



Governing Authorities

Why we should submit to our government

Titus 3:1 - Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,

What did Paul want us to be reminded of?

To be subject to rulers and authorities.

What does it mean to be subject to rulers and authorities?

To obey the laws of our government.

Why should we obey the laws of our government?

To be ready for every good work.

How is obeying the laws of our government connected to being ready for every good work?

If we act with the laws of our government, we will be free to do God's will; if not, the laws of men will encumber us limiting our freedoms and thus our ability to be used by God in accordance with His will...

1 Pet 2:13-17 - Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Government is a lot like your digestive system... if it works right, you hardly know you have it.

How does obeying the law of men put to silence the ignorance of foolish men?

Obedying the laws of men prevents those who don't know God from having a reason to oppose you.

How should we view the freedom that man's law affords us?

Not as a cloak for vice but as a way to serve God, for man's law allows things that God's Law does not.

But didn't Paul act in God's will by being in jail? Can't we be in God's will where ever we're at?

- We can be in God's will and be in jail but you can use Paul's example to justify being thrown in prison in order to minister to the other prisoners. You can minister to prisoners and not be in prison yourself.

- Paul was incarcerated for preaching the gospel. That is entirely different than breaking a human law that does not conflict with God's law.

Let's take a look at another passage Paul wrote which gives us even more insight as to why we should obey the governing authorities...

Rom 13:1-7

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.

For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

V1 - What is the command to believers here?

Submit to the government.

What does it mean to submit or be subject to?

Cooperation, loyalty, willingness to obey

What kind of attitude should we have about our being subject to the governing authorities?

Our subjection must be free and voluntary, sincere and hearty. Curse not the king, not even in your thoughts...

Eccl 10:20 - Do not curse the king, even in your thought; do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; for a bird of the air may carry your voice, and a bird in flight may tell the matter.

Why is it important not to even think about rebelling against the governing authorities?

- To visualize and imagine is where treason begins. The subjection of soul requires inward honor and outward

reverence and respect, both in speaking to them and in speaking of them. This is what it means to be obedient, in spirit as well as letter.

- For this same reason, Jesus condemned entertaining adulterous thoughts as the same as adultery and even anger as murder in Matthew 5.

Why were these wise words to a small band of people in the Roman empire who had allegiance to a King who was not Caesar?

It wouldn't take much for an imperial edict to fall on a group who might become known for causing unrest within the empire.

Did the quiet submission of Christians to the Roman government guarantee peace?

No but at least it might allow them to continue to spread the gospel freely for a time.

What were the alternatives to quiet submission to the government?

1. Become like the Zealots, Jewish rebels who fought, often violently for freedom from Rome.
2. Withdraw to the desert to set up their own community far from the evil city.

What was wrong with these responses?

1. It takes matters into our own hands which will fail since God is not in it.
2. We would not be able to fulfill the Great Commission.

Why is it important for Christians to live within whatever political structure they find themselves in?

This is the only way we will be able to share the gospel... People receiving the gospel can change lives and transform society.

What does our willingness to submit to governing authorities tell us about our willingness to submit to God?

God has placed us in situations that offer daily lessons in submission. If we don't learn proper submission in those areas, our submission to God may be imaginary.

Eph 5:21 - submitting to one another in the fear of God.

What other authorities besides Government does God place over us?

Family, school, work, sports, church...

In what specific ways can I demonstrate respect for the authority of even those I do not admire?

- Be loyal even when others are not, support their policies for the good that is in them, respect the office if not what the person in the office does.

- As in the military we learned that discipline demands that we are saluting the rank if not the person with the rank.

Why should every soul be subject to the governing authorities?

"There is no authority except from God"

- God sets all authorities in place. He allows all governments and leaders to function under His sovereign will.
- God as the ruler and governor of the world has appointed the ordinance of government, so that all civil power is derived from Him as from its source, and he has by His providence put the administration into those hands. By Him kings reign...

Prov 8:15 - By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice.

So does this mean that when rulers abuse their power that God is behind it?

- The abuse of power is not of God, for He is not the author of sin; but governing power often has strong temptations associated with it... bad decisions coupled with power are an abusive combination.
- As our natural powers, though often abused and made instruments of sin, are from God's creating power, so civil powers are from God's governing power.
- The most unjust and oppressive princes in the world have no power but what is given them from above...
John 19:11 - Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."
- All governing power is from God because He allows it... though the power is from God, man makes the decisions:

"Power doesn't abuse people, people abuse people"

What happens to governing authorities that seek to act contrary to God's will?

They will answer to God. They are under God's constraint and under His final judgment...

Dan 4:34-35 - And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

See also Psalm 2

V2 - What are those who resist authority really doing?

- Resisting God's law.
- Bringing judgment on themselves

Are there times when we should not submit to government?

- Other passages of Scripture give guidelines and examples.
- When a government demands allegiance that conflicts with a believer's loyalty to God, Christians should respond in a different way.
- Believers should never allow the government to force them to disobey God.

What examples can you think of where God's people acted in God's will to defy governmental authority?

In all these cases, God blessed those going against the governing authorities because their law conflicted with His law...

- Hebrew midwives – defied Pharaoh to preserve the life of the infant Moses (Exodus 1:15-22)
- Rahab – hid Joshua's spies who were conducting reconnaissance in Jerico (Joshua 2:1-14)
- Daniel - declined food fit for a king (Daniel 1:8-21) & did not cease to pray (Daniel 6)
- Daniel's friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego) - refused to bow to the king's image (Daniel 3:1-30)
- Jesus - healed on the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11, 14:1-6)
- Jesus' disciples - picked grain on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5) and refused to be silenced (Acts 4:1-22, 5:14-42)

In Acts 5:14-42, we read about Peter and the disciples healing people and preaching about Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. This infuriated the Jewish religious leaders and they brought them in before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body...

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Peter went on to use this hearing as an opportunity to share the gospel which made the counsel even madder at them to the point where they were plotting to have them killed. Note what one of the prominent Jewish religious said, even though he was not a follower of Jesus, his logic was correct and God used this to free the disciples...

34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.

35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.

36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.

37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.

38 "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;

39 "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it-- lest you even be found to fight against God."

40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

It occurs to me that the world needs more of this kind of correct logic. This is the kind of logic that is the most powerful weapon against radical Islam.

What is illogical about radical Islam that will cause this religion to fade from being a force in the world?

Their belief that it is of God to force people to have their world view.

- Universal truth can stand the test of competition, those preaching falsehoods seek to hid the truth.
- If it is of God, it will last, if it is not of God, it will naturally die.
- Dare to compare

God has allowed the pluralism of the Roman system of government to flourish because it accommodates the gospel. Islam will have its season but will ultimately be crushed because it does not tolerate the truth. The Bible tells of the Roman system of being the last world government of men before the Lord Himself takes over. In the last days this power will be abused by the Antichrist when God removes His restraint on human government.

How does the current state of affairs in Afghanistan present an opportunity for the church?

The radical Islamic Taliban are out of power and the people are celebrating their liberation from them. Kids are flying kites, men are shaving their beards, women are uncovering their faces and talking about getting jobs. These people are open to western culture, look for the pendulum to swing greatly in our direction. The two lady missionaries freed from captivity said that even the Taliban were curious about Jesus. But I believe that there can be great danger in the pendulum swinging in our direction...

How does the Afghan openness to western culture represent great danger?

Look at Russia, they received an infusion of western culture over night and now their economy is in the tank, crime is rampant, people are without jobs or work without pay and in many ways people are worse off there now than they were before the demise of the Soviet Union. The problem is having the freedoms of western culture without being restrained by a personal relationship with God. For example, Russians were used to getting hand-outs from the government and did not have a strong work ethic. That kind of approach does not work in a market economy but a lazy work attitude is so endemic in their society, the only solution I see for the Russians is to be rallied by a strong leader in wartime. Indeed Ezekiel 38 says that this will happen.

So what is the opportunity represented by countries like Russia and Afghanistan that are now open to western culture?

The church should flood them with missionaries. Their only hope is to have a large segment of their population who know the true God, Jesus Christ. We should take advantage of their willingness to embrace all things western and help them to know how they may know true peace by introducing them to the Prince of Peace. Only Jesus can give them the peace, truth, and justice for which they hunger.

Can you think of any examples from history that Christians should have resisted their government but didn't?

Nazi Germany

What factors contributed to the inaction of Christians in Nazi Germany?

- Dependence on government benefits had caused to lose their will to criticize.
- Being isolated or otherwise uninformed kept them from making a timely response.

What kind of government officials are assumed in verses 3 & 4?

Those who are doing their duty.

Why shouldn't Christians be afraid of government officials who are doing their duty?

They are God's minister for good.

What should we expect from the Government if we do what is good?

Praise from them

How is it that the governing authorities are God's ministers or servants? Are they believers?

They are generally not aware they are serving God...

Prov 21:1 - The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; he turns it wherever He wishes.

Can you think of any examples where the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord?

- Caesar Augustus causing the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem (Luke 2).
- King Ahasuerus not being able to sleep which led to the Jews being saved (Esther 6).

What does it mean that governmental authorities "*do not bear the sword in vain*"?

- It is not for nothing that God hath put such a power into the magistrate's hand; but it is intended for the restraining and suppressing of disorders.
- They act on God's behalf to stand as a terror to evil works and evil workers. They bear the sword; not only the sword of war, but the sword of justice.

Why must evil doers be dealt with in this world? Why not wait until the Great White Throne Judgment where the Lord Himself dispenses justice?

When men are become such beasts, such ravenous beasts, one to another, they must be dealt with accordingly, taken and destroyed to deter others. The horse and the mule must thus be held in with bit and bridle.

Why is it a good thing that God uses governmental authorities to punish evil doers?

It is intended for a kindness to those that are punished, that by the destruction of the flesh the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus...

1. As a holy God, that hates sin, against which, as it appears and puts up its head, a public testimony is thus borne.
2. As King of nations, and the God of peace and order, which are hereby preserved.
3. As the protector of the good, whose persons, families, estates, and names, are by this means hedged about.
4. As one that desires not the eternal ruin of sinners, but by the punishment of some would terrify others, and so prevent the like wickedness, that others may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Consider....

1 Tim 2:1-2 - Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

Why should we pray for the authorities over us?

So that we may live peacefully and be able to serve God.

What should we be doing if we are to pray effectively for those in authority over us?

- Watching them closely so that we may pray specifically.
- We must avoid ignorance of apathy toward our world.

V5 - What two reasons does verse 5 give for why we should be subject to the governing authorities?

1. Because of the threat of punishment (their dispensing God's wrath)
2. Our conscience's sake

Why is it important to heed the prompting of our conscience?

- If you don't use it, you'll lose it... It is possible to sear your conscience (1 Tim 4:2) to the point where we become past feeling (Eph 4:19)
- True citizenship is rarely rewarded. Faithfully carrying out our small duties may not gain recognition but God notices every action: When we obey the government because it serves Him, God knows our real motives.

Note: Roman Caesars persecuted Christians until it dawned on Constantine that the Christians were his best citizens so he made Christianity a state mandated institution... but compromises to make it more acceptable to the masses laid the groundwork for future problems.

- For example, Emperor Constantine confirmed the doctrine of the Trinity in the Council of Nicea but elevated Mary's status making her an object of "veneration." This appeased the pagan multitudes by giving them a queen of heaven (Roman Catholicism in its embryonic form).

V6 - Why should we pay taxes?

- It is part of submitting to the authority God has delegated to the government.
- Taxes pay the salaries of those doing the governing.

Interesting observations about government and taxes:

- Everybody works for the government, either on the payroll or on the "taxroll."
- One of the things we have to be thankful for is that we don't get as much government as we pay for.
- If Washington D.C. is the seat of government, the taxpayer is the pants pocket.

What did Jesus have to say about paying taxes?

Jesus said that it is our duty to pay taxes...

Matt 22:17-21

17 "Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?"

19 "Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius.

20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

21 They said to Him, "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."

Jesus also gave the proper motivation: pay taxes as to not offend the governing authorities (temple tax - Matthew 17:24-27).

Why would it be important not to offend the governing authorities?

- So that you may live in peace
- To be in a better position to share the gospel with others.

V7 - What else besides taxes should we render the governing authorities?

Customs (duties, tolls, usage tax, royalties), fear (respect), honor (praise)

Why should we respect and honor a political leader who has demonstrated his low moral character by his behavior?

- We're respecting the position, not the behavior.
- Similar to love the sinner, not the sin