"OBEY THE LAW"

(The Believer and Governmental Authority)

Romans 13:1-7

10-11-2020

INTRODUCTION: What would society be like without laws?

***As Christians, we must submit to the law! (v. 1a)**

<u>Four Reasons</u> why you should obey governmental authority:

I. *Reason # 1 - We should submit to the law:*
TO HONOR <u>GOD</u> (v. 1-2)

II. *Reason # 2 - We should submit to the law:*
TO AVOID <u>PUNISHMENT</u> (v. 3-4)

III. *Reason # 3 - We should submit to the law:*
TO KEEP A <u>CLEAN CONSCIENCE</u> (v. 5)

IV. *Reason # 4 - We should submit to the law:*
TO FULFILL AN <u>OBLIGATION</u> (v. 6-7)

CONCLUSION: The only time a Christian is justified to disobey the law is when the law violates a Biblical command of God. Otherwise we must obey!

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10-18-2020

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INTRODUCTION: What would society be like without laws?

Have you ever imagined what life would be like in NYC if there were no laws?

The existence of law is a clear testimony to one fact: "Man is depraved."

The humanistic teachers of today can call man "good" all they want; however, all the evidence shows just the opposite! (Rom. 3:10, 23).

Law would not be needed if there were no such thing as sin.

If man were flawlessly perfect (as originally created) there would exist no need for law.

However, because man is (due to fallen nature) rebellious, we need laws.

Because man is selfish (often at the expense of others), we need laws.

Because man is greedy, we need laws against stealing.

Because man is perverted, we need laws against rape and incest.

Because man lies, we need laws against fraud.

Because man is vengeful and cruel, we need laws against murder, attempted murder, and physical abuse.

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19)

I Tim. 1:9-10 - "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be nay other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

"For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20) (in a lawful society, man is made aware of his sinfulness and need for salvation).

"The law entered that the offense might abound" (Rom. 5:20, cp. 7:7).

V. 1

"Every soul" = every living being. The obligation to obey government applies to all people. No one excluded. [unless you are dead; hence, the word "soul" refers to living.]

"Be subject" = to place yourself under; to take your place in rank; to submit to the authority over you.

"Higher powers" = governing authorities.

After commanding all men to submit to the law, God gives four reason why we should [NOTE: The word "for" (meaning "because") - v. 1, 3, 5, 6]

Each of the four reasons simply can be stated in one word: We ought to submit to the law because of:

1) "God" (v. 1-2)
2) "Wrath" (v. 3-4)
3) "Conscience" (v. 5)

And 4) "Dues" (debt or obligation - v. 6-7)

***As Christians, we must submit to the law! (v. 1a)**

Four Reasons why you should obey governmental authority:

I. Reason # 1 - We should submit to the law: TO HONOR GOD (v. 1-2)

V. 1

"For there is no power but of God" - The word "for" gives us a very good reason to obey the "higher powers" (governing authorities).

The reason is, God is the originator or establisher of all true, bona fide authorities. EX:

1) The home - the husband (I Cor. 11:3)
2) The church - the pastor (Heb. 13:7, 17)
3) The society - government officials

"The powers that be" = the authorities that presently exist.

"Are ordained of God" = lit. have been placed by God (perfect tense)

It is God who established the principle of government ("authority") in the past.

Contrary to the humanists of today, our law system did not originate over a "millions of years" evolutionary process. But God established law.

A detailed system of law existed even before the Mosaic Law, as evidenced by the archaeological finding of "Hammurabi's Code of Laws." Hammurabi, who reigned from 1728 - 1686 B.C. (at least 3 centuries [300 years] before the Law was given to Moses) wrote down many laws strikingly similar to the Law of Moses.

It is important to note that:

1) God ordained (appointed) the fact of government, not necessarily the forms of government that exist today.

   EX: of inferior forms of government:

   --Communism - A forced redistribution of wealth (taking it from those who earned it and giving it to those who did not). No one owns private property.

   --Totalitarianism - Dictatorship (EX: Hitler); the state has total control over everything in a society.

2) God instituted the principle of law and justice, not necessarily the specific laws that a given government might legislate.

   EX: of inferior laws:

   --Legalized abortion (freedom to murder)

   --No Bible reading in public schools (viewed as unconstitutional)

   --Murderers gaining freedom (EX: Charles Manson getting weekend passes)

   --Compulsory education (the education of children is the responsibility of the parents, not the state)

   --Social Security (government becoming a provider of goods and services [seeds of Socialism])

   --Certain "Anti-discrimination" laws - forcing an employer to hire homosexuals, etc.

Despite the growing inadequacies in our crumbling government, praise God some element of justice remains.

Bad government is better than no government.

If there were no government authority, there would be anarchy and lawless, wild, uncontrollable, barbaric behavior.

Society would be like a roller coaster off its tracks, like a river over its banks, or like nuclear waste outside of its container.

There must be law and order, restraints, enforced boundaries.

V. 2

"Resisteth" = to place oneself against; to oppose; or rebel.

"The ordinance of God" - the institution of God.

Certain forms of civil disobedience--taking the law into one's own hands, or refusal to obey the law of the land--is sin against God!

Why? Because God established government.

"Damnation" = judgment

The judgment in view is no doubt temporal (in this life, by rulers - v. 3); but also it will be answered for at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:1-15).

You will not get away with breaking the law! "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Ga. 6:7). "Be sure your sin will find you out."

There are times when it is right to break the law.

When is it okay?

*When man's law conflicts with God's law. [when government imposes a law that will violate a Biblical conviction]

Three Biblical examples of when Christians can disobey government:

1. When it interferes with your prayer life (Dan. 6)

2. When it interferes with your worship (Dan. 3)

3. When it interferes with your witnessing (Acts 4:19-20)

"We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29)

Examples of situations when it is right to disobey the law:

When the law forbids evangelism
church attendance
Bible reading and prayer
Child discipline

The reason for separation of church and state is:

1. To keep the church from becoming political, and the state (government) from becoming a religion (EX: the corruption of a "state-church")

2. To safeguard the state from telling the church who or how to worship. The state is never to impose (force) a belief or practice on the church.

II. Reason # 2 - We should submit to the law: TO AVOID PUNISHMENT (v. 3-4)

V. 3

A law-abiding citizen will not be afraid of the law-enforcing authorities.

Someone who lives a life of good works (or good behavior) will not feel guilty whenever he sees a policeman nor will he hide what he is doing when a "blue car" passes by. Someone who obeys the traffic laws (EX speed limit) will not be looking in his rear view mirror constantly. Someone who is honest and respectful of others and their property will not live in constant fear of "getting caught!"

"Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?" - Do you want to not live in terror of the law? Do you wish to be free from fear?

Wouldn't it be great to not wake up every morning with paranoia?

The secret to living a life free from "law-enforcement paranoia" is to simply practice what is good. Not only will you be free from having "the shakes" but you might even get recognition from the authorities for honoring the law (v. 3b).

V. 4

"He (government) is the minister of God to the for good"

"Minister" = servant. The same word as translated "deacon" (diakonos).

"to thee" = government to be a servant to the people (not a dictator)

"For good" = government is to help make this world a better place to live; it is for our benefit, that we might have freedom and peace. God not only teaches us to obey government leaders but to pray for them - so that we might enjoy such peace (I Tim. 2:1-4).

"He beareth (carries) not the sword in vain" -

"Sword" - the symbol of law enforcement

"In vain" - for nothing; for no purpose; a police officer does not carry a gun for nothing. It is not a decorative piece of metal, designed to make his hip attractive!

He carries it to use it, when the need arises.

Government has the authority (under God) to practice corporal punishment upon criminals.

Capitol punishment is Biblical. It is not murder because murder is an individual taking the life of an innocent person. Capitol punishment is the law taking the life of a guilty criminal.

Gen. 9:6 - "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

Num. 35:33 - "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed by the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."

Acts 25:11 - "For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar."

"A revenger" - Someone who carries out justice by executing God's wrath upon the one who practices evil.

[NOTE: previous context - Individuals are not to avenge themselves (12:19); but are to leave the "getting even" up to God. Government, however, is God's only legitimate means to do His work of vengeance by human beings.]

A just government's best friend is a law-abiding citizen (of all people, Christians should be the most law-abiding citizens).

What a shame it is for a Christian to go to jail for evil doing (I Pet. 4:15 - "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other matters.")

III. Reason # 3 - We should submit to the law: TO KEEP A CLEAN CONSCIENCE (v. 5)

An observation: Lawbreakers with any conscience at all will generally be nervous people, jumpy, shaky. Why? Because they have a guilty conscience.

"Ye must needs" = It is a binding obligation or an absolute necessity that you place yourself under the law.

If the fear of punishment is not a good enough reason for you to obey the law, obey the law for your own conscience's sake.

Your "conscience" is "that internal voice" put into you by God (Rom. 2:15) that tells you either something is right or something is wrong. "I can do this; I can't do that."

The Bible says that even unsaved "Gentiles" have: "The work of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15).

Even unsaved people who don't know the Bible have an intuitive sense of right and wrong.

The Christian, however, has a heightened sense of right and wrong. He who knows God's Word has a greater sensitivity to morals

Don't violate your conscience: if you do, it will become calloused (I Tim. 4:2).

We as believers must keep a clean conscience.

Paul could say: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1).

(To disobey government is to be guilty before God)

Acts 24:16 - ""And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

At salvation we have had "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. 10:22).

Don't defile it! Keep it clean and you will keep it tender and sensitive.

--We are commanded to have a "good" conscience (I Tim. 1:5, 19)

--The servant of God is to have a "pure" conscience
(I Tim. 3:9)

The Bible says: "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart (Prov. 20:27 - NKJV).

Don't dim your lamp by dulling your conscience!

LAWS THAT ARE OFTEN VIOLATED, EVEN BY CHRISTIANS:

- **Immigration**
- **Marriage Laws**
- **Traffic Laws (Speeding/stop signs/red lights/no seat belts)**
- **Not paying Fines**
- **Tax evasion**
- **Cheating on income tax**
- **Arms (illegal possession of guns)**
- **Drugs**
- **Alcohol sales to minors**
- **Draft dodging**
- **Renting out illegal apartments**
  - **Welfare Laws abused**
  - **Ecological abuse (littering; graffiti defacing public property)**
- **Vehicle Laws (No Registration; inspection; insurance etc.)**
- **Copyright infringement**

Christians should never have to lie, cheat, or steal.
Have a clean conscience toward God & men

IV. Reason # 4 - We should submit to the law: TO FULFILL AN OBLIGATION (v. 6-7)

V. 6

"Pay ye tribute" - the phrase could be translated as present tense, indicative or imperative.

In context, it seems best to understand it as an imperative. You must pay tribute (taxes).

"Ministers" - a different word than in verse 4 (Greek "leitourgoi" - Eng. "loiter" - someone who constantly remains in a certain location.)

This word "minister" refers to a "devoted and dependent servant" (a "hired servant"). Someone who, because of their devotion to a certain task must be remunerated financially for their service so that they can make a living (EX: the O.T. priests and Levites and N.T. pastor offer such full-time, dependent service - Luke 10:7; I Cor. 9:14; I Tim. 5:18 - "a laborer is worthy of his hire").

"Attending continually (working full-time) upon this very thing (namely, law enforcement).

V. 7

"Render (pay back) therefore to all their dues (that which is owed).

"Tribute" = tax (EX: IRS, state and federal taxes)

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's . . ." (Mt. 22:21; Lk. 20:22-25)

"Custom" = toll (EX: NYC bridges)

"Fear" = reference (a healthy fear of the law is good)

"My son, fear thou the LORD and the king" (Prov. 24:21)

"Honor" = respect (to treat with value)

Don't ever call police "pigs"

Don't ever belittle your mayor, governor or president (if you don't respect them for their character, at least respect their <u>position</u>).

CONCLUSION: The only time a Christian is justified to disobey the law is when the law violates a Biblical command of God. Otherwise we must obey!

"They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them" (Prov. 28:4)

The best way to fight crime and criminals is to be a law-abiding citizen.