

11 Nov 12  
Higher Authority  
MSBC

I. Today we mark the willing sacrifice of our soldiers and sailors in the cause of freedom and liberty, and in the name of the United States of America. And I want us to focus in on the use of the words freedom, liberty and sacrifice. Here's a [video](#).

## II. Scripture

Is that our testimony?

Today I'm gonna talk about some serious stuff relating to politics and the Bible. Feel free to leave now if you want to, or need to take children out. I'd like to exhort and encourage through the instructions of the apostle Paul to the Church at Ephesus ... the specific charge to the Church.

### Romans 13

*1*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 execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. *5*Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. *6*For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. *7*Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

*8*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. *9*For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

## III. Prayer blessing the reading and hearing of the scripture

## IV. Authorities

Let's look at the scripture again,

*1*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God:

Amen! One would be foolish to try and argue with this. What this sets up is a hierarchy of power. God is number 1, earthly governments are down the line ... and individuals are in submission to all. Is this the correct interpretation? Yes, but ...

I am truly grateful for the citizenship I have in the USA. And ...

I'm proud to be an American, 'cause at least I know I'm free.

And I won't forget the men who died, and paid that price for me (Greenwood)

A few years ago (like 8), I had a conversation with a colleague who was belittling Christian martyrs for breaking the laws of their respective countries. I can't forget the incredulity he expressed that those individuals would be honored for smuggling Bibles in, preaching, baptizing and then being arrested, tortured and killed. At the time I, it piqued my interest and answering the question became crucial.



I find it interesting that so many people are unfamiliar with the Vietnam era story of LT Calley. On 16 March 1968, this platoon leader took a leading role in massacring 347 Vietnamese Villagers. He was following orders ... unlawful orders. For his efforts he was sentenced to life in prison, but ended up serving house arrest at Ft Benning, GA for 3.5yr. In August 2009, at the age of 66, Calley spoke to the Kiwanis Club of Columbus, GA. His remarks:

*There is not a day that goes by that I do not feel remorse for what happened that day in My Lai. I feel remorse for the Vietnamese who were killed, for their families, for the American soldiers involved and their families. I am very sorry...If you are asking why I did not stand up to them when I was given the orders, I will have to say that I was a 2nd Lieutenant getting orders from my commander and I followed them—foolishly, I guess.*

There is a difference in laws. Here is a point not likely caught by my agitated friend. There is a higher authority. In the Army, and other branches of the service, you will pay if you obey an unlawful order. So why am I saying this?

Clearly there are multiple levels of laws. The answer to the question is simply that they (the martyrs) are obeying a higher law (from Matthew 28 and Acts 1) and will face temporary judgment here in order to receive a greater prize for eternity. If LT Calley had stood up to CPT Medina in 1968, he would've received a harsh response, much like those in Muslim lands today.

## V. Love

*the powers that be are ordained of God. 2Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3For 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: 4or 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.*

Let's consider for a moment our **brothers and sisters in chains** (Hebrews 13:3).

I wonder how they interpret this passage? Here's where it gets sticky. It says that the powers of the state are ministers of God to execute wrath upon them that do evil. I wonder if

### [Alireza Seyyedian and Farshad Fahti, prisoners for the gospel in Iran](#)

see their tormentors as ministers of God to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil? What about

### [Alimujiang Yimiti' imprisoned in NW China for nearly 5 years](#)

thinks that if he does that which is good, he will have praise from his captors? What are we to make of this? What if real persecution came to Jefferson City? What then?

This is a *very* difficult question. And I think the answer has two parts.

a. God's role. The UCMJ model only goes so far. As George Box once said,

“... all models are wrong, but some are useful.”

Unlike the military, God is not sitting in the Pentagon waiting to find out about those leaders in violation of Romans 13. HE's also not waiting around to find out about those jelly-bellies who followed the unlawful orders of those leaders. In fact, *HE's not waiting for anything*. As in the Garden of Gethsamane, HE asks us to put away the swords in Romans 13, and leave the justice to HIM.

b. Love. This is love of God for us. It's also love of God for others.

In response to the questions of the suffering Church above, it is useful to consider the testimonies of those under persecution. In particular, [Narsbek Sydykov](#) was beaten for the Lord in Kyrgyzstan, a muslim country in which judges make decisions commensurate with payments of the parties involved. It's a corrupt and evil place. In response to a question on the possibility of having justice served, Sydykov responded,

“... we have no hope that any justice will be given in this case. .. We know that God is our only protection, but He puts governments and laws in place to restrain evil.”

I have to believe that Narsbek was familiar with this passage in Romans. And he seems to have no problem with it. Perhaps the love of God is flowing through him to the extent that he understands the magnitude of God's knowledge and faithfulness. Perhaps he likes it!

Then there is the curious case of [Dinh Trung](#) , a Vietnamese Christian who was sentenced to three years in prison in Quang Ngai for preaching the gospel in the early '90's. Dinh accepted his plight and began to minister in the prison. He led many prisoners to Christ. One day the officials offered him an early release. Trung's response was extraordinary!

“I demand my right to complete my prison sentence.”

Trung wanted even more time to continue his ministry in the prison! Consider the last part of our passage.

... and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

We can deal with Romans 13 better when we know God better.

## VI. Involvement/Responsibility

So, is there a place for the military in all of this? Actually, yes! The justification is given in the very same passage!

**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.**

All governments involve people ... sinful people. It is ludicrous to envision any government sans defense. Even in the new heaven and earth, the Christ the Lord will reign eternally, and satan will be bound ... by Whom??? The hope is that we have righteousness in our government as it was intended in this chapter. Evil governments don't come into being by chance. For that matter, nothing does!

The process is sure! Evil governments come into being when good people do nothing! Can we imagine the American revolution taking place by the hands of ignorant people who hide their heads in the sand?

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

*That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, 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.*

Could it have happened with people who wanted to vote themselves more government benefits?

*Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;* Do you think folks who insist on gay rights could've carried out such a campaign?

*the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them,*



Would selfish individuals without concern for the common good take up arms against a tyrannical king???

*and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.*

Be sure of this: War is tough and nothing is free! Because someone had to buy it, someone had to build it, someone had to invent it, and someone had to sacrifice to get it!!!

So, yes, there is surely justification for a military in Romans 13. And, too, the hope for righteous leaders. Government is your responsibility, and whoa be to the one who ignores it!

Scrooge: "But you were always a good man of business, Jacob."

Marley Spectre: Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business! (Dickens)

## VII. Conclusion

I hope this has made each of you think more deeply about the "raison d'etre" of suffering, and governments, and the military ... and sacrifice. We are, this day, honoring those among us who have taken up the cause of our country and the common good. Money can't replace people. But, praise God for those by whom "freedom" is gained.

And praise God for the One Who bought our freedom through the sacrifice of the cross ... **a stumbling block to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians)**. And, now, I'll turn it over to Pastor Jim Franklin for the next section of the service.

