

Transformed!

How God Renews the Lives of His People

Get Personal

Part 17: Authority and Accountability

A Note from Pastor Keith...

Transformed people transform others. They are people of influence and impact on the people, the culture, and the world around them. This isn't just an ideal or wishful thinking. It is our God-given responsibility as His people. He expects us to be fruitful for His purposes and His Kingdom, and He will hold us accountable if we're not.

People of transformational impact possess the intensity of a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1) and the clarity and focus of a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2). They work as a team with each member doing his part and using his gift (Rom. 12:3-8). They are people of radical love (Rom. 12:9-13), who have no regard for whether others love them in return (Rom. 12:14-21). People like this change the world!

How are these "world changers" to relate to the people and institutions that are currently in charge? Are they our competitors? Our opponents? What is the Christian's responsibility and attitude toward human government?

As you work to transform lives and build God's Kingdom in this world...

Submit to the government.

Reason #1: *It's part of submitting to God.*

1. God's Word is absolutely clear on this:

^{1a}Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities...

Romans 13:1a (all references are NIV)

2. Human authority is an extension of God's authority.

^{1b}... for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Romans 13:1b

- **Human rulers and governments, with all their failings, are established by God.**

...the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.

Daniel 4:17 (see also Daniel 2:21; 4:34-37)

- **Someday God's Kingdom will be fully expressed in the governance of the world.**

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Revelation 11:15b

- **For now, the Kingdom is expressed in individual lives.**

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

John 18:36a

[Jesus said,] "...the kingdom of God is within you."

Luke 17:21

3. Submit, then, as a matter of conscience.

^{2a}Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted.....

Romans 13:2a

Exception: If the government orders you to sin, don't.

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Let's review: What specific things is God asking us to do to transform lives and build His kingdom?

Which of these specific things is the government *actively preventing* you from doing?

In what specific ways are you reluctant to submit to the governing authorities?

In light of today's passage, how do you justify your reluctance?

As you work to transform lives and build God's Kingdom in this world...

Submit to the government.

Reason #2: *Rebellion will be punished.*

1. Submit as a matter of conscience. Submit, too, out of fear of punishment.

^{2b}Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Romans 13:2

2. God uses government to bless those who do good.

³For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ^{4a}For he is God's servant to do you good.

Romans 13:3-4a

3. God also uses government to punish wrongdoers.

^{4b}But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Romans 13:4b

- **God works with and through human government.**

²¹Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious, ²²for those two will send sudden destruction upon them, and who knows what calamities they can bring?

Proverbs 24:21-22

- **The authority to punish comes from God.**

^{10b}Pilate said, "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" ¹¹Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

John 19:10b-11a

Exception: If the government orders you to sin, don't.

As you work to transform lives and build God's Kingdom in this world...

Submit to, well, everyone!

Give *everyone* what they're entitled to.

1. Summary of Consequences and Conscience

⁵Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. ⁶This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing.

Romans 13:5-6

2. Whoever you're dealing with, treat them right.

⁷Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Romans 13:7

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Governments of all kinds, in all times and in all places have one overriding interest in common: maintaining order, keeping the peace. In this they are the agents of God, serving His interests.

In what ways does the government's interest in maintaining the peace inherently conflict with our work of transforming lives and building God's Kingdom?

(I couldn't think of any either.)

What acts of Christian obedience does our government actively discourage or even punish? In what way?

In what ways might we pursue these same acts of obedience without attracting government opposition?

What acts of Christian obedience does our government actively encourage or even promote?

How might we take better advantage of the freedoms we enjoy to do God's work?