

God and Caesar

Dub McClish

The will of God and the judgments of men must inevitably clash. The servants of God are to render to each (God and Caesar) the things that are appropriate (Mat. 22:21). However, at times the rendering of obedience to civil government would cause us to ignore or disobey Divine law. So it was with the apostles before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. The Lord had commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature, which they had begun doing on Pentecost in Jerusalem. The rulers in Jerusalem had strictly charged them to teach no more in Jesus' name. Even though the apostles had been arrested, threatened, and warned repeatedly for preaching, they continued to fill Jerusalem with their teaching (Acts 4:1–5:26). In explaining to the council why they had disobeyed the civil injunction, the apostles said simply, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This case is illustrated where the ultimate authority lies and where our ultimate loyalty must be.

Clashes between human and Divine law still exist. A case in point is the judgment awarded a sister in Tulsa, Oklahoma who sued the elders of her congregation for withdrawing fellowship from her because of the sin of fornication. She was asking for \$1.3 million but was awarded "only" \$390,000. Assuming that the elders proceeded Scripturally to carry out this withdrawal, the command of God and the judgment of men in the court are clearly in conflict.

Consider the following:

1. This incident is a graphic illustration of how far our nation has strayed from its God-fearing roots.
2. This incident exemplifies a growing tendency of the state to control the practice of religion.
3. It shows that some members of the church will spare nothing when pursuing their selfish and evil aims.
4. This judgment will likely set a precedent from which numerous similar suits will be filed by ungodly church members.
5. Already, far too many elderships refuse to practice church discipline for various "reasons," and this will give them a good excuse to continue to refuse.
6. Some churches that were about to work up the courage to obey the Lord's commands on this subject will now likely be afraid to do so.
7. Congregations need strong and godly elders to state to their bewildered flocks that they intend to continue to obey God rather than men—in this matter as well as in all others.
8. Congregations need for us to follow their Godly elders in obeying the Lord in this and all other matters.
9. The Devil may have won the skirmish, but not the war!

[Note: I wrote this article for, and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, March 22, 1984, of which I was editor.

Attribution: From *thescripturecache.com*; Dub McClish, owner, curator, and administrator.