

THE BOOK OF ACTS

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

OCTOBER 26, 2025

SCRIPTURE Then the religious leaders called the apostles in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" Acts 4:18; 5:29

Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces... He chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the high officers and protect the king's interests. Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they could find no corruption in Daniel. He was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. These men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God." When Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done. Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you." "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! My God sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty." Daniel 6 (selected verses in NIV & NLT)

INTRO

Government is the creation of God. It is a tool for our good and His glory. But at times, government can go wrong.

On one hand, we're told to submit to governing authorities.

Let everyone be subject to governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13:1-2

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. Titus 3:1-2

On the other hand, we're shown examples of standing against governing authorities.

For Christians, there is a tension between submitting to and standing against government.

WHAT IS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE?

Christian Civil Disobedience: The refusal to obey the commands of a government without resorting to violence, when those commands are in direct violation to God's laws and commands.

We must harness the American spirit to ensure it is subjected to the Holy Spirit.

©2025 Pastor Cory Henderson

WHAT JUSTIFIES CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE?

Civil disobedience should only come when government requires one to violate Scripture:

1/ Pharaoh's Infanticide of Innocents

2/ Jericho's Slaying of Spies

3/ Babylon's Idolatry of an Image

4/ Jezebel's Persecution of Prophets

5/ Herod's Slaughtering of Sons

6/ Religious Leaders Muting of the Message

7/ Antichrist's Surrender of Souls

Each of these are rare and extreme circumstances, forcing people to participate in evil and unjust laws, which directly violate Scripture.

CAN WE HONOR GOD IN CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE?

1/ Daniel prayed in his civil disobedience. (v.11)

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them. Intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

2/ Daniel remained a good citizen in his civil disobedience. (v.5)

"As much as possible, we should seek to cooperate with the government and obey the law. But we must never allow the law to make us disobey God's Word." W. Wiersbe

Christians must stand against some things, but not everything.

3/ Daniel did not draw attention to himself in his civil disobedience. (v.10)

Being bold and courageous does not mean loud and obnoxious. How we act matters!

4/ Daniel was humble and honorable in his civil disobedience. (vv.21-22)

Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor. 1 Peter 2:17

Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:8

5/ Daniel did no evil in his civil disobedience. (v.4)

"Resistance to evil is necessary, but the resistance should not itself be evil." N. Geisler

6/ Daniel accepted the consequences of his civil disobedience. (v.16)

"One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sometimes we need to contend, like Paul. Sometimes we need to concede, like Jesus.

"Obey God and leave the consequences to Him." Charles Stanely

7/ Daniel exalted the Lord in his civil disobedience. (v.21-22)

"But this will be your opportunity to tell them about Me." Mark 13:9

8/ Daniel trusted God in his civil disobedience.

Sometimes government leaders have a change of heart and sometimes they don't.

Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: "Peace and prosperity to you! I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God!"
Daniel 6:25-26

Sometimes God delivers His people and sometimes He doesn't.

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if He doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up." Daniel 3:17-18

John MacArthur's modern example of civil disobedience