



Hate taxes? Read this!



A guy I used to work with at the post office, Matt Rohrbach, always used to complain about the government. One of his biggest gripes was taxes. I take that back. One of his biggest gripes was that I never got upset about taxes.

“Just what will it take to get you upset about this, Martin?” he asked me one day.

“About what?”

“About taxes. The government is now taking about fifty percent of our income. You’re working for Uncle Sam from January through May. How long are you going to sit there and take it?”

“I don’t know. What time is it now?”

“That’s not funny. You need to join tax groups. You need to exercise your rights as an American citizen. Help the rest of us kick the tax-and-spend politicians out of office.”

“Then will I be as calm as you?”

“I’m *concerned*.”

“Wait a minute,” I said. “How many times have you heard me say, ‘God knows how much money we need?’”

“Too many times.”

“I haven’t told you this yet, but I’ve got a new twist on it.”

“And I’m afraid you’re going to tell me what it is.”

“‘God knows how much money we *don’t* need.’”

“You’re sick, you know that?”

“It’s true.”

“That you’re sick? I know.”

“No, that God knows how much money we *don’t* need. And He has lots of creative ways of separating us from it.”

“Do you have a rich uncle? Is that your problem?”

“I assure you I don’t. I have to scour my dryer for change to buy groceries. Don’t you remember that story in the Bible where Jesus told Peter to throw a hook in the sea and pull out the first fish he caught? ‘Just throw it in,’ Jesus said, ‘and yank out the first fish you catch.’ Then Jesus told Peter to reach into the fish’s mouth and he’d find the tax money there, the money they owed.”

“I know the story. What about it?”

“First of all, this was an unfair tax. It was for the upkeep of the temple; the temple tax. Only aliens had to pay it; Israelites were supposed to be exempt. But



Jesus didn't want to cause any trouble, so He told Peter that they were going to pay it anyway. So He sent Peter out with a hook. Can you imagine the chills that went down Peter's spine when he stuck his finger down into the mouth of that fish and felt that coin?"

"I suppose so. But what's your point?"

"It's that easy for God to give us money. If He wants us to have it, it's nothing for us to have it. The miracle isn't that we have enough to get by. The miracle is that we have so little. The miracle is that God keeps such a miraculous supply away from us."

"But why would God do that?"

"To keep us humble. To make the job ahead look so impossible that we'll give up and trust Him. Self-confidence stinks."

"Speak for yourself. I'm not about to give up. I'll fight to the finish."

"The sooner you give up, the more relaxed you'll be. You haven't even had your coffee yet and you're buzzed like a phone wire. Your face is actually red."

"That's sunburn."

"In January?"

"Okay! I'm upset!"

"I say, be more appreciative of bad government."

"What?"

"When idiots are in the White House squandering our money and wasting our natural resources, the world is primed for Christ."

"Well, we're there. All primed, Captain!"

"If humanity could sail this ship perfectly apart from divine intervention, who would need the divine intervention? Instead, we've grounded this baby onto the rocks, and it has been six-thousand long years of creating a need. Humanity has had six thousand years to bring peace and plenty. Do you see it?"

"Hell no. It's a struggle every day."

"Right. Governments fail by design."

"Then why should we even fight evil government?"

"Exactly! Look, I've got nothing against calmly and peacefully trying to make things better if a person feels called to it. But these Christians you're drawing inspiration from are far from calm and peaceful. They're running around in a sweat thinking that God expects them to fix the world for Him. That's like cleaning the house before the maid comes. Why do they think Jesus Christ is coming? He's not coming to congratulate them for cleaning the house; He's coming to transform a corrupt, greedy, wasteful world. Do you realize how sufficient and plush His kingdom is going to be? That's the purpose of this backdrop of stupidity and insufficiency, then: to highlight the glory of that coming kingdom."

"I'll think about it. I'll admit I'm a nervous wreck. You know, I hate it when you make sense."

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The following article was written by the same Matt Rohrbach with whom I'd had the previous conversation. That conversation I just shared with you was real. Though 23 years has passed, I could take you back to the post office where we worked then and show you where each of us was standing when this memorable exchange took place. Even more memorable is the change that overcame Matt in the following weeks. He started reading books I had given him about God's sovereignty, about God's plans for all humanity, and the peace that God established through the cross of Christ. Matt wrote the following article a mere two months following our conversation, and I published it in a newsletter I then wrote. I reprint it now, for your present peace.

What Happened To Matt?

A political activist embraces the evangel of peace

by Matt Rohrbach

Scripture tells us to leave the past and stretch out toward the future (Phil. 3:13-14). That's good, because the past can easily burden us. With our hands full carrying yesterday's baggage, reaching toward the future is difficult, if not impossible. Perhaps my experience will help those now enmeshed in politics.

My political interests became passionate during the 1992 presidential campaign. To me, as to most Christians, Bill Clinton embodied all that was wrong with America.



Concerned with ever-increasing taxes, I joined taxpayer protest groups. I got bumper stickers, yard signs, window signs and pins. I joined pro-life groups, and gave anti-abortion talks at churches, speaking out against government. I donated as much money as I could to “friendly” campaigns and appropriate causes. Subscriptions to Christian and conservative political publications kept me informed of the enemy’s latest assaults, and how (or if) we were able to counter-attack. At any given time, it seemed, I had a letter to an editor somewhere between formulation and completion. Everyone who would listen, and many who would not, got a piece of my mind. I warned of the sorry state we’d be in if Bush lost the election. The phone lines between my house and Washington were hot for a long time. (Ma Bell must have a plaque hanging somewhere, engraved “Thanks, Matt, for a great year.”) I enriched the Postal Service, too, with countless letters to congressmen, urging them to vote for Christian causes. Clippings and cartoons blared my opinions at home and workplace alike.

I was hooked; a man with a mission. The best part was, I knew I was right, and that I was on God’s side (or was He on mine?). I was hot to stop evil forces from gaining further control of our government and, doubtless, pulling us to ruin with them.

I cannot adequately describe how fierce my desire to fight had become. When Bush lost, I only got worse. I was vindicated, though, because I had done my share. I was on a very steady soapbox. When things went to pot (and I was sure they would), I was going to be pointing fingers at a lot of people. Furthermore, I was gearing up for future elections, to reclaim America from those who would be doing their utmost to ruin it. I was in for the long haul—a real flag waver.

I wanted people to share my concerns for our country. People who were uninvolved puzzled, frustrated, and sometimes angered me. Didn’t they understand what was at stake, or how much there was to lose? Our Christian values were being attacked, with hoards of satanic God-haters breaking down the doors to govern-



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ment offices nationwide. I sincerely believed it was my duty to join the fray that would help God pull victory from what I thought would be a terrible defeat for Him. Each round lost would make the next round harder, and perhaps impossible, to win.

But then, something changed. It was a divine surgical strike, so fast and efficient. God, by grace, was opening my heart to the truth. He desired my full attention, and so He removed political passions from my heart.

I know where political activists are coming from. I was there. I believed my effort to change the political course of America was crucial to God. Without me, and others as concerned, the outcome of the battle might have been one He did not desire, and had hoped to avoid. I almost imagined God pounding His fist

in frustration every time a pro-abortion candidate was elected. Presumably, He was then forced to rearrange His plans, to allow for the new setback. What a frightening scenario of a God of limited power.

What do I mean, “a God of limited power”? We need to be honest and ask ourselves what other kind of God would be so dependent on us? If we believe that God needs our strenuous efforts to ensure the success of His plans, then we must logically believe that if no one helps Him, He will not succeed.

Is He God, or isn't He? Thankfully, He is indeed! No one can withstand His intention (Rom. 9:19), so the outcome of His plans is unaffected. We can do nothing to alter or nullify even the smallest detail of His sovereignty. His counsel is immutable (Heb. 6:17).

Paul conducted “an embassy in a chain” (Eph. 6:20). *What? An ambassador for Christ in chains?* Under such conditions, how was he to spread the evangel entrusted to him? Yet, referring to his bonds, Paul declares: “My affairs have rather come to be for the progress of the evangel,” so that “the majority of the brethren, having confidence in the Lord as to my bonds, are more exceedingly daring to speak the word of God fearlessly” (Phil. 1:12,14).

Think about that. As a result of Paul's subjection—to the Roman authorities, those spreading the evangel were more daring than before. God didn't free Paul. God didn't send anyone to protest the imprisonment of His ambassador (an act of war, by human standards), nor did He send activists to burn down the prison. Instead, He used Paul's oppression by Rome to do His work, even to the point that the truth reached into Caesar's very house, right under the Emperor's nose (Phil. 4:22). God will not be constrained by His creation. He is truly in control.

Our commission, like Paul's, is to herald the evangel of peace (Eph. 6:15); peace with God, peace with our enemies as well as our friends, and even peace with the governments that God sets over us. —*Matt Rohrbach*

In the ensuing years, Matt has remained a great friend and a supporter of this ministry. He used to edit and proofread my first newsletter back in 1994, and he still edits the newsletter today—although I'm sneaking this one by him as a surprise. —MZ