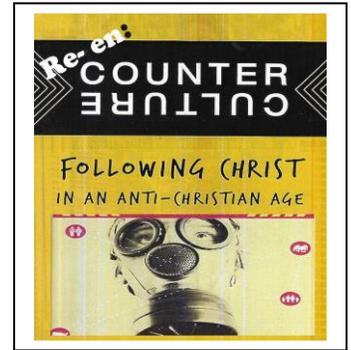


# Romans 13 Re-Encountering- Culture 'The Prayer 20/20 Impact' February 23, 2020

Dear Praying Friends, and Partners In Prayer Team,



*“Let every soul put himself habitually in subjection to authorities which hold position over them, for there is not an authority except that is ordained by God. Moreover, the existing authorities stand permanently ordained by God.”*

**Romans 13:1 (Kenneth Wuest Paraphrase).**

*“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” 1 Timothy 2:1-2 NKJV*

Do you consider yourself a concerned citizen? Do you try to stay informed of the current trends and issues in government? How important do you think these things are for Christians? Have you ever been asked lately what your opinion is about government? If you want to find a hot topic today, just ask, “What do you think about our government?” Are we suspicious of the “powers-that-be?” And what is our attitude that born-again godly Christians should behave towards those in authority over us? My father-in-law once told me that he would never like his daughters to marry policemen, because they can be so corrupt in our day and age; or preachers, because they sometimes portray a “judging-better-than-thou” attitude. And guess what? Be careful what you wish because his older daughter married a local policeman, and his younger daughter married a preacher. We still laugh at that today, but many in our world have those opinions and thoughts about civil-servants in authority and God’s servants in light of the last 40 years of abusive power. In fact the story he loves to share is an anecdote about the following:

*A mother and father of a troublesome young rebellious teen asked the school counselor what they should do to help correct and guide their son. The psychologist suggested a test to see which tendency would indicate what profession he would someday enter. The school psychologist set a bottle of wine, a hundred dollar bill, and a Bible on the table just inside the door of their home. They waited while peeking into the living room for Jr. to come home after breaking his usual curfew. The psychologist said, “If Jr. picks up the bottle of wine, he maybe a lawyer. If he picks up the one hundred dollar bill, he may be a banker, and if he picks up the Bible, he may be moved to be a preacher.” So they waited, and lo and behold, Jr. came in late past his curfew, he picked up each item and looked at them curiously. Mom, dad, and the psychologist watched with anticipation as to which direction his rebellious heart would direct him. Suddenly, he grabbed all three items and looked around and rushed up to his room shutting, and locking the door. “He took all three, so what does that mean?” asked the parents. “Oh, no, it’s worse than I thought,” replied the school psychologist, “He’s going to be a politician!”*

Our feelings about corrupt and ungodly authorities and politicians have affected our views and attitudes of what peoples’ opinions are about government, like it or not. Through the years many writers, journalists, and authors have expressed opinions about governing authorities. Humorist Mark Twain, whose real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens said, “Christian governments are as frank today, as open and above board as raiding each others’ clothes lines for ‘dirty underwear’.” He also said,

“I think it is not wise for an emperor or king or a president, to come down into the boxing ring, so to speak, and lower the dignity of his office by meddling in the affairs of private citizens. That is the difference between governments and individuals. Governments don't care, individuals do! So, I think I had to get out of politics or I may have developed into a very capable pick-pocket if I had remained in public office a year or more.”

You may or may not recognize the name Henry Louis Mencken (September 12, 1880-January 29, 1956). He was an American journalist, essayist, satirist, and cultural critic from Baltimore. He commented widely on the social scene, literature, music, prominent politicians and contemporary movements. He was an admirer of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and was a very critical and an outspoken opponent of religion or any kind of belief in a “good” God. He said, “The English long ago discovered that all government is evil. And the best way to endure it is to treat it as a suspicious character- watching it at every step.” He is still remembered today as openly vocal against American involvement of both World Wars because of the continual growing corruptness of big government.

In our lifetime, Ronald Reagan expressed the same sentiment of growing corruptness in our government in this humorous way. He once said, “Government is like a baby



with an over developed alimentary canal"... (a reference to the medical term of our digestive systems' continuous passage from mouth to anus), ... they are loud, earsplittingly whiny, with loud cries and no control on the other end." One recent pundit for office of government said this, "Let's define 'politics' this way; first, poly- means many, and secondly, tics means blood sucking vermin, ticks. So politics is: 'many bloodsucking vermin.'"

Whether you have a positive attitude or a negative attitude, government intrudes on our lives increasingly every day. It was Henry David Thoreau who once said, "I heartily accept the motto that 'government is best which governs least or not at all.'" In today's passage we are going to discover a completely different attitude toward government that God says every true Christ-follower should have. It is an attitude that is going to surprise you and runs counter-culture to those around us. My hope is that we will believe the gospel of Christ and that our belief would move us to re-encounter our culture. My prayer is that in this journey we are on, God might open our eyes to the needs of people in our culture and around the world, bring us to our knees in tears and prayers on their behalf, and cause us to rise with conviction, compassion, and courage to humbly pray and spread the truth of God while selflessly showing the love of God; all in hopeful anticipation of the day when sin, suffering, immorality, and injustice will finally be no more because Christ comes!

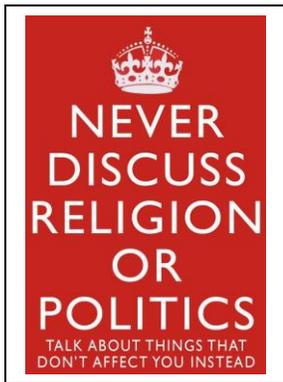
Remember that Paul tells believers to have a "submissive- obedient respect" to the authorities that are in place. Why? To protect us! His plan from the beginning of the world, after the time of the flood of Noah- knowing that our world needs to be kept in check- was to institute an authority of governing for individuals and nations. Genesis 9:5-7 are the Biblical beginnings of God's ordaining government as an authority to bring right and retribution upon people who may be helpless before evil. God's plan was to keep the fallen world from turning to "anarchy and ruin." God has ordained

three authorities and institutions for us that hold through all of time: First is the home and family and marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). The second is government (Titus 3:1), and the third is the church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 5:17). I love Kenneth Wuest's translation of this first verse which is: *"Let every soul put himself habitually in subjection to authorities which hold position over them, for there is not an authority except that is ordained by God. Moreover, the existing authorities stand permanently ordained by God"* (Romans 13:1). I believe Paul makes the command very clear that we are to recognize God-given authority in government. God is not expressing which "kind" of government is to be obeyed, that really doesn't matter, but all authority is to be respected.

Paul lays out for us what good government is in this passage. He also gives us insight as to why we should be submissive and humble, even if government isn't good. It is important to note that in the words of Romans 13, written by Paul, we have the Spirit-inspired teaching regarding our responsibility as Christians and our behavior for civil government. Remember the letter to the Romans was written during changing counter-cultural Roman Empire and some of the worst emperors such as Nero, who according to *Foxes Book of Martyrs*, tells us he dipped Christians in wax and lit them as candles in his palace gardens. Great persecution started and the Jewish religion had the reputation for not respecting or paying taxes. That was why the Jewish leaders tried to trap Jesus with the question of taxes to Caesar, which we will discuss later in our message series. Paul strikes a keynote when he says to let every soul be subject unto the

"higher powers", so we can not place conditions on the command. We are not to condition our obedience on how "good" or "evil" a person is in authority. Paul leaves us without doubt that it stands to reason if you are disobeying government, then you are setting yourself up for God's judgment.

I know this raises all kinds of questions! "Are you saying, Pastor, that I should always obey government and never resist? Aren't there exceptions? What if a leader is 'bad' or 'evil?' Must one submit to that?" For instance, what about the Christians in Russia, or China today? What about our counter-culture workings to change the laws in America to favor wrongdoing or killing such as abortion? Are Christians to submit to civil powers that abuse us or sin? Wasn't our country founded on believers rebelling against the injustices of English tyranny? How can that be wrong? I did receive several questions as a result from last week's message along these lines. How do Christians respond to racism, slavery, or the evils from Hitler's government? Even if this particular passage of Scripture doesn't address the need for what a Christian should do if he were to say "no" or rebel against the government, where do we go for the answers? I am glad to say when we look at a passage, and if there isn't a definite answer for our questions, that a good Bible student should go and search like Bereans the other passages in Scripture that give us an answer. There are other Scriptures that interpret Scripture. There are times when the Bible gives an answer to us if we are wondering when it is right to disobey government. As our own country moves farther and farther away from its Christian foundations, it becomes more obvious that if we live what the Bible says, we need to know how to respond. There are three principles to consider before you engage in civil disobedience or say "No" to an authority.



**Principle #1: If you choose to say ‘No’ to government or an authority, base your disobedience on a clear Biblical mandate.** Make sure it is not on your opinion, or feelings. It must be a clear “black and white” Biblical principle that is being violated; such as someone asking you to kill another or harm another. We would all agree that it is most important to not listen. Let me give us two clear Biblical passages that give us direction about this principle, one from the New Testament, the other from the Old Testament.

The New Testament example is found in Acts 5. If you remember the story, the religious leaders of the day ruled through a body of politicians called the Sanhedrin. They were the religious power that ruled against the Roman power under Pontius Pilate. The apostles such as Peter and John were spreading the Gospel message that Jesus Christ was the risen Messiah who would forgive us our sins. And people were responding to the message of salvation through repentance and leaving their old lives and committing to a new life in Christ. The people were trusting in Christ by the thousands (Acts 2:41; 4:4). The Scriptures say that motivated by jealousy, the religious leaders *“arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ‘Go, stand in the temple courts,’ the angel said, ‘and tell the people all about this new life’”* (Acts 5:18-20). The prayers of the early “upper-room” church were the power behind all the conversions and the supernatural release of the leaders of the church. When the high priest and the associates found them back at it preaching in the temple and through the streets, they brought them before the high supreme court to tell them to stop preaching about Jesus and healing in His name. Peter and the other apostles replied with this wonderful principle, *“We must obey God rather than human beings! The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging Him on a cross. God exalted him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that He might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him”* (Acts 5:29-32).

I want to remind you that these were the very ones who were responsible for the execution of Jesus Himself. And Jesus, Himself told them that they could not crucify Him if not for the authority God gave them. In John 19, Jesus, even when on trial, showed incredible submission facing an unjust possible execution. The Scriptures say: *“When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. ‘Where do you come from?’ he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ‘Do you refuse to speak to me?’ Pilate said. ‘Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?’ Jesus answered, ‘You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.’”* (John 19:8-10). All that to say, even Jesus was submissive and God was able to use that for the salvation of all our sins. But here the apostles were being told to obey against God’s clear Biblical mandate to share about Christ. So they said “No”.

We must be careful that we are being asked to violate a clear Biblical commandment. I have heard of preachers who endorse a political candidate, and have lost tax exemption status and unfairly cry “Oh, I am being persecuted!” Baloney! In that situation they are not suffering because of Christ, they are just taking their own stubborn ideas and trying to make it Biblical ideas. If I were to say, “I’m not paying my taxes, I don’t agree with how the money is used,” and then when the IRS comes and arrests me for owing 60 thousand dollars in back taxes, I can’t cry, “Oh, I’m being persecuted.” Jesus made it clear in Matthew 22:15-22 we are to, *“render to Caesar the*

*things which are Caesar's, and to God the things to God."* Not even a "religious" reason is enough to violate and say "No" to government authority. We must be sure it is a clear Biblical mandate.

The Old Testament example is found in Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who refused to bow and worship an image because of the clear law of God. *"King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from your majesty's hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, your majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up"* (Daniel 3:17-18). Make sure it is a clear Biblical mandate!

**Principle #2: If you choose to say 'No' to government remember your greatest weapon ever to use is prayer.** When Daniel was being set up to fall before King

Darius, the administrators who wanted to have him arrested could not find anything corrupt to remove Daniel. They couldn't even find a dirty secret to bribe him. They realized, *"We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God"* (Daniel 6:5.) So they attacked his routine of prayer and had a law passed that one must only pray to "Darius" (Dan. 6:12-13). Even Daniel had to receive the consequences of saying "No" to the governing authorities, to obey God. You know that God delivered Daniel. That is why I believe in 1 Timothy 2:1-



4, we are commanded to *"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."* Notice that the phrase: *"first of all"* is a way to say, *"your first action and first resort to wrong against you is to be prayer."* In Romans 13:14 Paul ends his argument of obedience and submission to governing authorities with the only other command in this chapter, *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not give into the 'fleshliness' of our fallen human nature."* I love how the New English Version translated the phrase, "put on Christ" to read *"But take up the weapons of the Lord Jesus Christ and stop giving attention for your sinful nature."* Just as we are to put on the armor of God listed in Ephesians 6:14-19, the reference of putting on the armor of "light" from Romans 13:12- all is done through the power of prayer.

I believe that prayer is the greatest power on earth. Andrew Murray in his book *With Christ in The School of Prayer* said: *"Prayer is the power on earth that commands the power of heaven. Prayer is at once indispensable and irresistible. Do we not see how unknown and untold power and blessing is stored up for us in heaven? Can we not understand how that power will make us a blessing to men, and fit us to do any work or face any danger? How is prayer the one secret of success? How can it defy all the power of the world and fit men to conquer that world for Christ? The answer, of course, is that the power of the heavenly life, the power of God's own Spirit, the power of Omnipotence, waits for prayer to bring it down."* Murray says this: *"We must enlarge our hearts for the work of intercession. The attempt to pray constantly for ourselves must be a failure. It is in intercession for others that our faith and love and perseverance will be aroused, and that power of the Spirit will be found. When we ask how we can become more faithful and successful in prayer, we must see how the Master teaches us the parable of the Friend at Midnight (Remember my message from Luke 11 on February 2nd?) Intercession for others is the most perfect form of prayer: it is the prayer Christ*

*prays on His throne. Let all lovers of souls, and all workers in the service of the Gospel, take courage. Time spent in prayer alone gives work its worth and its success. If we will but believe in God and His faithfulness, intercession will become the very first thing we take refuge in when we seek blessings for others, the very last thing for which we cannot find time. Prayer opens the way for God Himself to do His worth through us! In it we secure the presence and the power of God.” (The Power of Prayer, pg. 42-45)*

Loved ones, prayer is the power of the Omnipotent God and He wants us to hang on His arm of Almightyness! If you just take a moment and think that prayer as the power to rule the nations and veto world leaders; we know that prayer is the hand that rules the world until Christ comes. Think of all the world leaders like Nehemiah, Joseph, Moses, Daniel, and Queen Esther who were the prayer power behind some of the world’s greatest leaders in history. Don’t you know that God always has His people in the quiet wings of government ready to wield influence? He always has the “cup bearer” of influence. So loved ones, we must pray!

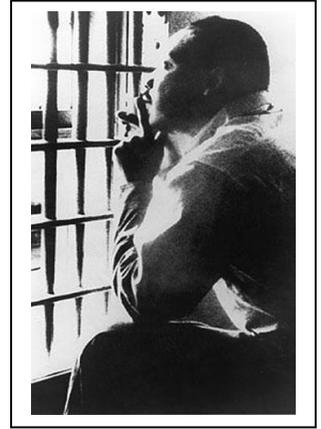
**Principle #3: If you choose to say ‘No’ to government be prepared to suffer the consequences.** Peter reminds us in his letter to suffering believers: *“Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us” (1 Peter 2:11-12).* He also reminds us that if we suffer for living for Christ, that it isn’t because of our own irresponsibility and wrongdoing. Peter reminds us, *“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil” (1 Peter 2:13-16).* In modern terms- “don’t be a jerk if you say “no” to authorities and suffer for the consequences. God doesn’t promise we will not go to jail. God doesn’t promise we will never suffer as Jesus did. We shouldn’t stand back after we have said ‘no’ to authority and say, “God this wasn’t supposed to happen.” If we disobey the authority of parents and family, we will have discipline (Hebrews 12:7). We are to make every effort to live in peace with all men, but if we don’t we may need to take the responsibility of suffering that occurs. The only thing God does promise, “He will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5-6). Be careful; don’t assume that an authority is violating God’s Word just because they are telling you to do something you don’t like. We all need to adopt a humble, submissive spirit to one another in the fear of Christ (Eph. 5:21).

There is a great example from a godly pastor as to accepting the consequences of saying “No” to governing authorities. If you remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that he unlawfully and peacefully protested against racism. In April 1963 King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) joined with Birmingham, Alabama’s existing local movement, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), in a massive direct action campaign to attack the city’s segregation system by putting pressure on Birmingham’s merchants during the Easter season, the second biggest shopping season of the year. As ACMHR founder Fred Shuttlesworth stated in the group’s “Birmingham Manifesto,” the campaign was “a moral witness to give our community a chance to survive.” Dr. King was placed in jail, and was highly criticized by the area pastors and leaders of government. I honestly can’t imagine godly men would rail accusations against Dr. King for such an act of courage. In that Birmingham jail he wrote the longest letter in defense to those pastors and other

believers who accused Dr. King of “unchristian behavior.” Here is a segment of his letter answering the question, “Why did you do this?”

*My Dear Fellow Clergymen:*

*While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.*



*You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."*

*Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: "An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust."*

*Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.*

*We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.*

*Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you?" Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream?" Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus?" Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God?" And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?*

*There was a time when the church was very powerful—in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the*

early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests. Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent--and often even vocal--sanction of things as they are.

*But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust. I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour.*

*Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?*

*If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.*

*I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith.*

*Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood, Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*Published in: King, Martin Luther Jr.*

This example shows our "heart's attitude" for the authorities that God has ordained over us in this world. Do we respect the things God ordains? R. L. Moyer was correct, though he shocked many people, when he said, "**Government is just as much a divine institution as the church!**" God established both. Paul is trying to encourage us to be good citizens, who pray (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

**So my question to all of us is: "Where's your heart?"** After just having the Life Line Screening tests this week, I heard of a Michigan man who entered the hospital for tests one day; he never would have guessed what the doctors would find. A routine chest x-ray revealed that the man's heart was on the wrong side of his chest! Because of a rare reversed-organ condition, his heart was in the wrong place. This is a strange story indeed, although I think some of us suffer from this condition in a spiritual way.

Do you ever find yourself thinking you're in a good place with the Lord? "I haven't done this sin or that sin in a long time. I'm doing much better in this area of my life than so and so is. I'm in leadership in my church or ministry and I think I'm a better Christian than some of the people who share their political Facebook posts." Do you know what I'm talking about? We get to think we are in a good place—safe place—home free, but we are struggling from a rebellious or hard heart.

In this counter-cultural age, we are reminded that we will act and operate in a direction that others will be offended and opposed toward. Many people only obey laws and authorities when it is convenient for them. Many will show a lack of humility and respect with their criticism, words, and jokes which show a rebelliousness slipping out. We need to ask ourselves, "Are we lacking respect for those in government, and are we Christians as guilty as the rest of society in fostering a critical

rebellious spirit?" Certainly, we are not expected to agree with all our leaders' policies that are in violation of Scripture, but we are to *"honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God and honor the king"* (1 Peter 2:17). It is easy to believe the lie that those in authority over us are robbing us of the freedom to do what we want. The truth is that God has placed them there for our protection and liberty. Rebelling against God and the authorities He has set up is a very serious sin for it gives Satan a wide open avenue to attack. Submission is the only solution. God requires more, however, than just the outward appearance of submission; He wants us to sincerely submit from the heart to those in authority. When we stand under the authority of God and those He has placed over us, we cut off this dangerous opening for spiritual attack in our lives. Ask yourself, "Is my heart hardened? Am I full of pride? Am I trying to find ways to justify my bad attitude, and blame others in authority for my moments?" Being under authority is clearly an act of faith. By submitting, we are trusting God to work through His established lines of authority, even when they are harsh or unkind or tell us to do something we don't want to do. If we are in a time when those over us abuse their authority and break the laws that are ordained by God for the protection of the innocent, in those cases, we will need to seek help from a "higher authority" for our protection. The laws may require that such abuse be reported to the police or other governmental agent; such as crime, sexual abuse, or physical abuse.

Just remember, rebellion is a transgression against God and an opposition to any person. It is bitter. It is angry. It is stubborn. It is contentious. It disputes. It defies God's will. It disobeys. It is violent. It is corrupt. It is motivated by pride and is held in place in one's heart by fear. A hard rebellious heart is the enemy's counterfeit (bad) fruit to God's fruit of the Spirit known as patience (Gal 5:22). 1 Samuel 15:23 informs us, "Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshipping idols." Why is this? Because rebellion is rooted in deception and does not trust God or wait on God or rely on God for His provision. Rebellion is a deception that serves the self. Think: Fear over faith. Think: Pride. Think: Idol. Think: Israelites in the wilderness. Think: Agreement with the enemy, whose very nature is an all-about-me (not God) mentality.

A rebellious and hard hearts stop hearing God's voice and Word. Rebellion is a choice of withholding our hearts from God because we believe a lie that He has or will withhold His blessings from us. This lie of lack can remain in the will and memory of Christians from as far back as their pre-salvation. It can reside in a secret cellar of the heart, locked away by fear of loss and anger, dividing the heart and mind and will, provoking the person to grip onto what they fear they will lose again (even to the extent of hoarding). God is in the business to deal with authorities over us. *"The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes"* (Proverbs 21:1).

Our world faces so many troubles and trials. But do you know what? God is greater than all of them. The psalmist writes that *"the Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all"* (Psalm 103:19). God is in control, no matter what form a government may take. Whatever the form of government, it will be imperfect, both because it seeks to rule over men who are sinners and because the men who rule are sinners. The only perfect system of government is that which our Lord Himself will establish when He returns to rule over the earth in perfect righteousness. But I must warn you that He is not only coming as Savior, but as Judge of the earth.

So it's time to raise up our banners and charge into enemy territory with the most powerful weapon we have—prayer. Take a moment now to pray with me today:

- Pray for the millions of men, women, and children who are robbed by anxiety. Pray that today they would find peace in God's presence and strength in His unwavering love.
- Pray for children affected by violence and trauma, not just in our nation but across the world. Ask God to flood their hearts with His restoring Spirit to show them His goodness and beauty. Pray for His mighty hand of protection on their lives.
- Pray for God's church to grow and be strengthened and for more people to be connected to His love. Pray that the church would take new ground around the world and be a shining light of His glory.

Prayer is the key that can unlock even the most difficult situations—so thank you for taking a moment to lift these requests up to the Lord today.

Toward the end of his life it is said that W. C. Fields was seen reading the Bible. A surprised friend asked him what he was doing so, and Fields answered, *“Looking for loopholes, looking for loopholes.”* In relation to this text of Romans 13, there are no loopholes. We are never under any circumstance to avenge ourselves, or be rebellious with plans we may have to the contrary. Are we a loving church? Are we loving this world? Let's run to Calvary today, burdens are lifted at Calvary, and Jesus is very near!

Pray with me,

***“Our precious heavenly Father, we come to be humbled by Your mighty truth and pray You will grant us a deeper understanding of ourselves, our sin, and our Savior. You have said in the Bible that rebellion is the same thing as witchcraft and as bad as idolatry. We know we have not obeyed You in many areas of listening and being submissive to those authorities you have placed above us. Listening to traffic laws, tax laws, and attitudes toward government officials, listening to parents, stepparents, or legal guardians. Being respectful to teachers, coaches, school officials. Giving honor and prayers for our employers, husbands, wives, and even how we express and talk about our church leaders. Lord, help us not be wise in our own eyes, and turn away from evil attitudes and actions. Give us the humility and love to prefer others. To talk about others with an interest to pray for them and honor them when it is due, and not just convey that we are judgmental or careless Christians. Don't let this world's citizens have reason to roll their eyes and denounce us. Let them see Jesus and not our opinions. Let them see Jesus and not our conceit and selfish reactions. Help us and heal us from our stubborn blindness and hard hearts. Help us confess our failures to You today and ask for help. Grant us the humility of approachability, and the courage to speak words of loving confrontation to ones around us. In all things, lift our eyes to the saving, helping, keeping love of our wonderful Savior, in whose name we bodily come, amen.”***



***In His strong love,  
Pastor Corvin <><***

Quote: "There can be no good government without law and order; nor that without authority; nor that without justice; nor that without God." ... Edward Gibbon (1737

