

Thinking Biblically About Governmental Authority

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 June 2020

Preacher: Fred Stone

- [0 : 00] If you were asked by someone, tell me a leader, tell me someone that you're aware of, you've read about from history, from today, who has made an important or memorable political statement.
- Don't answer out loud, but who comes to mind? Think about it for a moment. Who has made a statement that really got your attention? It said something of substance about, it was a political statement.
- Well, I'm thinking a lot of people in this room, you're thinking of a president of the United States, maybe some other politician. I think of Ronald Reagan about memorable statements.
- A writer or a historian, some of you may be thinking. I used to read the column of William Buckley a lot. I've read some of his articles, some of the articles in the National Review, the magazine he founded many years ago.
- As you think about people, leaders of whatever, from whatever background, who have made memorable, important political statements.
- [1 : 24] Did Jesus come to mind? He really would not be high on most people's lists of political statements.
- Because that's not why he came into this world. But, Kent Hughes, a pastor and author, says that we should think of Jesus.
- And he points to a statement that Jesus made in response to a question about paying taxes. Look at this. It's from Matthew chapter 22.
- Here was the question Jesus was asked. Tell us then, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?
- Look at the response. But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?
- [2 : 21] Show me the coin for the tax. And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? And they said, Caesar's.
- Then he said to them, Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, And to God the things that are God's. And Hughes says that last statement, you see right there on the screen.
- Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And to God the things that are God's. He says that's the most important political statement ever made for this reason.
- Look. With this single sentence, Our Lord established the validity of human government, While at the same time setting its limits.
- Jesus, in that statement, Makes it clear. Human government has a place in this world. It is important. We need to recognize that.
- [3 : 23] Submit to that. Even Jesus paid taxes. But human government is limited government.

It is limited under God who has ordained it. We'll look at a little bit about that a little bit later. Our country right now is in desperate need of a reminder, Or for some people, An introduction to the importance of recognizing And respecting authority in general.

And the authority of government in particular. Now, what we're going to do in this message this morning, That means, It's important for us to show respect to our government leaders, And law enforcement officers, Who are agents of our government, Charged with the responsibility of enforcing the laws in our country.

Now, where that comes from, In scripture, Is going to be very clear. It's Romans 13. Romans 13 provides the most detailed statement, Or description, Of the authority of government, That you'll find anywhere in the Bible.

The most detailed description. And I want us to look at it. The first five verses of Romans 13. Paul is writing, Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.

[4 : 53] For there is no authority except from God. And those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities, Resists what God has appointed.

And those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, But to bad. Would you have no fear of the one in authority?

Then do what is good, And you'll receive his approval. For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid. For he does not bear the sword in vain.

For he is the servant of God, An avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore, one must be in subjection, Not only to avoid God's wrath, But also for the sake of conscience.

This passage, as you see, It explains the God-given authority of human government, And our responsibility to submit to it, And even support it.

[6 : 04] Let's look at it. First, God calls us to submit to governmental authority. Paul gives us two reasons. Let's look at the first one in verses 1 and 2. The authority of government has been established by God.

The authority of government, The authority of the state, Has been established by God. Look at how strongly Paul makes that point. First, For there is no authority except from God.

Then, Those that exist have been instituted by God. And number three, Therefore, whoever resists the authorities, Resists what God has appointed.

These statements are clear that God has called everyone, Everyone, To be submissive to governmental authority.

Now that includes for us, We can think about it like this. We need to obey the law of the land. We need to know what the laws are, And we need to obey them. Obey them.

[7 : 03] We don't have to lock them all. We don't have to agree with them all. Obeying the laws of the land. It also means submitting to the authority of those who enforce the laws, Like law enforcement officers, Judges, And anyone else who is charged with the responsibility of enforcing the law.

Now, I know, I know, That the idea of submitting to authority, Like this, The authority of law enforcement officers, That's not a popular subject right now.

Many people have responded to the abuse of authority, By a few officers, By rebelling against all authority.

So I want us to just deal with the question right here and there. What should we do with government or law enforcement officers, Who abuse their authority?

What should we do? We see what's happening throughout our country. Well, I want us to understand this is not a new problem. This is not a new question that people, And especially Christians, Have asked.

[8 : 21] Paul wrote this while living under a Roman government that was hostile to Christianity. Paul didn't know what it was like to live in a government for the people, By the people, Something like that.

Nero was the Roman emperor. He is known, Notorious for ordering the persecution of Christians. Paul even died, Most likely, Tradition tells us, Under that kind of persecution.

Throughout history, Human government has failed to be just and good, Probably more times than not. I think the former chaplain of the U.S. Senate, Richard Halverson, Helps us to answer the question, Excuse me.

What about when authority is abused? Look at what he said. To be sure, Men will abuse and misuse the institution of the state, Just as man, Because of sin, Has abused and misused every other institution in history, Including the church of Jesus Christ.

But this does not mean that the institution is bad, Or that it should be forsaken. It simply means that men are sinners, And rebels in God's world, And this is the way they behave, With good institutions.

[9 : 50] As a matter of fact, It is because of this very sin, That there must be human government, To maintain order, Until the final and ultimate rule, Of Jesus Christ is established.

Let's think, Even though some governmental authorities, Have failed to administer justice properly, Properly.

The solution is not, To reject all government authority. That would result in chaos, In lawlessness, In violence, And that's anarchy.

Over the last month or so, We have seen what happens, When the police and National Guard, Are either not able, Or not allowed, To keep law and order.

We have seen, Angry mobs, Riot, In the streets, Burn down buildings, Loot stores, And injure, And even kill, Innocent people.

[11 : 07] That's been happening in this country. Everybody's aware of it. In Seattle, Washington, Radical extremists, Have taken over part of the city, Part of the downtown city, And the liberal mayor, And governor, Have not allowed the police, Or the National Guard, To restore order.

They didn't allow it to be prevented, And they are not allowing, Order to be restored. Some so-called leaders, Have even commended, These terrorist type individuals, Or made excuses for them, And the way they have destroyed businesses, Terrorized citizens, And killed at least, One innocent person.

It should be clear, To normal, Logical thinking people, That those who are calling, For police departments, To be defunded, Are fools.

Absolute, Fools, Who call for, Police departments, To be defunded, In effect, Disbanded.

Minneapolis City Council, Here's an example, Of why they should be called fools. Minneapolis City Council, Voted unanimously last week, To defund, The city's police department.

[12 : 43] But several members, Of that city council, Have since been assigned, Private security guards, At a cost of \$4,500 a day, In taxpayer dollars.

Now I want you to think about that. Think about what's happening, In an American city. These council members, Defunded, The police department, That provided for their security, Every day, As a part of their normal, Responsibilities.

They will then go out, And hire private, A private security, That has less training, Less experience, Less accountability, To provide that same, Security, For themselves.

They don't want the police, But they want what the police, Does. And so the, Absolute fools, Defund, Well trained, Police, And hire, Private security, To protect themselves.

They're afraid, To live without law and order. But they're so stupid, As to abolish, The normal government, Sanctioned, Sanctioned, Police department, That throughout the country, Is given the responsibility, Of enforcing, The laws.

[14 : 28] That great philosopher, Forrest Gump, Was right. Stupid is, As stupid does. Now, Even though, Our government leaders, Who make the laws, And the law enforcement officers, Who are authorized, To enforce the laws, Are far from perfect.

And they are. We are far better off, With them, Than we would be, Without them. But I want to be quick to say, This does not mean, That we overlook, Leaders, Or law enforcement officers, Who do wrong.

Leaders, Leaders, And officers, Who break the laws, And fail to administer, Justice, Properly, Should be removed, And should be punished, Under the law.

The policeman, That killed George Floyd, Was rightfully, Fired, Immediately, After his actions, Became known. He was rightfully, Charged with murder, As quickly, As the legal system, Allowed.

Here's what, I want to make clear, And it has been clear, But people are not listening. Law enforcement, Leaders, And officers, Throughout the country, Have condemned, That man, That rogue, Killer, Police officer, And anyone like him, Who fails to protect, And serve their community, The right way.

[16 : 12] As far as I know, No governmental authority, No police leaders, Have defended him, In any way.

Government leaders, Law enforcement officers, Agree, That every human being, Deserves justice, And equal treatment, Under the law, By, All law enforcement officers, And when that does not happen, It demands, A rational, And lawful response, But never, Is it justified, To have an irrational, Unlawful response, Like we've seen, Happen, All over the country, This past month, With riots, And looting, Now I want to be clear, Injustice, Can never be, Tolerated, Anyone who breaks the law, Government leaders, Law enforcement officers, Private citizens,

And rioters, And looters, Should be punished, Under the law, That is what is right, Before God, Now, Let's sort of pause here, It should be pointed out, That all human authority, Is always subordinate, To God's authority, Look at verse, One and two again, Let every person, Be subject to the governing authorities, For there is no authority, Except from God, And those that exist, Have been instituted, By God, Therefore, Whoever resists the authorities, Resists what God has appointed, Now think about that for a moment, That means, If we ever face, A situation, Let me back up a minute, God has appointed, Has ordained, That there be human,

Human authority, Government, State, Sanctioned, Authority, But it's under him, It's under his authority, It's under his word, That he's revealed, About himself, About life, If we ever face a situation, Where our only choice, Is either to obey God's word, And disobey man's law, Or to obey man's law, And disobey God's word, If we're going to be faithful, We must obey God's word, And disobey man's law, That's how the early church leaders, Responded, When they were ordered, Stop preaching, In the name of Jesus, Stop preaching the gospel, They were charged, By Jesus himself, The word they heard, From the Lord, Go into all the world, And make disciples, Be my witness, And that's what they were doing,

So when they were ordered, To stop, They had no choice, But what they, Are well known now, For saying, In Acts chapter five, We must obey God, Rather than men, So there are exceptions, But these exceptions, Do not void the point, That Paul was making, In Romans 13, What we as Christians, Need to understand, Is that God has established, Government authority, In this world, And government authority, In the hands of human beings, Will always be flawed, It will always be imperfect, We don't accept that, We try to do better, But as God's people, We must submit, To that authority, Work to change, What needs to be changed, Work to correct, What needs to be corrected, But we cannot, Reject authority, Because the result will be, Anarchy, Chaos,

[20 : 28] Lawlessness, As we have seen, Even in our own country, In recent times, Now Paul gives us, Another reason for submitting, In verses three, Through five, Look at this, The ministry of government, Has been assigned by God, I'm using the word, Ministry here, For a purpose, Look at this, Paul emphasizes, The government's ministry, Servanthood, Just as he did, Government's authority, Note again, Three statements, For he is God's servant, God's minister, For your good, For he is the servant of God, An avenger who carries out, God's wrath on the wrongdoer, For the authorities are, Ministers of God, Paul describes, Governmental authorities, Government leaders, In whatever capacity, Law enforcement officers,

Who carry out, The laws, Or enforce the laws, They're servants of God, In this world, You think about, Our elected leaders, Think about judges, Think about, Think about law enforcement officers, Some are Christians, Many are not, Some would be, Some would be, Some would be, Of another religion, But they are, Many of them, Unconsciously, And all of them, Imperfectly, They're serving, God's purpose, Of administering, Justice, In this world, I want you to notice, In verse four, What, Some people would consider, A hard statement, The phrase, Bear the sword, Emphasizes, The authority of government,

To punish law, Lawbreakers, Even to the point, Of exercising, Deadly force, Capital punishment, Or even waging, A just war, This word, Translated sword here, It's used in other places, In the New Testament, To describe a sword, That killed people, You can see on the screen there, Some references, If you want to write them down, And look them up, When Paul says, That government in general, Is authorized, To bear the sword, He means, That God has given government, The authority, To use the sword, For the purpose, For which it was used, In the first century, To kill, If necessary, Not murder, But to kill, If necessary, Now this would apply, To the governments, Having the authority, To wage a just war, Not to be the aggressor,

But to be, Involved in, Protecting people, Administering justice, Administer capital punishment, And even the, Use of deadly force, In policing, When absolutely, Necessary, You know, I don't know how, Many law enforcement officers, You know, Been around, I grew up in a family, Where my dad was involved, In law enforcement, All my life, Till he retired, I've been around, Law enforcement officers, My entire life, I want you to know, That they do not, Want, To ever use, Deadly force, That is not something, That they desire, Long for, Most law enforcement officers, In this country, Never fire their weapon, In the line of duty, That is a fact, We also see,

In this passage, That God intends, For government, To be his, Look at this, Avenger, Who carries out, God's wrath, On the wrongdoer, God, Uses governmental authority, To execute his wrath, On people who do wrong, People who break the law, He does this, This is how he serves, Justice, We don't have the right, To do that as individuals, Get even with people, But we give this, To government authority, To be done, Fairly, Justly, Hopefully without, A lot of emotion involved, Every government official, And law enforcement officer, Needs to be held, To the highest level, Of accountability, To ensure, That they are, Administering justice, Appropriately, To all people, At all times, That's a given, But every citizen,

[25 : 34] Of this country, Needs to understand, That if they break the law, They will be, Pursued, And they will be, Punished, And government authorities, Have the, Authority, The biblical authority, To use, Appropriate, Force, Along with the responsibility, To exercising, Appropriate, Restraint, As they, Enforce the law, Now, God, Has ordained, Government, He calls government, To exercise, Authority in this world, For our good, For the good of those, Who desire to, Uphold the law, But I want you to look at, One more thing, Before we leave this morning, God calls us, To conscientiously, Obey, Government, Government, Authority, Look back at verse 5 again, We find in verse 5, That we are to support,

The government, Not just because, We're afraid of being punished, Not just because, We're afraid of being caught, But because it's the right, Thing to do, Look at verse 5, Therefore, One must be in subjection, Not only to avoid, God's wrath, But also, For the sake, Of conscience, As Christians, We should believe this, What we've been looking at this morning, It should be within us, To know, That laws, Are good, Are helpful, It brings order, Safety, Security, To a society, To a group of people, And so, We should desire, Within us, As people of God, With the Spirit of God within us, We should desire, To obey the law, To cooperate, As long as we're not called upon, To sin against God,

To cooperate with, Government leaders, Obeying governmental authority, Is simply a part of our obedience to God, It is the right thing to do, It is a good thing, For us to do, And so, Paul appeals to us, Not just because you'll be punished, But as a Christian, It should be a part of your conscience, Could it be something you want to do, As a child of God, Obey, God given authority, Now, I want us to wind this whole thing up, This morning by looking at, Or thinking about, While God does exercise, His power and His purpose, Through proper government authorities, His greatest demonstration of power, Is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ, That's how I want us to end today, God works through His spirit, And His word, To change people's lives, From the inside out, What we've been looking at this morning,

The truth, The cold hard facts, Just reading that, Is not going to change anyone, It's not going to make anything better, But the spirit of God, Working in a Christian, Opens our eyes to see, This is what's right, This is what, God has ordained, This is what pleases God, This can bring change, To Christians, Across this country, Of all denominations, Of all races, Of all socioeconomic levels, The Lord changes people, One by one, Individually, From the inside, From the heart, And as He changes us, Individually, He changes our community, And as He changes communities, He changes, Our nation, This is what we need to focus on, We need to pray for,

God to work in Christians lives, To see the truth, About authority, About submitting to it, About enforcing laws, Justly and fairly, Cal Thomas is a political columnist, And a committed Christian, He has a helpful word, About this, For all Christians, In this country, I want you to look at what he says, He says, I think we need to go back, To the fundamentals, There is nothing more powerful, Than an individual believer, Sold out to Christ, And committed to his own family, Her own neighborhood, His own school, And one's own environment, If enough people catch this, Which is really the message, Of the first century church, Then the possibility of revival, Of real national need, Will be increased, We must never forget, That our first and foremost, Citizenship, Is in the kingdom of God,

[30 : 42] And we need to demonstrate, That we are a part of the kingdom of God, By the way that we live, The way that we talk, The way that we show, That Jesus Christ, Has made a difference in our lives, If we really want to have, A stronger influence, And impact, On people around us, Let's live like Christians, Let's share the gospel, Let's pray that God will work, To change hearts and minds, Which will in turn, Change attitudes, And words and actions, This is how we'll be the best citizens, This is how we can best, Live under the authority, Of the government, As faithful, Committed, Followers of Jesus, Let's pray together, Dear God, We pray right now, That you will work in our lives, To show us that we need to have,

The right attitude toward government, Law enforcement officers, Authority in general, We pray, Father, That you will work, Through your word, Through your spirit, Throughout our country, To cause Christians, To realize, What we've been looking at this morning, To live like Christians, In this way, We pray, We pray, Father, That you would so work, To cause rational thinking people, Believers and unbelievers, To see that, Lawlessness, Rejection and rebellion, Against authority, Will only lead to chaos, And more lawlessness, And increasing violence, We pray, Father, That you will cause people in this country, To reject that, To reject anarchy,

Help Christians to lead the way, Help us, Father, To find, More common ground, Give us wisdom, Throughout the country, Men and women, Young people, Help us to collectively, Act wisely, In our communities, In our towns, In our states, Lord, If there are people in this room, Who, Need to change some attitudes, Show them, Help them to see, What needs to change, Lord, If there are people in this room, Who do not know Jesus, As their Lord and Savior, Call them to faith in Jesus, Now, But help us all,

To obey you, And respond to what you are saying to us, Through your word and spirit, Let's just pray, And listen to the Lord, And respond, Thanks for listening.

We'll see you tonight, Like, ■■■■, Underlife, And I■■■■■■■■ on my side, And follow on my way, tocar on and ■ress, And listen to the things, What are you saying to you, That is eai, That is the most important thing, And a bomb, You choose to do, Or go out persuasion, and friendships, And I go down to this, And then, Come into this room, And today, And now,