

“The Jews insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.’ 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 19:7-11 NIV)

God has given power to civil authorities. They may choose to use that power in their own way or they may use it in a way that adheres to God’s way. Which way are our governing authorities exercising the power that has been granted to them from above? Are they enacting laws that will cause Christians to fear when they engage in good behavior or speak the Word of God?

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: ‘Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ‘What are we going to do with these men?’ they asked. ‘Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name.’ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, ‘Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’” (Acts 4:8-20 NIV)

God’s people must make a difference if a difference is to be made. When our leaders leave God’s way behind, they will — without correction — lead our country to a place that is *totally* rebellious toward God. We must be active and engaged for good.

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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A Case for Rebellion?

In recent months our country has seen numerous actions taken by our government that were only imagined just a few years ago. Some have likened it to the sinister book written by George Orwell entitled *1984*. Published in 1948 and set some 36 years in the future, *1984* is a novel that depicts a very dark vision of the future. In *1984*, Orwell describes a futuristic society that is led by “Big Brother.” Big Brother censors *everyone’s* behavior through various means of observation — even their thoughts. The totalitarian society portrayed in *1984* is inhabited by mindless followers of the “Party” who live in complete ignorance of the overwhelming control exerted by “Big Brother.” The novel is an extremely chilling depiction of how *easily* the power of the state could be allowed to dominate the lives of individuals through cultural conditioning. Some have described *1984* as the most powerful science fiction novel of the twentieth century. So do those who liken the direction of our current culture to the novel *1984* have any basis to do so?

Over the last several years in public schools, we have seen a steady elimination of *anything* that hints of Christianity. There is outright rage by some when even the name of Jesus is *mentioned* in any public setting. Just recently, two teachers in Florida were threatened with loss of their jobs as well as loss of retirement benefits and even possible jail time because they had a prayer of thanksgiving before partaking of a meal at a Booster Club banquet being held for their school.

People who have chosen to make their voices heard in public town hall meetings find that they are accused of being part of a mob or organized radical group simply because they object to recent government proposals.

There are many now claiming that this Nation was not founded on Christian principles and therefore *all* public displays that represent *anything* of a Christian nature should be banned from public view.

There is legislation afoot that would ban the public reading of Bible passages concerning homosexuality as “hate speech.” Some political figures are attempting to pass laws that would ban any television or radio personalities who hold to Christian principles and ideals from having any access to the airwaves.

This list could of course go on and on. But in this article, we want to focus on *our* response as Christian citizens? In Romans 13:1-7 we read —

*“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For
continued on page 2*

there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." (NASB)

A conclusion might be drawn from these verses that God places governing authorities in power and we are therefore commanded to *always* obey those who assume that responsibility. The result of disobedience would be punishment by God in some form. Thus to live peaceably in total obedience would be Christ like.

Let's look a bit closer at these verses. As God directed the affairs of mankind through his chosen people (the Jewish nation) — it was both a religious *and* civil government. The rules were established by God and strict adherence was not only expected, but commanded by God.

So numerous were the laws, that it became impossible to keep all of them.

"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." (James 2:10 NASB)

However, as prophecy was fulfilled, Jesus entered the picture. Along with the emergence of Christ from the grave there was a simultaneous change in the order of earthly authority. No longer would God deal directly with a chosen people in a physical manner. There would now be a spiritual kingdom on this earth (the Church) and the members of that *spiritual* kingdom would live in a physical world with governing leaders who were given their authority by God. So His people would now be living both in Christ's *spiritual* kingdom (the Church) *as well as* the physical world that would be ruled by a civil governing authority that was now separate and apart from the kingdom of God. God would no longer exercise authority *directly* over those civil rulers as He had done previously throughout the Old Covenant. God had *now* given those *civil* rulers the authority to govern in a way that might or might *not* abide by Godly principles. Civil authority had been handed over to civil governments and was no longer under God's direct command as it had been previously.

The Scriptures however do tell us —

"¹³Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by

him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. ¹⁷Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." (I Peter 2:13-17 NASB)

So are Christians simply commanded to obey all governing authorities — no matter what? The verses above as well as verse 3 in the Scripture at the top of page 2 seems to indicate that God's expectation of governing authorities was that they would operate in a manner that would serve for the good of those who are their subjects and in so doing would be punishing evildoers. So does that change the way we might view obedience to governing authority? Let's continue with more thoughts concerning this.

A look at other places throughout the Bible reveals the admonition God gave to His people when they sought their *own* ways rather than adhering to God's ways. Those ways — when not in accordance with God's ways — more often than not — brought great harm on themselves. Some strong language is found in Isaiah 5:20-23.

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine And valiant men in mixing strong drink, Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!"

The last several years in our country have been *filled* with the institution of laws that go against Godly principles. An all out war *against* Christianity in our public schools is underway while at the same time Islam is being *allowed to expand* into those same public schools. Muslims are being granted special rooms for prayer time in many public schools. Tax-supported Muslim schools have been established in New York and Minnesota. It should be obvious to anyone who is at all in touch with the governing authorities of the past several years that our leaders are not taking this Nation in a Godly direction. Good is spoken evil of and evil is called "good." Looking *only* at the laws passed concerning abortion and homosexuality clearly demonstrate that we are in such a time.

Cultural conditioning in America has allowed the Devil to do a great job of silencing Christians by redefining what is now termed "hateful." It may well be becoming more and more apparent that our governing leaders no longer know right from wrong. They call evil good, and good evil. It is not only a right of Christians but also an imperative duty that we not only elect Godly leaders, but hold all of them accountable to Godly principles.

So do those who liken the direction of our current culture to the novel *1984* have any basis to do so? That's up to you to answer that question. And are Christians simply commanded to obey all governing authorities — no matter what?