

**April 1, 2014**

The Disciples Understanding Of Governing Authority

Romans 13:1 (NASB), ***“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.”***

As a pastor I run across many Christians who have serious questions about President Obama’s leadership and his intentions towards the evangelical community. At times the complaints about him border on the angry and are at times rebellious and disrespectful in nature. The same attitude was directed toward President Bush by some on the left when *he* was in office. We have entered a time where we seem to have lost the ability to respectfully disagree. I realize that in large part this is due to the serious nature of many of the issues we face and how so many of these issues have deep theological implications.

How then is the Christian to react and behave in light of all of this? First and foremost as in all things we are to be more Christ-like and we are to be very different from the world. In Romans 13:1 Paul writes that the Christ follower has to understand a couple of things about the nature of authority.

The first thing is that all of us are under the authority of the ***“governing authorities.”*** The word that is used here is the word ***“subjection”*** which is the Greek word that was used to describe a soldier’s absolute obedience to his superiors. Our superiors are those who are in civil authority over us which means that as Christ followers we are to obey them. As John MacArthur says we are to obey those in authority in ***“every position of civil authority and every person in authority no matter their competency, their morality, their reasonableness, or any other caveat.”*** Titus 3:1-2 says, ***“Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.”***

Scripture is clear that not only are we to be obedient to civil authority but we are also to pray for those in authority over us as well. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 says, ***“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”***

The second thing that the Christ follower must understand is that all authority is from God. Paul writes here in verse 1, ***“For there is not authority except from God, and these are established by God.”*** God is sovereign and as Christians this means that we have to understand that *all* who are in authority are in authority because God has ***“established”*** their authority. Daniel 2:21 says, ***“It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.”*** Psalm 103:19 says, ***“The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.”*** 1 Timothy 6:15 refers to God with this, ***“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”***

All government authority is derived from and is therefore ultimately defined by God. God established and instituted government to reward good and to restrain an evil world. The reality in a fallen and sinful world is that we cannot exist without the restraint of government.

I believe that as Christ followers a big part of our witness is how we relate to others and included in that is how we relate to those in authority over us. 1 Peter 2:13-15 says, ***“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”***

I did not vote for President Obama both when he ran as Senator Obama in 2008 and for reelection in 2012. There are many areas of disagreement which I have with the President. But as a Christian I understand that President Obama is President because that is part of God’s will and purpose. His authority as President has been given to him by our Lord who is sovereign over all. I did not vote for the President but I pray for him and I pray for his family. I pray first of all for his salvation, I pray for his safety and for his health and I pray for the safety and health of his family as well.

There is one exception though to being obedient to our civil authorities. We are not to blindly follow our leaders and this especially applies when they are asking us to disobey the word of God. In Exodus 1:17 the Hebrew midwives were commanded by Pharaoh to kill all of the Hebrew baby boys. Verse 17 says, ***“But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.”***

In Daniel 3 Nebuchadnezzar commanded all the people to worship the image he had created and if they did not they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to worship the image and were thrown into the furnace but it says in Daniel 3 that the fire had no effect on their bodies ***“nor was the hair of their head singed.”*** In Daniel 3:18 they said to the king, ***“Let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”***

As Christians we have to understand that God is the God of all true authority. Those who are in power are in power because God has established their power. We are to therefore obey the authorities as a soldier obeys their superiors *except* when we are being asked to do something that is against God’s Word.