

The Righteous and the Wicked

When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices. (Proverbs 11:10)

Scripture: Proverbs 11:3–6, 8–11, 14

Song: “Make Me a Blessing”

Catherine and William Booth, founders of the Salvation Army, ministered in London during a time of great poverty and social need. Catherine gave herself to her city, proclaiming the gospel and fighting to end child prostitution and other wicked activities. When she died in 1890, 24,000 people gathered to pay their respects to a woman who had lived to help others.

Proverbs 11 makes a big distinction between the righteous, who walk in the ways of the Lord, and the wicked who oppose Him. The first distinction is personal: the Lord delivers those who are righteous, while the wicked “are brought down by their own wickedness” (v. 5). But the blessings of the righteous extend far beyond themselves and their families. Their influence in their community is powerful, exalting the city in which they live (v. 11). Fellow citizens see the difference: they rejoice when the righteous prosper and when the wicked perish. Even entire nations rejoice when godly advisors make victory sure (v. 14).

Do you see God’s people making a difference in your community? Are you part of this work? You and I can be a blessing in so many ways as we seek to follow Jesus.

Father, may I glorify You by helping those around me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

April 6–12. **Laura N. Sweet** is a wife, mother, grandmother, and former Christian school teacher who writes from her home in Midland, Michigan.

An Issue of Authority

Peter and the other apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” (Acts 5:29)

Scripture: Acts 5:26–32

Song: “Come, Thou Almighty King”

The Oxford Dictionary defines *authority* as “legitimate power, decision-making capacity, and the means to cause others to obey.” The word *legitimate* is interesting in light of today’s passage. The Jewish court—the Sanhedrin—believed they had the authority to judge the apostles and to make them obey. But the apostles knew that God alone was the true, legitimate authority.

Earlier in Acts 5, the Sanhedrin had arrested the apostles and put them in jail, but God’s angel opened the door and led them out (v. 19). Frustrated, the Jewish leaders again brought them before the court, demanding to know why they continued to preach in Jesus’ name. Peter’s answer was succinct: “We must obey God rather than human beings!” Peter then shared the gospel with them in terms of the Trinity: God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus has authority to forgive sins, and the Holy Spirit witnesses to all of this. God is the ultimate authority, far greater than the Jewish leaders, and the apostles would obey Him!

As Christ-followers, we recognize that rulers and their laws do have authority. But when those laws clash with God’s revealed will, His is the ultimate power and authority.

Father, help me acknowledge Your authority over all of my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A Joyful Community

Do this so that their work will be a joy. (Hebrews 13:17)

Scripture: Hebrews 13:16–20

Song: “We Are Called to be God’s People”

I taught at a Christian school for 16 years. While there were a few things about teaching that I didn’t enjoy (like grading papers!), it was a job I loved. Teaching brought me joy because I loved my students and enjoyed spending time with them in and out of the classroom. That’s the part that I still miss even today.

Not everyone is able to work their “dream job,” and not everyone has a workplace that is fulfilling and encouraging. But as Christians, our church community should be supportive and helpful. The writer of Hebrews closes this letter by giving many instructions to believers. He reminds them to do good and to share with one another. He is especially concerned that they obey their church leaders and submit to their authority. Life can be difficult for ministers and church leaders when there is constant resistance and conflict in the church. Their work then becomes “a burden”—not the joyful task that it should be.

Working with God’s people should be a “dream job.” Is that how your church leaders would describe it? Or do difficult people make it a nightmare? Let’s work together to make our churches joyful communities!

Father, help me to obey my leaders and to respect their authority over me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

The Righteous King

“When one rules over people in righteousness. . . . He is like the light of morning at sunrise.” (2 Samuel 23:3–4)

Scripture: 2 Samuel 23:1–7

Song: “Rejoice, the Lord Is King”

The Bible is filled with narratives about the lives of men and women of faith, but few stories compare to those about King David. From his battle with Goliath to his reign as king, David is shown to be a man of God. Second Samuel 23 gives us David’s testimony at the end of his life, his last words.

David said these last words were an “oracle” (or prophecy) given to him by God’s Spirit. He spoke of his own reign in Israel as God’s exalted and anointed king (v. 1). David was a good—although imperfect—king, and Israel flourished during his reign. But this oracle concerned another ruler, a descendant of his house, who will reign in righteousness. This ruler will be like the sun, bringing light and blessing to the earth.

The fulfillment of this everlasting covenant that God made with David is “arranged and secured in every part” (v. 5), and it is none other than Jesus Christ! If David’s reign brought blessing, how much more the righteous kingship of Christ? He is the great king, the ultimate authority who will rule all heaven and earth in power and glory!

Father, I praise You for our righteous king—King Jesus. May I serve Him gladly and well. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

The Word and the King

It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life. (Deuteronomy 17:19)

Scripture: Deuteronomy 17:14–20

Song: “How Firm a Foundation”

In 1969 young Charles, the Prince of Wales, attended university to learn the Welsh language. It seemed a strange course of study, but the monarchy hoped to strengthen its connection to the people. When King Charles III was crowned in 2023, he was the first British monarch in centuries to speak Welsh—and he did so at his coronation.

As prince, Charles was preparing for his future role as king. Deuteronomy 17 looks to the same subject in regard to Israel’s future king. The people could only choose a king from their own nation—no foreigner was to rule over them. He was not to be focused on horses or chariots, nor on riches or women. Instead, the king was to personally write out his own copy of God’s Law, and study it “all the days of his life” (v. 19). This would teach him to revere the Lord, and it would secure his kingdom for the long term.

If only all the world’s leaders would make the Bible their daily study! Our world would be so different. God’s authoritative Word gives wisdom and direction for all—kings and citizens, presidents and people. We can look to it eagerly!

Father, help me to make Your Word my focus for life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Politics and Religion

Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” (Mark 12:17)

Scripture: Mark 12:13–17

Song: “Be Thou My Vision”

“Never discuss politics or religion in polite company.” That’s probably good advice, since both topics can bring about strong feelings and harsh words. (Sadly for me, I like discussing both! You may not want to invite me to your next dinner party.)

The Jewish leaders in our passage today intended to get Jesus into hot water with a loaded political/religious question: Should the Jewish people pay taxes to Caesar? This was meant to “catch” Jesus in His words. If He said no, the Roman authorities might consider Him a rebel and a trouble-maker. If He said yes, the Jews might accuse Him of siding with their Roman occupiers. Jesus, of course, knew this and answered the question brilliantly. Whose coinage did they use? Whose image and inscription was on it? If it’s Caesar’s coin, give him what belongs to him. But remember our obligation to put God first.

Paying taxes we owe the government is not a pleasant thing, but it doesn’t interfere with our first obligation—to love and worship our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. After all, as believers we bear *His* image, and we belong to Him. It’s not such a tricky question after all.

Father, help me to remember my obligations to the government even as I prioritize my relationship with You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Fearing God, Respecting Authority

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority. (1 Peter 2:13)

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:13–17

Song: “Trust and Obey”

Whatever their political stance, everyone complains about the government. Christians often forget that God has established government for our good, to keep law and order and to punish evil-doers. Even poor leaders are better than no government when it comes to restraining violence and chaos in our world.

Peter wanted his readers to remember that every authority in their government was instituted by God to maintain peace. God expects His people to be respectful and to submit to governmental authority in the world. This public obedience reflects well on our faith. We are to obey the laws of the land unless they conflict with God's law—and then we must “obey God rather than human beings” (Acts 5:29).

The key phrase in today's passage is “Submit yourselves *for the Lord's sake.*” We honor God when we submit to earthly authorities—bringing glory to Jesus instead of bringing cause for His enemies to defame His name. Our goal should be to show proper respect to everyone: “Love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor” (1 Peter 2:17).

Father, give me the humility to submit to authority for the sake of the Lord Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.