

**Date: May 3, 2020**

**Message: “Pleasing God When Displeased with Our Government”**

**Text: Selected verses**

In times like these we especially need the Bible to continually calibrate our minds, wills, and emotions. Our thoughts are not naturally God’s thoughts. We need the word of God to constantly renew our minds (Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 4:12; Psalms 119:105; Col. 3:17).

Rom. 13:1-7

- We are commanded to \_\_\_\_\_ to our governing authorities
- No government exists unless \_\_\_\_\_ ordains it
- Resisting our authorities is resisting \_\_\_\_\_
- Resisting our authorities will result in \_\_\_\_\_ consequences
- Submitting to authorities results in peace and a \_\_\_\_\_ conscience

Let’s remember that Paul originally wrote this passage, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to Christians living in first century Rome. Roman government was as pagan, wicked, immoral, unreasonable, and unfair as a government could possibly be. At the time Paul wrote Romans 13 to the churches Rome was persecuting Jews and Christians.

God’s command to Christians in Romans 13 regarding how we should respond to our government can be summarized in one word—“\_\_\_\_\_”. That isn’t all that the Bible says about our relationship to government, but it does convey what our overriding disposition should be.

Titus 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17; 1 Tim. 2:1-4

God has designed and ordained structures of human authority and submission that we are to embrace and practice by His empowering grace.

- Citizens are to submit to their government
- Wives are to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1)
- Children are to submit to their parents (Eph. 6:1)
- Employees are to submit to their employers (1 Pet. 2:18)
- Church members are to submit to their church elders (Heb. 13:17)

This human authority within the government, the family, the workplace and the church are to be followed and obeyed by Christians, but it is not *absolute* authority.

There are times when the authority of a husband, parent, boss, president, or government official should *not* be submitted to...when the authority is telling us to do something that is clearly sinful and against God's will taught in the Bible.

If we are going to disobey a God ordained authority we must make sure that God endorses our disobedience.

Acts 4:19; 5:28-29 "*We must obey God rather than men*"

The context in Acts was that the apostles were being commanded not to preach the gospel. This is something Jesus had clearly commanded them to do.

In some pockets of the world, governments have outlawed Christian gatherings all together. Certainly, we do not fault our brothers and sisters in those countries for meeting together in secret. The smile of God is upon the underground church in China, North Korea, Turkey and other places.

**Caution (SJB):** I don't think we should view our governor's orders as persecution against Christians and churches. Christians have not been singled out from the rest of society. Christians and non-Christians alike have been equally affected by these government mandates. Not being allowed to corporately gather in person as a church family *temporarily* is frustrating and perhaps unnecessary, but it is not persecution as described in the Bible. We can still freely meet together via various forms of technology. Certainly, there are some politicians you might want to shut down churches altogether, but that is not what this society-wide quarantine is doing.

So, the questions of the hour for us in Whatcom County include...

- Are the current restrictions regarding social interaction and group gatherings an egregious abuse of government authority that warrants our resistance/disobedience as believers?
- How long must we continue to comply with this social distancing mandate? Another week, month, year, or forever?
- At some point is it permissible and perhaps even best for Christians and a congregation to disobey the government on this matter?
- Most importantly—would **God** approve of His children disregarding what our governor is telling us to do (either now or at some point in the future)?

And the answer is \_\_\_\_\_

We must all purpose to have our consciences informed by Scripture and allow others to do the same, and by no means should any of us violate our own consciences, nor encourage others to do so.

We must all purpose to maintain humble, loving hearts of deference toward one another in the midst of our inevitable differences, and certainly not become judgmental of others who live differently than we might choose to in the coming weeks and months.

### **What we should all be doing in regard to our government:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ *faithfully* for our leaders and country (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Some of us spend more time criticizing our leaders than we do praying for them. Yet God never commanded us to criticize them, but He has commanded us to honor and pray for them (1 Pet.2:17).
- \_\_\_\_\_ *graciously*. We don't have to stand by passively if we believe our elected officials are violating the constitution. There are appropriate avenues for expressing our opinions and disagreements to our leaders and we should use them. Praise God that He has given us this freedom in our country. And when we do use the legal and appropriate avenues of communicating with our governing officials, we should exude a spirit of humility and respect toward them.
- *Live and suffer* \_\_\_\_\_

1 Pet. 2:12; Matt. 5:16; Acts 5:40-42; 1 Pet. 2:21-23

Even when the apostles were harshly persecuted and beaten, they didn't murmur or complain against their persecutors, but praised God and gave a blessing instead. They learned this from Jesus.

- \_\_\_\_\_ *wisely*. This is a privilege we still have in this country and we should exercise it faithfully. We should be as informed as we can be about the candidates and issues and seek the Lord's direction in casting our votes according to His will. We should not be apathetic toward our government or social issues.

### **Important reminders to help take our minds off the governor and onto God**

1. God's glory is the most important thing. Pleasing and obeying Him should always be our foremost pursuit. (2 Cor. 5:9-10; 1 Cor. 10:31)
2. God ultimately controls every politician and regulation in the world. Things are not falling apart, they are falling into perfect place in our world, in our county, in our church, and in your family. (Psa. 103:19; Eph. 1:11)

3. Our increasing conformity to the image of Jesus Christ is more important than “getting our lives back to normal” as soon as possible (Rom. 8:28-29). Are these undesirable circumstances *sanctifying* you or *souring* you?
4. The proclamation of the gospel is our primary mission as believers. How are you using this pandemic as a means to adorn and articulate the gospel of Jesus Christ by your exemplary attitude and verbal testimony? (Acts 1:8)
5. Suffering (in various forms) is promised to Christians in this world (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12) Most of our suffering is “first world problems” as we call them. Minor inconveniences compared to many people in the world. The temporary shutdown of church gatherings should increase our sympathy and prayers for our persecuted brethren around the world.
6. We must possess an eternal mindset (Col. 3:12; Phil 3:20) This world and this pandemic will pass away very quickly. Our citizenship is in heaven, not on this earth.
7. Keep preaching the gospel to yourself. You are infinitely loved by God, you are His child and in union with Christ, you’ve been forgiven of all your sin and empowered to live in victory over sin, He is present with you at all times, you’ve been given every spiritual blessing and all things pertaining to life and godliness, you have 24-7 access to the throne of grace, you possess the abundant grace of God for every need, you are protected by the power of God, and your place in heaven is permanently reserved by God. (Rom. 5:1; 6:3-7; 8:1; 8:28-39; Col. 3:3; Heb. 13:5; Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 4:14-16; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13; 1 Pet. 1:3-9)

### **Conclusion:**

I don’t know the answers for each of your unique situations, but God does. Seek Him through His word, earnestly pray, and perhaps seek the counsel of other mature believers.

Look up the verses we’ve touched on this morning—cross reference them—be good Bereans and check what’s been preached with the Bible (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21).

Please continue to pray for our church elders. I assure you that we are discussing these matters very seriously and it is the unified heart of the elders to above all...

1. Please and honor God with any decisions
2. Obey the Bible even when it may be hard to do so
3. Shepherd our flock well
4. Be a godly testimony in the community/world
5. To cultivate hearts that are humble, loving, gracious, and respectful toward those inside and outside our church and toward anyone who rules over us in the government.

And the elders will continue praying for the flock as you make decisions for your own lives and families!