

What The Bible Says About

The Christian & Human Government, Part Four

When Is Civil Disobedience Allowed For the Christian?



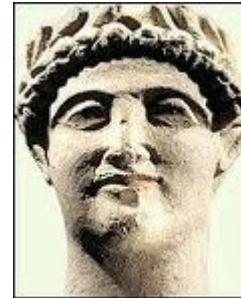
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How is a Christian to treat the government?¹ In the first century Church Christians were being persecuted for their faith. The Bible tells us that the Roman sub-king Herod attacked the Church:



Acts 12:1-3 (KJV) Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth [his] hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

and killed the Pastor of the Jerusalem Church, James the brother of John (the Revelator). When James' death was received favorably by the Jewish authorities, Herod also captured **Peter**. Though God sent an angel to the prison to free him, the average Christian was in a very precarious position. The Jewish ruling council, the *Sanhedrin*, hired a young student of the Rabbi Gamaliel by the name of **Saul of Tarsus**. The Bible says:

Acts 8:1-3 (HCSB) Saul agreed with putting {the Deacon Stephen} to death. On that day a severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered



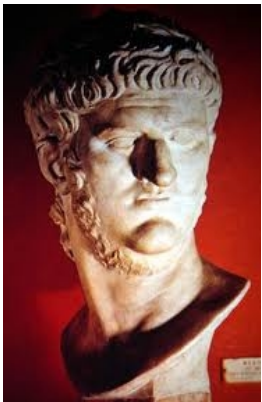
¹ Some of the research for this study came from gotquestions.org

throughout the land of Judea and Samaria. 2 Devout men buried Stephen {the Deacon} and mourned deeply over him. 3 Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.

The Pastor was killed, a Deacon was killed, and the Church was scattered to the four points of the compass. Saul was doing a great job in reducing the Church to ashes when the Lord Jesus Christ knocked him down on the Damascus Road. When Saul was saved the Lord introduced him to the Church by saying:

Acts 9:15-16 ^(HCSB) ... this man is My chosen instrument to take My name to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for My name! ”

God took the persecutor (Saul) changed his heart, changed his direction, changed his name (Paul), and then sent him to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the Israelites. The persecutor that used to work *for* the government killing Christians now represented Christ *to* the government. God is in control!



God uses Christians of every age to approach and effect the government.

The Emperor of Rome (AD 54-68) was Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus. Known as “Nero”, he was definitely not a Christian. As many in the Roman

government of his day he engaged in homosexuality, adultery, and even pedophilia. It was rumored that Nero in a drunken stupor started the great “Fire of Rome” in AD 64, destroying much of the capital city and killing many people. The Roman senator Tacitus wrote:



“To get rid of the report {that Nero did it}, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called 'Christians' by the populace”.

The man who used to be “Saul” but now was the Apostle Paul was imprisoned for preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, and was headed toward a “beheading” when he stood before Nero in Rome. You would expect Paul to say “**Rise up in revolt against Rome!**”. Instead, the Lord had him write:

Romans 13:1-7 ^(HCSB) Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God. 2 So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God’s command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have its approval. 4 For government is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For

government is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. 5 Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath, but also because of your conscience. 6 And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's public servants, continually attending to these tasks. 7 Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.

The Apostle Paul was not the only New Testament writer to address this. The **Apostle Peter** who was imprisoned when Pastor James of the Jerusalem Church was killed wrote:

1 Peter 2:13-17 (KJV) Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 As free, and not using [your] liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. 17 Honor all [men]. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Three Views On Civil Disobedience

Anarchy: The Anarchist believes that a person can freely choose to disobey the government at any time, and that he has the freedom to do so. This type of believe is non-Biblical. As we have seen, the Apostle Paul said:



Romans 13:1 (HCSB) Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God.

and the Apostle Peter said “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the King ... or unto Governors”. Anarchy says that every person is a law unto themselves. Can you imagine driving an automobile if there were no rules or regulations at all? It would be disastrous.



Extrême Patriot: This type of person believes that the government must *always* be obeyed, no matter what it imposes. In World War II many within Germany held to extreme patriotism, even when the ashes of murdered people littered their front yards. After the war trials were held at **Nuremberg** to decided who was guilty of crimes against humanity. Many of the attorneys for the war criminals that ran the hideous Concentration Camps said in their defense, “**But I was only following orders**”. One of the judges dismissed the argument with the question, “**But gentlemen, is there not a Law above our laws**”? The Pharisees wanted to trap Jesus, so they asked Him “**Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not**”. Our Lord Jesus said:

Mark 12:15-17 ^(KJV) ... bring me a penny, that I may see [it]. 16 And they brought [it]. And he saith unto them, **Whose [is] this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. 17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.**



Biblical

Patriotism: This is what God expects the Christian to do. The government *prints money*. The government *wages war to protect its citizens*. The

government *polices the cities*. The government provides everyone a peaceful place in which we can, without fear of harm, work, worship, and play.

According to the Scripture the Christian should pray for and support his government both by paying taxes and by living within its laws. The Christian is allowed to act in civil disobedience *only* when the government commands him to act in a manner that is contrary to the clearly presented requirements of God's Word.

God's Word *always* trumps man's law!

In Exodus chapter one we are told that Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, decreed that all male Jewish babies would be murdered the day they were born. The Bible tells us that:

Exodus 1:17 ^(KJV) **But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.**



The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in 2009 that Pharmacists *must* stock and dispense **Plan B** pills, which cause a woman to self-abort a newly fertilized egg. Several Christian Pharmacists and one

Muslim Pharmacist refused to dispense these *morning after* pills, saying that to do so would violate their faith. The Court ruled:

{The right to freely exercise one's religion} "**does not relieve an individual of the obligation to comply with a valid and neutral law of general applicability. ... Any refusal to dispense -- regardless of whether it is motivated by religion, morals, conscience, ethics, discriminatory prejudices, or personal distaste for a patient -- violates the rules.**"

There is a higher rule that we all must comply with, and that is the Rule of God.

Pharaoh was upset that the midwives refused to do what he said, so the Bible tells us:

Exodus 1:22 ^(KJV) **Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.**



Moses' mother *kind of* obeyed this command. She put Moses in a little boat and then put him in the river, saving the child so the child could save Israel. **What would happen in our society if doctors refused to abort babies?google.com**

With over 50 million babies

murdered since *Roe vs Wade* became law, how many potential doctors have we killed? Have we murdered the man who would cure Alzheimer's disease, or the woman who could fix Parkinson's?

Has the cure for cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other diseases been thrown away with the dismembered arms and legs of little babies? God help us, America, God help us!

When the second generation of Israel went into the land of Canaan, they sent **spies into Jericho** to gain intelligence for battle. The Bible says:

Joshua 2:2-7 (KJV) ... it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. 3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country. 4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they [were]: 5 And it came to pass [about the time] of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the

men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. 6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. 7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

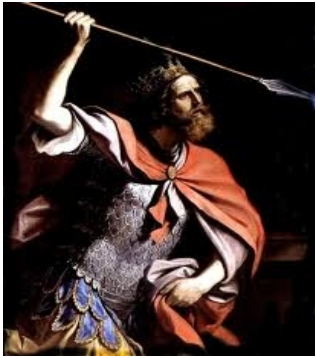
Rahab the Prostitute practiced civil disobedience by hiding the spies, telling the King's men that they went out when they were actually hidden on the roof, and then helped the spies to escape. God honored her act of Civil Disobedience by including her in the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ (**see Matthew 1:5**), and she was commended as a great Christian in two places in the New Testament:

Hebrews 11:31 (HCSB) By faith Rahab the prostitute received the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed.

James 2:25 (HCSB) ... wasn't Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by a different route?

Didn't Rahab tell a lie, and isn't a lie sinful? God doesn't commend Rahab for telling the lie, but for preserving the lives of the spies so that Israel could take the land according to God's Will. Her act of civil disobedience may have been flawed, but God honored her for doing the best she knew how.

In 1 Samuel the **King Saul** of Israel ordered that no one



was to eat until the Philistines were defeated – a stupid and dangerous order, for a military man needs nourishment to fight. His son **Jonathan ate some honey** for energy. When King Saul heard about it he commanded that his son be put to death. The Bible says:

1 Samuel 14:45 ^(HCSB) **But the people said to Saul, “Must Jonathan die, who accomplished such a great deliverance for Israel? No, as the LORD lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for he worked with God’s help today.” So the people redeemed Jonathan, and he did not die.**

The people of Israel rose up against the foolish command of the King, refusing to kill Jonathan. We see something similar in **1 Kings 18**. In that text **Queen Jezebel of Israel** – a pagan and godless woman – ordered that all of the Prophets of God be put to death. The Bible says:

1 Kings 18:3-4 ^(HCSB) **... Obadiah was a man who greatly feared the LORD and took 100 prophets and hid them, 50 men to a cave, and provided them with food and water when Jezebel slaughtered the LORD’s prophets.**

Obadiah was the man “in charge of the palace”, so he directly worked for **Queen Jezebel and King Ahab**. Yet he refused to kill God's Prophets, hiding them in two caves – and preserving the national religion of Israel.

In the Book of Daniel there are several cases of civil disobedience. **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego** – three young Hebrew exiles – were ordered to worship an idol by the **King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon**:

Daniel 3:5-6 ^(HCSB) **When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, drum, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 But whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.”**

The three Hebrew exiles refused to do this. They told the King:

Daniel 3:16-18 ^(HCSB) **... “Nebuchadnezzar If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. 18 But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up.”**

Their answer enraged the King, and he had all three thrown into the blazing furnace. The Bible says, however, that these faithful believers entered into and came out of the fire alive:

Daniel 3:27 ^(HCSB) **{and} the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men: not a hair of their heads was singed, their robes were**



unaffected, and there was no smell of fire on them.

God protects those who live for Him. The Prophet Daniel was later ordered *not to pray to God for thirty days*. The Bible says:

Daniel 6:10 ^(HCSB) **When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.**

Daniel was not disrespectful to the King, but refused to set the King's decree above God's Word. He kept praying, and was thrown into the lion's den. Yet God protected Daniel, and the lions slept while he was there. God protects His people.

In the New Testament Church **the Apostles Peter and John** were brought before the Sanhedrin and ordered to stop preaching the Gospel (**Acts 4:19-20**). They refused, and said **“We must obey God rather than man”**. Later they were hauled before the Sanhedrin again. We read:

Acts 5:25-29 ^(HCSB) **Someone came and reported to them, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple complex and teaching the people.” 26 Then the commander went with the temple police and brought them in without force, because they were afraid the people might stone them. 27 After they brought them in, they had them stand before the Sanhedrin, and the high priest asked, 28 “Didn’t we**

strictly order you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to bring this man’s blood on us! ” 29 But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than men. “

The greatest example of civil disobedience we see in the Scripture will come during the Great Tribulation period – that seven year period where anti-Christ will rule the earth.



Revelation 13:16-17 ^(HCSB) **he requires everyone — small and great, rich and poor, free and slave — to be given a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, 17 so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark: the beast’s name or the number of his name.**

Those who receive the mark of the beast or the number of his name will be damned forever. Civil disobedience will be a “must” for those who turn to God for salvation during the Tribulation.

Summary

The Christian is supposed to follow the laws of the government in which he lives. We are to be good citizens – both of Heaven and of Earth. However, **no Christian is compelled by God to obey a government ruling that is evil or that promotes evil.**

The Christian should work in a non-violent manner within society to promote the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. When the government establishes laws that are contrary to God's Law the Christian is allowed to resist the ordinance.

In such a case the Christian may be punished for his actions. In the early Church the **Apostles Peter and John were beaten**, but the Bible says:

Acts 5:40-41 ^(HCSB) **After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. 41 Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name.**

Rather than being defeated, they were honored that they were **“counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name”**. Christians must learn to stand up for the Gospel of the Kingdom. It is an honor to suffer for the Lord.

