

utter dismay, they will be eternally separated from God. Jesus came to save sinners (Mark 2:17)! The Bible says: "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). All men need a Saviour! Jesus Christ's humiliation and death on the cross of Calvary is all in vain if man can save himself (Galatians 2:21)

**FOR ME OR AGAINST ME:** The Bible informs us that no man can be neutral towards Jesus Christ. No man can say: "I don't know if I am ready to trust Christ as my Lord and Saviour". Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against me..." (Matthew 12:30). To refuse to trust Christ, or delay to trust Christ is to REJECT Christ. It is the same as saying: "...We will not have this man to reign over us." (Luke 19:14) Men reject Jesus Christ because they love darkness and hate light. They refuse to come to the light (Jesus Christ); "lest their deeds should be reprov'd" (John 3:20)! A man is either in the kingdom of darkness or he is in the kingdom of light. A Christian has been delivered out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13). Light and darkness are mutually exclusive. Light expels the darkness. There is no gray! No middle ground! To refuse the kingdom of light is to remain in the kingdom of darkness.

**NARROW WAY OR BROAD WAY:** The way that leads to destruction is broad and many go down that pathway (Matthew 7:13,14) Satan doesn't care if you destroy your life and go to hell because of drugs, alcohol, immorality, the occult, materialism, or even religion. He offers you many choices! But Jesus Christ offers the narrow way! When a person repents of their sin and trusts Christ as Lord and Saviour of their life, Jesus becomes their shepherd. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they FOLLOW ME! A Christian yields his will to the Saviour's will. A Christian has been bought with a price -- the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18,19). He no longer is boss of his own life (1 Corinthians 6:19,20), but joyfully offers his obedience to the Lord who bled and died for him. Those who truly understand the Saviour's love manifested at Calvary, respond with grateful obedience. Jesus said those who love Him will obey Him (John 14:15)

**TODAY NOT LATER:** God confronts each of us to make a decision NOW! "...behold NOW is the accepted time; behold NOW is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). We are not guaranteed an opportunity tomorrow (Prov. 27:1). We are not granted an opportunity after death -- "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27) We are warned that rejection NOW will result in hardness of heart (Heb. 3:7-13 Proverbs 29:1)9

**GOD'S SIMPLE PLAN OF SALVATION** (1) Admit you are a sinner justly deserving of God's wrath and judgment (Romans/ Chapters 1-3:20) (2) Believe that Jesus Christ bore your judgment on the cross of Calvary (Romans/ Chapters 4-8). (3) In prayer, repent of your sins and acknowledge to God that you are fully trusting only Christ for your salvation! (John 1:12 John 3:16 Acts 16:31, 4:12, Romans 10:9,10,13) (4) Based on 1 John 5:13, praise God that you are a Christian and your sins are forgiven; and that you KNOW you HAVE eternal life.

# THE CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY



**Greenwich Baptist Church**

P.O. BOX 52  
GREENWICH, NEW JERSEY 08323

**THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION:** The vital importance of understanding how God works through authority is illustrated for us in Matthew 8:5-13. In this account a centurion appeals to Jesus to heal his servant. Jesus agrees to heal the servant, but even more significantly makes the following statement: "...Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (8:10). Why is it that this man had such great faith that far surpassed any others in Israel? The explanation of his great faith is linked with his understanding of how God works through the principle of authority. His understanding is explained in verses 8 and 9: "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." When Jesus heard his explanation of authority, "He marveled" (Matt. 8:10). This man had great faith because he comprehended the power of a sovereign God over His universe. Man may think that he controls this world and does as he pleases, but the truth is that there is a sovereign God overseeing every detail of the affairs of men and only what that which He permits can come to pass. The Centurion wisely discerned the sovereign power of the Lord Jesus Christ over all of creation and knew that all he had to do was speak the word and his servant would be healed.

**THE PRIDE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR:** Nebuchadnezzar was truly one of the most powerful kings who ever lived! His problem was that he didn't recognize his power to rule and reign came from God. One day, while walking in his palace he pridefully said: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:28). While these arrogant words were still in his mouth God spoke from heaven in judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar spent the next seven years of his life living like the beasts of the field until he learned "...that the Most High [God] ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:30). At the end of the seven years when his normal human behavior was granted back to him, he humbly proclaimed to all who might doubt the sovereign God of the universe: "...all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He [God] doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest thou?'" (Daniel 4:35).

**GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER ALL HUMAN AUTHORITY:** When Jesus was standing before Pilate during his trial, Pilate made the comment to Jesus: "...knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" (John 19:10). Jesus' answer sums up the whole message of this booklet: "...Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above;..." (John 19:11). All power and control of human affairs comes from above! That is why it is absolutely vital that every Christian learn how to reverently submit to God - ordained authority. God clearly instructs every believer to submit himself to God - ordained human authority in Romans 13: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment" (Romans 13:1,2). Those in places of leadership have been allowed that privilege and responsibility by God: "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the

cooperation with those who know how to make wise godly appeals to authority.

**# 9 BE PREPARED TO OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION:** If we really have a spirit of loyalty to those in authority, many times God will give us a creative alternative suggestion that will accomplish the basic goals of our authorities without violating our beliefs. Daniel's appeal included a plan of action that he felt would better accomplish the intended goals of the king. It turns out that Daniel was right and his appeal was granted. "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. {13} Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. {14} So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. {15} And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. {16} Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse" (Daniel 1:12-16).

**# 10 BE PREPARED TO SUFFER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE:** According to Daniel 1:8 Daniel had made up his mind from the beginning that he could not violate himself by obeying the king's command: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8). He was prepared if his appeal was rejected to remain loyal and devoted to the king above every king -- the Lord Jesus Christ. There are times that Christians will have to suffer because of their stand for Christ. The whole book of 1st Peter instructs Christians on this subject. But, many times if the above steps are taken, God will use an effective appeal to change the heart of the king (Proverbs 21:1). Sometimes what we consider to be suffering for Jesus sake is really suffering we've encountered because we have violated the proper steps of appeal.

**# 11 BE PREPARED TO FLEE IF NECESSARY:** Paul fled from those who sought to kill him in Acts 9:23ff. In contrast in Acts 14:19-25, Paul returned to the same city where some of the people had stoned him and left him for dead. Jesus at times fled from his attackers, but when he discerned that his hour had come he willingly surrendered. A wife may suffer many hardships because she faithfully lives with an unsaved husband who has a drinking problem. But if her life or her child's life is threatened she may find it necessary to flee (1 Corinthians 7:10,11).

## HOW TO BE SURE YOU ARE SAVED!

**FAITH OR WORKS:** Man is made right with God, not by what he does for God, but by what God has done for him. Man cannot save himself by good works or religion. "...By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight..." (Romans 3:20) Nicodemus, was a religious man, but he wasn't a saved man (John 4)! A man can be in Church every Sunday, be sincere, live a good moral life and still spend eternity in hell! Note the warning in Matthew 7:22-23. "Many will say to me in that day (judgment day), Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Those who are trusting in their own goodness to enter the kingdom of Heaven will discover to their

their children want to go to Church; I wondered why this mother would forbid it. When I sat down with the mother, I discovered the cause of her negative feelings toward the Church. Her daughter had developed a self-righteous condemning attitude towards her mother. She assumed, that since she was a Christian and her mother wasn't, that she knew better how to run the home than her mother. Every time she saw her mother disobeying the teaching of the Bible she would preach at her mother with a condemning spirit. She conveniently forgot that God commands children to honor their parents (Exodus 20:12). There is a time and place for children to appeal to their parents, but it must always be done with a reverent and grateful spirit. Daniel did not self-righteously condemn his authority for commanding him to eat the unclean meat. Instead, he reverently requested of the prince that he not have to carry out this command (Daniel 1:8). Because Daniel demonstrated a reverent and grateful spirit, the prince was willing to work with him to try and honor his appeal.

**# 5 HAVE THE PROPER COMMITMENT TO THOSE IN AUTHORITY:** A successful appeal will always communicate to our authorities our commitment to their success. Our attitude should manifest a commitment to serve them. There should be no hint that we are jealous of their position or that we think we could do a better job than they if we were in charge. Jesus clearly indicated to his disciples that the person who has the most influence over people's lives is the one who is "servant of all". "But Jesus called them him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. {43} But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: {44} And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:42-44).

**# 6 MAKE THE PROPER SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:** Before Esther risked her life in going before the king to appeal for the future well being of the Jewish nation, she spent three days and three nights in fasting and prayer (Esther 4:15). Daniel spent regular time in prayer clearing his conscience before God so that he might be led of God in decision making and appeals (Daniel 9:20; 6:10; 2:14-19).

**# 7 MAKE THE PROPER WORD PREPARATION:** Proverbs 22:11 reveals the importance of choosing the right words when appealing to kings. "He that loveth pureness of heart, the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend." Every appeal should include sincere positive statements about those in authority (Acts 26:3). The words of an appeal should make clear to the authority that the appeal is based on personal convictions, so that if the authority doesn't hold to the same convictions, he won't sense a condemning spirit (Romans 14:4). Esther's appeal was a carefully thought out and planned "petition" (Esther 5:3,4).

**# 8 PRAY ABOUT THE PROPER TIMING OF YOUR APPEAL:** Esther wanted to make sure that she had the king's undivided attention when making her appeal. She planned a banquet and requested his presence to make her appeal known. But at the first banquet, she somehow sensed this was not God's perfect timing and stirred up the king's curiosity by planning a second banquet and inviting him to it on the following day (Esther 5:1-8). Meanwhile, God during the night worked in the king's life to prepare him for the appeal she would make (Esther 6:1-3). The whole story is a beautiful illustration of how God will work in

judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psalm 75:6,7). God sovereignly removes kings (those in places of leadership) and setteth up kings as He sees fit (Daniel 2:21). "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all human authority (Ephesians 1:21).

**THE GOD - ORDAINED PURPOSES OF HUMAN AUTHORITY:** "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:3,4). "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well" (1 Peter 2:14). God - ordained human authorities are to PRAISE THOSE WHO DO WELL and PUNISH THOSE WHO DO EVIL. It is essential to understand that God has ordained authority for our protection. As long as we reverently submit to authority, our conscience will be clear and God will work in our lives in a mighty way (Romans 13:5, 1 Timothy 1:18-20).

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY

In 1 Peter 5:8 we are told that Satan "...like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour..." Please notice that Satan must hunt until he finds prey that is vulnerable to his attack. He can't arbitrarily choose those whom he wants to destroy. Just as mold can only grow under certain precise conditions, so Satan can only work in a person's life when the conditions in the person's life have opened the door to him. James 4:7 reveals that every true born again child of God has the power to resist the devil and he will flee. Satan can only stay and cause destruction and damage if the believer has "given place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). There are many sins listed in this passage that will open the door to Satan's activity, but there is one sin mentioned throughout the Bible that opens the flood gates to Satan's attack. That sin is the sin of rebellion towards authority! According to 1 Samuel 15:23 "...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry..." A person involved in witchcraft openly exposes himself to the realm and power of Satan's control. Likewise, when people rebel against authority they move out from under God's protective umbrella provided by such authority. The devastating consequences of rejecting God's appointed authority or irreverence towards authority are illustrated in the following passages.

Numbers 12:1-1 Miriam and Aaron against Moses authority Numbers 16:1-35 Korah and 250 princes against Moses authority. 2 Kings 2:23-25 42 youths mock Elisha's authority 2 Kings 1:5-18 King Ahaziah and his men against Elijah's authority

**THE PROTECTIVE UMBRELLA OF AUTHORITY:** In the next section you will find listed the four areas of authority that God has established for the protection of His people. As long as a believer respectfully and reverently submits to these authorities God has placed over him, he is protected from the destructive attacks of Satan. Satan is constantly day and night seeking to destroy believers with his fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16). He is not able to penetrate and bring destruction and damage if we remain under the protective covering of divinely appointed authority. But if a believer refuses to submit, then he exposes himself to the realm and power of Satan's control. This explains

why God warns that the sin of rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23). Witchcraft describes those who openly worship the devil. Those who rebel against authority step out from under God's protective umbrella and dangerously expose themselves to Satan's influence like those who openly worship him. **OUR ABILITY TO OVERCOME TEMPTATION IS LINKED TO A PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO AUTHORITY. ALL CHRISTIANS WHO ENTERTAIN A SPIRIT OF REBELLION TOWARDS AUTHORITY WILL FIND THEY ARE UNABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY RESIST TEMPTATION.** "...God resist the proud, but gives grace (to overcome temptation) to the humble" (James 4:6ff).

**DISOBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY:** "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. {2} Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. {3} For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: {4} For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to wrath upon him that doeth evil. {5} Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake" (Romans 13:1-5).

This passage makes it clear that when we unjustly resist the authorities God has placed over us we are resisting Him. God calls those in authority "ministers of God". Pastors of local Churches are usually called ministers. But God says that policeman, judges, governors, kings etc. are also His ministers. Have you ever wondered why a judge wears a robe? It is connected with the reverence and respect due him as a minister of God. God warns if we disobey our authorities that He will make sure that we receive the just punishment through his ministers -- "they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans 13:2). It is interesting to note that one characteristic of a false religious teacher is that he promotes rebellion towards those in authority. He uses the Bible to encourage religious people to resist those in authority. God calls these false prophets "presumptuous", "self-willed", "...they are not afraid to [speak evil] of dignities" (2 Peter 2:10). He even uses stronger language in this verse: he says they "despise government". There are many today who advocate not paying taxes to those in places of authority, and they use the scripture to back it up. Not only does this contradict the teaching and example of Jesus himself (Matthew 17:24-27), it also violates the context of this passage in Romans 13. "For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:6,7). What is the "cause"? It is the previous instruction about submitting to authority. Beware of those who use the Bible to encourage you to rebel towards authority in these areas!

**EXAMPLE OF JOSEPH AND MARY:** "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the [world] should be taxed" (Luke 2:1). Most people know this is part of the Christmas story of Jesus birth in the city of Bethlehem. According to verse three of this chapter those who were being taxed had to go to their "own city". This meant for Joseph that he must make a trip to Bethlehem. It was prophesied hundreds of years earlier that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The amazing insight is that God used the submissive and obedient spirit of Joseph and Mary

people rejected his leadership until Moses learned how God works through the power of appeal and prayer. The next example illustrates Moses fighting God's battles with spiritual weapons.

**EXAMPLE OF PHARAOH** (Exodus 5-12): Moses went to Pharaoh with his appeal to let God's people go. Pharaoh flatly refused! Moses did not go back to the Israelites and say: "Pharaoh refuses to obey God's command. We must organize ourselves militarily and forcefully demand our freedom". Instead Moses knew that after his respectful and wise appeal, the greatest weapon of influence was the power of prayer. God can put greater pressure on those in authority to do what is right if we will seek Him in prayer. This is exactly what happened to the Pharaoh as God brought the ten plagues upon him. As Moses was faithful in repeatedly making his appeals, God was faithful to put pressure on Pharaoh. God's people were delivered without civil disobedience! Furthermore, all the increased burdens that the Pharaoh put on them worked to their advantage by making them stronger. So that when they were delivered the Scripture declares: "...there was not one feeble person among their tribes..." (Psalm 105:37) when they came forth out of Egypt.

**EXAMPLE OF ELISHA** (2 Kings 6:8-23): One day Elisha's servant woke up to discover that he and Elisha were surrounded by a great army of Syrians. He thought this was their defeat, because all he could see was the horses and chariots (carnal weapons) of the enemy. Elisha prayed that God would open his servant's eyes to see God's army (spiritual weapon of prayer) that was encamped all about them (Psalm 34:7). God miraculously delivered them through the power of prayer. Incidentally, the reason the Syrian army had come out against Elisha was because he discerned through the power of prayer the Syrian's battle plans and was able to alert the Israelite king ahead of time.

**# 3 HAVE THE PROPER LOYALTY TO AUTHORITY BEFORE YOU APPEAL:** In Daniel chapter one we find an excellent illustration of how to make a wise appeal to any authority who commands you to do wrong. Daniel was commanded to eat meat that he knew would be in violation of God's law. The steps he took in making an appeal to his authorities should be followed by all Christians. His first step is given to us in Daniel 1:9: "Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs". Daniel had demonstrated to his authorities his loyalty to them and thus he was "well favored" (Daniel 1:4) by them. A Christian who is living out the character of Christ in his life should be increasing in favor with not only God, but also with men -- even unsaved men! We are told in Luke 1:52 "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man". One who rules as a leader in the Church should have ...a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7). Those "without" are the unsaved in the world. Daniel's first step in effective appeal was to demonstrate a spirit of loyalty to his authorities. He used his wisdom and understanding that came from God to assist his authorities to be successful in their leadership (Daniel 1:4). In fact, he was so successful in helping his authorities that the king found his wisdom to be "...ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm" (Daniel 1:20).

**# 4 HAVE THE PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARDS THOSE IN AUTHORITY:** One day a girl who was recently saved in our Church informed me that her mother didn't want her to attend our Church any more. Most parents are happy that

## HOW TO APPEAL TO THOSE IN PLACES OF AUTHORITY

Christians need to be prepared to appeal to those in authority. We are never to blindly submit - thinking we are not personally responsible for our actions - because we were commanded to do something by a person in authority. It is our responsibility to wisely appeal to an unwise decision of someone in authority. We should be prepared to appeal when: # 1 those in authority command us to do something wrong that violates God's higher authority # 2 when those in authority are themselves doing something wrong that is resulting in God's judgment -- such as laws legalizing abortion. # 3 those in authority may not be aware of important details that would help them make a wiser decision. In order for an appeal to be effectively used of God, there are several important principles that must be followed.

**# 1 MAKE PRAYER FOR AUTHORITIES A PRIORITY:** Those in authority are not infallible. They will indeed make mistakes and at times be wrong in their decisions. Therefore, it is very important to consistently pray for God's promptings in the lives of those in authority. It is not surprising that God instructs believers to make this a top priority of the Church: "I exhort, therefore, that FIRST OF ALL, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, FOR KINGS, AND FOR ALL THAT ARE IN AUTHORITY, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:1,2).

**# 2 BE COMMITTED TO FERVENCY IN PRAYER, NOT MILITANCY IN DISOBEDIENCE:** Christians in our nation are joining their forces in trying to stop the holocaust of abortion in our nation. For this we praise God! But we have to be very careful that the methods we use are in harmony with God's principles of appeal. The "operation rescue" technique of breaking the law by sit-ins at abortion clinics is clearly not God's way of victory. "...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (human attempts of civil disobedience), but mighty through God (power of prayer and appeal) to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). Those who promote civil disobedience in this context are sowing the seeds of rebellion that will bring their own destruction. Read the history of the French Revolution for a classic illustration of how civil disobedience backfires on those who promote it.

**EXAMPLE OF PETER** (Matthew 26:36-56): When the multitude came to arrest Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter, in his militancy to defend Christ, whipped out his sword and cut off a man's ear. Peter was trying to use a carnal weapon to defend Christ. The Lord Jesus responded by restoring the severed ear, and then gives this warning: "... all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Those who use the carnal weapons of civil disobedience sow the seeds of rebellion that will eventually bring their own destruction. Jesus had already demonstrated to Peter His power over those who came to arrest Him by His spoken word (John 18:2-9). Why did Jesus have such power with his words and why was Peter rebuked for using the sword? The answer is found in Matthew 26:36-43. When Peter should have been praying (spiritual weapon), he was sleeping! Because he didn't understand the power of prayer, he attempted to use a carnal weapon (a sword) to win the battle. Moses took up the sword in seeking to defend God's people who were being unjustly treated (Exodus 2:11-14). God did not bless his efforts; the

to the king's decree to fulfill this prophecy. What if they had said it is unjust and unfair for the king to decree this tax? What if Joseph refused to obey, because of the hardship it put on his expectant wife? It is not an accident that God chose these parents for Jesus because they understood how God works through authority, and they had the submissive spirit necessary for the prophecy of Christ's birth to be fulfilled in obedience to the king's demand.

## WHAT ABOUT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY?

Many religious leaders try to justify civil disobedience using the American Revolution as a classic example. The circumstances surrounding the colonists' action does not promote civil disobedience! The colonist had sent to the king an Olive Branch Petition date July 5, 1775. In this petition, they assured the king of their desire to be loyal to his authority. They were making an appeal for justice not declaring their independence. The king responded to their appeal with the Prohibitory Act on December 22, 1775. This act was a declaration of war upon the colonies and severed them from any further protection or provision from England. The colonists then had to form their own government for their own defense. Further study on this subject can be found in the book entitled "The Revolution Myth" by Gene Fisher and Glen Chambers. This book is published by Bob Jones Press.

## THE FOUR GOD - ORDAINED AUTHORITIES

**# 1 FAMILY** -- "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:20). "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22).

**# 2 CHURCH** -- "Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God..." (Hebrews 13:7). "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves..." (Hebrews 13:17).

**# 3 CIVIL GOVERNMENT** -- "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors..." (1 Peter 2:13,14). "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then, not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same; For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:3,4).

**# 4 EMPLOYER** -- "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh... Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance ..." (Colossians 3:22,24). "Servants, be subject to your master with all fear; not only to the good and gentle but also to the perverse. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:18-20).

**WHAT ABOUT SUBMISSION TO EVIL AUTHORITIES?** When those in authority command those under them to violate God's authority then there is justifiable cause for disobedience.

**EXAMPLE OF PETER:** In Acts 5, Peter and the other apostles were commanded not to preach in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter respectfully informed the authorities that he could not obey their command: "...We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

**EXAMPLE OF SHADRACH, MESHACH, and ABEDNEGO:** When they were commanded to bow down to worship the king's golden image they refused to obey because of their allegiance to Almighty God. "...O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:16,17). Please note here that they believed that God had power and authority over their authorities power to deliver them if He so chose!

**EXAMPLE OF DANIEL:** Daniel was commanded by his authorities not to pray to His God for thirty days. Daniel refused to obey the king's instruction and continued to pray to His God as he had done "previously" (Daniel 6:10). Daniel ended up in the lion's den where God miraculously protected him. Please note that it may be necessary to suffer for righteousness sake in refusing to obey those who give commands contrary to God's commands. Every Christian should thoroughly acquaint himself with the book of 1st Peter. It is in this book that we learn God's principles of responding to suffering that has come our way because of righteous living. There may be times when there is a need to flee from those who are using their authority wickedly (Matthew 10:23).

**EXAMPLE OF THE MIDWIVES:** When the Pharaoh commanded that all the Hebrew sons be put to death by the midwives, they refused. "...The midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive" (Exodus 1:17).

**WHAT ABOUT REVERENCE FOR EVIL AUTHORITIES?** "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle but also to the perverse. For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (1 Peter 2:18,19). Disobedience to authority will most of the time be the exception to the rule. Every Christian must learn to REVERENCE THE POSITION OF AUTHORITY and not the PERSON IN AUTHORITY.

**EXAMPLE OF DAVID:** God illustrates this for us in the case of David's submission to King Saul's authority. David knew that God had chosen him to be King one day (1st Samuel 16). Before he became King though, he was under the authority of King Saul who was acting very wickedly. Furthermore, we are specifically told King Saul had evil spirits at work in his life (1 Sam. 16:14ff). Because of his jealousy of David, Saul tried repeatedly to kill David. Twice we are told that David had the opportunity to overcome Saul and declare himself king, but on both occasions David made this comment: "...The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord" (1 Sam. 24:6; 26:11).

Many godly character qualities were learned by David that helped him to be a successful king as he reverently submitted himself even to an evil king.

**EXAMPLE OF PAUL:** In Acts 23:1-5 we have an interesting account of Paul's respect for the position of authority rather than the person of authority. Paul sternly rebuked those who had smitten him unjustly, not according to God's law. But, when he learned he was addressing the high priest he respectfully apologized: "...I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" (Acts 23:5). Here a man was wrongfully and unjustly using his authority, but the apostle Paul understood he was still to be held in reverence.

**EXAMPLE OF JOSEPH:** If you read the story in Genesis 37ff, you will find the same type of situation with Joseph. He respectfully and reverently submitted himself to his authorities who wrongfully mistreated him. But during all the suffering Joseph endured, he knew that even those who abused him meant it for evil, but God worked through them for good (Genesis 50:20). Joseph, like David was moved up into a prominent place of leadership where he was able to help the very ones who had afflicted him. Those who learn to respect and honor authority will be used by God in a mighty way. "...before honor is humility" (Proverbs 15:33).

**EXAMPLE OF ROMAN GOVERNMENT:** When Paul instructed believers to submit themselves to the powers that be (Romans 13 -- civil government), he did not limit that submission to Christian leaders. In fact, the Roman government of Paul's day was very humanistic, like the government of our day. Our government allows the killing of the unborn through abortion, the Roman government also orchestrated the killing of children (Matthew 2:16-18). Please note again in Proverbs 21:1 that the "...KING'S HEART IS IN THE HAND OF THE LORD...". It doesn't say he must be a Christian in order for God to be in control

**WHAT ABOUT THE HOLES IN THE UMBRELLA OF THOSE IN AUTHORITY:** What do you do when you are seeking to remain under the protective covering of those in authority and they have obvious holes in their umbrella because of sin in their own life? Do you trade the umbrella in for a new one? If a lady has an unsaved husband, or a husband that is backslidden, should she file for divorce and seek out a good Christian man who will provide the protection she needs? God has given specific instructions related to this situation. A lady who has an unsaved husband is to remain with him (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). Furthermore, in 1st Peter chapter 3:1-6, we are instructed that a godly lady who is able to maintain a meek and quiet spirit in submission to her husband, will be able to influence him to obey God's Word. Proverbs 14:1 says "Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands." A Christian lady may not have the power of position, but she does have the power of influence! Please note that this verse doesn't say the woman will be able to build her house if her husband does his part. If she understands the wise Biblical principles of appeal to those in authority, she can, through the power of God, build a strong house. Christians who know how God works through authority and how to respectfully appeal to authority have great power with God to influence their home, church, business and even the nation. It is for this reason that the rest of this booklet will explain the principles of appealing to those in authority.