



How Shall We Then Live? Part 2

(in re: to the govt)

1. God commands every human being to respectfully obey the government (and their deputized agents) in the place where they reside or currently exist¹ (1a "in subjection" = In respectful obedience [same word as Luk 2:51]):

1.1. Earthly govts have been established by God (1b) "instituted" = Appointed [same word as Act 22:10] (Dan 2:21, 4:17, 20). This includes: 1) His earthly sacred govt of the church – Joh 18:36w/Luk 22:29 w/Heb 12:28 [w/23 = the church]w/Mat 16:16-19 w/Joh 20:21-23; See also Act 23:1-5), 2) the evil secular govts of the world (e.g., Babylon – Dan 2:37-38, 4:27, Egypt – Exo 9:16, Rome – Joh 19:11; Hence – 1Pe 2:13-17).

Examples of deputized agents: 1) secular (president, police, court judges), 2) sacred (pastors – Tit 2:15).²

1.2. Rebelling against earthly govts (or their deputized agents) means resisting God and incurring His judgment through them (2) "judgment" = God has authorized and empowered the secular and sacred governments to carry out His wrath against those who are disobedient to their authority and laws (3-5) "bear the sword...an avenger" = Earthly govts are the instrument through which God secures justice or vengeance (Rom 12:19). This is true for the church as well (e.g., 1Co 6:1-6 [Mat 18:15-20 w/Deu 17:6-13]; Heb 10:26-30). "for the sake of conscience" = Disobedience to God's governing authorities brings also the consequence of a guilty conscience – which when operating properly, indicates corruption in the soul – an ailment that must be remedied otherwise it will lead to more serious sin (e.g., 1Ti 1:19).

1.3. Our respectful submission/obedience to them includes paying taxes as well as any other fees or payments they may require to support them and their work (6-7) "revenues" = Additional fees and payments serving as a revenue source for the govt (e.g., permits, licenses, customs/duties, tolls – Mat 9:9 "toll booth"). "honor" = Most likely a reference to financial honor (See Rom 12:10; 1Ti 5:17). God also sees as acceptable, governments demanding their citizens to financially support those employed by them/their deputized agents (e.g., ancient tax collectors [head and land taxes]: – Zacchaeus, Luk 19:1-10 [chief tax guy in the region of Jericho. A portion of what they collected went to their support]).

1.4. The only exception is when the governing authorities demand something that is sinful (Act 5:29).

(in re: to the Law)

2. Christianity is all about love because:

2.1. it is all about fulfilling the Law (8) "the law" = The entirety of God's OT laws. See verse 9, "the commandments, 'You shall not...' = The Ten Commandments. If you have the Ten Commandments then you also have the rest of the commandments since they represent what each of the ten looks like in specific cases (they are the case laws). Hence (Deu 5:31). **PNTM:** 1) Paul is concerned w/Christians obeying God's Law (which means Rom 10:4 cannot mean Christians are off the hook w/regard to obedience to the Law). 2) Obeying God's law is how we love one another (9) = Paul sees obeying God's Law as synonymous with loving others. This is also how we love our enemies - Mat 5:44 = Not they must become our friends or we must have affections for them but we must treat them righteously/according to God's Law - e.g., Rom 12:20).

2.2. You can't love people without adherence to God's laws (10) = As a logical syllogism: Premise 1) True love does no harm to others. Premise 2) The Law was established to keep us from doing harm to our neighbors. Conclusion: Love requires the Law (or the Law represents the rules for love – 1Ti 1:5-8). Consider (then) churches/Christians who reject adherence to God's Law. They are churches refusing to love others (love w/o the Law is a non sequitur).

¹ By government is meant: any entity demonstrating sovereignty or the infrastructure and ability to consistently enforce its laws in the face of local or foreign opposition. This definition of government represents a "biblical hybrid" of modern understandings or criteria of govt recognition (e.g., Montevideo Convention, Declarative Theory of Statehood). The most significant difference between modern views and the biblical record would be the fact that God sees (and has appointed) as legitimate even those governments whose current occupation and control of a particular territory is not approved of by its population or former occupying government (e.g., Israel under Babylon or Rome).

² In respect to the pastor's authority, disciple of the Apostle John, friend of Jesus' mother Mary and early church father Ignatius writes, "It is fitting that you should run together in accordance with the will of the bishop (anointed pastor) who by God's appointment rules over you...He that refuses to assemble with the church [for the judgment of the bishop] has condemned himself. Let us be careful then not to set ourselves in opposition to the bishop, in order that we may be subject to God...Beloved, be careful to be subject to the bishop and the presbyters [other elders]. For he that is subject to these is subject to Christ, who has appointed them; but he that is disobedient to them is disobedient to Christ Jesus. He that does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. For he that does not yield to his superiors is self-confident, quarrelsome and proud. God resists the proud. And the proud have greatly transgressed. The Lord says to the priests, 'He that hears you, hears Me; and he that hears Me, hears the Father that sent Me. He who despises you, despises Me; and he that despises Me, despises Him who sent Me...We ought to receive everyone whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household as we would do Him who sent him. It is manifest therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we look upon the Lord Himself...It is becoming therefore, that you also should be obedient to your bishop, and contradict him in nothing; for it is a fearful thing to contradict any such person. For no one does [by such conduct] deceive him that is visible, but does in reality seek to mock Him who is invisible. And every such act has respect not to man, but God."

3. The other reason Christians need to be concerned about obeying to God's Law is because our obedience after becoming a Christian now weighs heavily in our final assessment before God (11-12) "Besides this" = Besides obedience to the Law being necessary to loving others, it is also necessary to our salvation. The Law - or our obedience to it represents the deeds/criteria used by God on Judgment Day to determine whether or not we were faithful to the covenant (whether or not we were faithful to our vow of faithfulness ["faith"]) - Rev 20:11-15 "what they had done" = Were they obedient/disobedient to God's Law?. "the hour has come for you to wake from sleep...The night is far gone; the day is at hand" = There is no more time to waste not taking our sin seriously (being asleep in spiritual darkness – making our "10"s into "2"s; 1Pe 4:3). "salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" = Idiomatic way of saying, "the certainty of our salvation is being determined more now (in our day-to-day Christian lives), than when we got baptized (first believed and were justified). "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" = Our faith alone will not be enough to save us. We must also be characterized by taking action ("cast off...put on" = Aorist [continued action]) in respect to what is sinful ("works of darkness") and what is righteous ("armor of light").

4. Two major keys to obeying God's Law are:

4.1. the avoidance of all those things/activities that impair our thinking, inflame our feelings or corrupt our wills (13) "Let us walk properly as in the daytime" = Let us live lives characterized by obedience to God's Law which includes the avoidance of the three things/activities established in Paul's three couplets: **1) impaired thinking:** "orgies" = Most likely not a reference not to sexual parties but popular Roman (or pagan) religious services often conducted at night and involving the use of alcohol to produce ecstatic forms of worship similar to modern day Pentecostal services (trance like chanting, unintelligible speech, chaotic bodily movement and occasional vomiting).³ Hence Paul's coupling of this word ("orgies") with "drunkenness." Access to the spiritual realm was believed to be achieved through impairment of one's mind (Pro 23:33; Pro 31:4-7). **Examples of other things to avoid that impair thinking:** Dependency on opioids, marijuana, lack of sleep. All have been shown to not only impair thinking, but possibly lead to long-term thinking problems (shrinking of the brain, dementia, Alzheimer's disease). How impaired thinking leads to sin/disobedience: you won't obey what you don't understand or think incorrectly about (Isa 5:13; Jer 4:22; Mat 13:15 "dull" = impaired; Eph 4:17-18). **2) inflamed feelings:** "not in sexual immorality" = Avoidance of all things related to or encouraging this capital crime. IOW: avoiding those things that inflame our feelings – most especially those things which are sexual in nature (e.g., entertaining sexual thoughts, viewing or listening to sexually-stimulating media: movies, music etc). Inflammation w/respect to our feelings is most common among those who obey their feelings – i.e., those not avoiding "sensuality" (2Pe 2:18 [NAS] "by fleshly desires, by sensuality" [apposition]; Gal 5:19. = Sensuality is a sin). Sociological studies show that sensuality (life det'd by our feelings) or the constant inflammation of our feelings – even when not specifically related to sexual things – more than often leads in the direction of sexual acts (e.g., gluttony stimulates sexual drive)⁴. This is true even among the animal kingdom – creatures who live completely based on their feelings (e.g., food supply determines sexual activity/birth rates). Hence the reason Peter compares such people (those living according to their feelings) to animals (2Pe 2:10 w/12). **How then to avoid inflaming our feelings and the sexual immorality/disobedience that follows:** Practice self-control/stop saying "yes" to your flesh in the little things (Act 24:25; Luk 16:10). Also, get rid of your addictions (anything that you will sin to keep is an addiction – e.g., drugs, alcohol, food, video games). By nature, all addictions inflame the feelings/identify us as people enslaved to our feelings. **3) corrupted wills:** "quarreling and jealousy" = According to James, jealousy is a main cause of quarreling/sinful fighting (Jam 4:1 w/3:16; See Mat 27:18). The spark however, setting this doomed sequence of disobedient behavior in motion is a corrupted will: the fulfillment of your will (or way) is more important than God's will or way. Your main mission/motive in life is self not God (Jam 4:2-3). Adopting this as our life's mission/motive is diametrically opposed to God's prescribed purpose and laws: everything for the advancement of His glory and kingdom (Rom 11:36). Corrupted wills also happen to those Christians whose loyalties/mission is divided ("one foot in the world, one in the church"). Only those putting God first in their mission and motives are His friends (Jam 4:4 w/8 "Draw near to God" = Make Him your main mission/motive in living). Notice putting God first (versus possessing selfish or corrupted wills) requires the removal of two things: 1) the removal of sinful habits/deeds ("cleanse your hands you sinners = Hands a metaphor for deeds), 2) the removal of doubt w/respect to God and His Word ("purify your hearts, you double-minded" = Hearts are a metaphor for our wills, double-minded a reference to doubts – See Jam 1:8). In summary, you will possess a corrupted will (one not fully committed to God) as long as you hold on to sinful habits and doubts. **Example of a sinful habit to avoid that is associated w/both doubt and disobedience:** You do not schedule counseling/call pastor to resolve your doubts, to help you find the answers in God's Word. Removing doubts is a part of renewing our minds (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23).

4.2. the replication of the person of Jesus in the person of us (14) "put on" [ἐνδύω = to clothe or completely cover – Mat 22:11; Mar 1:6; Luk 24:49] = To replicate – or produce a close copy – captures this idea when the garment/clothing is the person of Jesus. The fact that we (or our person) are wrapped in His person however means that this replicate will carry the unique aspect of seeing not simply a living example of Christ, but what His person looks like when embodied and expressed in the unique person that God has made each of us. It means not the loss of our identity, but seeing to it that our identity is shaped exclusively by Jesus. Hence the reason the followers of Jesus are called "Christians" (Literally, "little christ"). This then is the other necessary key to obeying God's Law – or conquering what stands in its way – the "flesh" or the gratification of our "desires." Our job is to be the full-time understudies of Jesus (in theater, an understudy is someone who studies every aspect of another actor so as to function as their replacement). **A great place to start in our endeavor to become Jesus' replicate/understudy:** In all things, WWJD?

³ For example see "Why Roman Orgies Weren't Really A Thing" by Spencer McDaniel (talesoftimesforgotten.com)

⁴ For example, "Female sexual behavior is inhibited by short-and long-term food restriction" (Gill, C.J. and Rissman, E.F.; Physiology and Behavior)