

Be Subject to Principalities and Powers

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Straight Paths Bible Church

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

- I. A Christian's duty to a civil government is a very important and a very difficult matter.
 - A. Christians profess allegiance to Christ above all others.
 1. He is our lawgiver, our Lord, and our Judge.
 2. Obedience to God is first and when man's laws contradict the laws of God we are not to submit to them.
 - B. The kingdom of Christ exists all over the world and it has been reared up amid other kingdoms, which are of this world.
 - C. This has always been the cause of fear and suspicion among the rulers of this world that the real goal of Christians is to set up their kingdom and do away with the kingdoms of this world.
 - D. This is not the goal of Christians now as they live in this world, but it will be accomplished by Christ himself when He sets us his millennial kingdom here on earth.
 - E. It is unsettling and disturbing for rulers when they know their subjects have their allegiance somewhere else and not in them.
 - F. Since it is such a complicated and difficult matter we need to have some principles from which to work and some guidelines to keep us in God's will in this matter.
 - G. If we refuse to submit to the government, or any other God-ordained authority, we must make sure that we are not doing it out of selfish interests and rebellion because that puts us in the same class as the wicked.
- II. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers.
 - A. To be subject means to regard their authority - not to be in rebellion.
 1. Rebellion against authority is always spoken of as evil and condemned in very strong terms in the Bible.

1 Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,

- B. It is a part of setting things in order.
 1. For Christians to exempt themselves from any authority but God shows no regard for all of humanity that is around them who are not submitted to God, but are being forced to submit to earthly government.
 2. It is like saying to them, "I don't have to submit to them, but you do."
- C. It is God himself who ordains these authorities and the Bible calls them "God's ministers."
 1. This is a truth that we need to understand well.

Romans 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 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: 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. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are

God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

2. This does not mean that God approves of their character, morals, or behavior, but they are appointed by God to accomplish God's purposes in people and nations.

Daniel 2:21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

Daniel 4:17 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that 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.

3. The government is God's judgement or blessing on the people of the land.
- D. We have abundant examples in the Bible of how people of God handled the situation when they had to live under an ungodly government.
1. David under Saul.
 2. Mordecai and Esther under Ahasuerus
 3. Elijah under Ahab and Jezebel
 4. Jeremiah, Isaiah, and the other prophets under vile and wicked kings
 5. Joseph and Mary under Herod
 6. Jesus himself
 7. The Apostles under the Romans
- E. None of these ever made it their goal to overthrow the government, but they did refuse to submit to some of the commands that were given.
1. They did refuse to obey direct commands that went against what God had told them to do.

Acts 5:27-29 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

2. They did refuse to surrender and submit to arrest when the goal of the government was to stop them from promoting their Christian faith.

2 Corinthians 11:32-33 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

- F. We can consider this in light of some of God's other commands such as honoring father and mother, and wives submitting to their own husbands.
1. A child honors their parents by living an honorable life before others.
 2. A child cannot honor ungodly parents by praising traits which they do not have - that is lying.
 3. A wife is not expected to submit to a husband who beats her and threatens her life and her children's lives.
 4. God does not expect us to submit to tyranny and abuse either.
 5. But the business of our life ought to be about the kingdom of God and not about changing, overthrowing, or setting up the government.