

D-LIFE BOOT CAMP

Training for a lifestyle
of discipleship.



Keeping it Real

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

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PROTECTING HUMAN AUTHORITY "CIVIL GOVERNMENT" Part 2

I. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GOVERNMENT?

The Bible speaks very clearly about the relationship between the believer and the government. We are to obey governmental authorities, and the government is to treat us justly and fairly. Even when the government does not live up to its role, we are still to live up to ours. Finally, when the government asks us to do something that is in direct disobedience to God's Word, we are to disobey the government in faithful confidence of the Lord's power to protect us.

Whether the Bible uses the terms "master," "ruler," "government," or any other name for an established authority, the instruction is always the same – obey. We must remember that God created the authorities ruling over us just as He created us. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves" (Romans 13:1-2). Peter wrote, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right" (1 Peter 2:13-14). Both Peter and Paul also remind slaves repeatedly to be obedient to their masters for the same reasons (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; 1 Peter 2:18-20; Titus 2:9-11).

The instructions to government "masters" are just as clear and just as numerous. Jesus modeled the behavior and attitude every leader or authority should take.

“Jesus called them together and said, ‘**You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many**’” (Matthew 20:25-28). A government or authority exists to serve those governed.

Many times, however, a government will stray from its purpose and become oppressive. When that happens, we are still to live in obedience. “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God” (1 Peter 2:18-19). Both Jesus and Paul used taxes as a way to illustrate this. The Roman government taxed the Jews unjustly and many of the tax collectors were thieves. When asked about this dilemma, Jesus took a coin and said, “**Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?**” ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied. Then he said to them, ‘**Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s**’” (Matthew 22:20-21). Evidently, the believers in Rome were still asking the same question because Paul instructed them on the matter. “This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing” (Romans 13:6).

In the Old Testament, Daniel is a model we should use when it comes to our relationship with government. The Babylonians were given authority over the Jews because of the Jews’ disobedience. Daniel worked himself into the highest levels of this pagan and unbelieving government. Although the rulers respected Daniel’s God, their lives and actions show they did not believe. Daniel served the king as a true servant when he requested the wise men not be executed for failing to interpret the king’s dream. Instead, he asked for the key to interpret the dream from God and saved those, including himself, who would have been executed. While Daniel was in the royal court, his three friends refused to bow to the idol erected by King Nebuchadnezzar and were sentenced to death in the furnace (Daniel 3:12-15). Their response was confident faith. They did not defend themselves, but instead told the king their God would save them, adding that even if He didn’t, they still would not worship or serve Nebuchadnezzar’s gods (Daniel 3:16-18).

After the Medes conquered Babylon, Daniel continued to serve faithfully and to rise in power within the government. Here, Daniel faced the same dilemma when the governors and satraps tricked the king into signing a decree “...that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the

den of lions” (Daniel 6:7). Daniel responded by directly, and in full view of everyone, disobeying the order. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days” (Daniel 6:10). **Daniel was completely loyal to any ruler placed over him until that ruler ordered him to disobey God.** At that moment, when a **choice** had to be made between the world and God, Daniel chose God. **As should we all.**

2. CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

In summary, what the Bible teaches about the civil rights movement is this: it should never have been necessary. Beginning with the kidnapping and chattel slavery of millions, on through the hateful attitudes that prevented neighbors from using the same drinking fountain, the attitudes and actions that led to a culture where the civil rights movement became necessary were all categorically unbiblical. Christianity and civil rights should go hand in hand. Discrimination based on race or skin color has no place in the Christian worldview.

To begin with, the practice of slavery that introduced millions of Africans to the American South was completely unscriptural and un-Christian. Exodus 21:16 says, "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death." Several thousand years later, Paul equated kidnapping with lawlessness and rebellion against God’s order (1 Timothy 1:8-10). The New Testament admonitions for slaves to be submissive to their masters does not justify the actions of traders, slave owners, or the government and society that procured and treated slaves in ways directly contrary to Scripture.

After the slaves in America were emancipated, ungodly attitudes and actions toward them continued. There is nothing scriptural about racial prejudice (Galatians 3:28), unfair business practices (Proverbs 20:10), forced segregation within the Christian body (Galatians 3:29), or murder (Exodus 20:13). But human sin continued to shape an abusive society for a hundred years after the slaves were freed.

The goal of the civil rights movement was good and biblical—ensure fair rights and equal treatment for all. Any action that worked against this goal, therefore, has to be considered unbiblical. The Bible not only forbids favor for specific people groups,

it forbids unfair treatment of anyone (James 2:1-7).

Thanks to the non-violent policies of many of the civil rights leaders, much of the work toward civil rights was biblical. Free speech is granted to all Americans, and reminding a government and a culture of their constitutional and spiritual responsibilities is good and right. The tremendous effort and patience of civil rights activists to work within local and national legal systems is a great example of positively changing a God-given authority from within. The Freedom Riders, activists who rode buses to challenge states' segregation laws, were also lawful because the previous year the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled in *Boynton v. Virginia* that racial segregation on public transportation violated the Interstate Commerce Act. Their endurance through physical attacks and prison is a classic example of 1 Peter 2:20 in action.

At the core of "civil rights" is the God-ordained value of each individual.

Every person is made in the image of God. When nations recognize civil rights, they recognize the equality of all mankind. The civil rights movement in twentieth-century America can, for the most part, be considered a good example of encouraging a nation to embody more biblical standards.