

Special Relevancy Message

April 26, 2020

Sermon Title: "When Should Christians Choose to Disobey Their Government,

Introduction: First time ever I've considered the need for civil disobedience. Civil and religious liberties are being violated for a virus that is statistically no worse than a bad flu season. Pati and I watched a discussion by two doctors in CA who provided revealing statistics for all the world to hear. Based on the latest numbers coming out of each state the mortality rate (which can't be trusted) is averaging around 0.05%. For every million people that would be 500 deaths and 90% plus of those deaths are co-morbidity deaths. Their conclusion: Social isolation is weakening people's immune system making them more vulnerable to a virus. Our bodies are designed to come into contact with pathogens, bacteria, and virus by touching people and things.

Now, let me make this very real. Because of the social distancing orders demanded by our government here is a true story. A quadriplegic came into the ER for help. He had been quarantined in a nursing home because of Covid. The nursing home is understaffed, but more importantly the family members who would normally care for this man was not allowed to visit and if they had been allowed to visit, they would have smelled that his bed sores on his buttocks had become so infected it was literally rotten flesh, the worse smell _____ has ever had to endure in all _____ years working in the medical system. This is only one consequence of quarantine that no one, not even our governor has likely ever considered, but needs to.

The other consequences are closer to home for me and some of you. Are we allowed to worship face to face like Scripture demands, the Lord demands, when he says do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, Hebrews 10:24-25. Does the governor have a right to tell Christians they may not meet together according to the First Amendment in our Bill of Rights? Does the government have the right constitutionally to tell which businesses are "essential" and which are not and causing thousands of business owners to go bankrupt and lose their businesses they have been working hard most of their lives to build and employ millions? Constitutionally they do not. And where does the Minnesota legislature think they have a right to write a statute giving power to the governor to quarantine healthy people? It's on the books. I've read it. At no time in our history have we ever quarantined healthy people in a minor form of martial law. The Bible only calls for the quarantining of unhealthy people such as lepers. Imagine living in a town in Israel when a leper approaches and the mayor of the town says, "Oh no, a leper is here. Everyone stay inside your homes for the next thirty days after he has left!" Absurd isn't it?

What I am about to share with you today is a biblical perspective on when we ought to obey the government and when we have a duty not to. I think this will surprise you. Many

pastors over the last several decades have made Romans 13:1-5 and 1 Peter 2 absolutes. Nothing could be further from the truth. Obedience to the government is conditional, and we are at such a time and place today in our country and in our state. Let's dig.

Scripture:

Romans 13:1–7

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (ESV)

1 Peter 2:13–14

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. (ESV)

Main point: Government is God's appointed minister to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good but when government punishes those who do good and praises those who do evil it is our duty to resist.

Main question: Does the Bible in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 require absolute obedience to whatever the government demands of its citizens?

Initial thoughts:

- If it did there would be no USA today. The Black Robe regiment would have interpreted Romans 13 and 1 Peter to quell any revolution against Britain but instead they fomented the revolution. They were the backbone of our country's moral conscience back then and we need more men like them today. They convinced the founding fathers that King George was mandating evil laws (forbidding evangelism and Bible distribution) and in order to be faithful to Christ they must resist those laws especially the laws pertaining to evangelizing the Indian population which he forbade. David Barton could go on for hours with all the evidence you need to prove that our revolution against an established government was considered right and good and blessed of God. Repeat, if Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 mean absolute obedience there would be no USA today.

- It is my position (and others) that the First Amendment in our Constitution supersedes states Bill of Rights regarding the Freedom of Religion. Every Supreme Court case has been decided since the 14th Amendment in favor of the Federal Bill of Rights vs the states Bill of Rights. So, it is my firm belief that the government can ask churches not to meet for reasons of extreme necessity but they cannot demand or order churches not to meet at the threat of a \$1,500 fine and ninety days in jail. That is unconstitutional and must be resisted and now I will tell you why.
- But before I do, I want to credit Pastor Matthew Trewhella for inserting in his book *The Doctrine of Lesser Magistrates* an appendix titled an examination of Romans 13. Much of what I am saying to you today comes from that insight and I also need to thank Isaac Ohman for bringing this to my attention.

1. Nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to give unlimited and unconditional obedience to the government.

- Many of you already practice this. Homeschooling is an example. Many Christians believe with all their heart that the government has no right to educate their children in ungodly beliefs so they choose to homeschool and rightfully so. Yet, a majority of those homeschooling parents will probably say it is O.K. for the government in this situation to tell Christians in direct violation of our Scriptures not to meet together. Why is it wrong in one area but not in another?
- To better understand this we need to review the 4 spheres of government over which God rules. 1) Self, 2) Family, 3) Church, 4) Government. Let's examine.
 - Self. The only person who has a right to decide what to do with your body is you, no one else, and you decide on the basis of what God has told you to do with your body and how to use it.
 - Family. There is no higher authority other than God who can tell you how to run your family. Not the church and certainly not government.
 - Church. There is no authority on earth that can tell how the church of Jesus Christ must operate or behave. Only Christ has that authority.
 - Government. Government is the last sphere created by God and its authority comes last as well.
 - Consider, the authority in a family is the father (and where there is no father, the mother). Now is the authority of the father unlimited and unconditional? NO! If he tells his family to do things that are illegal or immoral it is the duty of the wife and children to say "No, we will not do that".
 - Consider the authority of the church placed in the hands of the elders. If an elder is abusing the congregation by his ungodly and dictatorial commands, is the congregation bound by Scripture to obey? No, it is their duty to resist.
 - Therefore it is also true that if government operates outside of its boundaries of praising the good and punishing the evil, it is the duty of its citizens to resist and not obey the law of the land.

2. Scripture teaches and encourages godly obedience or in this case civil disobedience when the laws of the state contradict the clear teachings of Scripture.

- The midwives in Egypt Exodus 1:15-21. Exodus 1:15–22 Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, “When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this, and let the male children live?” The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.” (ESV)
 - Daniel refusing to halt his prayers. Daniel 6:10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. (ESV)
 - The midwives were told to do something evil and refused and Daniel was told not to do something good and he refused and this has been the policy for the church for 2,000 years.
 - So, do not be surprised today when a political party tramples on religious freedoms when they have already excluded God from their platforms and conventions.
 - More examples:
 - Moses’s parents: Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. (ESV)
 - Paul running from the authorities in Damascus: 2 Corinthians 11:32–33 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands. (ESV)
 - Most famous of all: Apostles Acts 5:28–29 saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. (ESV)
3. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 limit the authority of government and does not allow for overreach. In other words, the authority is conditional based on the text.
- In Romans 13 – “For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad” and in 1 Peter 2 “to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good”. Their job description and therefore the boundaries of their authority are limited to promoting good and hindering evil. When those actions are reversed, they no longer have divine blessing and need not be obeyed. Say again.
 - Case in point. When abortion protestors protest peacefully and prayerfully in front of abortion clinics and have not violated any law (would it matter if they did) and are

arrested, this is where government has overstepped its authority. Their authority is null and void. Or,

- If the government arrests a father for using any deadly force in the protection of his family and found guilty, the government has overstepped its authority. A father has a God-given right to defend and protect his family. The first job of a husband is to love his wife and if protecting her from harm isn't love what is?
 - Here is a very sobering question. If obedience to the government is absolute, will you take the Mark of the Beast in submission to the government asking and telling you to do so? This unconditional understanding of these passages will cause many to take the Mark of the Beast because they want to obey the government. Yikes.
4. If God required us to obey unconditionally the evil laws of evil magistrates who were appointed by him, then that would make God culpable of being evil Himself! **For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.**
 - If we mistakenly obey evil laws out of a misunderstanding of Scripture then we become complicit ourselves in the same evil. God forbid.
 5. By disobeying (and suffering the consequences) of evil laws, Christians act as a check on the tyranny of the government and thereby serve as protectors of society.

Application

Here is how the "Stay at Home" orders are violating our freedom of religion: 1) Zoom and Facebook Live meetings do not adequately replace the face to face interaction of worshipers. How can we practice Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (ESV) we are not admonishing one another in our homes via Facebook Live. 2) Communion cannot be practiced the way Jesus intended. 3) Even if Facebook Live was an effective alternative to meeting face-to-face, it doesn't help those who don't have Facebook or can't afford internet service. Their religious freedoms have been denied and taken from them. 4) If the Muslims can be allowed an exception to the noise ordinance in Minneapolis by the mayor of that city to broadcast their prayers over the loudspeakers for Ramadan, why can't Christians congregate in their churches at safe distances (which has not been proven effective at all)? 5) Although the advocates who defend the current laws state they are not discriminatory since all religions and denominations are targeted, the logic is lost when government gets to pick and choose which businesses are essential and which are not. How did churches get categorized as not essential? If all businesses were closed and all public gatherings were banned for a compelling reason, we might agree and say we have not lost our religious freedoms, but, not all businesses are banned and not all gatherings are banned and the compelling reason to ban them wanes each day the numbers come in. The pandemic is not as lethal as claimed to be, we did not do this for seasonal flu viruses in the past which had greater mortality rates than SARS 2 which is what the W.H.O. renamed Covid 19.

Therefore your elders have decided to resume face-to-face gatherings next Sunday May 3 following the President's guidelines for re-opening America Phase One, Two and Three. MN is a state with some of the fewest cases of Corona virus and if the governor continues his onerous restrictions affecting thousands of worshipers and employees and employers by extending the Stay at home orders, we will obey God at that point rather than man and feel justified in doing so. The Liberty Counsel is encouraging all churches to reopen on May 3rd and if fined or arrested they will defend our right to worship as God has commanded. We will encourage all who feel they are at risk to stay home, and if people feel the need for social distancing we have plenty of room to distance ourselves from one another. Some can come late and leave early if they feel so inclined.

Two final thoughts. What our governor has done by joining our state with other Midwest states to decide when to re-open our commerce is unconstitutional. The governor and legislature can regulate commerce inside their own state as long as the companies regulated only do business inside that state. When commerce flows across state lines, the decision to re-open business that do state to state commerce is up to Congress, not the governors. It appears that only democrat governors are making these alliances in a political move to hurt the President. Jesus has taught us to be shrewd and awake.

Last thought. Isaiah 8:12 says "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. (ESV) Are the Soros's of the world involved in a major plan to destroy America? Of course. So are the Rothchild's and many like them. Is Bill Gates a eugenicist like his father? Of course he is, he wants to reduce the population of the world and so far his vaccines in Africa are doing a fine job of killing children. But, should we fear these conspirators? Not at all. God told Isaiah not to. Are they dangerous? Yes. Is God more dangerous? Infinitely so, and he controls just how far he intends to let them go on the leash he made for them.