

I. Submission and Meekness

- A. Submission to authority requires humility and meekness:
 - 1. This applies to all forms of authority, whether governmental or within the local church.
 - 2. True submission isn't just about outward compliance; it's about an inner posture of respect and willingness to follow.

- B. Wisdom from heaven is characterized by yielding:
 - 1. In James 3, heavenly wisdom is described as being pure, peace-loving, and submissive.
 - 2. Wisdom that comes from heaven has a yielding and submissive component.

- C. Understanding meekness through Jesus' teaching:
 - 1. Jesus stated, "Blessed are the meek" (Matthew 5:5), highlighting meekness as a blessed and valued trait in the kingdom of God.
 - 2. Meekness is often misunderstood as weakness or passivity, but it actually involves restrained strength.

- D. Meekness illustrated as strength under control:
 - 1. True meekness can be compared to a skilled swordsman who chooses to keep their sword sheathed.
 - 2. Though fully capable of exerting force, they willingly restrain themselves, exercising strength through self-control.
 - 3. This restraint demonstrates a choice to act with patience and kindness rather than reacting with power or aggression.

- E. Applying meekness and submission in our lives:
 - 1. When submitting to authority, our attitude matters as much as our actions.
 - 2. Choosing a posture of meekness reflects wisdom, humility, and alignment with God's character.
 - 3. This approach allows us to respond thoughtfully rather than impulsively, showing respect for God's order and for others.

II. Tools we can use

- A. Apostle Paul's Example of Utilizing His Rights:
 - 1. In Acts 22 and Acts 25, Paul strategically used his Roman citizenship to navigate legal challenges.
 - 2. By appealing to his rights, he protected himself and advanced his mission, showing that even within authority structures, there are tools we can use to advocate effectively.

- B. Our Tools in Engaging with Authority:
Today, we have various tools to engage responsibly with authority, including:
- **Petitions** to express collective concerns.
 - **Writing letters** to communicate directly with leaders and decision-makers.
 - **Making phone calls** to voice opinions respectfully.
 - **Voting** to influence governance through democratic means.
- C. Paul's Approach as a Model for Us:
Paul's example demonstrates how to use these tools effectively but with a heart aligned to God's character.
He approached each situation with a **posture of meekness, humility, and honor** toward the authorities.
This mindset ensured that while he asserted his rights, he did so in a way that reflected respect for God and others.
- D. Using Our Tools Wisely:
Our goal in using these tools should be to seek positive change while maintaining a Christ-like attitude.
Following Paul's example, we should engage with authority not from a place of defiance, but with a balanced spirit of respect and wisdom.

III. The Spiritual Significance of Rebellion

1 Samuel 15:1-23

This is a harsh word.

- A. God gave Saul a clear and specific directive:
Saul was instructed to destroy all the Amalekites and their possessions completely.
Saul followed God's directive, but only about 90% of the way:
He preserved some of the plunder, believing it could be used as a sacrifice to God.
Saul assumed partial obedience would be acceptable to God, thinking it would make up for his lack of full compliance.
- B. Key lessons from Saul's disobedience:
Partial obedience is still disobedience: Following God's instructions fully is essential.
Avoid presumption: We cannot assume our ideas or intentions will excuse us from obeying God's exact commands.
Understanding is not a prerequisite for obedience: Even if we don't fully understand God's instructions, we are called to follow them exactly.
- C. Reflecting on obedience and resistance:
When we resist God's direction, are we truly listening to His voice?
Are our actions led by what God is speaking, or are they influenced by personal offense or self-will?

- D. Listening to God requires strategy:
Hearing God's voice is not just about receiving His words but acting upon them.
True obedience involves:
Seeing what God is doing,
Hearing what He is saying,
Doing what He commands.

- E. Importance of full obedience:
God expects complete obedience, not partial effort.
His words and commands carry precise meaning and purpose.
Disobedience out of arrogance or self-will is equated to witchcraft, which goes against the spirit of His kingdom.

- F. Our posture toward earthly authority and leaders:
When we disagree with government actions, we should respond not with anger or defiance, but with humility and meekness.
Honoring the Lord means approaching challenges in a spirit of submission to His ways.

- G. Lessons in honoring God:
David's example reminds us: "How can I give to God that which costs me nothing?" (1 Chronicles 21:24)
The assignments God gives us are serious and require full commitment.

- H. Our calling and responsibility:
The call to reach the lost is of utmost importance.
Our prayer for government leaders should be for them to come to know the truth.

IV. Called to a Spirit of Meekness and Humility, Not Accusation

- A. We are instructed to act with meekness and humility, avoiding a stance of accusation or judgment.
Revelation 12:10 highlights that there is an accuser who stands before God, accusing believers day and night.
This accuser directs accusations not only at us but also at leaders, such as our Prime Minister, pastors, and every believer.

- B. Avoiding Alignment with the Accuser:
We must be cautious not to align ourselves with the accuser's spirit, especially when situations around us seem negative or challenging.
Instead of echoing accusations, we are called to respond with patience, grace, and prayerful concern.
Speaking in humility keeps us from becoming part of the accusations that work against God's kingdom.

Recap

A. Rebellion Viewed as Witchcraft:

God regards rebellion as comparable to witchcraft; it goes against His authority and order.

Maintaining a humble and obedient heart is crucial to walking in alignment with God's will.

Obedience involves more than hearing—it requires having eyes to see, ears to hear, and the courage to act on God's guidance.

B. Taking God's Assignments Seriously:

Every assignment God gives us is significant and should be approached with reverence and dedication.

We cannot fulfill God's purposes from a spirit of accusation but must operate from humility and meekness.

In all we do, we should seek to embody Christ's spirit, aiming to build up and honor others, rather than tear down through criticism or accusation.

V. Examples of Permitted or Blessed Rebellion

A. The Bible does give us a handful of examples of rebellion or resistance that appear to be permitted or even blessed. Looking at these examples can give us an idea of when such a response may be embraced, and how we could walk out such an act.

B. Examples of "sanctified rebellion":

1. The Hebrew midwives and parents of Moses, who preserved the male Hebrew infants, who Pharaoh had ordered to be murdered at birth (Ex. 1:15 – 2:10)
2. Mordecai, who refused to bow before Haman though the king had commanded it (Est 3:1-6)
3. Esther, who appeared before the king though she wasn't summoned (Est 4)
4. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused the food and wine of the Babylonian court (Dan. 1:1-16)
5. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to bow down before Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue (Dan. 3)
6. Daniel, who disobeyed the law about praying only to King Darius (Dan. 6)
7. The wise men, who did not return to Herod after seeing Jesus and being warned in a dream (Mt. 2:1-12)
8. Peter and John, when ordered by the Sanhedrin to no longer speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:1-22)
9. The apostles, when arrested by the high priest and Sadducees for preaching Jesus and performing signs and wonders in His name (Acts 5:12-42)

10. Paul, whose preaching was interpreted as rebellion against Caesar (Acts 16:16 - 17:9)
11. The ones who are resurrected to reign with Christ in the millennium, who are noted to have refused to worship the Beast, his image, and to receive his mark (Rev. 13 – 14:5; 20:1-6)

C. Each of these examples of resistance have one of the following conditions in common:

1. The issue was a matter of life or death (Moses, Esther, Wise Men/Jesus).
2. The issue was a matter of worship or primary allegiance (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Peter, John, the Apostles, Paul, the Resurrected Saints of Rev. 20)
 - a. The issue was a matter of conscience (Mordecai). This one is kind of a “grey area”. It requires thoughtful, sincere consideration – triage – as to whether the matter is serious enough to warrant disobedience.

D. These situations are *exceedingly rare*, at least in our cultural experience. Rebellion should not be option A, B, or even C for the people of God. But when it is required, there are two characteristics of that rebellion that are consistent in each of the examples noted above.

1. It is characterized as “civil disobedience”, and not revolution. In each example, the act of resistance was not an act of rage against the offending authorities, but an act of submission to God’s authority. It is bold, but not belligerent. It is always done in meekness, and often with a dash of cunning.
2. The act of resistance is done with the understanding that there are consequences to be paid, and the one resisting submits to those consequences.

¹⁸Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (1 Pet. 2:18-23, ESV)

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. (Rom. 13:2, ESV)

“Rightly exercised, civil disobedience is divine obedience. But when Christians engage in such activities, it must always be to demonstrate their submissiveness to God, not their defiance of government.” (Charles W. Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict*)

“...obedience [to ruling authorities] is never to lead us away from obedience to [God], to whose will the desires of all things ought to be subject...how absurd would it be that in satisfying men you should incur the displeasure of him for whose sake you obey men themselves! The Lord, therefore, is the King of kings...if they command anything against him, let it go unesteemed.”
(John Calvin, *Institutes*)