

Day 4 - Morning Study

Read: 2 Samuel 23:1-4

Our revolution was not a political one. It was a spiritual movement. The revolution happened because the principles behind the revolution were preached from the pulpit. It was led by pastors, and the political leaders followed. Many of those who came to America were looking for religious freedom. They did not want to be told how to worship God by a king or a pope. They wanted to be able to read the Bible and look to God to be the ruler of their lives.

Today, the church has allowed itself to become irrelevant because Christians have been told there is a separation between church and state. We must leave our Christianity at home and at the church. It has no role in politics. We have to ask ourselves, “Is Jesus Christ Lord over every aspect of our lives and the world?” Then He must be Lord over our government and politics as well! That is what the founders of the United States believed.

The founders did not take the revolution lightly. They sought unity with the King of England first. When he refused to listen and would not allow them to participate in their own representation, they moved toward independence. And remember it was not the Americans that fired first on the road to Lexington and Concord; it was the British.

The American Experiment was not based on the King being the ruler of all. It was based on Jesus Christ being the ruler of all, including over the King. It is God’s truth that sets men free, and our liberty comes from God. Today, we will examine the principles from the sermon “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers” by Jonathan Mayhew (1750).

This may be one of the most controversial Bible X days I have ever written. Jonathan Mayhew’s sermon offers a different view of Romans 13 from what we hear in our pulpits today. I have often been frustrated with our leaders’ usage of Romans 13 to keep good Christians silent in the face of evil. My goal here is not to offend anyone, and we will not be political, but I will offer a different view of Romans 13 than what we hear today. I recommend you read his sermon. Here is a brief synopsis of the sermon.

The sermon serves as a foundational text bridging Puritan theology and American Revolutionary ideology. Written exactly one century after the execution of King Charles I, the work systematically dismantles the doctrine of non-resistance, arguing that the biblical

command to obey "higher powers" is contingent upon those rulers acting for the public welfare. Mayhew asserts that when a monarch transforms into a tyrant, they cease to be a minister of God and effectively "unking" themselves, thereby making popular resistance a moral and religious obligation rather than a sin. By refuting the divine right of kings and the "sainthood" of Charles I, Mayhew provided the colonists with a potent rhetorical framework for challenging British authority, emphasizing that true loyalty belongs to the law and common sense rather than to an oppressive individual.

My goal is to get you to think about this topic and come to your own conclusions based on your conscience before our Lord.

Group Study

Read: Romans 13:1–7

Who establishes authority?

God establishes all authority. He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

What would happen if there were no authority?

There would be anarchy. This is why we have the Ten Commandments and God as the ultimate authority.

Read: 1 Peter 2:13–17

Why are we to be subject to every human institution?

For the sake of the Lord, we are to live as servants of God. We are to care more for others.

Why do people struggle with authority?

This is meant to be a discussion question. It is our sin nature. We are naturally rebellious.

Read: 2 Samuel 23:1-4

How does David explain what it means to rule justly?

A ruler must fear the Lord and rule justly over men. The ruler who fears the Lord puts him/herself in the right relationship with God, so they can be a just ruler.

What are the results?

It will bring blessings to the land and its people.

Read: Romans 13:3-4

What is a ruler supposed to do?

A ruler is to be a servant of God for good.

What if a ruler doesn't do this?

This is another discussion question and a key point in Mayhew's sermon. What if the leader is not a servant of God? Is he then a servant of the devil, and therefore, should we follow him?

What is the purpose of authority?

To promote good and punish evil.

What happens when authority becomes harmful instead of helpful?

It begins promoting bad or evil.

Read: Acts 5:27-32

How did Peter respond to the high priest?

He is required to obey God first over men.

Shouldn't Peter be subject to the high priest based on Romans 13:1?

Discussion question. If Peter did what the high priest demanded, would he be disobeying God?

In the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's refusal to bow down to the statue of King Nebuchadnezzar, did they fail to follow the King who was put there by God?

Yes. Like Peter, they would be disobeying God by obeying the king.

What about Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who refused to follow the Nazi's and was hanged for being part of the plot to kill Hitler?

Discussion question.

Is there a point when Christians have a duty to disobey those in authority?

Yes, when following those in authority would cause us to disobey God.

Why did these people disobey authority?

Because God is the ultimate authority, and the king's authority is subject to God's authority.

What made their disobedience right?

They were following God. This is why it is important to know God's word. If we don't, leaders and rulers can lead us down the wrong path. Just ask the Christian Germans.

What's the difference between: Rebellion and Righteous resistance?

Rebellion is against authority, and may be because we just don't like the ruler. Righteous resistance stands for what is right and good. Like Peter standing before the high priest or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to bow down and worship the idol.

This is not something we should take lightly, and just because we disagree with someone who has authority does not mean we can disobey them.

Turn to page 1 of this book and read the opening to America's Declaration of Independence.

Did the founding fathers take leaving the authority of the King of England lightly?

No. Just read the opening of the Declaration.

What are the rights of every person?

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Where does the government get its power?

From the consent of the governed (the people).

What does it mean by the consent of the people?

The people are part of the leadership. If a leader is bad, the people have the right to remove the leader. In our country, we do that through elections.

What are the rights and duties of the people if their government fails to secure their rights?

To change it or remove it.

Turn to page 24 and read through our unalienable rights. We call them unalienable because they come from God and not man.

Why is it important that our rights come from God and not man?

Because God is the ultimate authority, and man likes to rule over other men. And sinful man likes to make rules that benefit themselves over others. This is one of the problems that all human governments deal with. And the United States has to deal with the same issues.

Learn your rights. If you don't, someone may come and try to take them away someday.