

People of God, in the spirit of the 4th of July and in light of the events of this past week, I thought it appropriate to discuss the obligations and Limits of Civil Govt, as well as the Christians Duty when the Civil Magistrate goes beyond the Limits of their power, either by legislating unlawful decrees, or by refusing to enforce wholesome and good laws.

There are some who think that we Christians, in opposing the Government on certain issues, that we are nothing more than anarchists or rebels who just want to cause trouble; and that we are in danger of disobeying God because we are opposing the ordinance of God. Because of this, some also think that Christians, above all should therefore always show unlimited and unquestioned obedience to the Civil magistrate, and should never resist, but only always obey, no matter what ordinances or laws they may pass or refuse to enforce. Or at least with few exceptions.

Similarly, we have those within the Civil Magistrate that think that the City and County levels of Govt are nothing but outposts of the State and Federal Governments. And what ever the State says, whatever the Federal Govt says, the City must dutily enforce, despite how unlawful and wrongheaded and harmful such laws and decrees are.

I do not believe this is what the Scriptures teach however. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 need to be understood not only as a commands to the citizens about their duties to obey the civil magistrate, but they are also instructions given to the civil magistrate in how he is supposed to govern as God's minister, and by what standard he is to govern.

If the Civil magistrate governs in a way that is contrary to the express purposes of God then it is the right and duty of the people to oppose the civil magistrate and demand that he rule justly according to the lawfulness of the law, for the common good of society.

So let us first examine Romans 13.

1. CIVIL GOVT IS DIVINE INSTITUTION

13 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing (higher) authorities.

For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

First we see that earthly government is from God. There is a two fold government in man, one inward, which relates to eternal life, and one external, which relates the external regulation of manners for civil society. The Civil magistrate's authority to rule in the external realm for the benefit of society comes from God, and that is why every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.

If one rebels against the minister of God, the deacon of God, as the magistrate is called in verse 5, then he is rebelling against God, and that person will rightfully receive condemnation upon themselves. This is true, and all people ought to take heed and be warned.

The Civil magistrate therefore holds an honorable and noble calling and position in this mortal life, and this is why Paul urges that *"that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

We pray and give thanks to God for the Civil Magistrate, who is invested with the authority of God, so that we can lead quiet and peaceful lives. We do this because this is pleasing to God, who wants all people to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

He wants kings and rulers to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth through our prayers. And by the magistrate getting saved and

coming to a knowledge of the truth, that should lead to us living peaceful and quiet lives. That is what we want. To lead peaceful and quiet lives, and the magistrates job is to ensure that happens.

In order to promote domestic peace and tranquility, we need the civil magistrate to be God's governing minister in society.

2. CIVIL GOVT. IS ORDAINED BY GOD TO PROMOTE THE GOOD ORDER OF SOCIETY, AND PUNISH CRIMINALS.

³For rulers are not a cause of fear for *good behavior*, but for *evil*. Do you want to have no fear of authority? *Do what is good* and you will have praise from the same; ⁴for it is a minister of God to you *for good*. But if you do *what is evil*, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath *on the one who practices evil*. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Paul said the Civil Magistrate is a minister of God and ought to be obeyed. And now in these verses he tells us why the civil magistrate is to govern.

Paul here says that rulers are not a fear for good behavior, but they are a fear for evil behavior. He says, *Do you want to have no fear of authority, then do what is good*. OK. So Paul tells the citizen to do good, because the rulers are ministers of God for the good, and he is an avenger on the one who practices evil.

The Minister of God in the civil realm is to promote and reward good behavior, and punish the evil. That is the magistrates job. That is what he has been given the authority of God to do in the world. And therefore all citizens should therefore do good and obey the civil magistrate and do good as well, lest you incur punishment, for he does not bear the sword in vain.

BY WHAT STANDARD?

But it is right here that we come to the real substance of the matter. **What is the standard of good and evil?** Who determines what is the good that the magistrate is supposed to reward and praise, and what is the evil that he is to punish and afflict vengeance upon? If we have some standard of law that would tell us this, then so many problems could be easily solved for us. For not all laws are in fact lawful. Not all laws are for the good of society, but some laws are unlawful.

Unlawful laws, Pastor? Yes. There is such a thing as unlawful laws, and lawful laws. Lawful laws are those laws which are consistent with the Moral Law of God, and unlawful laws are those which are inconsistent with the moral law of God.

For example, listen what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Tim. 1:

⁸*Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, - so right away, Paul says that the law is good if it is uses lawfully. The implication is that the law can be bad if used unlawfully. So then, what is the lawful use of the law?*

⁹*understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.*

Notice, the law is not laid down for the righteous, for those who live their lives in conformity with the law of God, but rather the law was given to punish those who live lawless and disobedient lives. Paul even lists people who fit the description of lawless and disobedient - *for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice*

homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine – It is important to note here that most of these lawless behaviors were considered capital offenses in the OT. That is, they were considered so heinous and bad for society that God himself said that such people must not even be allowed to live. And so the lawfulness of the law is properly displayed in the world when the lawless and disobedient are punished accordingly, when the governing authorities, the ministers of God in the civil realm, bear the sword to punish law breakers.

Paul even has a catch all heading there, when he says, *and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine*. And we could then ask what is contrary to sound doctrine? Anything that is not *in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted*, he says.

The Gospel of the glory of the blessed God therefore, is in accord with lawful use of the law where in the lawless and disobedient and properly punished for their sins and crimes and against the good order of society. The magistrate is an avenging minister to administer wrath upon the lawless. That is his job. And all this is in accordance with the Gospel.

How is this in accordance with the Gospel? I thought the Gospel was about the forgiveness of sins and going to heaven when you die? Not so. The Gospel is the royal proclamation that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, and that it is the duty and responsibility of all the lesser kings, and lords and governors, and mayors, and city council members to rule and govern within their jurisdiction in accordance with His Lordship. This is one way in which the Gospel is allowed to permeate a society and take root so that the people can lead quiet and peaceful lives. Jesus said, all authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to me.

Jesus Christ has Universal Lordship and Authority such that the kings and the rulers of the earth are to serve Him with fear and rejoice in His Lordship with trembling. They are to kiss the Son, lest he be angry and

they perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Lest who perish? The kings and rulers of the earth. B whose wrath? The Lord Jesus Christ.

THE IMPLEMENTATIO OF THE LAW IS LOVING

Now back to Romans 13 - the apostle refers to this law code and refers to it as the standard of love for one's neighbor. So if we want to love our neighbors and promote the goodness of God in society and have a standard of morality by which we can truly determine whether certain behaviors are good or evil, and if we want to use the law lawfully, then we need to look no further than the law of God.

⁷*Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.*

⁸*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.* ⁹*For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."* ¹⁰*Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

To do no one wrong is to obey God's Law of love for neighbor. Thus, good and evil is defined properly in and by the Law of God, and it is by this standard that the civil magistrate is to rule for the good of our neighbors.

Peter basically says the same thing in 1 Peter 2:

¹¹*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.* ¹²*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.”

¹⁵ *“For such is the will of God that **by doing right** you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor.*

Notice firstly, that Peter says they are to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. And thus by abstaining they are keeping their behavior excellent. But it is precisely in this excellent behavior that the Christian is slandered as an evil doer, because he desires to abstain from fleshly lusts. His good deeds in abstaining from sexual immorality, are slandered as evil, Peter says. He might as well been talking about us today.

We too are slandered because we want to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul, and we expect and demand the civil magistrate to govern rightly according to the good and make and enforce laws that prohibit fleshly lusts and sexual immorality being displayed in public. We love moral goodness and virtue and truth and beauty and moral excellence, and we want the Civil Magistrate to punish the evil doers for their corruption of nature and their degradation of virtue and their public displays of sexual immorality, which Peter says destroys the soul. And because we want this, we are called all kinds of names as a result.

But Jesus said, *“Blessed are you when other revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

But then notice the next verse, right after Peter talks about doing good deeds and Christians being falsely slandered as evil doers for promoting good sexual ethics, he then says:

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

So he already used the phrase good and evil in the preceding verses, and he makes it clear that good is to abstain from sexual immorality, and evil, by implication, is engaging in sexual immorality. Evil is to engage in such fleshly lusts that destroy the soul. And one can destroy the soul of the individual, but once that destruction has taken root on such a wider societal level, the soul of the society is destroyed also.

Therefore, Peter had to believe that the governing authorities were supposed to punish actual evil doers, which would include those who committed sexual immorality, and they were to praise those who do actual good in accordance with God’s laws concerning sexuality and moral excellence.

But remember, Peter said that it happens that Christians are falsely called evil for promoting excellent moral behavior and sexual purity. But we should not think that he then would mean that the role of the government is to punish those who are falsely called evil. That would be crazy.

And yet we are being told today by Pella City Council that they have to enforce the state laws which allow for sexual immorality to be openly displayed in public because it has now become a civil rights issue. And all we are saying to the civil magistrate of Pella is, we want and expect you to do your job and actually be a minister of God and punish evil as God defines it, and reward the good as God defines it. And it could have been as simple as just enforcing their pool policy which reads:

*“The Pella Aquatic Center is a **family friendly** facility. Inappropriate behavior, language, **or attire** are not permitted and will be grounds for refusing admission or removal from the facility without a refund.”¹*

All they had to do was remove the people with inappropriate attire, and stuck to their policy, and this would have been settled. But I think that the fear of man has set in, and not the fear of the Lord as Psalm 2 tells them they should have.

City Council Members, do not be led astray by the false definitions in our state laws that now tells us evil is good and good is evil and that you are not allowed to discriminate in law and policy against those who would use such loop holes to corrupt the natural order and the pollute the common good of the town. Do not blindly follow the law which reflects the insanity of our age where we have collectively rejected what we have historically and traditionally and scripturally known to be good and evil.

If the Civil magistrate goes down this path, and then refuses to call evil evil as God does, and instead calls evil good, and gives sexual immorality preferred status in the public square, then they are contributing to the destruction of the common good, and are NOT performing their duties as ministers of God. If the Pella City Council Members want to be honored by God, and avoid the wrath of God, then they will obey God and fear Him first and foremost.

As Peter then says,

¹⁵ *“For such is the will of God that **by doing right** you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.*

We are being pressured by ignorant and foolish people who do not know the difference between boys and girls and have to tell themselves lies in

¹ <https://www.cityofpella.com/DocumentCenter/View/8045/Pella-Aquatic-Center-General-Rules-2021-Updates?bidId=>

order to keep their eyes blind to what is obviously true. The Oskaloosa Herald had the most amazing sentence I ever read. Here is what it says:

The council had scheduled a special meeting on Tuesday with a focus on the Community Center. However, community members used the opportunity to voice displeasure to the council about a transgender male teenager and their swimming attire and use of the men's restroom at the aquatic center. The teenager wore the shirtless swimming attire typical for males that showed his female-like breasts.

The will of God is that you would do right and silence and the ignorance of foolish men. Female like breasts? That is because he is a she. In the immortal words of Aerosmith, that dude looks like a lady. And yet, they want you to go along with their foolishness. Don't do it. Do not be enslaved to lies and deceptions and foolishness that takes you captive so that you cannot speak the truth as it clearly is. Instead, Peter says,

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

If you want to live as free people, then it is your obligation and duty that you do the will of God and do what is right, and silence ignorant and foolish people. Do not allow such people who have no moral standards to take control of the public square. Shut them down. Enact stricter city policies and encourage the police to do their jobs. That is what you have been called by God to do, City Council Members. So do it.

Freedom is not licentiousness, or libertinism, which only means you can do whatever you want, mostly expressed in sexual immorality. Freedom is found in obeying the law of God and obeying the laws of nature, and thus experiencing the blessing of God in the public square and securing that blessing to our future posterity. Without moral righteousness, there is no freedom. There is only slavery.

Charles Carroll, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, 4 November 1800

“Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime and pure, who denounces against the wicked eternal misery, and insures to the good eternal happiness are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments.

Moral goodness is the foundation for a free society. Sexual immorality above all else corrupts the foundations of morals, which is the best security for the duration of free governments. Society is lead into despotism and decay and corruption and total slavery chiefly because of sexual immorality. This is the trajectory every immoral civilization throughout the history of the earth has trod.

J.D. Unwin, an Oxford University Social Anthropologist wrote a 700 page book called Sex and Culture in 1934. Unwin examines the data from 86 societies and civilizations throughout history to see if there is a relationship between sexual freedom and the flourishing of cultures. Here is what he found:

1. ***Effect of sexual constraints:*** Increased sexual constraints, either pre or post-nuptial, always led to increased flourishing of a culture. Conversely, increased sexual freedom always led to the collapse of a culture three generations later.
2. ***Single most influential factor:*** Surprisingly, the data revealed that the single most important correlation with the flourishing of a culture was whether pre-nuptial chastity was required or not. It had a very significant effect either way.
3. ***Highest flourishing of culture:*** The most powerful combination was pre-nuptial chastity coupled with “absolute monogamy”. Rationalist cultures

that retained this combination for at least three generations exceeded all other cultures in every area, including literature, art, science, furniture, architecture, engineering, and agriculture. Only three out of the eighty-six cultures studied ever attained this level.

4. ***Effect of abandoning prenuptial chastity:*** When strict prenuptial chastity was no longer the norm, absolute monogamy, deism, and rational thinking also disappeared within three generations.
5. ***Total sexual freedom:*** If total sexual freedom was embraced by a culture, that culture collapsed within three generations to the lowest state of flourishing – which Unwin describes as “inert” and at a “dead level of conception” and is characterized by people who have little interest in much else other than their own wants and needs. At this level, the culture is usually conquered or taken over by another culture with greater social energy.
6. ***Time lag:*** If there is a change in sexual constraints, either increased or decreased restraints, the full effect of that change is not realized until the third generation.

What all this tells us is that “God’s moral laws are not simply a bunch of arbitrary rules given to restrict mankind’s freedom. Instead, they are like operating instructions designed to spare people from suffering while maximizing human flourishing and freedom. Unwin’s research provides strong rational justification for the inference that God’s moral laws pertaining to our sexuality, although they may restrain us from some immediate pleasure, protect us from enormous long-term suffering while maximizing our long term flourishing and freedom.”²

So then what does this all mean for us? It means that our society as a whole is crashing down around us, and the only people who can prevent that from happening are Christians.

² <https://www.kirkdurstont.com/blog/unwin>

Samuel Adams said in his letter to James Warren, Nov. 4 1775 – “No people will tamely surrender their liberties, nor can any be easily subdued, when knowledge is diffused and virtue is preserved. On the contrary, when people are universally ignorant, and debauched in manners, they will sink under their own weight without the aid of foreign invaders.”

This incident at the Pool is part of the collapse. In calling upon the Pella City Council to stand strong and resist the cultural decay and uphold righteousness and moral good, and virtue, and to punish evil, including sexual immorality, we are just encouraging them to do the job they were elected to do, to protect our city by preserving it against the cultural decay and to maintain freedom and liberty.

I don't hold out much hope for other parts of the nation, but we just might still have enough cultural momentum here in Pella to keep going strong for another generation or two, and Lord willing, we might be spared of this inevitable destruction. Or rather our grand children might be spared of this destruction.

But it must require vigilance and fierce determination to do what is right and good and to not give two rips about law suits from people who are foolish and ignorant and have no moral code whatsoever.

Who cares about money when our children's future is going to be destroyed as a result of this? Of course the wicked are going to attack us if we stand firm on this issue. That should be a given. But don't you think the future of Pella is worth a hundred lawsuits if it means we protect our most important investment and treasure we have, our children?

If we honor God and keep his commands and do what is right, God will protect us. But if we fail to stand because we fear men more than we fear God, then he will allow us to destroy ourselves and eventually be taken

over by more powerful and more corrupt men than ourselves. And our children's children will grow up in land that neither we nor our father knew, and everything that was good and right and beautiful about America will be gone.

So, what should we do? Well in the light of the 4th of July, let us consider this. The first issue that Thomas Jefferson listed in the Declaration of Independence for why the colonies were breaking away from the King of Great Britain was this:

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

What I am saying here today is that if the City Council of Pella refuses to assent to laws which are most wholesome and necessary for the public good, if they refuse to govern this town according to what is morally good, and they insist on perpetuating evil and allowing for sexual immorality to take over our public square, *it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish that government, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. And it is our right, it is our duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for our future security.*

People of God, it was not the Founding Fathers who were the traitors. It was not the Founding Fathers who were rebelling – it was the King himself who was a traitor and he had was not doing what he said he would do. It was the King who was lawless, not the Founding Fathers. And neither are we being rebellious today. We are not revolutionaries. We are not the ones seeking to overturn the natural order of society and throw off all such good laws meant for our protection. We are demanding that our city council assent to wholesome laws which are necessary for the common good. And if they refuse, then People of Pella, we have every right and duty *to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for our future security.*

Consider running for City Council. There are three opening this year. Ward 1, Ward 3, and the Ward At Large positions. Get involved and protect our children. The people of Pella are looking for strong principled leaders who will stand up to the corruptions of the day, and they will support you. You can win, and don't let that scare you. Rather, remember the words that the Lord said to Joshua

⁶Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1

Amen.