

Obeying the state

What are the limits?

Introduction

When the state is benevolent, true and just then there are no problems for Christians to be fully compliant. However, when the state becomes unjust, unlawful and malicious then Christians have no obligation to obey.

This difference has been obscured or ignored in recent years and it needs to be explained.

Historical

This problem first arose when the church was young. Jesus had explained that we had to give honour to Caesar where it was due, such as in paying taxes or obeying undesired commands (Matt 22:21; Mk 5:41¹).

So unpopular state commands may not be liked but must be obeyed. But the difficulty comes when the demand of the state is contrary to God's law and testimony.

It is vital that our testimony, individually and corporately, is not compromised. The early church faced this when everyone was commanded to burn incense to Caesar as an act of worship to his proclaimed deity.

Now Jews had a problem with this because the Torah explicitly states that there is one God (Deut 6:4). To burn incense to Caesar was idolatry. However, most Jews were practical people and knew that Caesar did not really believe that he was a god (until the time of Caligula, who was insane). It was a necessary, honorary social function to enable living without restrictions of jail or even death. So most Jews complied. A few zealots who refused were forced out of the cities into hiding.

For Christians however this act of idolatry is very serious; genuine believers could not comply. Thus all believers, even children, were convicted of a capital offence and many were killed in the amphitheatre, such as by being attacked by wild beasts or set on fire. The death of Perpetua,² a noblewoman, and her companions is an example of this commitment to divine truth.

So a seemingly trivial matter, merely burning incense, became a life or death decision. Christians had to defy the demand of the state.

¹ 'Compel' is a word of Persian origin referring to an official compelling someone to do an errand for the king. This was called 'impressment into service'. An example is Simon of Cyrene who was compelled to carry the cross of Christ (Matt 27:32). Roman officials could compel someone to walk with them a certain distance as protection from brigands.

² Perpetua was a 2nd-3rd century noblewoman living in Carthage (Tunis) who was arrested under the orders of Emperor Septimius Severus. She was imprisoned with her nursing baby and friends. At their trial she and her friends refused to offer incense to the Emperor. After sentencing, they were attacked by wild beasts in the arena but finally killed by a sword. She died in 203.

In later periods ten emperors ruled that preaching the Gospel was illegal and the church was persecuted. This, however, did not stop Christians from evangelising. We see, for example, that the apostle John is placed in exile on a rocky barren island (Patmos) for preaching the word of God (Rev 1:9). Paul, likewise, was persecuted by the Jews and punishment applied by the Romans, for preaching the truth about Jesus (Acts 21:30-33 etc.). Long before this James was beheaded for the testimony of Jesus (Acts 12:1-2). Stephen also was murdered for his testimony to the Jewish authorities (Acts 7:57-58).

This continued throughout history. Believers were burned at the stake, tortured, drowned and racked. Sometimes children, along with their mother, were tied up, put in sacks and thrown into rivers. In the Scottish 'killing times' families were killed for merely attending the Lord's Supper in a forest.³

So matters essential to the truth of God's word and our testimony to it are inviolable. The laws of men, if they contravene God's word, must be ignored and disobeyed. That is undeniable.

Romans 13

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. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 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. 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. Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Rm 13:1-7

God appoints men to be authorities in the world on his behalf; it is a divine stewardship (Prov 8:15). The purpose of this is to enforce good and punish bad. When functioning according to divine principles, anyone resisting the authorities also resists God. This results in divine judgment as well as human punishment.

Thus rulers are meant to be a terror to evil. That is people should dread breaking the law because they will be punished. Rulers bear the sword to execute lawbreakers of certain crimes. This terror is meant to be a deterrent to lawbreakers. Those who ignore this threat of judgment fully deserve the punishments they receive when caught and convicted of crimes.

So the normal procedure is that rulers put in place laws that follow God's ordinances and punish evildoers. Therefore all Christians should obey the law and honour the rulers.

This is the principle of civic justice that is applied by Paul. It is the ideal situation when rulers follow divine principles. Thus obedience should be the norm.

This, however, is not the case when rulers institute unlawful statutes and demand obedience to matters contrary to God's designs. The failure in law is committed by the

³ For more information read Foxe's Book of Martyrs, The Cloud of Witnesses, and Scot's Worthies.

rulers not the people. In such cases believers have no obligation to obey unjust laws. Indeed, they must break the law, by divine command, if the law contravenes God's law.

The actions of the apostles and the early church in general are examples of this in action.

Throughout the OT God denounced rulers that enacted unlawful policies, particularly adopting idolatry, licentiousness or oppression of the poor. Prophet after prophet was sent to condemn such rulers. Perhaps the classic case is that of Amos, raised up from being a Tekoan herdsman (Amos 1:1) to denounce the king of Israel and surrounding nations.

Thus says the LORD: 'For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its *punishment*, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth *which is* on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the *same* girl, to defile My holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, and drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god'.
Amos 2:6-9

Thus there is a divine obligation, on behalf of rulers, to understand divine law and apply it in local statutes. Rulers that fail to do this will face severe judgment in the final accounting.

Like a roaring lion and a charging bear Is a wicked ruler over poor people. A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor. Prov 28:15-16

Moreover I saw under the sun: In the place of judgment, wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there. Eccles 3:16

There is an evil I have seen under the sun, as an error proceeding from the ruler. Eccles 10:5

So this behoves Christians to understand the nature of local statutes and compare them to divine principles. Are they in compliance? If not are they something trivial that can be ignored or are they serious that must be broken?

The situation today

Throughout most of history, even in evil empires, there were social traditions that were upheld because they were deemed to be universal. This was later called 'natural law'. These laws were testified to by the conscience of all men and women and so rulers deemed these laws universal and necessary. So even the worst of kingdoms still: honoured the elderly, supported the relief of the poor, supported parental authority over children, demanded social respect and honour, kept local law and order, punished evildoers, gave justice to genuine complainants and so on.

This is no longer the case.

It is important for you to understand that the nature of western governments has changed. It is no longer in the historic model. It has been perverted by stealth and undermined by certain activist groups to be thoroughly corrupt. Every institution of society has been polluted and no longer functions by historic, traditional rules.

I am very serious when I say that this corrupting influence in Western governments is fundamentally Satanic in nature. There has been a demonic captivity of the institutions of the state. If you do not understand this you will fall victim to it. A series of waves of undermining influences has attacked the state by stealth and it capitulated to them. We

could itemise these in various ways, such as identifying Cultural Marxism which deliberately set out to undermine society 100 years ago, or a host of others isms. The net result is that the state and the principles working in society are perverted. In most cases they are upside down. Thus the government, the justice system, the police force, local councils, the education system, the health service, and every other institution is now doing the opposite of what it should be doing. They are all in antagonism to divine principles. Society is working against God.

Today we have laws entering the statute book which themselves are contrary to God's word. One obvious example is that marriage can now be between same sex people. This is flagrant abuse of heavenly principles (Lev 18:22, 20:13; Rm 1:27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10). But there are many such laws. Things are so perverted that a person can be put in jail for not accepting that a male is a woman because he feels like it. People have been jailed for simply dissenting from what's going on and putting a single image on social media.⁴ Parents have been arrested for demonstrating outside a school because a drag queen is teaching kids about explicit sex and transgender issues.

The church today faces multiple issues where it must not comply with what is demanded, whether it is laws that are actually illegal under Common Law or social demands based on diktat or regulations outside formal statute.

Examples of rules that are contrary to divine law and Common Law

- The demand to wear a facemask.
- The demand to be medically tested all the time.
- The demand to be locked down in your home.
- The demand to have an experimental vaccine.
- The demand to comply with social distancing.
- The demand that you cannot visit dying relatives.
- The demand to accept that a man can become a woman at will (and vice versa).
- The demand to accept that same sex people can be married and have children.
- The demand to accept homosexuals or transgenders in your place of business which is your home (such as a bed and breakfast / hotel).
- The demand to call people by their chosen pronoun, which can be contrary to divine law. (That is, accepting people's chosen identity no matter what it is, such as a different sex, cat, snake, dog, etc.).

We could go on and on.

The classic failure

The absolute classic case of the church failing to understand this principle is when Western governments demanded that churches close for fake health reasons. The objective was not to protect people's health (there was never any special risk) but to enforce control over Christians as part of a preparation from the coming global totalitarianism. The Elite were testing to see if they could get away with it.

Proving that they have no discernment or spirituality, virtually all church leaders willingly complied without any objection. A few faithful stalwarts held out, which should be commended.

⁴ Such as the case of Darren Brady, the decorated veteran soldier, who put an image created by Lawrence Fox of a swastika in rainbow colours (implying Gay/transgender groups) on social media. Several police officers appeared to arrest him in handcuffs. This was despite representation present showing that this was actually illegal.

This was the worst act of ecclesiastical rebellion against God in church history. Never before had the churches, almost world wide, closed their doors for months on end because a wicked government told them to. Every church should have remained open and church leaders should have been prepared to go to jail if need be. Since this was illegal under Common Law it was inevitable that the prosecutions would fail in court, which they did (like many other Covid laws and fines). Pastors had nothing to fear; they were not facing execution.

Throughout history pastors, men, women and even children, have had to face the wrath of a bad king when they disobeyed evil statutes. This was especially the case in the Scottish killing times when dissenting churches were outlawed under pain of execution. People continued meeting in secret, even with soldiers trying to find them. Many were imprisoned, some died.

In times of religious persecution, such as under Bloody Mary, even children were killed for being Protestants. But Christians chose to disobey evil rulers and willingly gave their lives. Hundreds were killed.

When it came to the Covid fake scam, church leaders were utter cowards when they faced nothing deleterious. Every single church leader that capitulated to this unjust law should immediately resign and never lead a church again. They have no discernment, no courage and utterly failed God and set a terrible example to the people.

Claiming, as some do, that Romans 13 demanded that they should obey the state is preposterous. They fail to understand true Biblical teaching that God's law is superlative over man's law. This is why understanding the truth about social compliance is important. This failure must never happen again (it will be tested).

Conclusion

When governments are in compliance with God's law then they should be obeyed. However, when governments go against God's law and introduce iniquitous statutes then it is the obligation of Christians to disobey those laws whatever the consequences.

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