



February 21, 2010

Who Really Pays

This past week an individual described as “disgruntled” by one of the news channels set fire to his home and then flew an aircraft into an IRS office in Texas. As the story developed there was talk of the individual’s failed or embattled business ventures in at least two states as well as at least two marriages. Finally a decision was made to strike back at the government, over tax issues, and make someone else pay. As vengeance was exacted, it was directed toward his own family, innocent individuals who had nothing to do with the matter, and himself. All of this points to not only a growing trend of striking out at others but also shows a basic human weakness to blame others when something does not go well. As the economy has sagged, such episodes have taken place and caused concern in the law enforcement and public safety communities that more will attempt to do the same thing. We cannot speak directly concerning this individual’s state of mind and life but there are some things that we can learn from the scriptures that may help us guide ourselves as we trust in God to help us manage. Christ told of times that would befall the Jewish nation as he warned his disciples of the coming trials. **“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. ... And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. (Lk 21.24-26).** One’s relationship with the government and taxation has always been an issue. Christ was confronted with the same issue when he was tempted to do something that could be used against him. When asked if was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, Christ replied, **“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Matt 22.17-21).** The publicans during the first century were tax gatherers who extorted the people to pay exorbitant taxes for their own benefit. Rebels who disliked this turned to insurrection and assassination as a solution. Sounds familiar doesn’t it. The current state of the world has caused some to engage extreme solutions that punish the innocent and fails to remedy the situation. From the very beginning, when Cain murdered Abel, he demonstrated a failure to accept responsibility for his own actions, asking God, **“Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4.9).** The Bible is a book of prevention. If we follow it and the precepts that it teaches we will avoid many of the pitfalls that life has to offer. In stories such as this one over the past week we find that there may be more to be said about personal choices that did not work out. Individual failures that resulted in catastrophic consequences. These are physical problems that occur in a material world. Even exercising the best judgment that we can and attempting to do our best may still result in such things happening. Job summed things up very well when he stated, **“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” (Job 14.1).** To this end we find that ultimate result of our own failure is to lose spiritually as well should we fall short of understanding and following God’s will. Paul tells us to **“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col 3.2).** The inability to see the long term effects of our decisions and the absence of viewing things spiritually robs us of the greatest tool that God has given us for surviving and navigating a dangerous world filled with the weakness of man and the influence of Satan. Paul states, **“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” (Eph 5.15-17).** Unfortunately when humans fail, the innocent pay a price as well.

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