

Civil Disobedience

1 Peter 2:11-12, Romans 13:1-70

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**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

With increasing ungodliness in government, at what point should the Christian resist?

1 Peter 2:11-12

¹¹*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹²having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

How are followers of Christ sojourners and pilgrims?

- Sojourn – a temporary stay – we should have an eternal perspective
- Pilgrim – one who journeys in foreign lands; one who travels to a shrine or holy place as a devotee – we are citizens of heaven and placed here for a purpose as a representative of God

What are fleshly lusts which war against the soul?

Sin, thinking about sin; anything that comes between us and God. There are consequences that, at the minimum result in loss of reward.

Why should we conduct ourselves honorably among unbelievers?

That they may glorify God when He is revealed to them... our witness to the world matters.

1 Peter 2:13-17

¹³*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men-- ¹⁶as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*

Why should we submit ourselves to every ordinance of man?

For the Lord's sake because we represent Him. Most of man's law is derived from God's Law and those that are not, it is a matter of perception... do what is perceived by man to be good (as long as it does not violate God's Law)...

1 Cor 9:19-22 – *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

Why should we submit to the king and his governors?

They have been established to restrain evil and encourage/reward the good.

How does our submission to the authorities put to silence the ignorance of foolish men?

Unbelievers will have not be able to claim that our faith has caused us to be bad citizens.

How is it followers of Christ have liberty?

We have been freed from the bondage to sin...

John 8:36 – *if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

We no longer have to sin, we have within us the capacity to break free from sinful patterns...

Gal 5:1 – *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

How do Christians use their liberty as a cloak for vice?

They have been forgiven so that act as though they have a license to sin. The danger in persisting in such behavior is that you have to wonder if you were really saved to begin with.

How are we bondservants of God?

We are servants (or slaves) by choice and not employees which expect to get paid a wage for services rendered.

How may we honor all people?

We treat them with respect...

Phil 2:3 – *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*

Observe the Golden Rule...

Matt 7:12 – *whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Who is the brotherhood and why is it important to love them?

The brotherhood refers to fellow believers; God uses our love for fellow Christians to attract people to Him.

John 13:35 – *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

Why does being involved in church activities demonstrate our love for fellow Christians?

Actions speak louder than words... you want to be with the ones you love.

What does it mean to fear God?

Respect and obey Him because you know He is very serious about sin.

Who is the king and how do we honor him?

The king is whoever God has placed in authority over us. We honor him by obeying him and not speaking bad about him.

So, does this mean we should not discuss politics?

We can and should call attention to bad policies in an effort to change them without having to engage in character assassination. This is the same as hating the sin while loving the sinner, a concept worldly people just don't understand.

The following was written by the Apostle Paul when Nero was in power overseeing intense persecution of Christians in Rome...

Romans 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.*

What is the command to believers here?

Submit to the governing authorities

What does it mean to submit?

Cooperate, obey, demonstrate loyalty toward

What benefits do we receive from quiet submission to our governing authorities?

It often results in our opportunity to freely spread the gospel

What are the alternatives to submitting to the government?

Become rebels or withdraw into holy enclaves... both limit our ability to reach people for Christ.

Why is it important for Christians to live within whatever political structure we find ourselves in?

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

Eph 5:21 – *“submit to one another”*

What other authorities does God place over us besides government?

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

Why should every soul be subject to the governing authorities?

Rom 13:1 – *There is no authority except from God* God is in control and sets all authorities in place. He allows all authorities to function under His sovereign will.

What happens to government authorities who act contrary to God's will?

They will answer to God... they will be judged for their actions.

v2 – What are those who resist governmental authority really doing?

Resisting God's Law and bringing judgement on themselves.

Are there times when Christians should not submit to government?

When loyalty to government conflicts with loyalty to God we should respond accordingly...

Acts 5:29 – *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”*

But we must be ready to accept the consequences...

1 Pet 4:14 – *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*

What examples come to mind where God’s people acted in God’s will to defy authority?

- In Exodus 1, the Egyptian Pharaoh gave the command to Hebrew midwives that they were to kill all male Jewish babies. The midwives disobeyed Pharaoh and *“feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live”* (Exodus 1:17). Also, the midwives lied about why they were letting the children live.

Exodus 1:20–21 – *God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them*

- In Joshua 2, Rahab disobeyed a command from the king of Jericho to produce the Israelite spies who had entered the city to gain intelligence for battle. She was redeemed from the city’s destruction when Joshua and the Israeli army destroyed it.
- 1 Samuel records a command given by King Saul during a military campaign that no one could eat until Saul had won his battle with the Philistines. However, Saul’s son Jonathan, who had not heard the order, ate honey to refresh himself from the hard battle the army had waged. When Saul found out about it, he ordered his son to die. However, the people resisted Saul and his command and saved Jonathan from being put to death (1 Samuel 14:45).
- In 1 Kings 18, Obadiah hid 100 of God’s prophets when queen Jezebel was killing them.
- In 2 Kings, queen Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, began to destroy the royal offspring of the house of Judah. However, Joash the son of Ahaziah was taken by the king’s daughter and hidden from Athaliah so that the bloodline would be preserved.
- Daniel records where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down to the golden idol in disobedience to King Nebuchadnezzar’s command. Also, Daniel defies King Darius’ decree to not pray to anyone other than the king. God rescued His people from the death penalty that was imposed, signaling His approval of their actions.

- The book of Acts records the civil disobedience of Peter and John. The religious authorities were determined to stop them from teaching about Jesus; however, Peter said, *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:19–20). Later, the rulers confronted the apostles again and reminded them of their command to not teach about Jesus, but Peter responded, *“We must obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29).
- In Revelation, the Antichrist commands all to worship an image of himself. But those who become Christians at the time will disobey the Antichrist and his government and refuse to worship the image (Revelation 13:15).

When is civil disobedience allowed for a Christian?

The position the Scriptures uphold is one of biblical submission, with a Christian being allowed to act in civil disobedience to the government if it commands evil, such that it requires a Christian to act in a manner that is contrary to the clear teachings and requirements of God’s Word.

1 Peter 2:18-20

¹⁸ *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.*

¹⁹ *For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*

²⁰ *For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.*

Who are the servants and masters today in our society?

Employees and employers

Why should we submit to our boss in fear?

Because he (or she) has the power to fire us. And he is acting to serve a purpose that God is making use of for our benefit.

Romans 8:28 – *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Why is it especially important to submit to harsh bosses?

God will reward us for suffering as His representative. He may be able to use it to extend His kingdom...

Ephesians 6:5-8 – *Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh... as*

bondservants of Christ... whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord

Should Christians be involved in politics?

Ephesians 5:11 – *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

We need to speak out against evil... that is an aspect of our being salt and light... it is how the Holy Spirit is working through the Church to restrain evil in the world today.

What role does voting have in speaking out against evil?

Every Christian should vote for leaders who promote Christian principles. God is in control, but that does not mean we should do nothing to further His will. Much of the suffering on earth is because of godless leadership:

Proverbs 28:12 – *When the righteous rejoice, there is great glory; but when the wicked arise, men hide themselves.*

Candidates or proposals that violate the Bible's commands for life, family, marriage, or faith should never be supported...

Proverbs 14:34 – *Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.*

Christians will receive rewards and lose rewards based on how we vote.

Can Christians be too involved in politics?

One of Satan's grandest deceptions is that we can rest our hope for cultural morality and godly living in politicians and governmental officials.

- A nation's hope for change is not to be found in any country's ruling class. The church has made a mistake if it thinks that it is the job of politicians to defend, to advance, and to guard biblical truths and Christian values.
- Nowhere in Scripture do we have the directive to spend our energy, our time, or our money in governmental affairs. Our mission lies not in changing the nation through political reform, but in changing hearts through the Word of God.
- Our Christian mandate is to spread the gospel of Christ and to preach against the sins of our time. Only as the hearts of individuals in a culture are changed by Christ will the culture begin to reflect that change.

What is Christian nationalism?

Christian nationalism is most often employed as a derogatory term. It is crucial to realize that labels can be unfairly used to trigger an emotional response.

Is true, biblical Christianity "Christian nationalism?"

Christians are obligated to individually submit to the will

of God (Romans 12:1) and to support one another along those lines (John 15:12). In practice, this means advocating for government actions consistent with a Christian worldview.

- Doctrines such as Christian Dominionism or Kingdom Now theology rightly invite accusations of "Christian nationalism," though these perspectives are not reflected in Scripture.

What is the problem with nationalism?

Nationalism is a sense of loyalty and commitment to one's country. It includes belief that the country ought to self-govern, pursue self-interests, and encourage shared cultural attributes.

- Such goals are neither good nor bad in and of themselves. Appreciation for one's culture, language, traditions, music, history, or achievements is a fine thing.
- We should defend freedom, the innocent, and our homes from foreign threats. We err, however, when we allow nationalism to displace our first loyalties to Christ and His kingdom. All those born again into the family of God are citizens of another kingdom (Philippians 3:20).
- "Nationalism" is rarely used as a criticism without qualification: it is tied to factions such as "white nationalism" or "Christian nationalism."

So why do critics of Christians being vocal about public policy invoke the term "Christian nationalism?"

Christians will be accused of "Christian nationalism" when there is the slightest connection between a person's faith and his or her political or social views.

Indeed, any politically conservative stance conflicting with progressive morality is waved away as "Christian nationalism."

What applications do we see from our discussion today?

- Obeying the government is obeying God.
- Civil disobedience is appropriate when government expects us to disobey God.
- When engaged in civil disobedience, expect to face worldly consequences but rewards in heaven.
- Christians should be politically engaged to stand against evil.
- Voting for the lesser of the evils is a Christian responsibility
- When the world labels Christians as "Christian Nationalists" they are trying to silence us... resist!