

Third Angel's Message Series



LESSON # 6

“Unless you are ready to accept the decision of a court of this world, you cannot voluntarily make any appeal to it. As certainly as you do, you are pledged, by every principle of government heavenly or earthly, to accept the decision, and if it is against you there is nobody to blame but yourself.”

ALONZO T. JONES, GENERAL CONFERENCE, 1895

There are two or three other scriptures that we will notice in the line of study that we have been following the past three evenings, and we will begin where the lesson stopped last night--Acts 25:11, with the words, **"I appeal unto Caesar."** We followed the record last night from its beginning up to that point and found that in the common view of that subject, Paul never did appeal to Caesar. After Caesar had taken him, Paul held Caesar to his own principles and laws.

The particular principle that we are studying now is the right of a citizen of the kingdom of God, an ambassador of Christ, to require other kingdoms and authorities to conform strictly to their own rules and the laws that govern themselves in their dealing with him.

The 16th chapter of Acts is another, beginning with the 16th verse; they were at Philippi.

"It came to pass as we went to prayer a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; the same followed Paul and us, and cried saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this she did many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command these in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers."

And these were Roman rulers too, because Philippi was a Roman colony and had special privileges from the emperor.

“And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates rent off their clothes and commanded to beat them.”

And they said, No, we appeal to Caesar. Didn't they? They did not. But they were Roman citizens, were they not? Why didn't they appeal to Caesar then? Were they not about to be abused and beaten? What would you have done? No, we need not say, What would you have done, but, What are you going to do? That is the question now.

“And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them.”

Then follows the account of the earthquake and the conversion of the jailer and his household, and their baptism. Now the 35th verse:--

“And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this, saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now, therefore, depart and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out.”

They violated every Roman law that governed themselves in their city; now they want us to go sneaking out of this place. No, sir. You come and take us out. You put us in here; take us out.

“And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates, and they feared when they heard that these were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.”

There is another passage: 2 Cor. 11:23-25, speaking of those who are boasting of their standing and so on:--

“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool), I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods.”

Now that beating with rods was the Roman punishment. Of course the Jews were limited by the law to forty stripes save one. Five times he got that, but this beating with the rods was not simply Jewish whippings but Roman scourgings--beating with the Roman rods, and he a Roman citizen. And we have no record anywhere that he ever appealed to Caesar under any such circumstances or any circumstances at all. When Caesar had taken him and kept him over two years in prison and then wanted to deliver him up to the Jews, then to Caesar or Caesar's lieutenant, he said, "No sir. I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. I appeal unto Caesar."

Question from the audience: "Why did he even then appeal to his Roman citizenship instead of to his heavenly ambassadorship?"

What I am saying is that he did depend upon his heavenly ambassadorship and upon his heavenly King, until the Roman power had taken him under its jurisdiction, and then he simply held the Roman authorities to the Roman law. But in the common idea that has been held on this subject, you would get the idea that Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship on every occasion when there was any danger, when the fact is that he never did it at all.

Three times at least he received Roman scourgings and made no use of his claim to Roman citizenship, made no appeal whatever to the civil power. But when he was taken into their hands and held under their control and kept within the power of Rome, then and not till then did he make any use of the Roman power. But then when the Roman captain was about to scourge him, which was unlawful, Paul said, **"It is not lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned."**

Under these circumstances and under no others did he ever make any appeal to or any use of the Roman power or make any use of his Roman citizenship. For when he went preaching the gospel and wherever he went he was mobbed, he was stoned, he was "shamefully entreated" and yet in the whole record there is no hint of his ever in any case making any appeal to any earthly power or any use of his Roman citizenship. Now if this was all written for our example and for our learning, then is this what we are to learn and is it not about time we were learning it? He put his trust in God, the Sovereign of the kingdom to which he belonged and where his true citizenship lay. Why shall we not do the same.

Daniel was in the country of Babylon and Medo-Persia. That is true. And whenever the time comes that one nation shall come with its armies against the country where you are or may be sojourning and shall take you with a great multitude of people and bind you and carry you off to their own country and keep you as slaves of the king, and the king shall put you in his palace, in his service--then you can decide easily enough, I think, whether there is not a difference between that and voluntarily seeking for political position. This is the record in my Bible about Daniel and how he got there. And when your turn comes and you get into such a place as that, I don't suppose anybody would find any objection to your serving the king in the place he puts you. But as long as you are at liberty to keep out of such places as that, I do not think you can cite Daniel as a justification for your deliberately going in there, in the face of the plainest teachings of Christ.

If I were taken captive, as Daniel was, and was appointed by the king, as some of Daniel's people were, to brickmaking or building the walls of Babylon round about, I suppose I should work in the brickyard. Then, if the king should take me out of there and send me to school, as he did Daniel and some of his brethren, I think it is altogether likely I should go on in school and study to the best of my ability. And after I had done that, if he should take me out and put me in his palace as a doorkeeper, I should perform the office of doorkeeper; if he should finally even bring me into his court to stand before the king, as the record is of Daniel and his three brethren, I should stand before the king. And if I should be honest and faithful enough and God should give me wisdom to interpret deep things to the king, as God gave to Daniel, and the king should appreciate God's blessing in that enough to honor

God for it and should at last put a chain of gold around my neck and put me in position next to the king, I should stand there.

But I am satisfied that until that time does come and such circumstances as that do arise, I would not be justified in running for political or any other kind of office, nor in taking any political steps to get somebody else elected, nor in taking any part in city government or State government nor in national government nor in politics of any kind. Jesus Christ did not, and he says, ye "**are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**" "**As My Father sent me, even so send I you,**" and "**as He is, so are we in this world.**"

Joseph was sold by his brethren, was bought and made a slave, was carried into Egypt as a slave, sold there as a slave and served as a slave. His integrity to God and faithfulness to His law got him into prison and there he remained quite a while. His faithfulness there, his quiet demeanor, and the atmosphere of the Spirit of God that was with him gave him favor in the sight of the jailer, who put him in charge of the doors and the other prisoners round about--what now would be called a "trusty" in the penitentiary. And God was with him still. The time came when God would prepare for the salvation of Israel--that is, Jacob and his family and all Israel to come--and He gave to Pharaoh remarkable dreams, as He did to Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Daniel. The king sent for Joseph, and he interpreted the dream for Pharaoh. Pharaoh wanted somebody to take charge of the matters that had to be arranged to prepare Egypt against the famine that was to come. Said Pharaoh, "Who knows as much about this as the man who knows all about it?" Therefore, the one that knows about this, the one that has explained it and told us what is going to come is the

one to take charge of it and carry it out. I put everything in Egypt into his hands, only in the throne will I be above him. Everything in all Egypt Pharaoh gave to Joseph's care.

And if you ever get into such a position as that through such experiences as that, I do not think that even I would raise any objection to your performing the duties of the place to which you are thus called.

But I do deny that these experiences, as my Bible gives them, have any bearing whatever upon the course of Seventh-day Adventists now anywhere on the earth, who are out of jail, free to choose where they will go and what they will do.

Now I want to state a little further upon the principle that no Christian, being a citizen of the kingdom of God, can of right start any procedure in connection with civil government. After it is started by the government itself, that is another question, and we have studied that. I repeat therefore, that upon the principles which govern kingdoms and governments, the very principle of the law that underlies the whole subject of government, whether it be law in heaven or law in earth, a Christian cannot start any procedure in connection with civil government.

And of all Christians, Seventh-day Adventists cannot do it. The very keeping of the Sabbath forbids it. For to submit a case to a court, he submits it to the procedure of the court. Now every court in the land can go strictly according to law and to all the rules of the courts and hold court and try the case on the Sabbath. The Sabbath-keeper cannot attend court on the Sabbath. But he has started the case himself, and in starting the case he submits the case to the procedure of the court. Yet if the court in regular proceeding even without any design calls the case on the Sabbath,

he will be required to attend on the Sabbath. He cannot do this though and keep the Sabbath. But to refuse, while starting the case himself, is only to trifle with the court. This the court cannot allow, and therefore may levy a fine for nonattendance. But if the fine is paid, it is paid for keeping the Sabbath. If it is not paid and he goes to prison instead, he cannot justly count it persecution, because without any fault on the part of the court it is only the straight consequence of his own action in starting the case. Therefore the very words, "**Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,**" forbids the starting of any case in court, because that commandment forbids us to start on a course that may prevent the keeping of the Sabbath holy.

And before I read, as I shall read that, I want to say that what I shall read is to meet an objection that is in the minds of a good many, that these things that are being brought out here are very wide of the mark. I have not heard any denial yet that the principle is there or that the principle is all right, but it is the following up of the principle that some do not accept. Well, if you acknowledge a principle as a principle which you are not willing to follow wherever it goes, then you would better give up the principle.

In order that all may know that this is not new, I shall read from the American Sentinel of 1893. Of course the article was not dealing with the subject in the way that we are talking on it tonight, but it is the same principle and the whole principle is there, and the certain consequences of the violation of the principle are also there.

I read from the American Sentinel of July 6, 1893, and I shall read perhaps the most of the article upon that subject:

"The Sunday managers resorted to the United States courts and got swamped the first thing.

They called upon the courts to decide the question. The courts did decide the question. And now they refuse to accept the decision. They submitted their cause to the courts and now refuse to accept the decision because it was not on their side. Well, then, as they are determined to have their own way anyhow, what in the world did they want with the courts in the first place?"

Unless you are ready to accept the decision of a court of this world, you cannot voluntarily make any appeal to it. As certainly as you do, you are pledged, by every principle of government heavenly or earthly, to accept the decision, and if it is against you there is nobody to blame but yourself. And I say that that has been there all these two years and yet in 1894 some Seventh-day Adventists went right over that ground and found themselves caught just as certainly as these National Reformers did. However the Seventh-day Adventist did not refuse to accept the decision. They accepted the decision, but it was at the expense of their paying a fine for keeping the Sabbath. Under the circumstances there was nothing else to do. I read on:--

"Well, then, as they are determined to have their own way anyhow, what in the world did they want with the courts in the first place? Ah! They only wanted to use the court as a tool in enforcing their own decision and their own will upon the people of the United States."

And if this had been written in this month of February 1895 of some procedure of Seventh-day Adventists, every word of it would have been exactly as it is; it need not be changed a particle. Now I am not bringing this as a charge, or a reproach or an accusation

against any Seventh-day Adventist or to find fault with any. I am only stating the fact. I am only sorry it is so; as sorry as I can be that it is so. But in the Bible it is written, **"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."**

And when we ourselves, in violation of the principles which we profess go over the ground of National Reformers themselves and get caught just as certainly as they did, then shall not we take warning from these examples as much as from those of our brethren in A.D. 35 or 40 in Judea? This principle is just as applicable in Maryland or any other state of the Union as it is in Judea or in Illinois. I say again, I am not finding fault. I know all make mistakes. All that I am saying is, Shall we not learn lessons from our own mistakes as well as from those of other people? I need not tell where this occurred. It is not necessary that this should be known. The fact is all that is needed, for the place will be just where you are, if you do not become better acquainted with principle than many now are.

Calling attention again to the Sentinel, there comes in there a little history about their case as to what it was in the court, which I need not read. Then coming back to the principle, we continue:--

"Of course it is always understood that especially the party which initiates legal procedure shall accept in good faith the final decision. With the other party it is not necessarily so, for he may be dragged into it and forced into court by the course of the initiative and he is not bound to accept any decision, because the whole procedure may be one of persecution and therefore wrong from the beginning.

"But with the initiative it is not so. It is in the nature of things, it inheres in the very idea of legal government that the party who

resorts to the law, the party who begins legal procedure, shall accept in good faith the final decision. Otherwise there is no use of legal government; violence becomes the only procedure, and might the only source of appeal. And that is anarchy indeed."

Then unless you, as a citizen of the kingdom of God, are ready to accept the decision of an earthly court, you cannot take the initiative; you cannot start the case, because to start the case and then not to accept the decision is the principle of anarchy itself--it annihilates government. But Christians are not in the world for that purpose. We are here for another purpose. We are to recognize and to respect without any question the systems of government that are already established, as they are established by those who have established them, and not to inculcate a principle nor to follow a course that can only annihilate the very foundations of the governments that are here.

"Now it is the everlasting truth that the Sunday party did take the initiative and have kept it from the first inception of the act of Congress clear up to this final decision of the court. And now, instead of accepting the final decision in good faith, they do not accept it at all, but resort to violence. The party of the second part, the party that was dragged unto the procedure and into court, freely announces beforehand that if the decision is against them, they will accept it in good faith and so conform to it. The party of the first part, the party which takes and holds the initiative from the beginning, openly disregards and refuses to accept the final decision and boldly announces their purpose to pursue such a course as will make the fair "a financial failure." And these are the ones who so scathingly denounce the course of the directory as "anarchistic" and "rebellious."

"The sum of the whole matter is this: It is essential to the very idea and existence of legal government that the party who takes the initiative in legal procedure shall accept in good faith and so conform to the final decision. Not to do so but to act the same as though there had been no decision after the final decision has been rendered is in itself to renounce legal government and is essentially anarchistic and rebellious. The Sunday-law party is and has been from the beginning the party of the initiative in this legal procedure. This party, instead of accepting in good faith the final decision, ignores it entirely and resorts to violence--the boycott--after that decision has been rendered. It therefore follows inevitably and the demonstration is complete that the action of the Sunday managers in this matter is truly the action and the only one which is indeed "anarchistic in conception and rebellious in execution." This is the logic of the situation, and it is the exact truth. Their very action only further illustrates it, and their calling other people "anarchists," "rebels," "traitors," "atheists," and so on, can never disprove this abiding truth.

"This is the same conclusion to which we were forced last year by the logic of their course in securing the act of Congress requiring the closing of the Fair. It is the only just conclusion that can ever be reached from the basis of ecclesiastical dictation or control in the affairs of the government. And this for the plain and simple reason that on the part of the ecclesiastics it is never intended that they shall pay any respectful attention to any law or any decision that does not suit them. Therefore the only purpose for which they ever resort to either legislation or judicial procedure is that the governmental authority may be at their disposal with which to execute upon the people their arbitrary will. And this, in itself, is at once to sweep away all really just or properly legal government.

"And all this only makes the more manifest the divine wisdom which commands the total separation of the ecclesiastical and the civil powers, which forbids the Church to have any connection with the State. It also demonstrates the wisdom of the men who made the government of the United States, in embodying in the Constitution and the supreme law the divine idea for governments--the total separation of Church and State. And this which has been done and is now being done by the churches is only a hint and the beginning of the sea of troubles into which the government will be plunged and indeed finally sunk by this gross disregard of the governmental principle established by our fathers and announced by Jesus Christ.

"So long as the Church keeps herself entirely separate from the State, she can consistently and rightly disregard any and all legislative acts, judicial decrees or executive powers put forth upon religious questions [or that touch religious practices]; because she ever denies the right of government to touch religion or any religious question in any way."

And this is present truth. It is present truth for us as well as for the National Reformers.

"But when she forgets her place and her high privileges and herself actually invites governmental jurisdiction of religious observances, she then, by so doing, and in justice forfeits her power of protest and her right to disregard governmental commands in things religious, while in fact and in practice she refuses to let it go, so that whenever the government does not do according to her will, she openly and intentionally disregards the very authority which she herself has invoked. She thus becomes the chiefest example and source of lawlessness and the swiftest instrument of governmental ruin."

And with us especially as we have seen, this principle covers all cases. Shall we learn what the principle is indeed and stick to it? That is the question for us all.

Another

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