

Political Slander

A study of the sin of slander with a focus on government politics

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Cesar, Czar, Emperor, King, President, Prime Minister, Rajah, Queen, Sultan, and Dictator. No matter where people live, there is an earthly authority over their nation or tribe. The title of the person at the peak of this authority may vary, but the authority is the same. The types of government may vary, but the authority is the same. No matter who is in power, the Scriptures have something to say about how we treat those who have authority over us. Christians are called to view and treat their earthly authorities in a specific way.

The Supreme Kingship of Jesus

Though each person is under an earthly authority, there is a spiritual authority above all earthly authorities, and His name is Jesus Christ. Jesus' authority is given to Him by God who created everything in the beginning (John 17:1-2, Matt 28:18). Jesus, as our supreme authority, is greater than any authority here on Earth. Eph 1:20-23 says, "God demonstrated [this power] in the Christ by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens--far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put everything under His feet and appointed Him as head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things in every way." See also Col 2:9-10, 2:15. Not only is Jesus above all earthly authorities, but these authorities are created by and for Jesus, and Jesus sustains all of them (Col 1:16-17). Jesus explained this to Pilate when He said, "You would have no authority over Me at all if it hadn't been given you from above." (John 19:10-11)

God's Role in and Our Response to Earthly Governments

Jesus is above every emperor, king, president, queen, and dictator. But what does that mean for us as Christians? What should our attitude be to our rulers? Rom 13:1-7 says, "**Everyone must submit to the governing authorities**, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God. So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do good and you will have its approval. For government is God's servant to you for good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For government is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath, but also because of your conscience. And for this reason you pay taxes, since the [authorities] are God's public servants, continually attending to these tasks. Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor." God has a direct role in the establishment of every nation, country, and tribe in our world. Every nation, good or bad, is established as God's instrument to accomplish His will. They are His servants. We see this throughout the OT as God used foreign and pagan nations to discipline the Israelites. Today, God calls the Christian to submit to whatever government they find themselves under. We are to obey them. Furthermore, Christians are to pay taxes and tolls and give honor and respect to those whom it is due. And since we are under an earthly authority, Paul says we owe them these things. Peter echoes Paul's command in 1Pet 2:13-17, "Submit to every human institution because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor as the supreme authority, or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For it is God's will that you, by doing good, silence the ignorance of foolish people. As God's slaves, [live] as free people, but don't use your freedom as a way to conceal evil. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honor the Emperor.**"

Our Response to Evil Governments

When a government or authority does evil, should we really submit to such an authority? When an authority is an enemy of Christ and persecutes Christians, should Christians obey such an authority? The answer is a resounding YES! Christians are not to oppose any authority, even evil ones. The desire to despise our authorities when they do evil comes naturally to our flesh, but this is sin. Jude (Jude 8) and Peter (2Pet 2:10) say that those who despise authority are ungodly. Peter's, Paul's, and Jude's message is undeniable: Christians still need to submit to their earthly authorities whether they do good or evil. Do you submit to and honor your authorities, or do you despise and oppose them?

God calls all Christians to nonresistance (Matt 5:39). Even Jesus, when He brutally crucified by the Romans, "was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before its shearer, so He does not open His mouth." (Acts 8:32) It is also written, "Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross." (Phil 2:5,8) When it comes to the way we treat our government, we must follow Jesus' example. Jesus Christ is our first and greatest example of how to submit to our authorities. Though God's true children do not fight or make war, there is a different kind of war to be fought. The war is a defensive one and Paul tells us exactly what a Christian's weapons are. Eph 6:11-12 says, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens." The Christian's weapons of war is not offensive, but defensive. The Christian's war cannot be physical but is only spiritual. Christians are to steel themselves with spiritual armor and not weapons of war (Eph 6:14-17). There is only one weapon that is allowed for a Christian to bear, and this is the Word of God (Eph 6:17). It is the words of God that can pierce the enemy. Christians do not oppose or fight the earthly authorities placed over them. Christians are to show them the way of God.

Though we are to completely submit to our earthly authorities, we are not to do so if the authorities require us to sin against God. Peter is an example for us in such a situation as this. In 1Pet 2, Peter tells us to submit to our authorities. Now, when Peter wrote his first letter, Christians were facing extreme persecutions from nonbelievers as well as the authorities. Yet even in the face of this persecution by the government, Peter still tells those who read his letter to submit. History tells us that Peter died at the command of Nero, the Roman emperor who murdered countless Christians by lighting them on fire to be the torches in his garden and feeding them to wild beasts for sport. Peter knew exactly what he was talking about when he wrote his first letter. So Peter serves as an example to us that we should submit to our earthly authorities even when they do evil.

What Christians do for Earthly Authorities

Not only are we to obey our authorities, Paul gives us something else we should do for them. He says, "First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Tim 2:1-4) We are to pray for leaders. If our leaders do evil deeds, we are to pray that they will leave us alone so that we can lead a tranquil and quiet life and be free from persecution. And when we bear the armor of God and spread His Word to those who wish to persecute us, we become God's instruments to bring evildoers to salvation. This is God's desire. He does not want leaders to continue in their evil deeds but to become His servants. It is our duty to submit to all authority and show them God's desire that they become saved and learn the truth.

Slandering the Authorities

Sadly, many, many people who claim to be Christians today are guilty of not submitting to their authorities. With their sour and sinful attitudes, they slander and despise authorities through gossip, insults, and malice. Paul gives Christians a strong warning in Titus 3:1-3, "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to **slander no one**, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people. For we too

were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, captives of various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another." The Christian is to slander no one! God gives this command so that Christians can be what God wants them to be. Is it a coincidence that Paul follows the subject of rulers and authorities with the subject of slander? Paul may have done this on purpose, knowing that slandering the authorities comes easy to our flesh. But when those who claim to be Christians slander people--especially those in authority--they disobey the command of God and therefore sin.

Other Scriptures about Slander

Slander is a sin that isn't talked about much in our religious community. However, the New Testament writers have made it clear that the Christian must not slander:

Eph 4:29-31 - "No rotten talk should come from your mouth, but only what is good for the building up of someone in need, in order to give grace to those who hear. And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit, who sealed you for the day of redemption. All bitterness, anger and wrath, insult and **slander** must be removed from you, along with all wickedness."

1Pet 2:1 - "So rid yourselves of all wickedness, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and **all slander**."

See also Rom 1:28-32, 1Tim 3:11, 1Tim 6:4-5, Tit 2:3-5.

Dear friend, are you still not convinced to the seriousness of slander and how sinful it is? Know that God will punish those who slander:

Col 3:6-8 - "God's wrath comes on the disobedient, and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, **slander**, and filthy language from your mouth."

2Tim 3:2-5 - "For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, **slanderers**, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the form of religion but denying its power. Avoid these people!"

Godly Examples Who Did Not Slander

Besides all the Biblical writers that wrote about the sinfulness of slander, there are four Biblical examples that we can follow to help motivate us to rid ourselves of slander.

EXAMPLE #1: Jesus

Jesus was arrested, beaten (flogged) by the religious leaders of the day, faced a Roman trial, beaten again (scourged) by the Romans, carried His own cross to a hill outside the city, and was crucified on it. Yet in all this, He acted like a lamb and did not slander His persecutors. Jesus faced the worst possible death for a human being and yet showed us how to submit to the authorities without resistance or slander.

EXAMPLE #2: Peter

We cannot prove exactly how Peter died, but his example still speaks to us today. All the apostles, save for one, met their death by the hands of persecutors. Even knowing that this would one day happen to him, Peter wrote that Christians are to submit to, obey, and honor our authorities. He also told us to rid ourselves of all slander.

EXAMPLE #3: Angels

Not only do we have Jesus and Peter as examples to follow when we are faced with a government that does evil, we have another example in the angels. 2Pet 2:9-11 says, "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, especially those who follow the polluting desires of the flesh and despise

authority. Bold, arrogant people! They do not tremble when they blaspheme the glorious ones; however, angels, who are greater in might and power, do not bring a slanderous charge against them before the Lord." When the angels are slandered, they do not slander in return. Are we arrogant by making ourselves mightier and more powerful than the angels when we slander others? May this never be! We should not slander anyone; we should not even slander those who do evil! Only the Lord has the authority to condemn those who do evil. The Lord's angels are an example for us so that we may never slander those who do evil.

EXAMPLE #4: Archangel Michael

We have another example that will further teach us not to slander: the archangel Michael. When he was face to face with the Devil, Satan himself, Michael did not slander him. Now, who is more evil than Satan, the one who is the father of lies and the cause of the fall of mankind? No one. But even an archangel will not bring himself to slander or condemn Satan! Jude 9 reads, "Yet Michael the archangel, when he was disputing with the Devil in a debate about Moses' body, did not dare bring an abusive condemnation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' " Take Michael as an example not to slander anyone and leave all condemnation up to God!

Conclusion

We are not to slander anyone; we are not to slander those who do evil, and we are not to even slander Satan himself! If these examples do not inspire and motivate us to fulfill God's command by getting rid of all slander from our mouths, I do not know what will. When Paul was desiring to return to Corinth and help the church there, he said, "For I fear that perhaps when I come I will not find you to be what I want, and I may not be found by you to be what you want; there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, **slander**, gossip, arrogance, and disorder." It was Paul's prayer that the Corinthians did not fall prey to these sins. When Jesus returns to the earth, would He ask the same question about us? Would Jesus want to find slander among His followers? Will He find slander in you?