

**GOD and GOVERNMENT (Part 3)**  
**“When Is It Permissible to Disobey Government?”**  
**(CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE)**

**INTRO:** KEY Question (PPT) ... SUPPORTING Questions (PPT) ...

**REVIEW: Role of *Government*?** Protect citizens by: restraining evil, rewarding good, maintaining order, guarding freedom, and upholding justice.

**Role of *Citizens*?** SUBMIT to ALL! Reasons ... HOW? Respect, Pay Taxes (whether unreasonable or misused), Participate, Live peacefully, Practice goodness, Pray

**TODAY, “Civil Disobedience: When is it okay to disobey government?”**

Thankfully we live in a nation where the governing authorities allow its citizens a high degree of personal and religious freedom. Probability is that will not always be true. We must enjoy and take advantage while we can – to live and share the Gospel message, which changes society from the inside-out!

**I. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE *EXPLAINED***

Does God really expect us to honor and obey brutal dictators or grossly immoral, elected officials? The answer is yes if we mean respecting their position of authority and obeying all just laws. The only time we have a right to disobey the government is when *it commands us NOT to do something God has commanded us to do, or when it commands us to DO something God has commanded us not to do*. Our obedience has its limits. Basically, we are permitted to disobey government when we are commanded to disobey God, our Ultimate Authority and The Final Judge. If the civil powers command something that God forbids, or forbids something that God commands, we are free to disobey! The Apostle Peter gives us the principle to follow, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). God’s authority is always higher than human authority. Our disobedience is never motivated by our hatred of government that God ordains, but our fear of God.

**II. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE *EXAMPLED***

When human authority directly contradicts God’s command, Scripture gives examples of people obeying God rather than human rulers. Frankly there are many examples in the Bible and in history where citizens resisted and disobeyed civil government.

A. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES (Midwives in Egypt, Moses before Pharaoh, Daniel before Nebuchanzzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Rahab, Amos, Esther, Paul, Peter, etc.). Look more closely at a few:

1. Hebrew *Midwives* Disobey Pharaoh in Egypt – refused to murder newborn Hebrew boys (Exo. 1:15-21). They feared God more than Pharaoh. Result? God blessed the midwives and gave them families of their own for saving the children.
2. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego* - refused to Bow to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 3:16-18). He built a giant golden statue and commanded all to bow down and worship it (Dan. 3). God forbids idolatry. They trusted God to deliver them from fiery furnace. Result? They were thrown into the fire and God miraculously delivered them.
3. *Daniel* and the Law about Diet and Against Prayer (Dan. 1, 6). Daniel refused diet, but offered alternative. Evil advisors tricked King Darius into passing a law that outlawed praying to any god or human except the king for 30 days. Daniel still went home, opened his windows, and prayed three times a day as he had always done. Result? He was thrown into a pit of hungry lions to be dinner, but God dispatched an angel to shut the lions’ mouths and save him.
4. The *Apostles* Were Commanded to Stop Preaching (Acts 4:18-20; 5:29). They refused. Result? Even though they were imprisoned and severely beaten, they peacefully accepted their punishment and kept preaching Jesus!

What do these examples all have in common? In no situation is the government hated, but that it’s requiring someone to directly violate God’s command.

B. HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

1. The American *Revolutionary War* (1765-1783) – The truth is the USA was born out of a violation of Romans 13:1-7, in the name of Christian freedom. That doesn’t mean God won’t overrule such violations and by His grace bring about good (which He did in this case), but the end never justifies the means.
2. American *Civil War* (1861-1865) – Stemmed from the issue of slavery
3. *Nazi Germany* (1933-1945) – “ethnic cleansing”
4. *Russia* (1922-today) – Complete government control

### III. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE *EXERCISED*

“Is it possible to disobey the government in a humble and respectful manner?” Are our only answers: rebel, suffer in silence, complain, get angry, get even, etc.? Some suggested guidelines in exercising civil disobedience. Use Daniel’s response to how to practice (Dan. 1, 6). Daniel refused dietary development (1:8). He humbly and respectfully appealed and offered an alternative (1:8-13). The king approved the test and Daniel’s way prevailed. In Ch. 6 Daniel was commanded by Medo-Persian King Darius not to pray to His God (6:4-5). He was thrown into lion’s den (v. 21, 28). God saved him and God helped him prosper. Guidelines:

- A. *Disobey only when absolutely necessary.* We disobey only when government clearly commands us to disobey God. Daniel would not violate his diet or prayer life and disobey God.
- B. *If you choose to disobey, do it with a submissive and respectful attitude of heart.* It is possible with God’s help to disobey outwardly in action, yet remain submissive in spirit. This is how Daniel and his friends responded to the King.
- C. *Attempt to resolve the situation peacefully.* Daniel offered a peaceful solution to the dietary issue.
- D. *Be willing to suffer the consequences of your disobedience.* If no peaceful resolution is found, Daniel accepted his punishment (6:16). Similar to his friends, Apostles, etc. Believers who choose disobedience cannot also claim some special protection from God when they break the law of man. We must commit ourselves to God’s care.

**CONC:** We need an attitude of extreme caution and prayerfulness when considering acts of civil disobedience. We can disagree with a law and still obey it (if not disobedience to a law of God). You can dislike a government and still respect its authority. You can criticize government actions while remaining a law-abiding citizen. If we take matters into our own hands, we are saying we don’t think God has things under control. Civil disobedience can actually short-circuit how God wants to use us and others in that situation to bear His image and likeness. Again, our heart attitude is critical. We may not always be able to obey, but we can always disobey with a submissive spirit because we believe and trust in God. He is the Highest King! All rulers will answer to Him. We must obey Him first and last and all the time in between.