

I've reluctantly decided to deviate from our study of Job this week, and consider instead the topic, The Christian and the State. Let me say at the outset, this subject can be controversial as Christians have disagreed over some of the particulars. Thus, rest assured, my goal this morning is not to put every at odds with each other, nor answer all the controversial questions, but to simply answer three basic questions.

- I. What is the Origin and Primary Purpose of the State?
- II. What Responsibility do Christians have to the State?
- III. When are Christians Permitted to Disobey the State?

I. What is the Origin and Primary Purpose of the State?

1. Before I go any further, the first thing I need to do is, clarify what I mean by the state (or government).
2. Simply by state or government is meant an organized authority that oversees a specific territory or people.
3. A common form of government is a monarchy, which generally refers to government ruled by a monarch.
4. Another form of government is a republic, which generally refers to government subject to the people.
5. I'm fully aware, brethren, that there's other forms of government and even significant variations of these.
6. But, within Scripture, most of the governments found in the Old and NT, can generally be categorized as a monarchy or republic.
7. For example, the Babylonian and Medo-Persian kingdoms were a monarchy, while the Roman empire was (most of the time) a republic (notice two things about the state).
8. (1) Its origin—that is, who invented the idea of government? Where did the notion of the state originate?
9. Well, plainly put, the origin of the state is God! God created government for the general good of society.
10. Rom.13:1—"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."
11. Governing authorities are from and appointed by God—they are not the invention of fallen and foolish man.
12. When governing authorities began has been debated—most Christians trace their formal beginning to Genesis 9.
13. Gen.9:1—"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'"
14. This is a repetition of the original mandate given to Adam in paradise—humanity (in some sense) is starting over.
15. And yet there would be some evident changes within this society to ensure it doesn't end as the previous one.
16. Gen.9:6—"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man."
17. This is likely the formal origin of the state—"by man his blood shall be shed"—who is meant by "man"?
18. Well, we know it does not refer to man as a vigilante but instead to man as a societal governing authority.

19. We know this because the NT tells us that "the sword" has been entrusted to the governing authorities (Rom.13:4).
20. The sword (which refers to capital punishment) has not been entrusted to individual men or vigilantes.
21. Now, admittedly, we aren't given any details in Genesis 9 as to how government is to be specifically ordered.
22. I personally think this is intentional, as it makes allowance for a variety of governing forms or structures.
23. Simply put, governing authority originates with God not man—governing authority is God's minister.
24. (2) Its purpose—the purpose of the state is rather simple—it is designed by God to punish evil doers.
25. Rom.13:4—"he (the governing authority) is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil."
26. 1Pet.2:13-14—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 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."
27. This is a very important point—the primary purpose of the state is to punish those who practice evil.
28. This is the fundamental purpose of government—to punish evil, encourage good, and promote social decency.
29. It's for this reason, and this is only my opinion, our own government seeks to do too much—it's too big.
30. People look to the government for too much—it's developed into something it was never intended to be.
31. Here's the irony—while it seeks to do too much, it often fails to do what it was created for and that is, punish evildoers.

II. What Responsibility do Christians have to the State?

1. While a Christian's responsibility to the state is varied, I want to briefly suggest three primary duties.
2. (1) Gratitude—by this I mean, Christians should be grateful for God's common grace in giving government.
3. Now, let me quickly clarify—this doesn't deny that many governments are corrupt and persecute Christians.
4. But I am here speaking in general—Christians, in general, need to give thanks to God for this restraint.
5. Furthermore, this is especially true of us who've been born and raised in the United States of America.
6. Brethren, God determines who will live where, and so we need to be thankful God determined we would live here.
7. And this true regardless how you got here—if you forcefully or willingly came, or if you were born here.
8. Either way, you are here now, and this is ultimately speaking, because of the sovereign providence of God.
9. Acts 17:26—"God has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings."

10. I've become increasingly convinced; most citizens of this country need to visit other countries in the world.
11. Brethren, simply put, there are few governments in this world, better structured than the one in this country.
12. I often wish there was a way we could ship every person under 30 to live in Korea, China, Cuba, or Germany.
13. I assure you, if you lived in any of these places for one year, you would have more gratitude for the US.
14. This doesn't mean there isn't many problems with our country—we are not perfect but we are privileged.
15. (2) Obedience, Rom.13:1—"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."
16. 1Pet.2:13-14—"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 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."
17. Because the state has been instituted by God, it acts with an invested authority that comes from God.
18. As you know, there are three realms of authority, the home, church, and state, and each one is from God.
19. And while there is some overlap between these, generally speaking, they are distinct spheres of authority.
20. (3) Prayer—this I trust is an obvious responsibility—we are to pray for the nation and leaders God has placed us in.
21. 1Tim.2:1-2—"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."
22. (a) Pray for the salvation of our leaders, 1Tim.2:3-4—"For this is god and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
23. This is in part, what we are to pray for concerning our leaders—that God would save and sanctify them.
24. (b) Pray for the prosperity of the nation, v2—"that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."
25. Jer.29:7—"And seek the peace (well-being) of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in tis peace you will have peace."
26. When our nation prospers, this allows Christians to worship God and serve Him without fear or hinderance.
27. (c) Pray for forgiveness for national sins—that is, as a citizen of the nation, confess her national sins.
28. For example, in our country, we should confess sins such as abortion, materialism, greed, and thievery.
29. While Scripture nowhere expects us to confess sins of past generations, we must confess the sins of our present generation (because we all have a hand in them to some degree).
30. If we are to pray for the salvation of our leaders and prosperity of our nation, then we must also vote to elect Christians to office who will prosper the nation (put hands and feet to prayer).

III. When are Christians Permitted to Disobey the State?

1. While Christians are commanded to obey governing authorities, Scripture provides three exceptions.

2. (1) When the state commands us to disobey God—whenever the state commands us to trespass God's law.
3. This can take one of two forms—the state can command us to act contrary to the law or forbid us to fulfill the law.
4. There are two classic examples of this in Scripture—the first is found in the OT and the book of Daniel.
5. In chapter 6, the Persian king Darius, made a decree (law), for 30 days people could only pray to him.
6. Dan.6:10—"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows opened 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."
7. Here the governing authorities commanded Daniel not to pray to God for 30 days—notice, he did exactly as his custom.
8. Perhaps, someone might object—"Why not just wait 30 days? I mean, this restriction wasn't forever?"
9. Furthermore—"Why not at least pray secretly away from the window so that nobody could see him?"
10. But no! Daniel prayed everyday just as he always did! His conscious was bound! He could do no other!
11. Acts 5:29—"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'"
12. The apostles were already imprisoned, and now they were being threatened with violence if they preached Christ.
13. They could have said—"You know what? Because they are threatening us, we could take a short break."
14. Acts 5:42—"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."
15. (2) When the state commands us to harm our body or family—that is, when it forces us to act contrary to the physical and spiritual health of our family.
16. For example, let's say the government (nationally or statewide) mandated a vaccine for every citizen.
17. Would Christians be obligated to take the vaccine? I mean, doesn't the Bible say obey governing authorities?
18. Well, let me suggest the answer is NO! Christians would not be obligated to take the vaccine, and he is why.
19. There are sufficient reasons to suggest that taking vaccines could prove harmful to us or to our family.
20. And yet, someone objects—"What if the government provides experts who have proof vaccines are safe"?
21. Well, we have the obligation to examine the claims of these experts and compare them with competing experts.
22. If one group of experts say this about a subject, and another group of experts say the opposite, who should we trust?
23. Well, you see that's why we have to be diligent examiners of the actual facts, and not gullible or naive.
24. Let me clarify—at this point, I am not saying you should or should not get a vaccine, but what I am saying is this—"It's up to you to decide!"
25. If after diligent consideration of all the facts, you conclude there's sufficient evidence to suggest it may harm you or your family—refuse to take it and suffer any consequences the state gives.

26. Here's the overarching principle—the government has not right to force you to act against your well-being.
27. Every person possesses the God-given right to protect their health, and nobody can take that right away.
28. Let me give another illustration—let's say the government decides humans are putting out too much carbon dioxide.
29. And so, the experts suggest, if every person slept in a plastic tent, carbon dioxide emission would be reduced by 40%.
30. But then, what if other experts suggested, this could actually be harmful for people to inhale carbon dioxide for 8-10 hours a day?
31. Well, again, it would be up to the individual to weigh the data, and come of with a fact-based conclusion.
32. You see, the issue is rather simple—we have a God-given right to protect ourselves from possible harm.
33. And again, if someone wants to sleep in a plastic bubble through the night in order to reduce carbon dioxide emission, they are free to do so.
34. But here's my point—no one has the authority or the right, to force anyone to sleep all night in a tent.
35. Brethren, people have a right to breathe—this is a God-given right that no authority can righteously restrict.
36. Yes, the governing authority has the right to make suggestions, and yes, people have a right to comply.
37. But no person has the authority or right to force another person, to breathe-in carbon dioxide 8-10 hours every night (homeschooling is another example).
38. And so let me clarify—I am not suggesting Christians are free to disobey the state whenever they disagree with the state.
39. I disagree with the state all the time (but I still obey)—I am talking about when our health or the health of our family is jeopardized.
40. Now, the question here becomes—what Biblical principle would I base all that I've said under this second reason.
41. Well, let me suggest I can base all that I've said under this 2nd point on Ex.20:13—"You shall not murder."
42. You see, the commands of God not the negative (you shall not murder), but imply the positive (you shall preserve life).
43. Larger Catechism—"Q.135. *What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?* A. The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others."
44. Larger Catechism—"Q.136. *What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?* A. The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are (list of sins) ...whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any."
45. According to the 6th commandment, we are expected to preserve life and avoid all that would destroy it.
46. (3) When the state acts in a tyrannical manner contrary to its constitution—here I'm especially speaking to citizens of our country.
47. Brethren, it really doesn't mater what you think of our constitution, the fact is, it's our national foundation.
48. And thus, it's not wrong to expect our governing authorities to govern within the boundaries of our constitution.

49. If you remember, within the book of Acts, the apostle Paul acted within the framework of Roman law.
50. He stood on his rights as a Roman citizen—he expected his leaders to ask in harmony to their constitution.
51. And so too, it is not wrong to stand on our rights as an American citizen, and hold our leaders responsible.
52. Responsible to what? Yes, the Holy Scripture! This is the church's constitution! But we must also hold them to the constitution of the US!
53. In fact, all protesting is built upon the premise, that the government is acting contrary to its constitution.
54. For example, the Revolutionary War and Boston Tea Party are two examples of this form of disobedience.
55. Because, keep in mind, in both cases they were defying the king of England, and so, disobeying the state.
56. And so, this means Christians need to read and be familiar with the US constitution and its amendments.
57. And, Christians have the right to complain when their leaders are acting in ways contrary to this document.
58. And, at times, they may even choose to obey the constitution over corrupt leaders (national and statewide).
59. For example, what if the government decided to forbid all private citizens from owning any firearms?
60. What should we do? Well me tell you what Christians can do—they could defy or disobey the government.
61. Let me illustrate this principle this way—the governor of CA has again forbidden churches to gather for worship.
62. Now, as some of you know, John MacArthur, who pastor's a church in CA, recently wrote an open letter to his state leaders.
63. In this letter, he basically explains why his church will disobey their orders, and gather to worship God.
64. Now, if you read this letter you will find, MacArthur makes very clear why they are defying the state.
65. He says—"We are not appealing to the Constitution of the Unites States but to the Holy Word of God."
66. John MacArthur—"Therefore, in response to the recent state order requiring churches in California to limit or suspend all meetings indefinitely, we, the pastors and elders of Grace Community Church, respectfully inform our civic leaders that they have exceeded their legitimate jurisdiction, and faithfulness to Christ prohibits us from observing the restrictions they want to impose on our corporate worship services."
67. Now, I personally agree with MacArthur on everything he said and the most important reason for disobeying.
68. But, personally speaking, I think a secondary reason to disobey would be, the Constitution of the USA.
69. For as you know, freedom of religion and worship are both protected under the very First Amendment.
70. Let me clarify—freedom of worship isn't granted us by the Constitution—it's given to us by God Himself.
71. The Constitution doesn't give us this freedom, it protects it—it protects it on a national or state level.

72. Now, admittedly, knowing when and why we should disobey the state is not an easy question (let me provide you three helps).
73. Help 1—We need right information—as a Christian learn your Bible and as a citizen learn the Constitution.
74. I have learned over the last 3 or 4 months, that precious few Christians know their Bible or Constitution.
75. Christians are citizens of two countries—we are first and foremost, citizens of a heavenly country, but we are also citizens of this country.
76. And while our heavenly citizenship gets the priority, it doesn't render terminate our earthly citizenship.
77. Beyond this, we need to study every specific situation—we need to study vaccines and gun possession.
78. When our Governor makes mandator rulings about this or that, study the issues and see if they're lawful.
79. Oftentimes, what happens, well-meaning Christians will merely quote Romans 13 as if that settles it.
80. Romans 13 is certainly a starting point, but it's not the only verse in the Bible—we need right information.
81. But someone says—"Shouldn't we just believe everything our leaders tell us?"—I would say, yes, in a perfect world, but, no, in an imperfect world.
82. Larger Catechism—"The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others."
83. Help 2—We need proper motivation—not only do we need wisdom, but we need proper motivation.
84. For example, think of some of the illustrations I used—vaccines, sleeping with masks, and owning guns.
85. In making a proper decision about these matters, who not only need information but proper motivation.
86. What drives our consideration? Is it merely to wine an argument, or even worse, just to go against authority?
87. We have to be sure we are acting for the right reason! Our conscience is bound through informed study.
88. Help 3—We need abundant humiliation—that is, we need to be mindful, not all Christians think alike.
89. Not every Christian would agree with everything I've said—and that's OK—we must be patient with each other.
90. And this patience needs to go both ways—people on both sides of the issues, have to love each other.
91. We have to remember, ultimately, we obey or disobey the government out of love and allegiance to Christ.
92. As Christians, we are all a part of the same nation, have the same King, and same Constitution (Scripture).