

Subjection to God and Subjection to the State, Part Four

by John Piper

Christians should submit to authority, interpret the constitution objectively, and obey laws, while also recognizing the universal standard of right and wrong defined by God.

Duration: 52:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 13:1-7, Philippians 3:20, Colossians 3:2

Topics: "Civil Authority", "Christian Citizenship"

Description

In this four-part sermon series, the preacher explores the topic of submission to government and civil authority. The first message emphasizes that all authority is established by God and should be respected. The second message discusses the importance of obeying laws and the role of civil servants in maintaining order. The third message examines biblical examples of civil disobedience and raises the question of when it may be appropriate. Finally, in the fourth message, the preacher explores the idea of a proper Christian engagement with culture and politics to prevent the need for disobedience. The overall message encourages submission to government while also considering the role of Christians in shaping society.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.DesiringGod.org. The scripture text for tonight's message comes from the book of Romans, chapter 13. If you need a Bible, there should be one in the pew in front of you, and it's found on page 948.

I'll be reading in Romans, chapter 13, verses 1 through 7. 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. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

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. 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. Therefore, one must be in subjection, not only to

avoid God's wrath, but also for the sake of conscience.

For the same reason, you also pay taxes. For the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 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.

And honor to whom honor is owed. Let's pray together. For all of us gathered now, Father, in this room and the North Campus, I pray.

I pray for ears to hear, eyes to see, hearts to feel, minds to understand. And for my own mind and tongue, I pray for humility and submission to Your Word, and faithfulness to the truth, and courage to say what needs to be said. Lord, You have met us, and now meet us still.

Shape us into a people who have a resounding impact for the glory of Christ on America, upon government and law and court in America. O Lord God, let us not be unduly quietistic, withdrawn, inactive. Let us be an engaged people, a thinking people, a working people, a relating people, a penetrating people, like leaven, like salt, like light.

O God, forbid that we would sit and watch soaps, or sit and watch comedy every night, and have our minds made small and banal and trivial, empty, feeling nothing magnificent, driven by no great purposes. O get us free from entertainment, I pray, and fill us with causes and purposes and eternal things. Life is so short.

O God, come, liberate Your people from the emptiness that is commended to us on sign, magazine, newspaper, television, radio, dumbing down life over and over again to godless, Christless emptiness. Lord, come, do more in this service than we ever dreamed You might do, for the glory of Your Son and the significance of our little, short, fragile, dying lives. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen. This is part four of the four-part series, so I do stop. I'm not going to spring another fifth part on you now for these verses, but let me rehearse where we've been in Romans 13, verses 1-7.

First, our focus was on all authority is God's. He put it there. And it is good for us, verse 4. He, the civil magistrate, is God's servant for your good.

Meaning, anarchy, mob rule, vigilante justice is a terrifying thing, not a comforting thing, and, oh, how thankful we should be that there are police and firemen and 911 and all manner of ordinances and laws holding the evil of the human heart in check. Oh, how thankful we should be. The second message addressed the question why Paul spoke in such sweeping, unqualified ways as he does in verse 3, when he knows there are exceptions to these things.

For example, verse 3. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. He writes that five chapters after writing that kings kill Christians. So, I argued that he is writing that way with Caesar looking over his shoulder, as it were, to make sure Caesar gets the message, this is what government is for.

And to say to us, if you're going to err on any side, err on the side of submission, not the side of rebellion. I really mean to take seriously here, he says, the fact that governments are there under God and that you should very seriously consider bowing the knee all the time to the laws that are written for you. That was the second message.

The third message, last time, was to look at biblical examples of civil disobedience and to pose the question how they fit and what it would look like if we ever did it. And now, here we are at the fourth message. And the reason for a fourth message is that it didn't seem right to me to pose the question of when you should disobey in America without being more positive and saying, might there not be a proper Christian engagement with culture and with politics that might prevent laws coming into being that would need to be disobeyed.

So that's where we are tonight. What's the more positive thing that I should say from this text? What does this text say about submission, particularly in a country where in one sense the government is us? How do you think about submission when you're the people who put the thing submitted to in place? Do you retain ongoing veto power, like I made the rule I can break it anytime I want? Is that the way democratic republics work or should work in view of this text? So that's where we're going in this message. Now, there are two teachings, more, but I'm going to only deal with two teachings that relate to this.

Verses one and two will just deal with the question of submission afresh in this democratic context. And then the second teaching is from verses three and four where I'm going to draw out the principle of the moral law that I argued was there before and will argue again and ask how do we bring the moral law to bear upon legislative and judicial processes in America. So that's where we're going.

But first, every time I'm drawn to talk about civic life or Christian involvement, I just feel a tremendous need to preface it with the bigger picture of Romans and the bigger picture of the New Testament, namely the picture that we are mainly citizens of the kingdom of God, not mainly citizens of America. That just must fly as the banner over every sermon on political engagement. Philippians 3.20, same author that wrote this paragraph.

Our citizenship is in heaven. From it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 3, verse 2. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. That is a profound identity statement about citizens of America who call themselves Christians. We're all dead.

And our lives are hidden. Our real life is hidden in Christ in heaven. When He appears, we will appear with Him, and this will be shown for what it really is.

It's not the main thing. 1 Corinthians 6.19. You are not your own. You were bought with a price.

Christians are people who were bought by the blood of Jesus, who died, who rose again, who is reigning in heaven at God's right hand, and who owns us. Uncle Sam does not own us. We have one supreme allegiance.

Jesus Christ, not America. Peter, in his letter, said, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles, abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Christians are exiles in America.

Know yourself an exile first, before you hear this sermon on your engagement with American politics. Know this is not your home. You are an exile, a sojourner, an alien.

Your citizenship is in heaven. You're owned by another. He is not the president.

And then Peter says this amazing word to help us grasp the fuller import of Romans 13.1. He says, this is 1 Peter 2.13. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Literally, be subject because of the Lord. Meaning, I'm not submitting to the government because the government has final sway over my life.

I'm submitting to the government because the one who has final sway over my life told me to. The government is relativized. It is stripped of any divine claim, any excessive authority.

Jesus is over and under the government. I do not give the government any supreme allegiance over my life. When Jesus said, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

And to God the things that are God's. Here's what I think he meant. Everything is God's.

When you have rendered everything to God, you are in a position to render some things to Caesar without committing treason against God. That's what I think he meant. Anybody who tries to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's before he has rendered everything to God will be an idolater.

Or will be guilty of treason. So there's the banner that I'm waving over this message. The larger picture from Romans and the New Testament, as I now am going to beckon you as Christian citizens of America, not to be quietistic, retreating, disengaged, inactive, lazy, wasting your life, but rather mightily engaged in this culture which is fading away.

That's where we're going. I said there were two teachings. The first from verses 1 and 2, the second from verses 3 and 4. Let's take them one at a time.

Here we go. Let me read verses 1 and 2 of Romans 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.

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. Now I think we just need to simply be reminded of the obvious meaning of this text, namely that all authority, whether it arose from a king appointing his son, like David Solomon, or a chief defeating all of his rivals in the tribes, or a democratic populace voting, makes no difference how the authority arose. This text says, verse 1, second half of the verse, there is no authority except from God.

It doesn't matter whether we voted it in. It doesn't matter whether it came down totalitarian-like. It doesn't matter whether it happened by war.

There it is, this text says, God did it. And we know, breathtaking as it is, that includes all the evil rulers in the world, because the most evil ruler was said face to face, what was his name? Pilate. And when he said, are you a king? To Jesus, are you a king? Jesus said, you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

Takes your breath away. You're about to kill me. I know that.

This is the plan. You think you're being real uppity and independent here. There's a script, and you're a little character.

I'm the main character. And you're doing His bidding. And that's the way it is with every governor who's ever been.

God reigns. So, democratic America, submit to your government. Because it doesn't matter how it came to be.

Vote, divine right of kings, war, or whatever. It doesn't matter. Now, more specifically, there are two senses in which the people put America in place.

And I want to just highlight both of them so that this point, this point, from verses 1 and 2, can be underlined in relationship to the remarkable fact that the people put this government in place. The first way we put it in place was to make a constitution which now governs us and our legislators. And the second way is going to be voting our president, vice president, and congressman into place.

But let's take them one at a time. Here's the first sentence of the constitution. We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.

We, the people, do ordain and establish this constitution. And there it is. And we should be thankful.

Lex rex. The law is king, we hope. Now here's an implication of this, that the people put in place an authority called the constitution.

That is meant, in verse 1 of Romans 13, submit to that. This is big. Because the implication has, the implication is that there is a way to interpret the constitution that strips it of its authority.

This is real immediate and relevant, right? One of the most weighty issues we're facing in America today is, I could use some big words here like hermeneutics, but most of you won't know that word. And so I'll just say, the way you interpret contracts, leases, ordinances, and the constitution, and the Bible. How we interpret things is huge.

I'm going to argue, right now, that this text, submit to the governing authorities, whether you put them in place or not, and one of those governing authorities is the constitution, submit to that implies you must have a way of interpreting that lets it have authority. Because if you develop a way of interpreting that simply makes it mean what you want it to mean, you are no longer submitting to it, you're making it submit to you. Therefore I'm going to argue that Romans 13.1 has in it a clear implication about hermeneutics.

About the way to interpret a contract that you just signed, or a lease for an apartment, or an agreement with a bank, or a constitution, or the Bible. Namely, there is an objective, external meaning outside your brain that you should find and not bring to the document. And that meaning was put there by those who wrote it.

And we should make every effort to discern the objective, external, unchangeable meaning of a document that we may get under it and obey. If you have a contract to work for somebody, and they say, you're fired. Well, why? No reason.

Well, this contract says that can't happen. I don't care. I'm giving it the meaning that it can happen.

You will go to court and you will hope that they don't believe in that kind of use of documents. This is so basic. And so many scholars, and biblical scholars, and judicial scholars use 500 page books to deny the obvious.

Namely, that do unto others as you would have them do unto you means treat the letter I wrote you according to what I meant by it, please. Not what you think it means. Would you please treat me that way? And that's the way our forefathers would like to be treated as they wrote this constitution.

And I'm not being overly simplistic here as though the application is easy. Application and interpretation are not the same thing. What a document meant, willed by its author, and how to apply it in a brand new situation is hard.

Those guys have got a hard job on the Supreme Court. I'm not making it easy. I'm just saying this text calling us to submit to the authority which is a document implies the document must have a meaning you can submit to and that you don't bring to it because that's not submission.

That's control. So that's the first way that we the people put authority in place and a huge implication. You're going to read in days about the philosophies of interpretation of the next Supreme Court nominee.

You're going to read big words. You're going to read words like originalism and things like that. And you're going to have to think clearly.

You won't have much to do with this, I grant it, but you can pray. And I think our prayers should be sophisticated enough to articulate something like this. Now here's the second thing we do.

We put in place presidents, vice presidents, senators, and representatives when we vote. We once upon a time put a constitution in place that governs the powers and the structures, has in it a legal way to amend. It's not a perfect document.

I just had to laugh because I was reading the constitution and one of the articles says the Congress will meet, will convene at least one day a year on the first Monday in December. That's hilarious, you know. And there's a little footnote, fixed in Amendment 18, like meet for six months and things were different.

So it has its place. It has in it, it has built in it a way to improve it in due process, but you submit to it in following those processes. Now here's the second thing, and it's just to state the obvious, that when a president and a vice president and senators and representatives make and then enforce laws, the legislative and the executive branch, we should obey the laws.

Even though we voted for them and we can't say, well, I didn't vote for them. Fifty-one percent of the people voted for them, but I didn't vote for them, so I'm not going to obey those laws. It doesn't work like that.

I believe if the Apostle Paul were here, he would say they are duly appointed authorities and therefore your whole demeanor should be obey those laws. Now, one last teaching from this paragraph, maybe more important than what I've said so far. Verses three and four, the moral law and how it should be brought to bear upon legislation and judicial action.

I'm picking up what I've said in sermons gone by, but I will show you where I get it again. So as I read verses three and four, I want you to watch for the words good and bad. And I want you to ask the question, does government create good and bad or is government to recognize and reward good and recognize and punish bad? Let's read it.

Verse three, for rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who's in authority? Then do what is good and you will receive his approval 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 wrong doer.

Here's my conclusion from those words, which are just huge, aren't they? I think those words mean in the apostles mouth, there is a reality in the world called good and bad, right and wrong. Governments don't make it up. You don't make it up.

God made it up. Good and bad are defined by God, not governments and not people. This is what I'm calling the moral law.

And now I'm going to ask, if there is such a thing that governments should respond to and we should respond to, then how do we take that and begin to use it in our political activity, our shaping of elections and laws and moral action and legal action and judicial action in this country? And I have two implications of the moral law and how Christians, I think, should use it. The first is this. The universality of the moral law makes it possible for a pluralistic society and increasingly pluralistic society to agree on enough to hold the nation together and not explode.

I'll say that again. The fact that there is a moral law independent of my creating it or the government creating it or a court creating it, the fact that it exists makes it possible for Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, pagans, materialists, New Agers, Christians, Jews, to agree on enough to hold the nation together. And if it doesn't, it won't hold together.

That's a little more than you see in this text. I'm getting some of it from Romans 2.15. Let me read that for you. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness.

I believe the Bible teaches that God's law is written on every human heart. Some of it is so obscure. It is so effaced and so much graffiti written over it with sin.

It's almost illegible. But unbelievers in God and in Christ can see it imperfectly. Here's the analogy I thought of.

Non-Christians can see the law of God, the moral law of God, the way a pirate understands and uses an astronomical telescope that he's never seen before and never used before. And when somebody gives it to him, he doesn't know what it is. And so he treats it like his other little telescopes to look out horizontally across the sea.

Like this, you've got this big telescope. And he's looking through it. And it doesn't quite come into focus because it's made for seeing the stars.

And he's trying to see a boat three miles away. And yet, he uses it. He recognizes what it is.

It needs to be there in place somehow. My deep conviction is that aside from all political engagement, the main task of the church is to help people realize what the telescope is for. It's for seeing Christ.

It's for magnifying Christ. It's for forming a relationship with Christ and exalting in Christ and making much of Christ. That's the main task is to say, Excuse me, can I show you what that's for? Can I show you what

that is? It's all about helping you understand God.

The moral law is all about echoing God. It's like the sunshine. The heavens are telling the glory of God.

The moral law written on your heart is all about God. Can I show you in the Bible what the big picture and the whole story is? That's the main job of the Christian. Main job, not the only job.

We call this, this great mercy that God lets unbelievers pick up and use and recognize a little bit of the telescope, the moral law. We call this common grace. Can we build that into the vocabulary of Bethlehem Baptist Church? Common grace.

It's not saving grace. Nobody goes to heaven because they have seen, Thou shalt not kill is a good idea. But it is and they see it because it's God's idea.

And it's written on their hearts. So here's a little summary of what we've seen so far. There is a moral law in this text.

I mean what we've seen so far on this point. There's a moral law. It's function, the function of government is to see it, protect the good and punish the bad.

This is a universal, there's no culture in the world, there's no human being that does not have at least some echo of this law on their heart. This universality of the law of God makes it possible in a pluralistic culture for there to be enough give and take and enough recognition and enough what you might call common ground or the common good to be recognized that we can have a nation and somehow hold together. There's no guarantee this nation is going to hold together because the forces at work to obscure the moral law of God both in its natural experience and its special revelatory biblical experience are huge.

There are huge powers at work and I don't know what the outcome will be for our nation. I just want you to have a construct for how people without being Christians, without sharing your views on lots of things, may come to an external conclusion about the shape of behavior that would be good for our land. I say external because for you the heart of it is Jesus.

The heart of it is faith. Whatever is not from faith is sin. Which means the common good exercised by an unbeliever is sin.

But that's okay, we want that kind of sin. You get that? Does that make sense? That's complicated. It really matters to Christians whether you don't kill out of trust in Jesus or don't kill out of love for yourself.

Because one takes you to heaven, the other takes you to hell and the same behavior is in both cases. And so we care more about helping people see what the moral law is testifying to than we do about just getting everybody to agree, you don't kill, you don't steal, you don't perjure. Good.

We've accomplished our Christian purpose in the world. We're living together in peace. Wrong! We don't ever feel content when somebody is morally upright on their way to destruction.

One last implication about the moral law I see here. Christians have a book. A most precious book.

An infinitely precious book. And the moral law of God here is a thousand times clearer than on my heart. This is the advantage we bring to American culture.

Not with any kind of uppity, proud, triumphalistic, beating people over the head with this book. That will never ever commend Christ or the book. But we do have it.

And the question is, having it, what do we do with it in the public sphere? Well, that's a lot of sermons, but I'm on my next to last page here. So we're moving towards the end. There are two ways I will sum up how the Scripture should be used in public life.

We should use the Bible to guide the kinds of behaviors we seek to put into law. That's not a simple statement. Let me make it more complicated.

Behaviors revealed in Scripture as essential to the common good, essential to the survival of society, should be aggressively commended by Christians for the enactment into law. By every persuasive means, not coercive means or violent means possible. Let me say it again.

The behaviors that this book reveals to be essential to the common good, essential to the survival of a culture or a society, should be aggressively commended, argued for, in the public square by Christians, by every means persuasively they can, both biblically and naturally. And I will use the example that you would expect me to use, and then maybe one or two you wouldn't. I believe that the nature of marriage is not only clear in the Bible, it is clear in nature.

And I believe that if you try to redefine marriage as between two men or between two women, it is so fundamental to the nature of the human being and the nature of society and the nature of history that, number one, the nation will come apart, probably, if we go down that road. And two, therefore, we should work to protect marriage with law. It's not that it's in the Bible merely that is inclining me to say that.

There are a lot of commands in the Bible I would never put into law, like forgive everybody. I would never argue in public, let's make a law in America, you've got to forgive your enemy. I would never do that.

I'm saying that there are biblical pointers to what is part of the warp and woof of what constitutes this common good that enables a culture or society to simply exist. And marriage is one of them. Don't kill is another one.

Don't steal is another one. Don't lie is another one. A culture can't exist where people perjure without consequences.

A culture can't exist where there's stealing without consequences. A culture can't exist where there's killing without consequences. And a culture can't exist where marriage is not marriage.

It won't work. And therefore, we should argue biblically, but of course people don't believe the Bible, and we should broaden out our arguments as many as we can. And if someone says, of course they will, why are you legislating your morality? I think the answer to that regular question on all kinds of issues is this.

Laws protecting marriage are in the same category with laws protecting life and property and contracts. No one complains that the prohibition of murder and the prohibition of stealing and the prohibition of perjury is legislation of morality. Nobody complains.

It is. It is. But nobody complains about it because we agree on those.

It's wonderful. I'm so thankful that there are a lot of people who think stealing is wrong, who don't know why. And I'm arguing, and this is what I would say if I were interviewed on the radio, I'd just argue

marriage is that fundamental, like those.

And therefore, we shouldn't complain when laws protect the nature of marriage. We shouldn't complain that this is the legislation of morality any more than we should that we protect life, which is a high moral commitment. I said there were a couple other examples.

I'm only going to mention them. We've prayed about them and sung about them already, one of them. There are behaviors that destroy children.

We call it abortion. I think there should be laws against that. I think Christians should work hard because a culture that kills its own weakest will not survive.

There are behaviors that destroy the environment. Christians should make a case from Scripture that God means for us not to burn the house down that he made for us to live in. I was talking with one of our missionary couples who came back, I believe, from Kenya.

I may have the country wrong, so don't hold me to that. And he said, John, you need to preach on environmentalism sometime because what's happening in Kenya, or the country, is as serious to the future of that population as the AIDS epidemic. And everybody knows about the AIDS epidemic, and nobody cares about what is happening to the future of the land.

So I plead ignorance on a lot of that. But I do say in this little one-minute segment, make that your cause and come and let us know what we should do. One last thing.

Scripture should shape our political life, not just in determining the kind of laws that we try to enact, but in the way we advance the kingdom and preserve liberty. Jesus said to Pilate, going on from that previous quote, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight.

But my kingdom is not of this world. Here's my generalization from that text. We do not advance the kingdom of Christ by fighting.

We never, ever, ever undertake with the sword to advance the gospel. Ever! You know, one of the hardest things in the present political milieu globally is that Muslims don't see that distinction. When America takes up the sword to do Iraq, as far as they're concerned, Christians have taken up the sword to spread Christ.

That's tragic. And we must do everything we can by mouth and deed to help the world see that distinction. I will never bear arms to advance the kingdom of Christ because Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, my disciples would fight. They're not fighting right now. I'm going to the cross, and that's the way it will always be.

Christianity will spread by suffering, not killing. We don't blow ourselves and others up on buses in London. The implications of this are that the gospel spreads by the Word.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ. Therefore, the most precious freedom we have is the freedom to preach, teach, share, assemble, worship. Therefore, I'm saying we should labor politically for the preservation of that liberty.

But we should not take up arms to advance the gospel. Here's the catch. Once you want it for yourself, you must give it to everyone.

Baptists have a glorious history on this, which many other denominations do not. And I love those denominations. Most of the people I learn from are in those denominations.

But Baptists from the get-go in 1611 have said the separation between church and state does not mean separation of influence. It means no government exercises its power to advance the kingdom. We will advance the kingdom by preaching, by suffering, by dying.

Therefore, let us preach, and let the Muslims preach. Let the Hindus preach. Let the New Agers preach.

What a vast difference. Christianity, I'm going to close with this. Christianity, paradoxically for the people that think the religious right is trying to make a theocracy out of America, some of the nuts are.

I'm not, and I'm not for this reason. My very commitment to King Jesus sends me back to say a coerced conversion is no conversion. Therefore, I will not undertake to advance conversions by the sword or any other manipulative, coercive means.

And in wanting that for myself, I will defend it for everyone. The liberty, the tolerance, the tolerance in this country was born in Christianity and is preserved by a strong commitment to the fundamental vision of Christianity. If you believe that tolerance can be sustained by relativism, namely, every religious claim is equally valuable, therefore, tolerate each, that will come down.

Because the only thing left to decide among anything is power. Not truth, not right. But if you say the reason we're tolerant is because we will not kill each other in order to spread our views, we will talk to each other, we will get in each other's face in public squares and we will argue till we'll brew in the face and we will pray and we will plead and we will hand out tracts, but we will never hit you or imprison you or kill you or torture you in any way to advance our cause.

And you better not either. We need a Christian argument in our day for tolerance, for pluralism. There is no other way.

The world has come to America. Every religion, every cockeyed viewpoint in the universe is here. Every ethnicity is here.

Every impulse imaginable is here. Christians have an answer for how those people can live together. And I've tried to open it a little bit to you.

May the Lord give you great zeal for His glory and the glory of His Gospel. And may He give you great love for the lost. And may He give you great wisdom and courage to commend His truth in the public square.

Let's pray. Oh, Father in Heaven, I pray for Your wisdom for Your people who have heard a rambling sermon trying to cover so many bases. If You would come and just take these pieces, Lord, that are of You and cause them to reflect and pray and seek Your face, I believe we could become an increasingly useful people for the eternal good of lost souls and for the temporal good of a confused culture.

And I believe it is Your will that we function in both these capacities and so would You please perform it. Lord, if there are folks north campus or in this room who are without Christ and have looked on from

outside Christianity, as it were, to this message, I pray that You would awaken enough longing and enough desire to hear more about Christ and His cross and His death and resurrection for sinners and how all that works itself out in life, that they would come, come and pray, come and talk, seek out believers and find their way into more and more biblical truth. Into Your hands now, Lord, I commit Your people in Jesus' name.

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