

Law and Order

Romans 13:1-2

Introduction

Renee Good was a 37 year old activist / mother - - - whose interference in ICE operations in Minneapolis led to her being shot by ICE agents – on January 7, 2026

She was involved in ICE Watch patrols – a group of activists that sought to document ICE operations / alert potential immigrants of their presence / blow whistles when ICE agents were present

Good was in her car – stopped sideways – apparently partially blocking traffic – during the middle of an ICE operation

She was ordered out of her car by ICE agents – that’s where things took a turn for the worse

Her girlfriend / partner [Becca Good] who had been mocking the ICE agent – calling him ‘big boy’ – and telling him to take off the mask - - - also began shouting at Renee telling her to ‘drive – baby drive’ – when ICE was telling her to get out of her car

She – of course – listened to her lover – who was making a video as well - - - disobeying ICE - she drove partially into the ICE agent [disputed facts] – at which point he shot her thru the windshield

Good’s attorneys described her and her partner as “responsible community members who lived peacefully and did not engage in harmful conduct toward others.’

Of course - - - responsible community members don’t generally seek to harass and impede or otherwise disrupt federal agents in carrying out their duties

Later on – Alex Pretti – also 37 – was shot and killed while interfering with ICE operations – in the Minneapolis area

He too – was an activist – and thought ICE should be opposed

What should a Christian think of such matters?

Does the Bible have anything to say about a Christian’s view of the state?

Christians – as a general rule of thumb are called to respect the rule of law - - - they are to be good citizens of the country they reside in

They recognize that government is better than anarchy

I Peter 2:13-14 - Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.'

Paul – here [in Romans] calls us to recognize lawful government – as established by God for the preservation of peace and order in society

Law and order reflects the biblical truth that man is a morally responsible being – accountable for his actions

When Karmelo Anthony – stabbed to death fellow High School student – Austin Metcalf at a track meet - - - He soon lost his rights to freedom – and became subject to the penalties applied in a Texas Courtroom [35 yr sentence]

Scripture reminds us that - - Man is not only responsible before human government for his actions – but will one day face a higher court

Ecclesiastes 12:14 - 'God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.'

The Christian and government is no simple issue – because there are times when we find people of faith having to oppose or resist the commands of human government

We might think of the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1 - - - they were commanded by the pharaoh - - to drown any baby boys in the Nile - - - but they refused that order

Exodus 1:17 - 'But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.'

They resisted the government because they feared God - - - not simply because they disagreed with a policy - - - but they believed that to obey what the government was telling them to do – would implicate themselves in sinful behavior / murder

We might think of Christians who risked their lives during WW II – refusing to hand over Jews who were hiding in their homes / etc. - - - knowing that they would be executed if they turned them over

Another example from the book of Daniel

Nebuchadnezzar had set up a golden statue and demanded that all bow before this statue - - - and the three Hebrew youths refused - - - Shadrach / Meshach/ and Abednego

They responded saying their God is able to rescue and deliver them from his hand . . .

Daniel 3:18 - 'But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image you have set up.'

They didn't know how God would respond - - - they just knew they were not going to bow! - and were tossed into the fiery furnace – but miraculously delivered by God

While Scripture affords us several examples where men or women had to resist a government ordinance on religious grounds – in the vast majority of the cases – the Christian believer is to respect the government's role in maintaining law and order in society – to be good citizens obeying the laws of the land

Here in Romans 13 – Paul tells us

Romans 13:1 - 'Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.'

I. The Good Citizen - v. 1

Here – we are reminded that Government is God's idea

He establishes governments / raises up rulers / puts down rulers / He holds rulers accountable

Many believe that civil government began with Noah after the flood – when God instituted capital punishment – as a restraint upon evil in the world

We might recall the reasoning for the flood

Genesis 6:5 - 'Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'

Genesis 6:11, 12 - 'Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.'

The earth had become violent / high murder rate / anarchy

When Noah got off the boat – we find not only the first mention of capital punishment – but essentially the first reference to state sanctioned punishment

Genesis 9:6 - 'Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.'

We sometimes get a mistaken sense of humanity's goodness when we live in a society well-ordered and maintained by rule of law / the police

The true picture of human nature comes out when the restraints of government are lifted – or the government becomes wicked and gives approval to certain criminal activity

Jim Elliot – in attempting to reach the Auca Indians in Ecuador – was reaching out to a tribe where the murder rate was close to 60%

If you were an Auca Indian – you were 3 times more likely to die from homicide than from cancer – generally in revenge killing from a neighboring tribe

Societies flourish – where there is law and order – and people are made to take personal responsibility for their actions

That is one of the reasons God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel – to promote a just society

Thou shalt not kill / steal / commit adultery / bear false witness / etc.

Kevin DeYoung: 'Have you ever thought about how much better life would be if everyone kept the Ten Commandments? We may grumble about rules and regulations, but think of what an amazing place the world would be if these ten rules were obeyed. If everyone kept the Ten Commandments . . . we wouldn't need locks on our doors or fraud protection. We wouldn't have to spend money on weapons and defense systems. We wouldn't need courts, contracts or prisons. Can you imagine what life would be like if people obeyed the Ten Commandments?'

MLJ: 'Government has become necessary because of the Fall. Because men and women have fallen, they have become lawless and selfish, they have become cruel and vile, and they must be kept in order.'

Government is one of God's restraints on evil in this fallen world

There are essentially four restraints on human evil that God has given to us in this world

- The family – parents are called to restrain evil – by disciplining their children / teaching them right and wrong behavior
- The government – police officers / courts / jails restrain evil in society
- The conscience – also works to restrain evil – if we listen to it
- The church – as Christians function as salt and light in the world / seeking to live by the ethical standards of Christ in the Bible

We are to recognize that government – even flawed government – generally speaking is better than no government – or anarchy

When we start hearing of people calling to defund the police - - - or to do away with the police – we are not talking to people who have a very good grasp on human nature – and depravity

James Madison: 'If men were angels, no government would be necessary.'

But – they are not!

Our response to lawful government is a reflection of our Christian faith

MLJ: 'the apostle is saying that government, law and order are God's idea.'

The fundamental Orders of Connecticut play an important role in American history

They were adopted in January 1639 – are said to be the first instance of a constitution on American soil

The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut: 'The Word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of a people there should be an orderly and decent government established according to God,'

The only way to maintain the peace and union of a people living in close proximity is for there to be government / laws of the land / lawful penalties for breaking the law / etc.

If every man simply does what is right in his own eyes – chaos reigns

II. To Obey or Not to Obey the State - v. 2

Life for the 1st century Jew – often included a resentment of Roman rule

Some of these Jews became followers of Christ – and needed to know how to respond to the Roman government

MacArthur once said that before Christ – Simon the Zealot would have been more likely to have stabbed Matthew the tax collector with a knife - - - than to have sat down with him for a meal!

Jesus brought these guys together to be His disciples

Since some Jews were violently opposed to showing any sign of submission to Rome – it was necessary to speak to these issues [as Paul does here]

Paul says

Romans 13:2 - 'He who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God.'

Generally speaking – to riot and rebel against lawful government is not seen as righteous behavior

The Pharisees on several occasions tried to trap Jesus in a statement – one of their traps involved submission to govt. - - - pay taxes or not to Rome?

Matthew 22:15-17 - 'Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap Him in what He said. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. "Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?"

Should we pay taxes to Rome? [it's a trick question]

If Jesus said, 'no' – then he is a traitor to the Roman Empire [could be arrested]

If He says, 'Yes' – then He is not patriotic to the Jews

Matthew 22:18-22 - 'But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? "Show Me the coin *used* for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." And hearing *this*, they marveled, and leaving Him, they went away.'

Answer: 'yes – pay taxes'

Government has legitimate purposes in the overall plan of God in this world

But – what about times where a Christian thinks they must disobey the state – or the government?

Governments often interfere with religion – or seek to restrict it in some ways

During Covid

Grace Community Church [in CA] – had been shut down for about three months [live stream only] - but no relief was in sight - - - [in contrast – we shut down for 6 weeks before we began holding services again] - - - Grace finally published an open letter announcing that

they would disregard the Covid lockdown orders implemented by the state of California beginning July 26, 2020 – and begin holding services

The letter stated amongst other truths that ‘freedom of worship’ is a command of God – not a privilege granted by the state

We don’t gather for worship because the government tells us to - - - we are obeying Scripture

Christ is the head of His church – and our allegiance is to Him

Church is *essential* to the health / well-being and faith of the believer

They knew – there could be severe consequences in taking that step

They could be fined / arrested / thrown in jail / etc. - - - who knows?

Nate Busenitz: 'History is full of painful reminders that government power is easily and frequently abused for evil purposes. Politicians may manipulate statistics and the media can cover up or camouflage inconvenient truths.'

Not much came of it – as they lawyered up – and fought every court injunction - - - they were wrapped up in court cases throughout the duration of Covid - - - eventually exonerated of all charges in the end

Rulers are given a stewardship in which they will be held accountable for how they handled the authority given them in this world

We find perhaps the most clear-cut example of Civil disobedience in the Scriptures - - - in the book of Acts

In Acts 5 – the Jewish government arrested several of the apostles and threw them in jail for proclaiming the resurrection of Christ / the gospel

During the night - - - one of God’s angels lets them out of prison – tells them to go and preach in the temple

Human government is doing one thing – and God is working supernaturally on behalf of the apostles

So they went to the temple and began preaching again - - - and the religious leaders [puzzled as to how they got out] - went and arrested them again

Acts 5:27-29 - 'And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the High Priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled

Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

We must obey God rather than men

The authority of God trumps the authority of man

The only time we are sanctioned to disobey government is if we are commanded to disobey a command of God or to go against our conscience – or do something which God's Word forbids

Should a Christian get involved in politics? [absolutely]

We ought to vote / be informed about candidates / pray for our leaders

I Timothy 2:1-2 - 'First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.'

John Calvin: 'When God wants to judge a nation, He gives them wicked rulers.'

It's a blessing to have godly rulers / to have people who fear God in our government

We know that kings and kingdoms will one day give way to the kingdom of Christ

In the book of Revelation - - - we find that the final form of world government on the earth before Christ returns - - - will be an authoritarian state / with great evil on the earth

It will be a global government led by the antichrist - who will call for the idolatrous worship of his own image / branding people with some kind of mark during the Tribulation - forbidding the people from buying or selling who do not receive the mark

All will worship the antichrist - except for people of faith

Revelation 20:4 - '... I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.'

During the Tribulation - - - rejecting the idolatrous worship of the antichrist - - - will be one of the hallmarks of true faith – many will forfeit their heads as John the Baptist once did

‘We must obey God rather than man’

Conclusion

When Jesus was arrested by the Jewish authorities - - - He faced two separate trials

The first was the Jewish one before the High Priest - - - who tore his robes and claimed blasphemy when Jesus said He was the Messiah

The Second trial was with Rome - - - primarily before Pilate - - - the Roman Governor

John 19:10-11 - 'Pilate therefore said to Him, 'You do not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?' Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin."

i.e. – Yes – Pilate – you’re in charge here [sort of] – be careful what you do with that authority because you’ll be held accountable for how you use it

There is a higher rule of God to which we are all accountable

Some day Pilate will find himself standing before Jesus in judgment

Matthew 16:27 - 'For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds.'

That judgment will be just and righteous - - - and we will enter in to a righteous kingdom

II Peter 3:11-13 - 'Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!' But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.'

Our prayer is: ‘Thy kingdom come’

We ask God for wisdom to live righteously in the present / passing age