

59—Paying Our Taxes

“Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed...” (Romans 13:7).

Introduction: We know what April 15th brings every year. It is coming soon. I have to admit I sometimes look ahead to this date with a mix of anxiousness, dread, and a complaining spirit at times.

First of all, because I spend nearly 2-3 full days working on my taxes each winter. So, it is time-consuming. I have to add up housing expenses. I have to add up business receipts. I have to calculate mileage. I have to organize the W-2's and 1099's and mortgage interest statements and Health Savings Account distributions and all the other paperwork.

Secondly, I tend to view taxes negatively because I never know, for sure, whether I'll be getting a refund or not. As a preacher, I am considered self-employed. Therefore, I pay quarterly chunks of estimated taxes out of my income throughout the year. If I overpaid, then I may be lucky and get a refund. If I underpaid, I may owe some money. This year, I owed the federal government and the Ohio School District some additional money beyond what my estimated taxes covered. Thankfully, I got a refund from the state of Indiana though. So, some years it can be a joy and some years April is a burden.

Finally, it probably does not help that I sometimes see the government spending money that I know, in the future, is eventually going to cost me and my children and grandchildren additional taxes too. So, that can be a depressing thought. Yet, complaining is easy.

Today, I'd like to flip the switch on the complaining and think about taxes in a positive way, with some sense of thankfulness. In Colossians 2:6-7, Paul writes that as Christians, we are to walk “...abounding in thanksgiving.” Did you catch that command? Christians are to be thankful. Can we say that we abound in thanksgiving about our taxes? How are taxes something we can be thankful for? I'm not trying to get into politics here. I'm not trying to take any political sides. I'm not going to argue about whether we should cut taxes or get more progressive with taxes. Instead, I just want to look at what the Bible says on this topic so we might consider a more positive vantage point of paying our taxes. Let's look at what the Bible says about our attitude toward paying our taxes.

I. TAXES TEST OUR DISCIPLESHIP.

A. Philippians 2:14, “*Do all things without complaining or disputing.*”

1. Does that say “do all things without complaining unless it's taxes?”
2. Does it say “Do all things without grumbling...but, you've got the right to grumble if the government takes more than its fair share of taxes.” Is there an exception clause here?

B. Keep in mind the first century reality of Christians—they were paying the Romans a huge chunk of taxes!

1. This is why “tax collectors” were often categorized with sinners—they were known to rip people off. They were the faces of a corrupt government financial system.
2. This is why the critics of Jesus asked in Mark 2:16, “*Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?*”
3. Some people think the same of being taxed today...but, let me ask, is it really worse today than it was in Rome? At least you get itemized deductions, and a schedule A, and a mortgage interest deduction...they had it worse.

C. Yet, Paul says “*do all things without grumbling*”...this is a test of discipleship! Are you willing to be thankful in “*all things*” even when some of those things cost you?

II. TAXES PAY FOR THINGS.

A. That’s a real deep statement, right? But, seriously, taxes do pay for some earthly things. They did in the first century Roman empire.

1. One of the questions people once asked Jesus in Matthew 22:15-22, “*Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?*”
2. Jesus answered: “*Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.*”
3. Some of those taxes belonged to Caesar...do you know why? Because there were some things taxes accomplished...Roman architecture, Roman armies to defend, Roman roads (which were actually quite nice from a first-century perspective)...

B. Likewise, our taxes need to be paid because they do accomplish some positive tasks.

1. Most of you probably drove here today, was it nice not to travel on a dirt trail?
2. As you drove here, maybe you drove by a fire department or a police car...do you appreciate it when the policeman or fireman comes to help in an emergency?
3. Some of you may travel to national and state parks, do you enjoy those places?
4. Some of your kids go to public schools, some of them may get state scholarships or funding to go to private schools? Do you appreciate some of those blessings?

5. Some of you have health issues, do you like the fact there are nutritional labels on much of our food to help protect you from allergens or ingredients that can negatively impact you?
6. When you pay taxes, these are just a few of the “things” that money supports...

C. Now, some will rebut what I just said, in their minds, and say, “Well, the government also pays for stuff I don’t agree with...for example, I don’t agree that we give money out to free-loaders!”

1. Let me just say...if you refuse to pay your taxes or cheat your taxes just because you don’t like “freeloaders”, do you know what that makes you? “A FREELoader!”
2. After all, you probably drive on that road, will call 9-11, eat that regulated food, and will gladly use the fire department if your car or house catches fire! You also probably enjoy some of the freedoms we have in America that are defended by our military.
3. If you use something and refuse to pay for it, then you are the very thing you despise—a freeloader.

D. Let’s realize our taxes pay for things we do enjoy and be grateful for that, especially in America!

III. PAYING TAXES IS OBEYING THE LAW

A. We cannot talk about our role with regard to taxes without consulting Romans 13:1-7.

1. Verse 1 says, “*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities...*”
2. That really should settle the issue of refusing to submit to the government’s tax code, shouldn’t it?
3. If not, notice verse 7, “*7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*”

B. Now, the counterpoint I have heard some people make in the past is this: how can I pay taxes to a government when my money indirectly supports things like abortions, a corrupt public school agenda, and even things like operations for transgenders?

1. Look, I do not like those things either. God doesn’t either. And, we do need people who speak out against evil and corruption.
2. However, do you know what the Roman government was also doing? They were persecuting Christians and putting them to death?

3. Yet, Paul still says we are to “*pay taxes to whom taxes are owed.*” That settles it for me.
4. By the way, he does not just say to “pay taxes” he also says to “pay respect” and we need to make sure our attitudes, social media posts, and words also represent that.

C. So, pay your taxes because it is obeying the law. God wants us to obey the law...He also wants just laws, fair laws, righteous laws, but that is no excuse to not pay taxes.

IV. TAXES HELP THOSE WHO ARE LESS FORTUNATE.

A. Another reason we ought to be optimistic about paying our taxes is because they do help those who are less fortunate. Has that not always been the will of God in every covenant?

1. Galatians 6:10, “*So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*”
2. Perhaps paying our taxes is just one of those opportunities.
3. Can you think of some ways taxes have helped those less fortunate?
 - i. I have friends with autistic children. They have been assisted by government programs that help with therapy, caregivers, school aides and more.
 - ii. I have friends who are truly disabled. They have been assisted by government programs that help them to be more equipped to meet their needs.
 - iii. When Covid hit last year, I had friends who were barbers, massage therapists, and held other occupations that were shut down. The government helped them get through that tough time...whether you agreed with the shutdown or not.
 - iv. I have elderly friends who are just getting too old to work full-time and our government has programs and incentives to help with retirement.
 - iv. Almost 10% of our federal budget (which is in the trillions each year) goes to specific programs that help the disabled, help with unemployment, school meals, housing assistance, child care assistance and with people who are not as fortunate.
 - v. I realize some abuse the system. I get it. But, I also realize there are some who do truly need the help. Some right here in this room. Some brothers and sisters.

B. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, “*18 ...to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.*” While that can refer to individual giving, can we not also apply it to what we give in taxes to help those who are less fortunate and need us to share? Can we not also be thankful that some of our money goes to share with those who are in need and in situations we cannot fathom? Think

about it this way...the taxes you pay on April 15th are INCOME TAXES. What does that mean? It means you have an INCOME...meaning you are capable of working and earning...it also means God wants you to use some of your income to be SHARING with those who cannot work.

V. PAYING TAXES HELPS ME SHOW HONESTY.

A. Luke 16:10-12: *“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?”*

1. God expects us to be honest and faithful in the smallest of things.
2. That includes your taxes.
3. Have you ever considered what dishonesty in our taxes might do to our reputations?
 - i. Sure, you may not make the newspapers for tax fraud like some big names do.
 - ii. Yet, what if your accountant knows? What if your family knows? What if the tax auditor comes calling one day and sees blatant cheating?
 - iii. How will your reputation as a Christian be affected in those choices?
 - iv. Most importantly, can we really expect God to give us the greatest of rewards when we have not done what He calls us to do in the smallest of ways here?

B. Little choices can affect our reputations and influence. So, view your opportunity to pay your taxes as an opportunity to glorify God in the smallest of ways.

Conclusion: This has not necessarily been a lesson to lead the lost to Christ, but it may be a lesson that leads those in Christ to be closer to Christ. If you have not been faithful in the small things, if you’ve failed to be thankful, if you’ve been a complainer and need to change the way you think and ask for prayer, we can help you with that tonight. Just let us know how we can be of help to you as you try to walk with the Lord.