

Romans Refresh

Submission to Civil Authorities in a Pandemic

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¹ Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good.

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But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

(Romans 13:1-7)

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Principles:

1. All civil authorities are appointed by God
2. God instituted civil authorities for our good—to uphold his basic moral law
3. Christians must be subject to civil authorities

Q: Are there any exceptions?

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Biblical Civil Disobedience

1. When civil authorities egregiously fail to uphold the moral law to the harm of its citizens
e.g. Hebrew midwives (Ex. 1:15-22); Esther (4:11); Nazi Germany; slave laws; Civil Rights; abortion laws

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Biblical Civil Disobedience

1. When civil authorities egregiously fail to uphold the moral law to the harm of its citizens
2. When civil authorities command us to do what God forbids us to do
e.g. food laws (Dan. 1:8); worship of the golden image (Dan. 3:16-18); Christians in Roman Empire

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Biblical Civil Disobedience

1. When civil authorities egregiously fail to uphold the moral law to the harm of its citizens
 2. When civil authorities command us to do what God forbids us to do
 3. When civil authorities forbid us to do what God commands us to do
- e.g. proclaiming the gospel (Acts 5:28-29); prayer (Dan. 6:10)*

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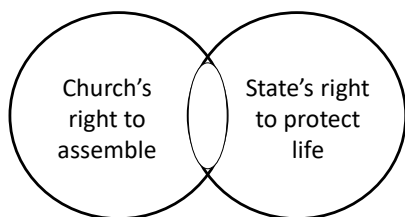
Civil Disobedience Today?

- *Civil authority in relation to churches*
 1. Jurisdictional Overlap

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Civil Disobedience Today?

- *Civil authority in relation to churches*
 1. Jurisdictional Overlap
 - government and churches have a legitimate, biblical claim on the territory of gathering

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Civil Disobedience Today?

- *Civil authority in relation to churches*
 2. Conditions of Legitimate Authority
 - a reasonable argument for public health
 - not unfairly targeting churches
 - not censoring our beliefs or proclamation
 - not permanent but temporary restrictions

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Civil Disobedience Today?

- *Concluding Exhortations*
 1. Trust God's (strange!) providence in refining and strengthening His church
 2. Be gracious and allow for Christian freedom on these issues

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