

When to obey the government, when not to

ROMANS: *What Remains*

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For the Lord's sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. 1 Peter 2:13-14

We must obey God rather than human authority. Peter, in Acts 5:29

Government is God's Idea.

All governments have been placed in power **by God**. Romans 13:1

The authorities are sent **by God** to help you. Romans 13:4

Government is the design of God, not people. It is not a result of “the Fall” (Genesis 3), but is a **gift** intended **for the good** of the citizens.

1. To **restrain evil**

The authorities are established by God for that very purpose, to punish those who do wrong. Romans 13:4

This is the role of government under God's authority; it is not my role (Romans 12:17,29). If the government fails to deliver justice, we are promised that God will “take vengeance.” Romans 12:19; Heb. 4:13

2. To **reward good**

Do what is right and you will be commended. Romans 13:3

*They are sent “to punish all who do wrong and to **honor** those who do right.”* 1 Peter 2:14 (a parallel passage to Romans 13:1-7)

A Christian's Response

1. Obey the laws of society

Disobey the government = **disobey God**. *Anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted...* Romans 13:2

Unless... When the government (or any leader) clearly steps out from under God's authority, we are free—even obligated—to disobey. We **must obey God** rather than human authority. Acts 5:29

Honorable resistance: These people disobeyed their governments and were considered heroes by God: the midwives in Egypt (Exodus 1), Rahab (Joshua 2), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3).

“God has ordained the state as a *delegated* authority; it is not autonomous. The state is to be an agent of justice, to restrain evil by punishing the wrongdoer, and to protect the good in society. When it does the reverse, it has no proper authority. It is then a usurped authority, and as such, it becomes lawless and is tyranny... If there is no final place for civil disobedience, then the government has been made autonomous, and as such, it has been put in the place of the Living God.” Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*, p. 91,130

2. **Pay your taxes.**

Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and import duties... Romans 13:6-7; affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 22:15-22

3. **Show respect and honor.**

...give respect and honor to those who are in authority. Romans 13:7
The **position** deserves respect, even if the **person** is not respectable.

The Benefits of Obedience

1. You can live **with less fear**. Romans 13:3-4

If you are doing something wrong, of course you should be afraid...

2. You enjoy a **clear conscience**.

So you must obey the government for two reasons: to keep from being punished and to keep a clear conscience. Romans 13:5

This is about your relationship with God. He **designed** government, so you honor him when you obey leaders he has allowed to serve.

3. You **point** others to **Jesus Christ**. Romans 12:17

Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world. For the Lord's sake, accept all authority.
1 Peter 2:12 NLT

Make it Personal

- What changes are you considering in light of Paul's teaching?
- In 1 Timothy 2, Paul instructs us to pray for “all those in authority.” Take a moment now and pray for 5 leaders in government.