

Image And Allegiance

Joe Slater

April 15 typically involves long lines at the Post Office as procrastinators mail those dreaded 1040 forms along with a sizeable check to the U.S. Treasury. We have extra time this year due to circumstances beyond our control, but it just delays the inevitable!

Nobody enjoys paying taxes. No doubt much of our tax money is spent unwisely, to say the least. Nevertheless, Romans 13:7 says, *“Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”*

When Jesus walked this earth, His enemies tried to trap Him with the controversy over Jews paying taxes to the pagan government in Rome. *“Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”* (Luke 20:22). If Jesus just said, “Yes, pay the taxes,” they could claim He wasn’t a loyal Jew. But if He said, “No don’t pay,” they could accuse Him of treason against the government. As always, the infinitely wise Jesus recognized their ungodly motives and gave them an answer they couldn’t use against Him. *“Why do you test Me? Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?” They answered and said, ‘Caesar’s.’ And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s’”* (Luke 20:23-25).

The coin bore Caesar’s image. Caesar had a right to require it in tax. People bear the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). He has a legitimate claim on our service. There is no conflict between the two. As we pay our taxes this week or in weeks to come, may we be mindful to render to God that which is due to Him!

The Importance Of Being A Light

During an Atlantic Ocean crossing, a severe storm arose. A passenger lay in his bunk, very seasick. In the dark of night, he heard a cry: “Man overboard!” Some poor soul had been swept from the ship’s deck.

The sick man lay there thinking there was nothing he could do to help. But then he thought, “I could at least put my lantern in the porthole of my room.”

The almost-drowned man was rescued, and he recounted the story the next day: “I was going down for the third time when someone aboard the ship put a lantern in a porthole. It shone on my hand, and a sailor in the lifeboat grabbed me and pulled me in.”

One small light! It belonged to a sick man. But it enabled a strong sailor to save a life!

Was the sailor who pulled the man into the lifeboat more important to his “salvation” than the man who put the light in the window? Which of the two could he have done without?

Every Christian can do likewise for his fellowman. Someone may actually pull the lost into the boat, but a light is needed. The light may be a well-prepared Bible class lesson. Perhaps it may be the example of faithful attendance to the services of the church down through the years. It could be a number of good deeds done for strangers we may never know that well.

Remember that Jesus said, *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:14-16).

God’s word is light! Your influence can be light! Never underestimate its power.

--Richard Dent (Liberal, KS) via *Old Paths*

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES

Joshua called upon the people to *“Choose you this day . . .”* There are some good biblical examples of men and women who were faced with choices and made the right one.

Moses *“came to years”* in Egypt. The Hebrews writer tells us that Moses chose to forsake all that Egypt was to him, and choose to serve with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Joshua, in his farewell address, after calling on the people to make their choices, stated: *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

The psalmist had a choice to make. He, like Moses and Joshua, made the right one. *“I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me”* (Psalm 119:30).

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, made the right choice, and Jesus stated that this would not be taken away from her. *“Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house, And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.”* When Martha complained that Mary wasn’t helping her with “much serving,” Jesus *“answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her’”* (Luke 10:38-42).

What choices are you making?

Will they get you to Heaven?

--Ernest S. Underwood (adapted)

via *Voice of Truth International*