

January 24, 2021

# Viewpoint from the Valley Grove Church Of Christ

---

## Not My Caesar

By David Diestelkamp

Jesus lived primarily during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius who ended his reign cloaked in paranoia, violence, and rumors of depravity and corruption. It was probably Tiberius's face on the denarius Jesus requested to be shown in response to being questioned about paying taxes to Caesar. "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" Jesus asked. They said, "Caesar's." "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," Jesus said to them (Matt. 22:17-21). Pay taxes to a corrupt government whose governors and soldiers would eventually participate in the murder of the Lord Himself? Yes.

The first Christians lived under the carnage of the cruel and bizarre reign of Caligula. When his reign was cut short by his murder, Claudius was little better. Aquila and Priscilla got to experience firsthand the emperor's ire when Claudius tried to solve his problems by expelling all Jews from the city of Rome (Acts 18:2). Comply with a megalomaniac emperor's unreasonable edicts? Yes.

Then it was Nero's turn to plot and murder his way to the throne in Rome. He is infamous for being vicious and cruel and for his harsh taxation. Nero's atrocities are legendary. Two thousand years later, the name Nero lives in infamy among Christians for his persecutions. Here is what the apostles wrote at the very time that this man (described by some historians as a "brutal psychopath") was reigning:

1 Timothy 2:1-2 — Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

Romans 13:1-7 — Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for

*(Continued on page 2)*

---

he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

1 Peter 2:13-17 — Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Let me say again: these instructions were written during the monstrous despotic rule of Emperor Nero, the man who ascended the throne by murdering family and possible heirs to the throne; the man who kicked his pregnant wife to death; the man who openly married a man he had castrated; the man who persecuted Christians and blamed them for burning Rome. Pray for him? Yes. Be subject to him? Yes. Honor him? Yes. Pay your taxes? Yes. #Notmycaesar was not an option that Scripture gave to Christians.

Politics have caused a vast divide in our country. Some Christians want to think that a president being elected by a suspicious or even illegal method means they need not recognize or honor him. Some conclude that a president who is immoral, accepts the killing of babies (abortion), or condones the sexually deviant is not "their president." And some are judging the validity of a presidency based on their perspective on law, rights, taxes, foreign policy, or free trade. We must remember: the first century Roman emperors failed in all these areas; yet Christians were told to pray for them, submit to them, honor them, pay taxes to them.

It is legitimate to ask, "How do we honor the dishonorable?" Obviously, we are not being asked to call evil good and good evil (Is. 5:20). Without enumerating ways to honor in every imaginable case, I want to challenge each of us to examine what is in our hearts: what we say and what we post and share on social media. Is it expressing prayerful submission and honor to our governing officials, even when (and especially when) we strongly disagree with them? If you can't think of anything positive about the elected official, that should be your challenge to let Christ live in you and prayerfully honor them. It's hard, but "...this is the will of God..." (1 Pet. 2:15). We are not simply choosing a president; we are choosing whether we will do God's will or not.

---

# Evangelism: A Way of Life

By Jerry Fite

People sometimes struggle with dieting. They lose weight and gain it back. They feel like a yo-yo: up and down. Some see the solution as not dieting, depriving yourself of certain foods for a period of time, but incorporating sensible choices as a way of life. Eating is essential to living, and when we incorporate healthy choices of food and make a life-style change in our eating habits, we will probably have more success.

Often, people become evangelistic for only a short period of time. We start a program of visitation and personal work. Then, the intensity languishes, and the work soon slows to a crawl. Could we be suffering from “yo-yo evangelism:” up and down — hot and cold? Maybe we need to take a hint from those in the field of health and nutrition, and start viewing evangelism as a way of life, instead of a momentary focus.

Evangelism is certainly appealing to the mind of the godly, for, by definition, it involves “good news.” The message that saves men and women from sin and death, infusing them with a lively hope for heaven is worthy fodder for a healthy mind. Helping one see their eternal destiny, they can choose wisely the way of eternal happiness. Making it happen by seeking the lost and teaching them keeps us from a “knowing to do good but doing it not” type of sin (cf. James 4:17). We are living the life that Jesus patterned: seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10).

Evangelism as a way of life not only mirrors the life of Jesus but keeps us always near the heart of God. God “is not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). He would that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). He does not get fired up for a few weeks and then allow these thoughts to languish. His desire for the lost to be saved continues to this very hour and should be a constant driving force behind making evangelism a way of life.

Evangelism spreads beyond the walls of the building when it becomes a way of life among the church’s members. When Christians are at work, school, home, or play, they are always looking for the opportunity to introduce people to the good news of Christ. “Furthering the gospel” is a daily goal (Philippians 1:5). A new acquaintance is offered a warm invitation to attend the worship services where the saving word is preached. The Christian is always ready to calmly offer a scriptural answer to all inquirers while being alert to opportunities to set up a home Bible study to help others expand their knowledge of the whole counsel of God (I Peter 3:15, Acts 5:42, 20:20, 27).

*(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3)

Buying up opportunities should characterize our daily walk (Colossians 4:5, Ephesians 5:15). Spiritual alertness creates evangelistic opportunities beyond the church building's four walls.

Making evangelism our daily focus, the kingdom of our Lord has a greater opportunity to experience growth through "making disciples" (Matthew 28:18-20) instead of merely "transferring disciples." Growing the Kingdom with new converts adds new souls energized with their own salvation to expand the good news to even more people. With more workers making evangelism a "constant" in their daily walk, we may find ourselves increasing in number "daily" (Acts 16:5).



**B**e exalted, O LORD, in  
Your own strength! We  
will sing and praise Your  
power. — Psalm 21:13

**Visitors — We pray that you  
benefit spiritually from our  
worship together and hope to  
see you again.**

#### January Birthdays:

The 22nd Jennifer Collins;  
The 23rd Paula Brown; The 25th  
Jacqueline Pryor; The 25th David  
Justice; The 27th Johnny Little;

Postage  
Stamp

Valley Grove Church Of Christ  
2110 East Stateline Road  
P. O. Box 461  
Southaven, MS 38671

**This Bulletin** is a weekly publication of the  
Valley Grove Church Of Christ, Southaven, MS

#### Sunday

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.  
Worship . . . . . 10:30 A.M.  
Worship . . . . . 5:00 P.M.

#### Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

Phone: 662-342-1132

[www.valleygrovechurchofchrist.com](http://www.valleygrovechurchofchrist.com)