

# A Christian must obey ALL the laws of the land...

## Eight Reasons

1. **Because the laws of the land are things of the government – Matthew 22:15-22.** “Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's...” Here Jesus establishes the principle plainly.

Paul gives at least three reasons to obey the government in **Romans 13:1-5**:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.<sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.<sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.<sup>4</sup> For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil.<sup>5</sup> Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

2. **Because government is established by God**
3. **To avoid punishment from the government** – This is what makes us drive the speed limit when we know the police might be near by.
4. **For conscience's sake** – This is what makes a person drive the speed limit on a deserted highway late at night. Our conscience is *always* near by.

“To resist” is the opposite of “to submit.” We make ourselves “subject,” willingly. If we are not in subjection, we are violating our consciences, because we know better.

Submission is nothing new to a Christian. We submit to parents (Ephesians 6:1), to other Christians (Ephesians 5:21), and of course, to God. (1 Peter 5:5-6)

How do you think Paul, Peter, and especially Jesus, responded to the governing authorities, even when they were unfairly being persecuted? 1 Peter 2:21-24 tells us that

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:<sup>22</sup> “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;<sup>23</sup> who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. (Ref. Luke 23:9.)

In that same context, Peter at least a couple of other reasons to obey the government:

**1 Peter 2:11** Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,<sup>12</sup> having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,<sup>14</sup> or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good.<sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—<sup>16</sup> as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

<sup>17</sup> Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

5. **For the sake of our reputations** – People are looking to criticize us, and if they can find some reason to call us “evildoers,” they will have an excuse (to their way of thinking) for not doing what's right. Compare Matthew 5:13 where Jesus' followers are called the “salt of the earth...” When salt goes bad, there's nothing left to make it salty! Has our salt lost its flavor?
6. **"For the Lord's sake"** – The “king” makes laws; the “governors” enforce the laws. Christians submit to them both.

Finally, we return to the gospel of Matthew to read Jesus' words regarding our obedience to laws of human governments.

7. **“So as not to offend” – Matthew 17:24-27.** Even though we may think of ourselves as exempt from having to obey the government – *at least one religious group teaches this!* – Jesus taught His disciples to submit and obey. (And Jesus truly *was* exempt!) In this way, we will avoid putting a stumbling block in another person's way.
8. **For the sake of our example – Matthew 5:41.** “*Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*”

Roman soldiers, under Roman law, could make people carry their load for one mile. (For example, Simon carried Jesus' cross, Matthew 27:32) So a Christian would have to go *one mile* by law. But Jesus taught us to go a *second mile!* Imagine, then, a conversation between a Roman soldier and a disciple of Jesus:

**Soldier:** You've gone one mile. That's enough. I'll get someone else to carry it the next mile.

**Christian:** No, I'm okay. Let's go another mile.

**Soldier:** *Another* mile?!? Who are you?!

**Christian:** I'm a follower of Jesus Christ.

Christians are friends of the government, submissive to law enforcers. They honor the "king." They do *more than the minimum, more than what is required*. If we do not obey the law, we are not even doing *what is required!*

You will want to teach people the gospel some day, and how will you be able to do that effectively, if you yourself are not in submission to the law of the land?

### The Excuses

"But that just isn't fair." "But I obey all the *other* laws." "But the government gets enough money; they'll never miss the little bit of tax I owe." "It wouldn't hurt anybody if I..." "But the laws of the government are inconsistent. What they *really* want is..." All these are simply sorry ways for us not to submit. We pick and choose the laws and rules that are convenient to us.

### The Exception

There are times when man's laws or rules conflict with God's law. Obviously, in that case, we would obey God's law rather than man's law. Both the Old Testament and New Testament have examples of this (Daniel 6:5-11, 21-23; Acts 5:25-29), but in the USA in modern times, that's a very rare occurrence. We can almost always obey *both*.

Remember, we can't use an *exception to a rule* to get out of following the rule!

### The Application

It is possible to honor the "king" and God at the same time. We can live in a way that will glorify God and allow us to live in peace with all men.

- We *support* and *help* the police rather than fearing and avoiding them. (There was an officer in Huntsville, AL directing traffic on a hot day. Someone went and bought him a cold drink, just to be nice. What an impression that made, and what a powerful statement it would've been if the person had said, "We Christians are on *your* side"!)
- We don't lie to our bosses.
- We pay whatever tribute or tax we owe.
- We respect copyright laws. We don't make or watch illegal copies of movies, songs, documents, therapy materials, etc.
- We drive the speed limit.
- We don't make excuses, and we don't complain.
- Etc. (*You* complete the list.)

Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribe and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20) Do you make excuses and try to find loop-holes like *they* did? When non-believers look at you, do they glorify God because of your good behavior?

May God bless you as you study this important topic, and learn to apply it in your life.

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# Christians And The Government



*Eight Good Reasons To  
Obey The Law*