

I've given today's message the title:

*“Truth, Lies and Conspiracy – The present and the future.”*

Some of you might be aware that over the last couple of months, and especially in the last 2 weeks, I've had to put significant time into helping another church (not local) – but helping them to get back to God's word, to honour God in how they live in this time of Covid and Government mandates and stuff. The church I've been working with, is pretty-much split down the middle over this.

And I think it's important for us to talk about it, because unless you've been living a very insular life, you will have noticed Christians (and not just Christians – people of the world as well), behaving very differently with regards to vaccines; masks; check-in apps; and particularly with Government mandates...

When the Covid Pandemic first began, it was something which began to grip the world with fear. As Christians, we have nothing to fear. Our complete trust is in God, and our hope and purpose are **not** fulfilled in this present earthly existence, and so we have peace. Additionally, we have peace, because we know that God is in control, and we can trust our Heavenly Father.

As I watched on, observing those who hold no such hope, being gripped with fear, the blessing we have in Christ, became evident – that in the midst of turmoil, we have peace. Unbelievers (on the other hand) had every reason to be fearful, because everything they valued, was at risk.

It wasn't long however, until I realised that some of my brothers and sisters in Christ were fearful too. The long-held '3 score years and 10' benchmark of human life-span had been long exceeded by many (mainly through advances in health care). But now, all of a sudden, Christians currently in their 70's, or 80's or 90's, were faced with their own mortality. They realised that it was highly likely, that if they caught the virus, they could die within a matter of days...

As Christians, we shouldn't be surprised when we see people of the world panic over such a thing. After all, they do not have the eternal hope and assurance that Disciples of Jesus cling to. But when Christians begin to demonstrate the same sort of fear and panic, it highlights for us, where our heart truly is.

As Christians, **Philippians 1:18....to live is Christ, to die is gain.** The life we live, we live for Christ. When threats arise, we don't have fear and we certainly don't panic, because we know The Lord is in control. We know that when we die, that isn't the end – our next step is Glory.

But at the same time, let us not be 'glib' about this. We know that every time a loved one dies, (even if they are a believer), there's a very real grief as we lose them, but joy as we wait for the resurrection.

Since the opening stages of the Pandemic, I've been surprised (and saddened) to see within the Christian church, a very strong shift in fear.

Some within the Christian church are now filled with fear that there's some sinister human element at play here. It's a fear that Satan has been using to:

- consume the church;
- divide the church;
- limit evangelism; and
- destroy fellowship within the church.

It's a fear that so consumes some Christians, that their thoughts are dominated by these fears. The drive to share their fears has become their passion and focus of their life and conversation. And it doesn't drive them to loving sacrifice – it drives them to:

- anger;
- defiance;
- ridicule and demean their brother;

Have you noticed this going on? Some folk are consumed by the belief “there's a world-wide evil agenda – there's a great conspiracy happening”.

And some of us may have may friends (close friends) who are consumed by this, and they are so stirred up about it, and are evangelical about it – they want to tell everyone about it, so

much so, that you might find yourself thinking, *“Is there something wrong with me? Do I need to be worried like they’re worried?”*

Do you feel the same as I do – that there’s people mocking you??? We follow the example of the sacrificial love of Christ, and we obey the commandment of God to follow the law and submit to the authorities,,,, and not only people of the world, but other Christians mock us for doing it...

And they’re looking down at me, feeling sorry for me, telling me I’m going to die because I’ve had a needle...

Do you sometimes feel you’re not a good Christian because you’re not as stirred-up about this as some of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ???

A few weeks ago, in a lot of churches, it’s finally come to a head, and in some people’s minds, the lines have been drawn. And strangely enough, the lines have been drawn over something as minor as the Government directive that we have to wear a mask when we’re gathered indoors... And so, under these rules, as we come to church, we have to wear a mask.

Some whole churches have said, “We will not do that – we will not do what you tell us to do.” Some individuals within churches have said, “I’ll come to church, but I’m not going to do what the authorities tell me – I’m not going to wear a mask”. And others have said, “If you’re wearing a mask at church, I’m not coming to church.”

Now, in the discussions I've had, many excuses and reasons are given, but what I've noticed, is what really lies behind it, in most cases, is an entrenched anti-Government/anti-authority attitude, that produces a prideful character of defiance, self-righteousness and *“you're not going to tell me what to do”*...

And it comes from a heart that will not submit. It's about:

- my rights;
- my freedoms;
  
- autonomy – “I want to be my own master”

This is a forsaking the very nature of the Gospel...

We've just finished studying Colossians, and we've been learning about taking off self, and putting on Christ.

Now, as we live by the Spirit, “living by the Spirit” isn't about ‘rule-keeping’. Living by the Spirit, is about Christ living in our heart, and so, as we walk with Christ, we walk in His ways. And, if we are living by the Spirit, we will not break a commandment of God.

And so, if we **do** break a commandment of God, we're not walking by the Spirit. Are you with me?

So, I'm hearing from others, “We have to fight the government on this, and it's our duty to disobey them, because they're taking our rights away from us”...

That doesn't sound like the sort of thing that Jesus ever said.

What does God say to Christians about the Governing authorities?

The classic text on how Christians relate to the authorities is found in Paul's letter to the Romans. Most people will begin at Rom 13. But Paul's line of thinking actually begins back in chapter 12, he's talking about Sacrificial living – Spiritual worship is to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. And from then on, he's sorta giving examples of how 'sacrificial living' is honouring God. We give up our own rights, and we love like Christ loves.

By the time we get to 12:14, Paul is setting this in the context of the words of Jesus (and His sermon on the mount) and His radical transformational teaching to "love our enemy" – this too, is part of sacrificial living (which is spiritual worship).

### Romans 12:14-13:7 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far

as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

<sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup> To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

(now, in the context of loving sacrificially / loving our enemies / overcoming evil with good)

**13** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, <sup>4</sup> for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of

conscience. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> 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, honour to whom honour is owed.

And of course, people are going to tell me there are exceptions. Yes, but they're rare. I cannot yet think of a time when obeying the Government would have required me to break a commandment of God.

But if the Government ever tells you to worship an idol / murder / steal,,,,, by all means, disobey the authorities, knowing that you might suffer because of it. But in all other matters, we must continue to obey them – that's God's word.

And so, when it comes to “obeying the authorities”, God's word is clear. It could not be more clear. But some people try to justify their self-centred defiant spirit, by twisting the Scriptures to try and make them say what they do not say...

BTW, does wearing a mask break a commandment of God? Absolutely not. In fact, what it does, is it represents the self-sacrificial giving up of one's own freedoms, in love for our brother or sister.

But despite this, there are people in the church today, who believe it is their **duty**, to rarely (if ever) obey the

government, and instead of obeying the command of God, to submit to the authorities, they believe a lie. And that lie tells them, that they are being godly by disobeying the authorities. And even when the authorities are **not** commanding them to break any of God's commandments, they feel justified in their disobedience....

This is perplexing:

To believe that “Breaking a commandment of God, is a Godly thing” – how does something like that, find its way in to the church?

I'll tell you how:

This is the product, of false teachers and false prophets.

If you are being taught something that is contrary to God's word, the person you're listening to, is a false teacher. If a prophecy has been made, and it's telling you to break a commandment of God, you have heard the words of a false prophet...

Perfect instruction for Godly living, is found in the Scriptures. We can trust the truth of the Scriptures. But it's very hard to filter the truth from lies on the internet.

The apostles are the ones who wrote the scriptures. Whereas we have no idea who's been typing on the keyboard on the other end of a discussion group. And even if we do know the other person, do we know the person who taught them, and where **their** information has come from?

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he said this:

2 Timothy 4:1-4 (ESV)

4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Back in Timothy's day, the leaders of the church, would be very aware of when false teachers were bringing their lies into the church – somebody would rock up there, in person. It's not so easy today.

Satan provides a full and efficient service, to cater for this:

- direct from the internet;
- direct from your phone,
- straight into your home.

In fact, one can take their chosen false teachers with them wherever they go, take him out of their pocket, and have a listen to him... He will satisfy their every passion. He will satisfy their every desire...

They can hear exactly what the flesh wants to hear. And if the person wants autonomy – to do what they see as “right in their own eyes”, their chosen false teacher will give them some

plausible arguments as to why God's command to submit to the authorities, doesn't count in their situation.

And if one listens to false teaching, it won't be long, until that person turns away from listening to the truth, and wanders into myths...

Some folk are taking their guidance from fictitious novels – it's fiction – it's not real – it's made up. Likewise, much of the stuff that's being read on the internet today: is fiction.

False teaching; False prophecy;

Very exciting; Might get the blood boiling; Very appealing to the flesh.

And it's leading Christians to desert the truth, and wander off into myths.

What myths am I hearing?

- the Governments of the world have conspired together to kill off the population;
- here in Australia, our government is illegitimate;
- Russia are the goodies;
- NATO are the baddies;
- Plandemic
- If you don't believe what I believe, you're a 'sheeple'

And people quick to believe lies.

*Last week, I was told that the schools are going to vaccinate children without their parents approval. This is something which has swept through social media. It's a lie.*

If you've heard that and passed it on, you are a liar, and a gossip...

We should be worried about this, Rev 21 tells us that the destination of "all liars" is the lake that burns with fire and sulphur... And yet those who believe the conspiracies, don't check the facts (except for on the internet), and they pass on lie; after lie; after lie...

When Paul wrote to Timothy:

1 Timothy 1:3-7 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. <sup>5</sup> The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup> Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, <sup>7</sup> desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

That's all very 'cutting'...

These vain discussions, come from wandering away from the truth, and being consumed by myths and speculations... - False teachings...

We've just studied the book of Colossians, and there's a warning about bringing in other beliefs that are not of Christ.

## Colossians

2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup> I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup> For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

All we need to know, is in God's word. In Christ, is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.. Is Christ not enough???

Now, what's been happening, is these myths/conspiracy theories, have been getting presented as "fact". And once a person has been convinced, and believes these things, it's like they've had a reverse 'born-again' experience...

They're completely changed, but they're changed for the worse...

False teachings, are a serious thing. They are destructive for those who hear it and believe it, but **woe** for those who

- teach it
- repeat it
- like it
- link to it
- pass it on.

Jesus said: Luke 17:1-2 (ESV)

**17** .... "**Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!** <sup>2</sup> It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.

You know, as Christians, sometimes we talk about “inter-generational sin” – the sins of the father being passed on to the son... And in my experience, nowhere is this more true than the sin of refusing to submit to the authorities... The father passes his sin onto the son, and the son, passes **his** sin onto **his** son. And generation after generation it perpetuates...

If any of us ever encourage others to break God's command, by not submitting to the authorities... Woe!

It seems that the motivation for **not** submitting to the authorities, is the belief (not gained from the Scriptures, but mostly from the internet), that:

- a) the Government has an evil agenda;
- b) the Government is impinging on my family and my life;
- c) about control;
- d) the words “slippery slope” get used – if we don’t fight this, what’s next???

Now, most of these conspiracies that people are believing, are from nameless, unconfirmed sources, that get repeated so many times, it must be true. Do you know what that’s called? **“Gossip”**.

In the Old Testament, **and** the New Testament, God’s standard for truth, is on the evidence of 2 or 3 witnesses. And guess what: *a person you do not personally know, who makes an unfounded allegation on the internet, does not count as a witness*. And where the facts are in dispute, a thorough investigation is required... You cannot do such an investigation (with integrity) on Google. It cannot be trusted.

What we do know, is the truth. And the truth is, “God is in control. Everything is in hand.” – in the hands of our Heavenly Father. It’s all part of God’s plan.

Today, some people are teaching that the covid vaccinations are the mark of the beast. Don’t be afraid of that. If you read your bible, you’ll very quickly realise that they’re not. Those who are marked with the mark of the beast, are those who

worship antichrist. Now, I don't know about you, but I'm pretty sure I'm not going to accidentally worship antichrist.

And still, some feel it's their duty to fight this evil agenda, which is ushering in the end.

And so the question is, "At what point (as Christians), are we to stand up and fight antichrist?"

Do you know what the Bible says? Never.

When the beast comes, to make war on the Saints, and to conquer them, it's only happening because God is allowing it. And the beast **will** make war on the saints, and conquer them

So, what are Christians supposed to do? Fight it? No. This is all part of God's will.

### Revelation 13: (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

<sup>10</sup> If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes;

if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

What do we do? Faithfully endure – trusting in God. He has everything in hand.

We know, that when Jesus comes to fight the final battle, He won't be needing my help or your help to do it.

So, if we trust God with our future, and we know that God is in control – He has everything in hand, let's come back to how we live today. And let's turn to the teachings of Jesus: Some of the greatest, most Godly teaching ever heard, is what's known as The Sermon On The Mount:

Some believe that we have to resist the Government, because they have an evil agenda. What did Jesus teach about resisting evil, and turning the other cheek?

### Matthew 5:38-41 (ESV)

<sup>38</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

BTW, 'going the extra mile', that's about when the authorities are forcing you to do something you don't want to do.

Jesus was talking to an occupied nation. The Romans were the enemy. The Romans had defeated Israel, and Israel were now occupied by their enemy.

Under the rules of occupation, a Roman soldier had the right to demand any passer-by to carry his pack for a mile, and then he could grab another passer-by, and force him to carry his pack for the next mile... How do you think you'd feel about that??? - collaborating with the enemy perhaps??? Want to rebel perhaps??? Well, that's not the way of Jesus.

Don't despise it – treat it as an opportunity for public service.

You see, that only makes sense with the mind of Christ: Am I being forced to wear a mask? Not if I see it as an opportunity to honour God by willingly providing a public service.

It only makes sense, when we have the mind of Christ. And when we look at it from the perspective of the sacrificial love of Jesus, and we remember that He calls us to that same sacrificial love. He gave up His rights – we can give up our rights. He suffered for our sake – surely we can endure some limitations on our physical freedoms, for the sake of the most frail and vulnerable...

I'm thoroughly embarrassed and ashamed, that often, those who are:

- most against the authorities;
- most defiant;
- quickest to break God's command by disobeying the authorities;
- most reluctant to lose a few freedoms for the sake of the other,
- listening to the most lies, and repeating lies,
- afraid of what the future is bringing

claim to be Christians...

Let's not be afraid. We know that God has everything in control. For us, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. So, let's take that seriously. For us to live, is Christ. We take off self, and put on Christ. And we let the Sacrificial love of Christ be evident in the way we live.

Now, if that's got you thinking, and you want to know more, let me know. Wednesday night, I spoke for nearly 1.5 on this, and I recorded it, if you want to see it or listen to it (I'll just have to give you a link.)

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,  
We thank You, that You are Supreme.  
The whole world is in Your hands;  
The history of the world, has been Your story;  
and the future, is at Your command.

Lord, we thank You,  
that we have nothing to fear.  
We know the end of the story,  
and Christ comes to slay his enemies.  
But the best bit, is Christ comes bringing salvation  
for those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

Lord, we thank You,  
that it's not up to us to pull the world into order;  
"Vengeance is Mine", You said.

Lord, we ask forgiveness,  
for when we have not submitted to the authorities;  
for when we have not respected them;  
and when we have not given them honour.

Lord, it reveals to us,  
that there's still some of the sinful nature,  
lurking within, wanting us to be our own lord and  
master.

Lord, we acknowledge:  
You are our Lord;  
You are our Master.  
And as our Master, help us to honour You,  
by doing what You commanded:  
submitting to Your appointed authorities.

Lord, give us the wisdom to know when we must  
disobey;  
but may we never use it as a loophole  
to satisfy the craving of the flesh for "autonomy".

And Lord Jesus,  
help us to love our brother and sister,

in the nature of Your Self-sacrificial love.

We praise You,  
that You gave up everything for our sake,  
Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit,  
that we would live and function,  
with the mind of Christ,

Amen.