

13: Should Christians Obey The Government Unconditionally?



In Romans 13:1-4 we read: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

These words have been widely interpreted to simply mean all believers should obey the government because government has been ordained of God. This particular view is a gross distortion of the truth. In this context, I've found that when a superficial reading of a certain text somehow doesn't seem logical, it's useful to look at the actions of the writer to see if his life and actions are consistent with *your* interpretation of his teaching. In short, when **Paul** writes that "they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation," but the book of Acts shows Paul repeatedly doing *just that*, there must be something wrong with our understanding of the text. And that's precisely what we see throughout the New Testament.

When Paul writes in the opening statement "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" the obvious question is who or what are **the higher powers**? This phrase would have to apply to *any* higher powers, be they spiritual *or* earthly. Obviously, in the spiritual realm, there are good and bad powers. On one side we have the Lord and his great angelic host. In the other group, we find Lucifer and "the angels which kept not their first estate." (Jude 1:6) This fallen host most certainly qualifies as a "higher power" for Satan is referred to as the "prince of the **power** of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Later in that same book, Paul tells us "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but *against* principalities, against **powers**, against the *rulers* of the

darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in **high** places." (Ephesians 6:12).

Common sense tells you that Paul is not telling us to be "subject to" the Satanic higher powers in the spiritual realm, so why do we assume he is telling us to be subject to evil earthly powers? How could it be scriptural for us to cooperate with the earthly agency of that spiritual wickedness? The next verse says "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." If we resist the **evil** in the spiritual realm, it's clear we don't receive damnation as a result! How then, could this verse mean if we resist evil in the earthly realm we receive damnation? In other words, in cases where the evil is vested in government, the idea that we are no longer to **resist** this evil is ludicrous.

Paul is telling us we must not resist the righteous power of God - whether it is manifested in the heavenlies or in various earthly sectors - including **righteous** government.

When Pilate *and* Herod give **Jesus** an order to speak, Christ *resists* their orders and remains silent (Matthew 27:13, Luke 23:7). When **Paul** has been beaten *illegally* by evil men within the Roman government, he refuses their command to come out of the jail and *defiantly* says "...let them come themselves and fetch us out." (Acts 16:37). That's not resisting?

When Peter is assisted in a **jail-break** by an angel, how is that obeying the government? (Acts 12:7) Did the Apostle "receive damnation" because he didn't ask the evil rulers 'Can I go now?' The writer of Hebrews tells his readers "ye have not yet *resisted* unto blood, striving against sin." (Hebrews 12:4). That firmly implies the Christians *were* appropriately resisting the evil, but every instance of that resistance ending in bloodshed occurs at the hands of the authorities. Whom were they resisting? **The Evil Authority.**

When Stephen was murdered, it was the religious leadership of the Jews that "set up false witnesses" to justify their unlawful crime. They even brought him before the high priest who was in agreement with the heinous killing of the young Christian. (Acts 6:13, 7:1, 15). When criminal elements have a position of control and authority within the government, believers have an *obligation* to resist them--not to twist the scriptures into justification for compliance with an ungodly government. In Damascus, the Jews that had authority under the governmental edict establishing their position (John 11:48) sought to murder

Saul (Acts 9:23). Saul escaped over the wall as he left Damascus. That sounds like **resistance** to me.

In Revelation, the true saints of God that oppose the Antichrist "overcame him by the blood of the lamb...." (Revelation 12:11). Antichrist heads the world **government** that is *already in power* in the form of the **United Nations** (Revelation 13:1). Many say 'if and when the mark of the beast is installed, then I'll oppose the law!' At that point it's too late! And if you're so blind as to continue to take part in the beast system in America now, what makes you think you'll have the discernment to even recognize the "mark" system when it occurs?

David gives us definitive marching orders when he tells us to "Defend the poor and fatherless." (Psalms 82:3) Would that not include a baby that is murdered as he is trying to be born? Under the current law of what is called "partial birth abortion," a doctor can legally **murder** a 9 month old baby that is 25% out of the womb! Yet it's against the government's law to even protest this hideous crime within so many yards of the killer's "medical facility!" Where do you draw the line? Every true believer should have drawn the line years ago, but most go on citing Romans 13 with no understanding whatsoever. Soon, they will hear another scripture: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." (Matthew 25:41-43).

This is more than a call to charity. This is a directive to do the things Christ has told us to do - regardless of what the government tells you is legal or illegal. For example, a pastor in Southern California was recently brought up on charges for bringing poor and hungry people into his church to sleep because it was against the zoning laws. He chose to "obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29).

In another example, the majority of states in America have enacted what they call "hoarding" laws which make it illegal to possess too much food; yet the Bible tells us there's a great famine coming. I Timothy says "But if any provide not for his own, and specially those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel." (I Timothy 5:8). In this instance, who should you be listening to, the word of God, or some local ordinance that was unconstitutionally enacted by evil men?

We must always remember that our "kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36). If we become conformed to the ways of

this world, how can we then "be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." (I Thessalonians 1:5). Are you suffering because you're **resisting** the kingdom of Antichrist, or are you committing spiritual fornication by living deliciously with him? (Revelation 18:9).

-- James Lloyd

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