

# How To Win a "No Win" Situation (Luke 20:19-26) By Jon Quinn



Have you ever been in a "no win" situation? You find yourself facing a choice and no matter which way you decide you are not going to like the results?

Actually, apart from Jesus, life itself is a "no win" situation. While there are plenty of options, there is only one frightening outcome. That's the reason that passages of Scripture such as "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." and "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." are so important (Romans 8:37; Philippians 4:13). They build our confidence, give us security and peace, and remind us of our reliance upon Jesus to take a "no win" situation and make us winners.

Jesus has certainly proven Himself capable of achieving victory in the most hopeless of circumstances. You cannot find a more hopeless situation than the one Jesus was in as He hung on the cross and cried out "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And then, all strength gone, He breathed His last. Dead, buried and gone. No, not gone. On the third day Jesus turned this chief of all "no win" situations into victory! Is not our great Lord deserving of our trust and loyalty? As Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68).

Consider another "no win" situation that Jesus' enemies had manufactured. They desired to entrap Him, and devised a strategy that they thought was going to make Him look bad no matter what He did.

"And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people, for they understood that He spoke this parable against them. And they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so as to deliver Him up to the rule and authority of the governor. And they questioned Him, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you speak and teach correctly, and that you are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes unto Caesar or not?' But He detected their trickery and said to them, 'Show Me a denarius (a Greek coin - JQ). Whose likeness and inscription does it have?' And they said, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Then render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and marveling at His answer, they became silent." (Luke 20:19-26).

## THE "NO WIN" SITUATION

"Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Luke 20:22). This is a loaded question. Neither a "yes" or "no" answer will do. Some questions are like that. Lawyers and debaters like to use them, and sometimes they serve only to win arguments but not to establish truth. "Have you stopped beating your wife?" is not a question to be answered with only a "yes" or "no."

This question is simply designed to get Jesus into trouble with somebody; either the people or their Roman rulers. The Jews resented being occupied by the Roman legions and being ruled by the Gentiles in Rome. They despised paying taxes to Rome and hated those of their fellow countrymen who became publicans and tax gatherers for Rome. Jesus cannot say "yes" without becoming "as a tax gatherer and sinner" to the people.

But if He says "no" most certainly it will be reported to the governor. He will be accused of sedition and rebellion. Either way, answering the question with only a "yes" or "no" is going to do tremendous damage.

Please note that Jesus feels no obligation to limit His answer to a "yes" or "no." Neither should we, when we are asked a question that we do not feel comfortable with giving only a "yes" or a "no." Sometimes enemies of truth will insist on such, but we are not obligated to respond with only a yes/no answer if we feel more is needed to properly address the question. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29).

## THE ATTITUDE OF THE ENEMY

"And they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so as to deliver Him up to the rule and authority of the governor." (Luke 20:20). These men were not interested in truth at all. In fact, they were quite willing to lie and deceive in order to entrap Jesus. They pretended to be something they weren't; they did it for ulterior motives and their goal was to destroy God's work.

What this means is that they played by a different set of rules than Jesus did. They would lie; He wouldn't. They would scheme; He wouldn't. They sought to harm; He sought to help. The same is true today when there are confrontations between Jesus' disciples and the world. But it is because we are disciples of Jesus that we do not respond in kind. We are to be honest always. We do not resort to devilish trickery because deceit and truth are incompatible. Our enemy might twist the truth; but we will simply let it shine. In any case, do not expect fair treatment from enemies who reject the Scripture's standards of honesty. "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and as innocent as doves."

(Matthew 10:16).

## THE ADMISSION OF THE ENEMY

"Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and you are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth." (Luke 20:21). They've tried everything else. They have searched and searched for something with which to accuse Jesus, but cannot find any flaw in Him. Maybe flattery will get Him off guard. The interesting thing is that their admission shows they have been unsuccessful at coming up with something legitimate with which to charge Jesus.

So, they swallow hard and echo the thoughts of those who knew and loved Jesus. Jesus has taught publicly throughout Palestine and His teachings were correct in every way. He did not show partiality to the rich or powerful. He had always dealt with others in an even handed way. He was quite willing to reprimand His friends as well as His foes. Its the only way to "teach the way of God in truth."

## A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

"Show Me a denarius." Whose likeness and inscription does it have?... render unto Caesar's the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." (Luke 20:24,25). Jesus knew of their trickery. We have obligations to both God and country. Only when Caesar makes demands of us that interfere with keeping God's commands is there a conflict.

Of course, Jesus could have just answered the question verbally, but instead He took a coin and let the people think about it. The reaction of His enemies tell us something. They "became silent" (vs. 26). Had they not been entirely honest in paying their taxes? Were they really rendering "unto God the things that are God's"? Their sudden silence indicates that they were much more prepared to dishonestly attack Jesus' record than to defend their own.

As the coin bore the image of Caesar, man bears the image of God. Let Caesar have his coin. Let God have His man or woman. Then, and only then, will our "no win" situation turn into victory.

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