

# Under Authority to Government, Employers, and Teachers

## Introduction

The Bible provides further guidance regarding authority and the Christian's role as it relates to Government, Employers, and Teachers. We will discuss each in greater detail; however, we want to look first at a common trait shared between the three. God as our ultimate authority has delegated authority in certain realms. These three entities receive authority to perform their duties and serve in their roles via delegation.

**Civil Authority:** 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. ..."

**Employers:** Ephesians 6:5-7 "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service as men pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. ..."

**Teachers:** Proverbs 5:12-14 "And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, not inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly."

The Bible identifies each of these three as having an authority role. As such, they are extensions of God's authority, and Christians have an obligation to respect, support, and abide by their direction where it does not conflict with other commands and precepts found in God's word. Now let us look at each more specifically.

## Civil Authority

Civil authorities are those that direct the functions of our governments. They are individuals and offices to whom our leaders have delegated specific responsibilities for the operation of our countries, states and cities. We have authorities that provide for our security and for the creation and enforcement of law. In both Romans and 1 Peter we find that this power has been granted by God and that it is His expectation that we abide by it.

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 resists the power, resists 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 bears not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath,

but also for conscience sake. 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; honor to whom honor."

1 Peter 2:13-17 "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

There are exceptions to how far civil authority extends. They are anywhere that direct contradictions are generated with God's commands.

Acts 5:29 "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'"

One might ask whether we can in good conscience be submissive to or pay taxes to a government that supports practices in conflict with God's law. When asked by the Jews whether it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar, Jesus responded as below.

Mark 12:17 "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

There is no doubt that the Roman government at the time of Christ was wicked and corrupt. The Roman rulers were known for their brutality and ruthlessness. Christ's authorization of the payment of taxes recognizes the right of governments to levy tribute as stated in Romans 13. Christians today face similar situations. Our taxes are used to support policies that Christians should oppose. Examples would include abortion, gay marriage, divorce for any cause... The payment of taxes does not mean that one tacitly supports or agrees with every policy that a government has, but their payment does mean that there is respect for God's authority.

Numerous Bible characters show us how to respect civil authorities:

1 Samuel 24:6-10; 26:7-25 – David had two occasions to defend himself during King Saul's pursuit of him. On both occasions David refrained from doing the King harm while pointing out to his own men that it would be wrong to lift his hand against God's anointed.

Daniel 1 - Daniel and his friends were carried away into captivity and made to be eunuchs in the service of the Babylonians. We find no evidence of them shirking their responsibilities or of them giving anything but their best efforts. We do find them

working respectfully with the king's servants to avoid defiling themselves with the "king's dainties" which would have been foods that Jews could not eat.

Daniel 3 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respectfully declined the king Nebuchadnezzar's command to fall down and worship the golden image of the king. They confirmed that it was against the law of their God and that they were willing to die rather than be guilty of this sin.

Daniel 5:21 – We see Daniel proclaiming respectfully, "O king, live forever." This is all after this king had unjustly thrown Daniel into a den of lions.

Esther 5-8 – With her life and that of the Jewish nation in peril we see Esther approaching king Ahasuerus (her husband) with poise, grace and respect. In 8:3 we see Esther bowing at the king's feet as a sign of respect for his authority and appealing to him for the lives of the Jews.

## **Employers**

Employers today have authority over us in the work that we perform on their behalf. We are compensated for this work with the expectation that our best efforts will be applied in its execution. In Biblical times the master/slave relationship was prevalent. Slaves were property and could be traded as such. Masters were commanded to treat their slaves properly. Slaves were commanded to serve regardless of whether they had a good master or a bad master. Abraham's servants were loyal and faithful to the point of being trustworthy of selecting a wife for Isaac. In the New Testament when Onesimus ran away Paul commanded him to return. His master Philemon was commanded to accept him upon his return as a Christian brother since he had obeyed the gospel.

There are numerous other examples showing the relationship of servants and masters.

Joseph served faithfully in Potiphar's house. He excelled to the point of becoming head over the household with nothing kept from him but the master's wife. When this was offered, his response was "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Joseph served faithfully again while in prison. He was recognized by the keeper of the prison and elevated to be over all the affairs of the prisoners.

Joseph, a former slave and prisoner, served Pharaoh faithfully. He oversaw the gathering of grain during the years of plenty, and its distribution during the years of famine. He was elevated to be second-in-command over all of Egypt.

Nehemiah served the king faithfully as his cup bearer. His work and service was rewarded when the time came to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The king supplied him with the authority and provisions necessary to ensure that the task was completed.

Jesus used the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen to illustrate how the Jews had ignored God's authority and would kill the heir, but he used a story grounded in truth that would incite one's sense of decency. Husbandmen would have been hired hands to manage the vineyard. They had rights to their wages; however, they did not have rights to the land or proceeds of the vineyard. Their actions resulted in theft and murder. How we apply ourselves in the work place can be indistinguishable from theft, and we should not be surprised to find ourselves pigeonholed or unemployed when we don't bring value to the workplace.

Jesus used the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard to make the point that it is within the master's authority to reward those whom he chooses. The application was God rewarding those who served Him faithfully. The story specifically makes the point that workers should expect no more than they have agreed to accept.

Certainly, our society has changed. Slavery in this country ended with the conclusion of the Civil War. Laws have been passed to protect both employer and employee rights. Employees have the right to quit work and find other employment. However, they don't have the right to harm an employer through the misuse of an employer's confidential information.

## **Teachers**

Public and private teachers/tutors/schoolmasters have been granted authority via its delegation from parents since the beginning of time. Parents enlist the services of teachers to train their children. Governments legislate that children be taught so that they can have more productive and active citizens with the goal of making the nation stronger. God has given authority for those to teach His word so the body of Christ will be stronger.

Prov. 22:6 "Train a child up in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Eph. 4:11 role of teachers "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

## **Samuel and Eli**

1 Samuel 2 "But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod."

1 Samuel 3 "And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision... Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shall say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant hears. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel, Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant hears."

Samuel was placed in the service of the LORD under the guidance of Eli. Eli instructed Samuel regarding the law, tabernacle worship, and respect for God. The passage above indicates that Samuel respected Eli and followed his instruction.

**Paul and Gamaliel**

Acts 22:3 "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."

Paul was instructed in the law at the feet of one of the most respected Jewish rabbis of his day. He learned the law and zealously defended it even though he was wrong in his understanding of its prophecies.

**Apollos and Aquila/Priscilla**

Acts 18:26 "And he (Apollos) began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

Apollos knew the old law and taught it convincingly. Aquila and Priscilla fulfilled their roles as Christians by teaching him the truth.

## **Conclusion**

Christians are expected to respect authority. That respect is to come in the form of obedience and exceptional performance where laws and requests are not in direct conflict with God's laws. Solomon summarizes the correct attitude in Ecc. 9:10 "Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."