

# A CALL TO GOOD WORKS IN A PAGAN SOCIETY

Tanya Goffin

*It is not great talents that God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. (Robert Murray McCheyne)*

Question and dilemma: where do I draw the line? Isolation or absorption?

*Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So, anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honour you. (Romans, 13:1-3, NLT)*

*We gave you strict orders never again to teach in this man's name!" he said. "Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about him, and you want to make us responsible for his death!" But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. (Acts 5:28-29, NLT)*

*Here, show me the coin used for the tax." When they handed him a Roman coin, he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. "Well, then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God. (Matthew 22:19-21, NLT)*

## Foundational Truths:

- The truth

*Which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. (2 Timothy 1:12, ESV)*

- God is in overall control (Romans 13:1). Ultimately justice will prevail. However, in the meantime the Christian life is costly and demands total surrender.

*Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession. ... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate' (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)*

- We are a chosen people; God's special possession having received His mercy. We have gone from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. (1 Peter 2:9-11)
- It is our radical new kingdom lifestyle that will result in the kind of good deeds that will speak to the non-Christians around us. This requires a phenomenal level of submission 'for the Lord's sake.'

*It is God's will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. (1 Peter 2:15, NLT)*

*You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow. (Matthew 5:38-42, NLT)*

*You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbour' and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! (Matthew 5:43-44, NLT)*

- Different weapons - the armour of God and prayer. (Ephesians 6)

*Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So, pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should. (Ephesians 6:18-20, NLT)*

*We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, NLT)*

- Submission to civil government and employers 'for the Lord's sake' (Matthew 22:21)



- Wise use of our tongues, pen and social media - 'grace and truth'

*Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ.*  
(1 Peter 3:15-16, NLT)

Example of Daniel (from 'Being the Bad Guys' by Stephen McAlpine)

Daniel - 600 BC. senior administrator in the Persian empire serving 4 emperors over several decades - arrives at work one day (he is now in his 80's) to find everything has changed. (Daniel 6) His life is on the line.

- Daniel is faithful for decades.

*If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities.* (Luke 16:10, NLT)

- Daniel is faultless, exemplary and grace filled.
- Daniel is fearless. Gods' opinion carried much more weight with Daniel than the opinion of anyone else. A big view of God puts humans in the right perspective.

In conclusion we are increasingly encountering a culture around us that feels weird - people who are broken, confused, identity issues, annoying. Like us they are made in the image of God and need a new identity in Christ. Our church should be the place where they are welcomed, loved and led to Christ.