

“How far do we go in submitting to government?”

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • May 1, In the year of our Lord, 2013

Prelude:

- I. “More about submitting to governments and government leaders. Just how far do you have to go in submitting, i.e., should we still be under British rule? What about Hitler? Saddam? etc. I know that Nero was ruling when Paul wrote what he did, but it is just really hard to think that one must submit NO MATTER WHAT and never rebel.”
- II. First, let us lay down some foundational truths.

Persuasion:

I. Do we benefit from the government?

- A. We are so used to criticizing the government
- B. that we may forget the benefits we get from the government.
 1. What point did Jesus make to the Pharisees and Herodians?

13 Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. 14 When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? 15 Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?” But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.” 16 So they brought it. And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” 17 And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at Him. (Mark 12:13–17).

2. What did Jesus teach about our relationship to government?
 - a) If we are going to use the things of Caesar, we should pay him for it.
 - b) Do we use the things of Caesar?
 - (1) Name some things of Caesar that we use.
 - (2) Money should top our list.

II. How should we view authority?

- A. Does it depend upon whether we agree or disagree with the authority?
- B. Does it depend upon whether we believe the authority is qualified or not?

III. Who gave us government?

- A. While it is true that governments have often opposed God and
 - 1. He has destroyed many,
 - 2. it is also true that He is the One
 - a) who is responsible for the existence of government and
 - b) He uses them according to His will.
- B. In Jeremiah 25 you will discover
 - 1. that God even called a certain pagan king His servant,
 - a) although this king was wicked and
 - b) later God destroyed this king’s empire,
 - 2. nevertheless, the Lord is the One
 - a) who let this government be and
 - b) He used it according to His will,

8 “Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Because you have not heard My words, 9 behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ says the LORD, ‘and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, *My servant*, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations” (Jer 25.8, 9).

- (i) How could Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar have been God’s servant?
 - (a) The king and his kingdom did not voluntarily submit to God.
 - (b) He used them,
 - i) even raised them up,

ii) to punish the nations,

iii) including Judah, but

(c) God did not endorse the wicked ways of Babylon, and

(d) eventually He punished Babylon.

C. In Daniel 4 the Bible tells us that king Nebuchadnezzar had to learn

1. that he did not rule by his own might, but
2. it was by the power of God.

17 “This decision is by the decree of the watchers,
And the sentence by the word of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men,
Gives it to whomever He will,
And sets over it the lowest of men.”
(Dan 4.17).

a) When Nebuchadnezzar finally learned

b) who put him on his throne and

(1) gave him his kingdom,

(2) here is what he confessed in Daniel 4,

35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing;
He does according to His will in the army of heaven
And among the inhabitants of the earth.
No one can restrain His hand
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”
(Dan 4.35).

D. Romans 13 clearly inform us of the divine origin of civil government,

1 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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and

those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 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. 4 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. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. (Rom 13:1–7).

- a) Every authority comes from God and
- b) He appoints them.
 - (1) Therefore, what does Paul say we should not do?
 - (a) We should not resist the authority.
 - (2) What does Paul say we should do?
 - (a) Be subject to the governing authorities.
 - (b) Do what is good.
 - (c) Pay taxes.
 - (d) Render customs.
 - (e) Render fear.
 - (f) Render honor.
 - (3) Why has God appointed governing authorities?
 - (a) They are supposed to be a terror to evil works.
 - (b) They are supposed to praise those who do what is good.
 - (c) They execute wrath on evildoers.

E. Let us see what Peter said about the matter,

13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent

by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king (1Pe 2.13–17).

1. Why did Peter say we should submit to the government?
 - a) We do it for the Lord’s sake.
 - b) What does that mean?
2. We honor the government because God gave it.
 - a) When we honor the government, therefore,
 - b) we honor God.
 - (1) We are doing these things for His sake.
 - (2) We are doing it because of Him.

F. David understood this well,

1. even before this passage was written,
2. refusing to kill Saul,
 - a) although he was trying to kill David, but
 - b) David knew that as king, God had anointed Saul.
3. First Samuel 24 records the words of David
 - a) after he had cut off part of Saul’s robe
 - b) when Saul was sleeping in a cave, and
 - (1) remember that Saul was trying to do more to David
 - (2) than just make him pay taxes or obey a law;
 - c) Saul was trying to kill David,

6 And he said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch out my hand

against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD” (1Sa 24.6).

4. First Samuel 26 tells of another time that David could have killed Saul, but
 - a) David refused to do so and
 - (1) refused to let one of his men do it, for
 - (2) the same reason as stated in chapter 24, and
 - b) David even rebuked Saul’s body guards
 - c) after the incident for sleeping
 - (1) while David and one of his men
 - (2) came into the sleeping camp,

13 Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, a great distance being between them. 14 And David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, “Do you not answer, Abner?” Then Abner answered and said, “Who are you, calling out to the king?” 15 So David said to Abner, “Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king. 16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not guarded your master, the LORD’S anointed. And now see where the king’s spear is, and the jug of water that was by his head” (1Sa 26.13–16).

G. What about Paul’s comment in Acts 23?

1 Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?” 4 And those who stood by said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?” 5 Then Paul said, “I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people’”

(Acts 23.1–5).

1. Paul quoted the Law,
 - a) rebuking himself,
 - b) showing a truth that still applies.
2. Did Paul believe that he had spoken evil of a ruler in verse 3?
 - a) Yes, he did.
 - b) He believed he violated Exodus 22.28.
3. Did the high priest do anything wrong?
 - a) Yes, he also violated the Law, according to Paul.
 - b) However, did that release Paul from his obligation?
 - (1) No, he still had to obey God,
 - (2) even if the high priest violated the will of God.
 - (a) We are never justified in committing sin!
 - (b) We are not free to sin when someone has sinned against us.

H. Therefore, concerning government,

1. let us keep our
 - a) actions,
 - b) words, and
 - c) attitudes
2. in check,
3. remembering the Golden Rule,

31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise (Luke 6.31).

II. What should we do when government becomes abusive?

- A. We cannot violate any of the passages we have read so far.
1. Even when we rebuke, we must show respect.
 2. Remember especially
 - a) David’s treatment of Saul, and
 - b) Michael’s treatment of Satan.
- B. The problem of abusive governments falls into two categories:
1. When they forbid us from doing God’s will.
 2. When they persecute us, whether for our faith or not.
- C. What if government asks us to do something that violates Scripture?
1. Acts 4 shows Peter refusing to quit preaching
 - a) when governing authorities told him to stop,
 - b) although Peter said nothing of overthrowing the governing authorities,

18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4.18–20).

2. A similar thing happened in Acts 5,

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5.27–32).

- a) What has the government asked you to do or cease doing,
 - b) that violates the will of God?
- D. Daniel 4 shows the prophet both
1. honoring King Nebuchadnezzar and
 2. rebuking him,
- 19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.” Belshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!” (Dan 4.19).
- 27 “Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity” (Dan 4.27).
- E. We have countless other examples of prophets rebuking kings.
- F. Consider the Book of Judges.
1. For what did the Lord use the Judges?
 2. In most cases, He used the judge
 - a) to lead Israel in war against a foreign oppressor, and
 - b) to bring Israel back to the Lord.
- G. Sometimes the Israelites had to remove a monarch.
1. Second Kings 11 shows them removing Athaliah from being queen.
 2. Why did they remove her?
- H. Concerning our Revolutionary War.
1. What right did England have to run the colonies, taxing them, etc.?
 2. Why did our forefathers declare their independence from England?
 - a) Did they do it over minor offenses?

- b) Did they do it at the drop of a hat?
 - c) Did they attack England, or did they defend our homeland?
 - d) What did the Pilgrims or Puritans do?
 - (1) They did not engage in war in their home countries.
 - (2) They left their nations and came to America to start over.
 - e) Let us read The Declaration of Independence.
- I. What is the Christian’s part in such matters?
- J. God has used one nation to punish another nation.
- 1. The Book of Habakkuk shows the Lord using Babylon to punish nations.
 - 2. Remember the point of the Book of Judges.
- K. Can citizens within a country rebel?
- 1. What about Jeroboam and Israel against Rehoboam? (2Ch 13.1–7)
 - 2. What about Jehu? (1Ki 19)
- L. Proverbs 24
- 11 Deliver those who are drawn toward death,
And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.
 - 12 If you say, “Surely we did not know this,”
Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it?
He who keeps your soul, does He not know it?
And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?
(Pro 24.11, 12)
- I. Is this not what Moses did to the Egyptian who was beating an Israelite?