

Government Mandate

Obedient Disobedience to Our Authorities

November 28, 2021

Today we're talking about shining our light and shaking things up!

What do you think about these government mandates? I've been thinking a lot lately about our *conscience* and our *country*; and while we're all in a thanksgiving mood – and a slight turkey coma – I thought it'd be an *opportune* time to talk about the government. Mandates. Regulations. Laws. Bans. *You know – that sort'a thing.*



We can sum up Romans, chapter 12, with: **renewing our mind**; and chapter 14, with: **training our conscience**. But in between 'em, in chapter 13, Paul talks about our obligation to our secular, political, governing authorities. And if you ask me, it's all *way too* direct and applicable!



I mean, Paul has the nerve to suggest that the way we treat the laws of our land, directly relate to our loyalty to the Lord. He acts like cheating on building codes or burning bans, income tax or fire works, seat belts or speed limits, is all ultimately a type of distrust of *God!* What's up with that? He's like:



Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which *God* has established. The authorities that exist have been established by *God*. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what *God* has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. – Romans 13:1-2 NIV



Does he *know* that *Nero* was Emperor when he wrote this? I suppose so, since he did say, “The authorities that exist”. That's a facial reconstruction of the depraved ruler who saw himself as a sun god, and used Christians as living torches! And in light of this, we're *still* told that **disobedience to our authorities is defiance of God**; and **obedience to our authorities is compliance with God**.

A cop pulls over an elderly lady for only going 22 on a *highway*. Her companions are scared stiff. When asked about her speed, she points to the sign. The officer says, “That's a road marker; this is *highway* 22.” Then he asks about her passengers; and she says, “Oh, these ol' gals'll be fine. We just got off the 175.”



Honoring limits, laws, codes, and bans, is *worship* when **our compliance honors our higher Authority**. Ever hear that “STOP” stands for “Stomp Toe On Pedal” or “Spin Tires On Pavement”? Well, for the obedient believer, may I suggest: “**Short Time Of Prayer**”. Instead of coasting through, “take a brake” and use the extra second or two to say to our Father, “This one's for You!”

According to Paul, this is *our* part of the bargain. But **he's not advocating blind allegiance to wicked men**. This is a two-way street. Remember Nebuchadnezzar the wicked, pagan king of Babylon, and servant of the Lord? The Lord said to his own, albeit disobedient, people:



“Because you have not obeyed My words, behold, I will send ... for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant ... and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then ... I will punish the king of *Babylon* and *that* nation ... for *their* iniquity,” – Jeremiah 25:8-12 ESV



When Jesus stood before Pilate, the Governor of Judea, He knew He was in the process of fulfilling a prophecy in Isaiah, that says:

A Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on *His* shoulders; and ... There will be *no end* to the *increase* of *His* government *or* of *peace*, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. – Isaiah 9:6-7 NAS

[Which is likely why, when Pilate said to Jesus:] “Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above. – John 19:10-11 NIV

Sometimes for reward – sometimes for punishment – but always for an eternal purpose.

We now have two parts to Paul’s equation: 1) **Believers must submit to their governing authorities**. And 2) **Governments must submit to God’s authority**. So what’s a believer to do if their governing authorities fail to submit to God? Well, Jesus calls us the “light of the world” and the “salt of the earth”, (Mat 5:13-16) and shining a light, at times, requires shaking things up!

For [the most part] rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For [believe it or not] he is God’s servant [whether he knows it or not] to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant ... to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. [Unless the authority turns against God and what is right] Therefore you must be subject, *not only* because of wrath *but also* for conscience’ sake. – Romans 13:3-5 NIV



Ever driven past a Speed Monitoring Trailer? There are only four basic mechanisms at work: 1) **the law**; 2) **electricity**; 3) **radar**; and 4) **your conscience**. They don’t make arrests, issue tickets, or even document what you’re doing. They just ... *flash* your *sin* in your *face*. I *hate* the flash! **“Lawbreaker. Lawbreaker. Lawbreaker.”** **“I slowed down! I’m barely over!”** **“Lawbreaker. Lawbreaker. Lawbreaker.”** Sounds like a *conscience*. A *healthy* conscience. If my conscience isn’t *calloused*, but *well-conditioned* with God’s *will* from God’s Word, it’ll chastise me for violating my Savior’s *higher* moral code.

But sometimes it *tells* us to *disobey*. It’s okay to speed, to rush someone to a hospital; because, **a moral imperative outweighs a moral infraction**. Like Jesus healing on a Sabbath.

We just have to establish a hierarchy of values according to God's will and by His Word. Because our lesser authorities aren't *perfect*. So we can't just blindly bow and obey for fear of *punishment*; **we must allow a healthy conscience to bow to God's authority first and foremost.**

God honors godly people who defy ungodly authorities. For conscience' sake, Moses' mother disobeyed Pharaoh's command, and hid him; (Ex 1:22-2:4) and Rahab defied the king of Jericho, and hid Joshua's spies. (Josh 2:1-24) Paul's not teaching us to condemn Schindler for betraying Hitler by helping the Jews! Or the heroes who helped American slaves flee the South.

And Peter and John defied pretty much *every authority* for the sake of *conscience* and *Christ*.



⁵ [The] rulers, elders, and scribes, ⁶ as well as Annas the high priest, [and] Caiaphas ... ¹⁸ called [Peter and John] and *commanded them* not to speak at *all* nor teach in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge." ²⁰ For we cannot *but speak* the things which we have seen and heard." ²¹ So when they had further *threatened* them, they let them go ... ²³ [And *being* let go] ²⁴ they raised their voice to God ... ²⁹ "Lord, look on *their threats*, and grant to *Your servants* that with all *boldness* they may speak *Your Word*" ... ³¹ [And] the place where they were assembled together was *shaken*; and they were all *filled with the Holy Spirit*, and [the apostles] *spoke* the Word of God with *boldness*. ... ^{5:17} Then the high priest rose up, and ... ¹⁸ put them in the common prison. ¹⁹ But at night an Angel of the Lord *opened* the prison doors and brought them *out*, and said, ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple and *speak* to the people *all* the words of this *life*." ... ²⁶ Then the *captain* went with the *officers* and ... ²⁷ set them before the *council*. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸ saying, "Did We ought to obey God rather than men we not *strictly command* you *not* to teach in this name?" ... ²⁹ But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "." ... ⁴⁰ and when they had ... *beaten* them, they *commanded* that they should *not* speak in the name of *Jesus*, and let them go. ... ⁴² And *daily* in the *temple*, and in *every house*, they did not *cease* teaching and preaching *Jesus* as the *Christ*. – Acts 4:5-5:42 NIV

When God says to submit to authorities, obviously **we're not to obey if they forbid what He commands, or command what He forbids.** Because *everyone* will ultimately stand before God and give an account of their actions, with their conscience bearing witness. (Rom 2:14-16) In fact, Paul is defying "the authorities that exist" by boldly declaring regarding Nero, who sees himself as the new sun god, that "He is [in fact] God's servant".

This is uniquely challenging for *us*, because we *the people* select our *own* authorities. And I believe we've been blessed with the *best* form of government. But **God would prefer a dictator – who commends goodness and condemns evil – over a democratic republic that doesn't.** But we *pride* ourselves on our personal *independence*. Speed limits? Stop signs? "Suggestions!" Seat belts? "Give me liberty or give me *death!*" And we're ready to fight for what we want. But when Jesus was being arrested, He *also* said:



My kingdom is not of *this* world. If it *were*, My servants would *fight* [Peter, *put that ear back where you found it!*] – John 18:36 NIV



You see, **Laws are for the symptoms, while salvation is for the problem.** Laws can *modify behavior*, but that's about *it*. **They can't transform a heart.** The IRS received an anonymous letter that said: "I haven't been able to sleep for two years because I cheated on my taxes. And so, I'm enclosing \$500. If, after this, I still can't sleep ... well, I'll send you the rest! Speaking of taxes, Paul now gets specific ... speaking of taxes:



This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, [fees] then revenue; – Romans 13:6-7 NIV

This is about twenty years after Jesus coined the famous phrase: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mk 12:17) **We don't render out of fear of an audit, but fearful reverence of God;** which means. So if you're feeling guilty, just go back and *amend your conscience* and *clear your return*. *Strike that. Reverse it.* Sadly, paying taxes *as worship* is *way harder* than *tithing* as worship. Know why? 'Cause *tithing* only takes *ten percent!*

But those secular Roman taxes built a network of roads that were *instrumental* for spreading the Gospel. Who could've realized their little denarius would *literally* pave the way for Paul to reach us?! **We just can't know how God may use bad government for good.** Want the ultimate Bible proof that even the very worst of governing authorities can't help but glorify God?

The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.' For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both [King] Herod [Antipas] and [Roman Governor] Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do [well] whatever Your hand [i.e. power] and Your purpose determined before to be done. – Acts 4:26-28 NKJ

Try as they might – **ungodly governments can't not ultimately serve God's purpose.** And Paul doesn't end with government taxes and revenue fees; he goes on to say:

If [you owe] respect, then [pay] respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. – Romans 13:7 NIV

[Seems ol' "ear-lopper" learned *his lesson*] *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ... Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil ... Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.* – 1 Peter 2:13-17 NIV

So, **how do you act out regarding those you didn't vote in?** This is America; so **by all means, shine your light and shake things up!** But in *all things*, do your Savior *proud* and show some respect. After all, that's *His* government mandate.