbinic laws and traditions. His willingness to heal on the Sabbath also violated the traditions that the priests had set up. Jesus confounded them by pointing out their hypocrisy. Is it any wonder that He also said that their traditions had made the Word of God of none effect? We must be willing to cast aside tradition where it binds us from seeking the weightier matters of the law! Are we willing to listen to and represent the Spirit of truth?

FRIDAY, APRIL 16

Scripture: Matthew 24:9-13

We all know the predestined price that Christ was to pay for our sins on the cross, though it was His attacks on the hypocrites in the Jewish religious establishment and His preaching of truth that were used as the excuses to

condemn Him to death. And the potential of death is an ever-present possibility that may be a consequence for standing up against evil that every believer has to be ready to face in the end-times. Do we expect to be raptured out? A large part of the church certainly believes so... We aren't here to debate eschatology. Too many church bodies have split over issues of pre, post or mid-tribulation, and the disunity that creates isn't worth being rigid with brothers and sisters in Christ over the issue. Better to agree to disagree and stay in fellowship. Regardless of when the rapture occurs in conjunction with the Great Tribulation, more and more people in the Western church are waking up to the fact that the church does not have to be in the middle of the Great Tribulation in order to face great adversity and persecution. This is a fact that our brothers and sisters living under Communist or Islamic oppression have understood as a daily part of their realities for a long time!

SATURDAY, APRIL 17

Scripture: Acts 4:1-22

Once Jesus had ascended to the right-hand of the Father, how did His disciples carry out the Great Commission? Did they respect the authorities? Acts 4:1-22 tells the story of Peter and John being dragged before the Sanhedrin to answer charges of heresy for preaching the name of Jesus in the healing of the lame beggar in Acts 3. Peter gives an epic condemnation of the religious establishment for crucifying the Messiah, and proclaiming the truth of Christ before the priests and all the assembly. The response from the religious establishment is to forbid Peter and John from preaching in the name of Jesus. Peter and John's response to the Sanhedrin comes in Acts 4:19-20: *"But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.'"* It doesn't get more elegantly stated than that! Our first allegiance is always to God.

SUNDAY, APRIL 18

Scripture: Hebrews 13:14

God has set eternity in the hearts of His family! From time to time we hear in church that we are strangers, sojourner and pilgrims in this world. These Word statements remind us that this world is not our true home. Such reminders really bring back into focus the need for us to keep an eternal perspective. Once we have given our lives to serving and loving God, our allegiance should be first and primarily to Him. There is no question that when the Natural Law and the Law of Man conflict, we must choose to obey God rather than man. Over the next few days, we will be taking a more detailed and in-depth look at what this may look like in practice.

MONDAY, APRIL 19

Scripture: Psalm 33:19, Psalm 19:7-11, Hebrews 4:12

Psalm 33:19 says, *"God spoke and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast."* He commanded and it stood fast. In order to understand where the laws enacted by men can conflict with the Natural Law, we must gain a firm understanding of how the laws of men are organized. Whether it be common law or statutory law, the laws enacted among men are all structured in some way. One of the most common is to group laws by subject. At the bottom of the structure, you may have a divide between the civil law and the criminal law. Then the criminal law might be divided between crimes against persons, crimes against property, crimes against animals, and so on. Then each category will be further and further structured in order to hopefully achieve consistent outcomes as between similar cases. As persecution begins to increase with the deliberate deconstruction of the Christian west, believers can expect to come into conflict more and more frequently with both the civil and criminal sides of the law.

TUESDAY, APRIL 20

Scripture: Proverbs 29:27

Back in the 1950s, separating a just law from an unjust law was simple, and the culture generally still retained the ability to separate one from the other. In the past there was a stronger sense of right and wrong. Laws which would

exclude people from service based on immutable characteristics such as race or sex were objectively wrong. As MLK Jr. suggested, people should be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. Sadly, we now live in a world that seems disinterested in character but obsessed over superficial characteristics and personal preferences. These days we have manifestly unjust laws in some states, which are a direct result of this shift in moral thinking away from the Judeo-Christian ethic and towards humanism. One example of such a law would be a law in California among other places which forbids mental health professionals from treating individuals with same-sex attraction with anything other than positive affirmation. In simpler terms, if a Christian counselor hears from a client that they have unwanted homosexual thoughts or feelings, that counselor is mandated to give that client positive reinforcement about homosexuality. Counselors aren't even allowed to refer a client to someone who would be happy to provide positive reinforcement. For anyone who comes from a religious background, this is manifestly unjust. It is a law which is designed to weed out Christians and other religious objectors from providing the guidance and help that aligns with their personal moral compass. These laws must be stopped before they can be enacted at the state level. This highlights the importance of electing leaders at the national level who will protect religious liberty. We personally know counselors who risk their jobs by representing God and His Word over caving to bad laws.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21

Scripture: Matthew 5:10-11

One of the big areas that these unjust laws have conflicted with religious liberty is in the area of public accommodations. Wedding photographers, bakers, and other wedding professionals have already been targeted by activists, as the Boy Scouts once were. Years ago, the Boy Scouts were sued by homosexual activists in an attempt to force them to allow homosexual men to become scout leaders. The Supreme Court at the time ruled that the Scouts had the right to reject homosexuals from leadership, and from membership. Fast forward thirty years and the Boy Scouts are a shell of what they once were. They now allow homosexuals to join and lead. They have admitted females into their ranks and have changed their name to BSA Scouts. They are also in dire financial straits due to lawsuits from decades of homosexual leaders committing sex assault and abuse crimes. Today's legislators do not believe that Christian scouting groups (Royal Rangers or Trail Life USA) should be allowed to exclude those who do not share their values. Laws may arise in the not-so-distant future which require Christians to engage in immoral behavior, or which may make righteous behavior illegal. So what is a Christian to do when faced with a hostile culture, hostile legal system, hostile lawmakers, and a hostile media? Before we develop a response, we must activate our prayer life and seek the Holy Spirit for His direction as to our level and manner of involvement.

THURSDAY, APRIL 22

Scripture: Mark 9:42; 1 Timothy 5:8

The first thing that Christians must do in sizing up a response to an unjust law is to determine whether the Word of God compels action in a way that the law forbids, or if it forbids one to act in a way that the law compels. To simplify, does the Bible say that **I MUST** do it, or does the Bible say that **I CAN'T** do it. What if the government compels us to engage in immoral behavior? Imagine that the government-run public schools in your district require trans and homosexual education programs for elementary school aged children (Not at all far-fetched in left-leaning states). Now say that the government passes a law requiring our children's attendance. Is obeying such a law immoral? Objectively it is. Jesus talks in Mark 9 about the innocence of children and the penalty deserved for defiling that innocence. Parents who do not take care of their families are considered worse than unbelievers according to Paul in 1 Timothy 5:8. Willfully failing to protect our children is a sin. If the government requires us to submit to a law which harms our children, we have a moral obligation to refuse to comply with that law, and to actively resist the government if necessary!

FRIDAY, APRIL 23

Scripture: Hebrews 10:24-26

An example of an unjust law is where the government seeks to prohibit Godly behavior. Such was the case in the numerous coronavirus restrictions imposed on churches in some states, preventing churches from meeting or

engaging in worship. We are commanded to give our worship to the Lord, and we are commanded to gather together (do not forsake the assembling...). When the government interferes and forbids us from doing something that God has commanded us to do, we should first give a brief respect to the authorities as we are also commanded to do by asking WHY the government is forbidding us from meeting or worshipping. If the building that a church seeks to meet in is structurally unsound and in danger of collapse, it would not be sinful to heed a government-posted warning and meet elsewhere. If two-hundred active coronavirus cases have been traced to a particular church, it might be prudent for the pastor to switch to livestreams for a few weeks. However, when the government arbitrarily picks a church capacity number without solid data to back it up, and bans singing and worship with no conclusive data that singing actually increases the chances of spreading COVID, and refuses to adjust the limitations when infection rates drop, we have a moral obligation to ignore the governments mandates and obey God instead. Certain states targeted the closing of churches while leaving liquor stores, massage parlors, and abortion clinics open. Many brave pastors risked much in the last year to stand on Bible principles. Some are still paying high fines and others have been jailed.

SATURDAY, APRIL 24

Scripture: Acts 12:6-19

When the government tells us that we are no longer allowed to preach in the Name of Jesus, what will we do? Let's see what Peter did in Acts 12. In this account Herod stretched out his hand to harass the church going as far as to kill James. When Herod noted that the killing of James gained him favor with the Jews, he moved forward to arrest Peter. The church made constant prayer for Peter, no doubt knowing that his life was on the line. God sent an angel to supernaturally free Peter, and what did he do? Did he go rushing over to the temple courtyard to again preach Christ to the Sanhedrin? Peter knew full well that Herod's men would simply arrest him and drag him back to the executioner's block. Peter was wise, and hid from Herod until Herod's death. We too, in the midst of increasing persecution must learn to be wise as serpents at the same time we are harmless as doves. We walk with He who is our Counselor, the Spirit of truth in our hearts and He is our Helper and our Mentor. His direction will set us on course as He did for Peter. He is the Ultimate Mentor and will give us the needed wisdom at the right moment!

SUNDAY, APRIL 25

Scripture: Matthew 10:16

What does being wise as a serpent entail? We are not to deny Christ, but that does not mean that we cannot take steps to protect ourselves. If street preaching is our assignment and we've been threatened with arrest by an officer, we might go out and get a GoPro, or become familiar with an app that records from our phones and uploads to a secure server so that we might get video of our rights being violated. Insulating ourselves might be something as simple as turning on privacy settings on our social media accounts so that no one but close friends can see the name of our employer. Perhaps some might be led to put their house into a trust which doesn't use the family last name, so that it's more difficult to track an address. It could mean consulting with an asset protection expert to shield our assets from a civil judgment by an activist group. If our organization is thinking about who to hire, we might work with an employment law attorney or others to craft a process that will weed out social justice types or others who might be a liability to our organization later on down the road. It also means looking for alternatives to the technology and products that we use so that our money is not going to companies which are actively trying to tear down Christian values. Drop Apple for Samsung. Drop Google in favor of DuckDuckGo. Drop Twitter for Gab, Facebook for Minds, and YouTube for BitChute, Rumble or Odysee. We should all have alternatives ready in the event we get deplatformed. Deplatforming is when a company kicks you off their service(s) due to your political beliefs. An important step we can take is to find a Christian Credit Union to open an account, since banks are now starting to deplatform as well. Finally, when getting ready to step into this public arena, let's always welcome and pray that the Spirit lead and guide us.

MONDAY, APRIL 26

Scripture: Proverbs 20:18, Proverbs 24:6

Above all, when we engage in righteous conduct which might run afoul of the laws of men, we must do three

things. First, we must take steps to make the situation as safe and positive for ourselves as possible. This usually involves some degree of thought and planning about how the enemy may respond. Instead of conducting street preaching, pro-life sidewalk counseling, or attending an anti-mask rally alone, go with a group of friends. Have someone whose job is to record any interactions with counter-protestors or police. If we are opening our church in defiance of COVID restrictions, don't do it without having previously talked to an attorney with a group that represents Christians pro bono like the ACLJ or Alliance Defending Freedom. Have a plan for what our security or ushers can or should do if health inspectors or the police show up. If we haven't seen the viral video of New York City Police and health inspectors chased out of a private business by employees and customers, try to watch it. When many voices stand up together to oppose unjust laws, the enforcers just might be forced to retreat! The link to the video can be found here: <https://www.bitchute.com/video/H3KqpKF5f5Ur/> In coming years please know, if you cannot find our ministry on YouTube – consider we may have been deplatformed, pray for our team and look for our videos on Bitchute.

TUESDAY, APRIL 27

Scripture: Matthew 7:3-4

The next thing we must do if we intend to engage in civil disobedience is to know our rights and to know the area of the law which our disobedience affects. Christians on the bleeding edge of Pro-Life activism know this all too well, as the police may use a technical violation of the law to shut down protests, even in areas of law that we might not expect. We must have a mastery of our rights which is in excess of that possessed by the authorities (or have someone in your congregation or on speed dial with that level of knowledge). A perfect example of this is that you probably don't want to defy the COVID restrictions in reopening your church if the building has multiple safety violations, the café isn't properly licensed to prepare and serve food or drinks, or your staff hasn't properly vetted the volunteers in your children's ministry using required state procedures. And make sure above all else that your tax returns are honest. Defying an evil system invites the attention of that system, and the system may use any counter measures such as an IRS audit to force compliance. Walking in obedience, integrity and honor is the path of righteousness that should be our life message -and that will serve us well when our godly values clash with authorities.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28

Scripture: Romans 13:4-5

As you engage in civil disobedience the final thing you must do is to remember that even though it is Biblical, there are frequently consequences. Consequences are something that we should prepare for, and expect. If we enter into a game, we should acquaint ourselves with the rules before starting to play, and unfair as it may be, the government sets most of the rules. Risk tolerance is a huge industry, and for those of us in ministry, having God at our backs, it is an area we neglect to give much thought, though it is important if we want to make a stand for God. First we must ask the Holy Spirit, 'How do you want me to participate?' Prayer to hear God's voice is usually accompanied by the grace and peace to carry out the assignment. Following God's direction is paramount, both for making a difference and for the ability to endure the consequences! We may not be at the point yet in America where our lives are in danger for going to church, but look at Chinese believers or those living under Islamic oppression. Every time they leave their homes to attend church or mention Christ to a friend, they are taking a risk. If we wait until the persecution has already surrounded us to think about these things, it might be too late to respond! We must be thinking through our need for preparedness and the steps toward the kind of maturity that will call for wisdom, strength and boldness in our lives!

THURSDAY, APRIL 29

Scripture: John 18:10; John 18:15-18

Peter, being impulsive, wasn't much for thinking before he acted during Jesus' ministry on Earth. His severing of Malchus' ear in the Garden of Gethsemane and his denial of Christ tell us that Peter often acted before thinking. Jesus chose him to set both positive and negative examples for the early church. We have to learn from his successes and his failures. Peter succeeded in not fearing man, and have we grown to that point? When we do not fear social,

legal or even physical repercussions from acting on our Biblical beliefs – then we are there! If we have worked through our fear of man, we will not fret over deplatforming, the cancel culture or social media outrage. If these are newer terms to you, look into them! They are cultural phenomena which the enemy uses to manipulate ideas and behavior, and younger generations are especially vulnerable. Incoming are a barrage of cultural ‘rules’ that go against God, and we must work out where we stand and what we are willing to risk for Christ’s sake. Jesus gave His all for us, and for our younger generations. Are we willing to stretch ourselves and become knowledgeable about this changing world younger people are navigating? Let’s form a plan of action to acquaint ourselves with these changes, and stand as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Will we stand boldly for Him when we are confronted by the evil servants of Satan who are invading our leadership and culture? If we’ve already worked through the scenario in our head, when we have the metaphorical or literal gun to our heads and are being told to deny Christ, we are much less likely to say, “I tell you, I never knew the man!” Let’s remember that the Helper Jesus promised to send after His resurrection will show us things to come. The Lord will prepare us by His Spirit!

FRIDAY, APRIL 30

Scripture: Numbers 16:31-33, Psalm 92:12-15, Proverbs 28:1

Civil disobedience has always been a tool of the left. They have systematically used it to erode the Judeo-Christian belief system America was built on. The left have used both ‘nonviolent resistance’ and violent lawlessness as they gained power, working to strip away the protections of the Bill of Rights. Now we have to be aware of civil disobedience as an increasingly important tool in **our** arsenal. Now is the time learn how to righteously dissent, and how to do it well. For our younger readers, let’s remember Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were in a spiritually hostile environment and they choose to be bold as lions. The Lion of the tribe of Judah dwelt within them and they were given the supernatural confidence needed at the moment needed. God had set eternity in their hearts and they caught their divine purpose by keeping an eternal focus. No doubt their commitment, wisdom and understanding – their very relationship with God – had been cultivated in their lives little by little. Perhaps a parent or elder also in captivity had been their mentor. It is likely the Ultimate Mentor, the Holy Spirit was very much involved. And for our older readers, Psalm 92:12-15 says, “*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord, Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing, To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him.*” The importance of the generational exchange between these believers cannot be over emphasized. Righteous dissent to a greater degree may be just around the corner and we all need to be prepared to do our part!!

Dedicated to Joanne Lees

*The night is very dark indeed,
But darker still for those in need!
Draw close to those who shine with light,
Those saints know shortcuts through the night.
With ears to hear and eyes to see,
These champions, they learned from Me!
The Word they know they will unfold
In such a way it turns to gold.
This is an end-time strategy,
For us to walk victoriously!*

Jayne Houghton