

Avenging Ourselves, Self-Defense, and Subjection to Authority – Part 3, Subjection to Authority

The last topic to this three-part series concerns subjection to authority. The first two parts, Avenging Ourselves and Self-defense are complex subjects, but when properly understood they will harmonize completely with this present topic.

What is government? For good or for evil government is a system under which people are regulated. In it are authorities that operate in various capacities. For example, in our country we have three branches of government: the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. From these flow the several federal, state, and local authorities. Every man and woman that comes into any of these offices of government are appointed by God. Whether the offices are filled by a vote of the people, or by official appointment, or for hire, it is God that puts them there. *Ro 13:1 ... there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.* They are directed by God to accomplish His sovereign purpose. *Pr 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.* And God can remove them from office as easily as He put them into it. *Da 4:17 ... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. ... 25 ... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Da 4:31 ... there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.* But in the last days when the Son of man shall come he shall put down all authority and power and His kingdom shall never end.

Dan.2.44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

The order of governing authority is essential to humanity. Generally authorities harness the social behavior of every citizen for the good of the whole society. It is *1Pe.2.14 ... for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.* Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States of America said, 'A wise and frugal ... government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government.'

Without government there is anarchy, or nothing to govern the populace. Anarchy was the state of the antediluvian world. Though it will be a very dark period which precedes the coming of Jesus Christ, Noah's day may have been the darkest period in the history of mankind because it was a time of anarchy. This society continued for only two millennia and then, but for eight souls, the earth was wiped clean of them in an instant by the judgment of God. Think of the localized instances of riot, lawlessness, and depraved acts that have burst forth in our day, and then imagine that on a global scale. This is how Scriptures describe that time.

Avenging Ourselves, Self-Defense, and Subjection to Authority – Part 3, Subjection to Authority

Ge 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ... 11 ¶ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

1Pe 3:20 ... the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

It was after the destruction of that world when God immediately installed the rule of government for the good of humanity. (cf. Ge.9.5, 6) Clearly the institution of government helps preserve humanity from their self-destructive ways.

Ro 13:4 For he (that ruler which is part of the powers of authority which God has ordained, vss. 1, 2) is the minister of God to thee (that is, every soul put under it, v.1) for good ...

1Ti.1.9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine ...

That is the basic purpose for government. Like it or not it is the best that man can do apart from the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This system is not Christian! We thank God that there have been times when government has tolerated Christians. However, that is not the norm. Many of Christ's disciples have suffered martyrdom by both atheistic and state-church governments.

God guides the masses of humanity by use of government. If God had not ordained government and subjected mankind to its various forms, no man would be inclined to be subject to it. But the Spirit of God anoints and empowers every leader, authority, and power of the world. (cf. 1Ki.22.20; 2Thes.2.11, 12; Re.16.13) I have the utmost respect for every man in places of authority, from President of the United States of American to the animal control officer. Thank God for our police officers and the soldier. God moves in every soul which functions in this capacity.

1Ki.19.15 And the LORD said unto him [Elijah], Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: 16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

Isa 45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut ... [The Lord made Cyrus and other kings to prosper Israel.]

Ro 13:6 ... they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

Avenging Ourselves, Self-Defense, and Subjection to Authority – Part 3, Subjection to Authority

Every soul is to be subject to these authorities. *Ro 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers ... Christ commanded the disciples of His day to Mt 22:21 ... Render ... unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.* Every soul, not only Christians, are to obey every law, observe its customs, fear and honor its officers, and pray for them.

1Pe 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors ...

Ro 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Tit 3:1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work ...

1Ti 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all [meaning, all kinds of] men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Every soul, especially if a Christian, that rebels against government and authorities is disobedient to God and His word. Resisting authority resists God's commandment and brings condemnation from that authority.

*Ro.13.2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the *ordinance [commandment] of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

**ordinance, διαταγή, dat. sing. of the noun διαταγή, compound Gr. word, διά, by through + τάσσω, to appoint, ordain; Acts 7.53, disposition; the verb, διατάσσω, is to command, appoint, ordain, set in order; lit. the orders by God.*

The spirit of the saints of all ages past is no different from the spirit of the saints today. A child of God is a child of God. Otherwise the differences there are is due to what God chose to reveal to them. But the spirit is the same. In the Old Testament, God delivered Judah, the southern kingdom of the nation of Israel, to the Babylonians. Among the captives were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (otherwise known as Daniel and the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego). King Nebuchadnezzar set apart certain of the Hebrew children to special services in the kingdom of Babylon. They were to be fed a special diet. But because they were Jews the diet proposed violated God's law for them. So, Daniel requested they receive an exemption for him and his three companions. After the steward tested this diet on them for ten days their petition was granted. (Dan.2.6-17) After some time

these four were promoted to various places of authority in the kingdom of Babylon. (Dan.2.49) But later Nebuchadnezzar looked for a show of solidarity in the kingdom. To do that he raised a great statue up in the plains of Dura and commanded everyone to bow down and to serve his gods. Because the Hebrews could not do this they were summoned to stand before the king to give an answer for their rebellion. The king said to them,

Dan.3.15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

And the Hebrews' reply to the king was:

Dan.3.16 ... O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

This time they were not granted an exemption from the king's commandment. They were arrested, bound, and cast alive into the burning, fiery furnace. And in this instance God delivered them in a powerful and miraculous way.

Even into old age the Lord preserved Daniel even through the Persian invasion into Babylonia. Daniel was not only promoted by king Darius as one of the three presidents, but was preferred above all of the other presidents and princes in the whole kingdom. (cf. Daniel chapter 6) So, these presidents and princes schemed against Daniel by suggesting to Darius that he issue an edict for thirty days duration which would make it unlawful for anyone to pray to any god or make a request of any other man except the king. The penalty for violating this law was being cast into a den of lions. Daniel would not obey that law. He continued *as he did aforesaid* in his prayers to God daily, three times a day. (cf. 1Ki.8.44; Dan.6.10) So, for Daniel's disobedience he was cast into that lions' den. Again, God brought about a miraculous deliverance.

This sets a perfect example for every child of God to follow in all ages and places, and under every government that will ever come into power, but it does not mean that the outcome will be the same as it was for these. Many more died for maintaining their faith in Christ. History is filled with the record of the saints martyred for their faith in Christ.

He.11.35 ... and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And these all, having obtained a good report

Avenging Ourselves, Self-Defense, and Subjection to Authority – Part 3, Subjection to Authority

through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

King Saul hunted for David as if he was an animal and tried to kill him, yet David refused to oppose his king or to lay hands upon him, though he had opportunity to do so.

1Sa 24:6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. (cf. 1Sa.24.10; 26.9, 23)

Our Lord Jesus Christ sets the greatest example of all when it comes to being subject to authority. He had the power to resist the unjust actions of God's ordained authority but He did not. Why? Primarily, because it would have been wrong to resist. But God used the instrumentality of government to bring about the death of our Lord so that we might be saved.

Mt 26:47 ¶ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. (This was God's ordained authority which came to arrest our Lord Jesus.)

...

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword (that was Peter, Jesus' disciple), and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

Was this an act of revenge? No. Peter's act was not a retaliatory act. Was it an act of self-defense? No. This was *not* an illegal, independent or gang-related act of violence. Peter, by use of his sword, resisted the forces of government. We must not bear the sword, fist, gun, knife, or anything else to resist that power which God has installed for the good of that society.

Ro.13.4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Shortly after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter and John were put in custody for telling others about Jesus and doing great things in His name. The next day they appeared before the Sanhedrin. After being questioned, the Sanhedrin threatened and banned them from telling others about Jesus. This was their response to the council that day:

Ac 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Avenging Ourselves, Self-Defense, and Subjection to Authority – Part 3, Subjection to Authority

Rightly so, Peter and John continued preaching Christ. But the next time all of the apostles were arrested and put into the common prison, miraculously released by an angel, returned back to teaching the people in the temple and brought to appear before the Sanhedrin. The whole account is recorded in Acts 5:17-42. The apostles said to them:

Ac 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

For this they were again banned from teaching the people, but also beaten. The persecution against them was intensifying. What did the apostles do?

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, David, Peter, John and the apostles did the right thing. Though they are separated in time by as much as a thousand years, yet their testimony as children of God is harmonious. The authorities which God put into place had done them an injustice but they remained faithful to God and willingly subjected themselves to the punishment of law.

God ordained that authorities may avenge wrongdoing. Whether it is right or wrong, all opposition is condemned. By this the children of God are tried and proved not to be of this world.

Re 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

If we must die on account of our faith in Christ, so be it, but we must never rebel against the powers of government. God has installed it for the good of all humanity. Job's words say it best, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. Job 13:15*

The conclusion of the whole matter is this: First, let us never avenge ourselves for injustices suffered by anyone. Defer judgment to the proper authorities if we must, but do not render personally retaliation to another for an injustice suffered. Second, in acts of self-defense, defense of others, of our property, and our country we must act to preserve life and help others. And third, we are to be fully subjected to God's ordained authority. The Lord our God has the final say. He will avenge every wrong that His people suffer. (Deu.42.43; Lk.18.6-8)

2Th 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power ...

This concludes the three-part series on Avenging Ourselves, Self-Defense, and Subjection to Authority.

171205-3