

Matthew 17:22-27 | Kent Stiles

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[0:00] Okay, well if you have your Bibles and you'd like to turn with me to the book of Matthew. We're going to be concluding our study of Matthew 17 this morning. I think we're about two-thirds of the way through the book.

My son asked me yesterday, what's the longest we've ever been on a book? And I couldn't remember. Dave probably. Which is the longest book we've done it? Luke. Okay, so we're pressing on for a while. We're not skipping anything. We're hitting it all. So Matthew 17, wrapping that up. So this morning, let me just provide a bit of context. You recall maybe that Peter, James, and John had been up on the high mountain with Jesus previously in this chapter when he was transfigured before them.

And for a brief time, we have Jesus who's 100% God, 100% man. There's a brief time where that veil was lifted and Jesus' divine majesty was displayed to these men as he talked to Moses and Elijah.

And then God, the Father, commended Jesus saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. So we saw that previously. And we saw they made their way down the mountain.

[1:18] And the next day, they had reached the foot of the mountain where the other disciples had waited. And we see there that Jesus performs another miracle or he, I should say, he heals a demon-possessed epileptic boy.

And that then brings us to our text this morning. And we pick it up from there at the beginning of Matthew or the end of Matthew chapter 17. So before we get started, let's go ahead and open up in a word of prayer and then we'll get into the text.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day. Thank you for the beautiful weather. Thank you for the sunshine, Lord. Thank you for each one that's here. Thank you for your goodness, your mercy. Pray for those who aren't able to make it today, Lord.

Just watch over them. Just pray that you would bless the next 30, 35 minutes or so. And that our eyes would be open ears as well as we glean from this passage in Matthew 17.

We thank you for these things in your son's name. Amen. So there's an old adage that says there are two certainties in life. What are they?

[2:20] Death and death. Death and taxes. Oh, Wally said taxes and death first. That's the way it really should go because the only tax you should pay after you die affects your family, not you. So death and taxes.

And no one really cares for either of those unless you're an undertaker, a funeral director, or you're a politician. And even they don't like it when it affects them personally. But there have been taxes ever since there's been a government because it takes finances to run the government and someone has to pay for it.

It was once said that I'm putting all my money in taxes because it's the only sure thing to go up. Good investment. Good investment. So death and taxes. Now, unlike those that are out there today surveying the woods, there is no certainty in death or shed blood amongst those who are hunting. Okay? In Matthew, though, we're going to see there's certainty in death. There's shed blood. And then in an odd way, then we're going to transfer onto taxes.

So sometimes you'll see this split up into two different sermons. It's kind of an odd combination, but we're going to cover both of them. So death and taxes. And many people have repeated those words. And this morning, we come to, again, this text in our exposition of Matthew that covers both of these topics, death and taxes, in that order.

[3:39] And so, again, if you haven't, I invite you to open up your Bible to Matthew 17. The outline is really simple. Death, verses 20 to 23. Taxes, 24 to 27. So with that being said, let's go ahead and read the passage this morning, starting in verse 22.

It says, now, while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men. And they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised up. And they were exceedingly sorrowful. When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, does your teacher not pay the temple tax? In verse 25, he said, yes.

And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, what do you think, Simon? And from whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes? From their sons or from strangers?

Peter said to him, from strangers. Jesus said to him, then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first.

[4:44] And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money. Take that and give it to them for me and for you. Okay, so again, interesting passage. Death and taxes, followed by at the end of miracle.

So let's look first in the order it comes. Let's look at death. So the words of verse 22 and 23, they're going to put us into a familiar territory. And Jesus had said this before.

If you think back to Matthew chapter 16, he says this. From that time, Jesus Christ began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and be raised up on the third day.

So he mentioned it there. He's going to mention it again in Matthew chapter 20. We'll see that here in a few weeks. It says in chapter 20, verse 18 to 19, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes and they will condemn him to death and will deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify him.

And on the third day, he will be raised up. And so each of these passages, each of these three passages of Matthew, they contain the same elements more or less. And not all of the details are included in each one of these predictions.

[6:01] But the general flavor, so to speak, is the same. That Jesus said that he would go to Jerusalem, that he would be delivered to the religious authorities, that he would be condemned to death.

And furthermore, Jesus says that he'll be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. He'll experience suffering, mocking, scourging, and ultimately crucifixion. And that he would die.

And then he goes on to say, not only will he die, he won't remain on the cross, but it says that he will rise again on the third day. And if we look at scripture, all that was prophesied by him, all that was mentioned to the disciples in these three references, we know comes to fruition.

That it was Jerusalem at Golgotha where he was killed. That Jesus was handed over to the religious authorities by the hands of Judas Iscariot. That he was condemned to death by some of these religious leaders on trumped up charges who then handed him over to the Romans.

We know that he stood before Pontius Pilate and Herod. And Pilate would eventually give Jesus over to be crucified. During which time he experienced tremendous physical suffering.

[7:14] That he was beaten, that he was whipped, that he was mocked. That he was spit upon, that he was put on a cross. And ultimately he would die. And there's no doubt that Jesus died. One of the Roman soldiers standing by the, watching the crucifixion.

He had certainly seen umpteen crucifixions in his life. And he allowed the body of Jesus to be lowered off the cross as he was certain that Jesus was dead.

So he died on the cross. He was put in the tomb. And we know in scripture it says that he also rose again. That there was no doubt to this either. Many of the disciples of Jesus saw him alive after his resurrection.

Touching him. And speaking with him. And so we see all these foreshadowed events come to place. And so Jesus repeated these things several times. And so a question ought to come into your mind.

Why would Jesus say these same things three times in a relatively short section of scripture? And this question really may be more specific.

[8:13] That perhaps Jesus said these things six or eight or ten times to the disciples. But we know for certain that they're recorded three times here in Matthew. Why would Matthew repeat these things three times?

Why would he do that? You know, he has limited words. I'm certain there's other things in the Lord's life that he could have recorded. Yet three times he chooses to reference the Lord's foreshadowing of his death and ultimately his resurrection.

Well, I think there's a few reasons. First, I don't think his disciples understood. And consider how his disciples reacted after each of these statements. In Matthew 16, Peter said, God forbid it, Lord.

That shall never happen to you. So I don't think he quite understood the plan of God. In Matthew 17 here, it says they were deeply grieved. So they saw this as bad news.

And certainly they would have been sad for the loss. Just like we see, you know, Jesus was sad about Lazarus. But they didn't understand, I don't think, the plan or whether there was a good news component behind this.

[9:19] In Matthew 20, the disciples, they come to Jesus with this distorted view of how to achieve greatness in the kingdom. And so I don't believe they fully understood these words of Jesus until they saw him risen and reflected upon the words that Jesus had said beforehand.

And this becomes especially evident when you read the account of the disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. And that they were downcast and perplexed at the events that took place, which were exactly, again, as Jesus had predicted.

So first and foremost, I don't think they understood. So he tells them multiple times. A second reason why Jesus repeats these things, I think, three times for them, is that he didn't want there to be any doubt that his death was an accident.

That he wasn't in control. It didn't take Jesus by surprise. According to Acts 4, verse 28, it says that the death of Jesus, it was predestined to occur according to the purpose of God.

You know, after Jesus had been crucified, the disciples certainly would have remembered his words, which wouldn't have been able to take comfort in. That he had been killed, but it wasn't unexpected.

[10:34] You know, these things that happened leading up to the triumphant return, leading up to the trial, to the crucifixion.

All of these things were known to the Lord. None of it was by surprise. And so, and we know that by reading what he says. So that's the second thing.

I think that the third reason why Jesus repeated these things three times is that these are, or this idea, these are really important ideas. When things are important, what do you do?

You repeat them. When you're taking a class like math, you don't just learn something once. You learn it. You're taught it once. You learn it again.

You practice. You hear again, especially the fundamentals, because they need to be ingrained in your head. Otherwise, you can't go forward. And these are basic principles that are really important, so thus he repeats them.

[11:32] You know, when parents, I know in our house there are things that you go over again and again with your children. Why? Because these things are important. It's important to have good manners at the dinner table.

It's important that you work hard in school. It's important that you clean your room. I know growing, or as my kids grew up, I can probably tell you that whenever my kids disobeyed, as rarely as that was, their mom was oftentimes doing the discipline.

Nicole was. And every time she would discipline them, or most times, she would say a verse to them. And if I were to ask KJ or Abby or Caleb to come up here, Matthew doesn't listen as well, so he may not know.

But my wife would always use the verse, honor your father and your mother, which is the first commandment with a promise so that it may. And she wouldn't focus as much on you think like, yeah, see the scripture.

She would use it as if you do this, then that it may go well with you and that you may experience long life on earth. And it was this promise of if this, then this.

[12:35] And that was just drilled into my kid's head. Why? Because that was an important thing for us to instill in our kids, that God commands them to honor their father and their mother. And not only that, but it comes with a promise.

So, in scripture, it's no different. The things that are important are repeated again and again and again. Now, it's all important. I shouldn't say that. Anything in scripture is important. But we see this repeated again and again.

When I talk to my wife, I talk to Nicole on the phone and we talk whether it's a two-minute conversation or a five-minute conversation, I always end the call with what?

What's for dinner? No, I don't end the call with what's for dinner, right? I say, I love you. And that's to reinforce to her that the last thing she hears from me is that I love her.

That's important for me to know that she understands. And memory is a funny thing. We have to be told oftentimes again and again or explain things to.

[13:40] Nicole had the opportunity last week to watch someone who was in, I would say, advanced stages of dementia.

And it wasn't all bad. One thing Nicole told me after a couple days is she said, you know, I've never been told I'm as beautiful as often as I am now. And I was like, why?

He's like, because every morning I would be introducing myself to this person and she'd say, boy, you're so beautiful. But thinking about every morning, I don't know if that was kind of a shot at me because she didn't say I tell her that.

And I do have a sense of dementia. But there's this idea that every morning the same instructions had to be repeated, sometimes multiple times per day. Who are you?

Why are you? Not why are you here? Very happy, but couldn't remember. And sometimes I think that's how we are. As Matthew repeats these words, it's good for us to reflect on them because these words are words of life.

[14:40] And sometimes I think we have spiritual dementia when it comes to the gospel and that we need to be constantly hearing again and again the words of Jesus, the one who knew that he would go to Jerusalem, that he would die on a cross, that he would rise again.

Now, interestingly, Jesus doesn't spend a lot of time reflecting upon or explaining or interpreting what this would mean. But we see later in Scripture that Paul did.

And we see that when Paul came to Corinth, these words that he preached to them, in 1 Corinthians 15, he says this, I delivered to you as a first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas in the 12 and 500 plus.

And Paul called this message, Paul called that little block of two verses, the good news, the gospel. It's a good thing that Jesus died on the cross because he died for our sins. It's not some ideology or philosophy that saves you from your sins. It is the death of Jesus that saves you from your sins.

[15:54] It is the blood of Jesus that he shed that saves you and me. The Scripture says it this way in 1 Peter 3, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, and that he might bring us to God.

It's this representation of substitution in that the just being Jesus dies for the unjust, being you and me, that he might bring us to God, that he might prepare a way in which we can be made right or reconciled with God.

And so the blood of Jesus is a sort of cleansing agent that wipes away our sins. From time to time, we sing the hymn, What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

And there's going to be a day when a great multitude, which no one can count from every nation, every tribe, every people, every tongue, they're going to stand before the Lamb on the throne.

They're going to cry out in a loud voice saying, as it says in Revelation 7, Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and upon the Lamb. And it goes on, the Bible tells us that there will be ones who come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[17:16] You see, we all have stain that needs to be removed. You ever try to remove oil-based paint from your hand with water? What happens?

Doesn't do anything, right? You've got to go out and you've got to get mineral spirits or gasoline. Something that will remove that particular agent. And we all have this stain that needs to be removed.

And it's not removed by good works. It's not removed by being born into a certain family. It's not removed by going to church. But rather, it's only removed and the only agent that will cleanse it is the blood of Jesus Christ.

And so the only way you have access to the stain remover is through faith in Christ. And what he did on the cross. So he tells them a third time, or he'll tell them a second time, a third time coming up.

Because it's that critical. It's important that we remember that on a daily basis. The basis for our salvation. So that's the death of Jesus interpreted. His death helps us with our spiritual death.

[18:17] Well, after foreshadowing his death, Matthew moves to what might appear to be a bit of an odd topic. And that's in verses 24 to 27. We'll see how Jesus deals with the matter of taxes.

And the manner in which Jesus deals with taxes shows us how we ought to deal with taxes as well. And even more so, how should we be a civilian in this world?

We're not of this world, right? Our home is not here. But we are currently residing in this world. And thus, if we are, how ought we be a civilian in this world?

So let's focus our attention on taxes. And we're going to pick it up in verse 24. With Jesus here, we're going to see that he's coming with his disciples into Capernaum.

Capernaum was the hometown of Peter. And it was the center of Jesus' ministry. He performed many miracles here. It was located on the northern border of the Sea of Galilee. You may remember that video that Tom showed last week.

[19:14] Kind of helped us show all the geography and where things were located. And Jesus and his disciples, they had been away from Capernaum for some time. And we can't quite trace all of Jesus' travels. But in chapter 15, Jesus said he and his disciples left the Galilee area.

And they headed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And it seems as if Jesus returned briefly to the southern section of the Sea of Galilee in chapter 15. But soon they left again to Capernaum Philippi in Matthew 16, which is north of Capernaum.

And then we have the Transfiguration that's recorded in 17 that we saw last week. That probably took place at the base of Mount Haran. Or Harman, I'm sorry. Harman, I'm sorry. Which is also north of Capernaum.

So that's kind of the region he's in. But then our text here this morning, we find Jesus and his disciples. And they're back in Capernaum. And as they arrive, they're immediately confronted by what it says those who collected, in some versions, the two drachma tacks.

And I'll get to that here in a moment. And these people approached them right away. This idea, this two drachma tacks, it was also referred to as the temple tacks. And this tacks was levied on all Israelites for the operation of the temple.

[20:28] And its origins we see in Exodus 30, where the Lord told Moses to collect half a shekel as a contribution to the Lord for the use of the sanctuary. And a drachma was the money equivalent roughly to a day's wage.

And so this tax would represent the amount an average worker would earn in two days. So I guess in today's dollars, maybe we're talking about a few hundred dollars. I mean, obviously, depending upon what your occupation is.

But on average, I would say it's probably a few hundred dollars. So it's not inconsequential. But it's not super oppressive either.

And so it's important that we keep in mind, though, that this particular tax, it wasn't for the Romans. It was for the Jews. And so most of the tax collectors that you read about in the New Testament, they were Jews that had sold themselves to the Romans.

And so they were hated by their countrymen. But these tax collectors, they were different. They were collecting taxes for the upkeep of the temple sacrifices. And they weren't nearly as despised because they had some biblical justification, so to speak, for their efforts.

[21:37] It was based on something that they see in the scripture. And so the money was going to support the religious activities of the temple in

Jerusalem. And furthermore, these tax collectors, they don't have, because they're Jews, they don't have Roman authority to collect this payment.

They simply had the pressure of social status, so to speak, to compel others to pay their tax. Kind of like others are watching. I mean, it's almost like when you come out of the grocery store and there are several cute little girls selling overpriced cookies.

And people are eyeing you watching. I wonder what he's going to do. Does he hate kids or is he going to buy cookies? Is the Lord going to pay this tax or is he going to go on his way?

And so Jesus and his disciples, they had been away from Capernaum again recently, and they hadn't yet had an opportunity to pay this tax. And the accountants at Capernaum, they had noticed whether they were looking through the ledgers or paying attention, Jesus hadn't paid this tax.

And so one of these two drachma tax collectors came to investigate the matter. And he came to Peter while he was out of his house. And he says in verse 24, does your teacher not pay the two drachma tax?

[22:52] Kind of an interesting way to ask the question. You know, hey, I noticed in the ledger your bills do. It's almost accusatory. Does your teacher not pay the two drachma tax? And there may have been some doubt as to whether or not Jesus was actually going to or willing to pay this tax.

In fact, Pharisees and Sadducees, it appears, used to argue back and forth regarding this tax and that the Pharisees said that you had to pay it. They would honor what you saw in Exodus 30, that it was a tax that was put in place and that it should be paid.

The Sadducees said the tax was only applicable during the time of Moses, but not in their day. Or some of them would say it was a one-time tax you would pay and then you're good for the rest of your life.

Those in opposition to this tax pointed at the time of Nehemiah, we see that the tax was actually levied at a lower rate. It was about a third of a shekel paid to help for the construction of the temple. There was a lot, very little money at the time for those that were in the area. And so they argued this wasn't a divine decree, but rather by the real needs to establish the temple sacrifices again.

[23:59] So because of this conflict, there were those who refused to pay this tax. It wasn't cut and dry. And so with that being said, the stance of Jesus and how he would react in this situation was definitely in question.

And furthermore, you can think back if you think about the temple. There were some rumors that going around the land that Jesus wasn't too favorable about the temple. That at one point he had made a whip and he drove all the money changers out of the temple and overturned their tables and making a mess.

You know, at that time you may recall in John 2, it says Jesus said, destroy the temple and in three days I'll raise it up. And there was also a question of loyalty of Jesus to his Jewish nation.

And certainly that was being questioned that he wasn't submitting to the rule of the Pharisees or the Sadducees, but rather he was quite vocal in pointing out their inconsistencies and their errors.

So there were all these questions going around and the question was a legitimate one. Does your teacher not pay the two drachma tax? Well, in verse 25, you're going to see Peter responds with a bold answer and it's a short answer.

[25:08] And he said, yes. Yes. Now down through the ages, I'm sure there are some who would have wished that Peter had said, no, he's not paying it. He doesn't have to pay it. Don't ask for it again.

But instead he says, yes. You know, I think ultimately there are those always trying to get away with their tax, from their tax obligations.

But as a side note, I think the teaching of the Bible regarding the tax is clear that as Christians, we need to be good citizens and we need to pay our taxes. You know, when we get to Matthew 22, we're going to see Jesus asked a question about Roman taxes.

And it's an answer that we see or we read or we refer to often. And that is in 21 of chapter 22, he says, render to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's.

Okay. Paul says essentially the same thing in Romans 13, where he says, render to all what is due them tax to whom his taxes do custom to whom custom fear to whom fear honor to whom honor. [26:15] Peter says, he writes, submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king, as to a king, one in authority or to governors as sent by him.

So part of this submission requires that we pay our taxes. So if you refuse to pay your taxes, you're contrary to what we see here in scripture. If you don't want to pay your taxes, the best way is to use the means by which we have given to reduce our taxes.

And that is to elect those who don't want to raise your taxes. That's tougher, easier said than done, right? Better yet, elect people who want to lower your taxes. That's almost impossible. You know, once a tax gets on the book, don't you always laugh when they say this amendment won't raise taxes a dime?

And you're like, well, yeah, but it'll keep in effect the 10% raise in taxes we agreed to three years ago that was only supposed to last for three years. It's tough. But we vote against the referendums and when they increase sales taxes.

And if you don't want to pay your sales tax, again, you vote against them. You lobby your government representative. You publicize your efforts. You do everything in your lawful power to reduce the amount of tax you're to pay. There's all these legitimate ways to go about doing it, to get around paying your taxes.

[27:27] But the Bible encourages us to be model citizens. Again, I referenced earlier, how do we be citizens in this world? Submitting to the government. One of the ways that you do so, again, is by paying your taxes.

I think the only exception we see in regard to this submission is that when we're asked by the government to do something that goes against the will of God, that we're called to obey God rather than man, and we are willing to suffer the circumstance or the consequences, just as the apostles in the early church did, that they were told not to preach of Jesus, yet they went ahead and ultimately it led to suffering imprisonments and beatings and ultimately death as a result.

So when it comes to paying taxes, there's nothing sinful about rendering to Caesar that which is Caesar's. And again, remember here, the tax we're talking about in this passage, it wasn't a governmental tax.

It was a religious tax. It went to support the work of the temple. And in the minds of the Jews in these days, it was somewhat optional. However, it does apply to our taxes in this way. If Jesus would go about paying an optional tax, then I think it's fair to say that we ought to go about paying our requested taxes.

Our required taxes. So Peter says, yes, my master intends to pay this two drachma tax. Sometime after this conversation, Peter makes his way back to his home.

[28:52] And as he enters, before he says anything or before Matthew records anything, in verse 25, we see that he's approached by the Lord. And Jesus speaks first and he brings up this issue of taxes.

So he demonstrates, obviously, his omniscience. He knew the conversation that had taken place, knowing what Peter had just been discussing with the tax gatherer. And he says this, he asked him a question. What do you think, Simon?

From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll tax? From their sons or from strangers? So at this point here, he's not talking about temple tax.

He's talking about customs tax, which would be similar to a... That's the passage of goods back and forth. That would be similar to like a sales tax. That was based on the business activity.

The poll tax, it was a tax paid by each household. It would be more similar to like a property tax or an income tax. And so Jesus asks, when a king puts forth a tax, who does he collect this from?

[29:54] You know, he doesn't collect it from those in his family. He collects it from the people of the kingdom. And Peter knew that this was the case. And so he answered from strangers. Jesus told Peter he was exactly right.

And then he said this, consequently, the sons are exempt. In verse 26, or you might put it this way. Consequently, the sons are free. That may say that in your translation. So Jesus was saying here,

he wasn't obligated to pay the temple tax.

He didn't need to pay this tax. Why? Because he was the son of God. The temple was for him. And you don't tax your sons.

And so Jesus did call this temple. In Luke 2, he says, my father's house. So as a son, Jesus was free from the obligation of this tax.

And in many ways, I think this is a point in the passage. Excuse me. This is the point of the passage here. It's not so much about taxes as it is about Jesus. And about how he reacts and how he acts.

[31:01] And that this passage continues to develop, as we see throughout Matthew, the Christology of Jesus, who expresses his identity here. And that he is the son of God.

The implication is that he was free from tax. He didn't have to pay this tax because he was the son of God. But he chooses to do so. Not required, but chooses to do so.

The question is why? Well, look at verse 27. It's very short and sweet. He says this, lest we give them an offense. So in Jesus' actions, he both clarified who he was.

And secondly, he willingly paid this tax so to not give an offense. Jesus said he didn't have to pay this tax. But regardless, he would gladly pay it that he might not give offense to others.

He knew he didn't have to. But this minor issue of supporting the work of the temple would soon become a major issue. And rather than others focusing on who Jesus was and the claims of who he was making, they would focus on whether or not he had paid a temple tax or not.

[32:10] Some would view him as being disloyal to Israel or antagonism may have arisen. Not because he was a Messiah, which they hated that also, but because he was stirring the pot in regards to this tax.

And I think this is how the Bible encourages us always to use our freedom. That, excuse me, that Christ doesn't set us free so that we might be able to do what we want.

But rather that Christ sets us free so that we can do what is right. That when we come to faith in Christ that we're free. Jesus said in John 8, You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. And Paul repeated this in Galatians 5. It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Jesus frees us from all the requirements of religious ceremonies. Jesus frees us from all the things that we're free.

Jesus said in Galatians 5, Jesus said in Galatians 5, Jesus said in Galatians 5, Because by faith, he has become our righteousness. Paul went on to say furthermore in Galatians 5, You were called to freedom, brethren.

[33:12] Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another. And this is exactly what Jesus sought to do.

Though he was entirely free from the tax, Jesus used his freedom to demonstrate his love for others and not to give an offense. And I think there's application here for us.

And that when you're dealing with, when I'm dealing with people in the world, there are many times that it's best to not do what you are free to do, as you might not give an offense to others.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul speaks about this freedom that he had as a believer. And here's what he says in verse 19 through 23. I'm not going to read all the, I'm going to read the book in the first part and the last part.

He says, For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more. And he concludes by saying, I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

[34:20] Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be a partaker of it with you. So in verse 19, Paul makes it very clear that he's free to do as he pleases.

He can eat what he wants. In chapter 8, he can drink what he wants. Chapter 9, he isn't bound by the Jewish eating laws. He can eat pork with the pagans. If he wants to, as a minister, he can have a wife on the flip side.

He doesn't have to take a wife. He can have a job and he can preach or he can be supported by the gospel. And when it comes to interacting with others, Paul will willingly do so.

And he will do as they do as to not give an offense. Verse 20 explains Paul's approach to the Jews and what he would do and what he did.

And so that his actions weren't the issue. When he was with them, he didn't eat pork chops. That is not to offend. Verse 21 explains Paul's approach with the Gentiles.

[35:18] When he did what he did with them, so that his actions weren't the issue, if they were serving meat sacrificed to idols, he would gladly eat meat sacrificed to idols. And it sounds so easy, but in practice, it's very difficult.

And then oftentimes it takes us out of our comfort zone. I think about a couple of stories. I'll just share one for sake of time. I think about when Daniel was here talking about his time in the Philippines.

You guys may remember, you know, Daniel being from America, I'm sure he could have probably gone over there, even with what support he had, could have lived pretty high on the hog compared to those in the Philippines.

Their standard versus our standard, you know, much lower. And he saw the need for these people. You may recall the Bajau who were in a really dirty, dilapidated area, very, very, very poor.

And he knew that in order to be effective with them, he couldn't come into the community with a motorcycle, with nice clothes, and act as he would normally.

[36:25] Not that there was anything wrong with that, but that he had to essentially lower himself to their level, live in the community, learn the language, be exposed to, you know, I'm sure sickness and parasites and, and, and food that he probably didn't like.

And he did these things to appeal to the people, ultimately to get them the gospel. He wasn't required to do so, but he did that in order to not give an offense.

And Paul wasn't required to eat, again, meat that was sacrificed to idols, but he did so, again, not to give an offense. Jesus was not required to pay the temple tax, but he did so, as not to give an offense.

And in every case, they use their freedom, so as to not give offense. And I think about how that impacts your life and mine.

And let me ask you this question. Are there things that you or I do or don't do that cause offense that you are free to change?

[37:33] Are there things, are there stances you take, are there things, ways you act where you would say, I can, I can, I can do that differently. I'm sure each one of you can probably think of that man or that woman, that guy or that girl at work that you work with, that you're friends with who claims to be a Christian, but they're known for being a difficult person to work with or to get along with.

That if there's any reason to complain, that person will complain. Do you guys know anybody like that? If there's not a reason, they'll find a reason to complain. If there's a minor issue, they quickly make it a major issue.

And they make the gospel repulsive to others by their actions. They're doing what they can rightfully do, but they're causing an offense. You know, perhaps with your neighbor or coworker, you're making the wrong issue out of something that doesn't need to be.

Or at work, maybe you're being stubborn over something, doing someone else's work. That's technically their responsibility. Or with your neighbors, perhaps you have a fight over a tree that overhangs your yard and shades your garden.

You want to cut it off of the tree and your right is to cut it off of the tree. And you can do that, but maybe that will become an offense to the gospel. So do you use your freedoms or do you restrain as to not give offense?

[38:50] You know, perhaps there's some of you children here, younger ones, with us that have had arguments with your brothers or your sisters over the past or a task that your parents have asked to do.

I never hear that in my house, right? I mean, you ask someone to do it, they do it. There's not this, no, he's supposed to do it. No, she's supposed to do it. It doesn't stop at 18 or 19 either. That's the interesting thing.

Well, perhaps your sister hasn't done her share and you've refused to help her because you've already done your share. You've already done what's required of you. You're free to go. And the

contention between you two comes as a result of this.

And I'd ask the question, why not help your brother or sister to reduce the offense? As Jesus willingly paid the temple tax, I urge you to work hard in whatever situation you're in as to not deliver an offense and that it would hinder the gospel.

If the musicians want to come up, I'm just going to close with this. This passage ends, I like the way it ends because it gives us a reminder again of who Jesus is and Jesus has said he's going to pay the tax.

[40:00] Well, how's that going to happen? He just gives us another reminder of who he is. In so doing, Jesus demonstrates his great sovereignty and his omniscience and that he knew, I don't know this definitively and that how this, we hear, we read the story about this fish and the coin, but I think he knew that there was someone in the Sea of Galilee who had some money in their pocket which happened to fall out at the bottom of the sea.

He also knew there was a fish in the Sea of Galilee who was attracted by the shiny metallic layer of the coin who would scoop it up in his mouth. Yet he knew the fish wasn't going to swallow the coin and I'm not sure how the fish kept the coin in its mouth.

It was either too big for the fish to swallow or it simply kept it in its mouth because that's what the Lord instructed it to do. Jesus also knew this fish happened to be swimming near the shore of Capernaum at the precise time and place that Peter would choose the fish and Jesus would know that when he threw that hook in into the sea that the fish would bite the hook.

We don't know anything about the bait. Perhaps it was the fish really like that shiny hook of that metal but that Jesus also knew that this coin dropped was a stater which was worth two shekels which was enough to pay the temple tax for the two people.

So a really small miracle in that sense but a very complex miracle that reminds us of his omniscience and of his superiority and just of his sovereignty. so death and taxes.

[41:27] As we come here this morning I pray that you're leaving as one who has been ultimately washed by the blood of the Lamb who's been washed by Jesus Christ one whose stains have been removed and second as one who is a believer I would pray that while we are citizens of this world not citizens while we are citizens in this world not citizens of this world that we would strive to be salt and light to a lost people knowing too that we were once blind and that we seek simply to be one beggar telling another beggar about where to find the bread.

Let's thank the Lord this morning. Heavenly Father we thank you for our time Lord as we read these verses Lord it's such just a great reminder number one of ultimately what you've done Lord to pay the penalty of sin that Lord you walked this earth perfect for approximately 33 years Lord you were 100% God you were 100% man the idea of that cross at the end of your life Lord that was that was a that was a painful thing Lord there was anguish with that it wasn't an easy task and Lord you opted to do that so that Lord I might be able to be made right with you that everyone here has the option of being cleansed by your shed blood we thank you for that Lord we thank you for this story of the tax temple tax Lord to show that you Lord who is the greatest model for us as to how we can use our spiritual freedom yet as not to offend our brother not to offend those who are searching for the bread as a beggar Lord we pray that we would be sharing the gospel that we would be giving to those who are in need and we thank you for Lord your message your passage your scripture we pray this in your son's name amen