

Bedford Bulletin

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“GOD
Made us
Alive...”

Together
with Christ

Ephesians 2:5

OBEDIENCE TO LAW

Did you know that there are three laws? Two exist today and must be obeyed, one has been replaced. The Hebrew writer speaks to the old covenant, the first Law that was replaced saying, *“⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.” (Heb. 8:7-9) and then, “In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13). Good news is the law that replaced the first is the second, the Law of Christ. Paul spoke of it in this way, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Paul also referred to it as the “Spirit of life” saying, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). To the church at Corinth Paul said, “to those who are without the Law, I became as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law” (1 Cor. 9:21 NASB). The priesthood has changed, there no longer exist the “Levitical Priesthood”, now Jesus is our new High Priest (Heb. 3:1, 4:14).*

So, to recap, the old law was in force till Jesus came and nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:13, 14), and established the new and better covenant (Heb. 12:24). The Law of

Knowing & Doing God's Will

Proverbs 11:14

Christ, currently in force is the foremost law for us all. It replaces the old law and supersedes all others. More on the law of Christ at the end of this article.

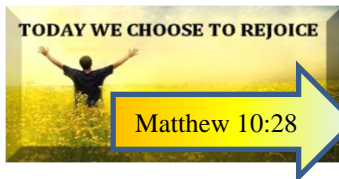
Now to the other law that we must follow, God speaks of the authorities and civil law to which Paul states, *“¹ Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will ^[a]bring judgment on themselves.”* (Rom. 13:1-2). When Paul said, *“every soul be subject”*, he used the Greek word, [ψυχή] which Thayer's say it is, *“that in which there is life; a living being”*, in turn that means all mankind, not just Christians. Why is this so important today? Because of what Paul said in verse 5. *“Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake”* (v.5). Not only Paul but Peter also spoke to this subject saying, *“¹³ Therefore submit yourselves to every ^[a]ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—¹⁶ as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for ^[b]vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷ Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king”* (1 Pet. 2:13-17).

We know in the first century Rome ruled where Paul and Peter lived. We also know that Roman rule was fierce, often violent and often unfair. But in the midst of all this, the word of the Lord, the law of Christ gives only one reason for disobeying civil authority. Recorded in Acts 3 Peter and John healed a lamed man and causing the people to glorify God because of what they saw. Then in chapter 4 *“...the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead”* (4:1b-2). In verse 17 the rulers said, *“But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name”*. They were commanded by the civil authority not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. To that they replied, *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (vs.19-20). Yes, civil

law must be obeyed, but not if it puts us in a position where we must disobey the divine law of Christ.

When we are ordered to do something by the civil authorities, we are obligated to obey the orders. Many of our brethren are staying away from our worship because they believe we are not abiding in the orders of the civil authority which has asked that we all practice wearing masks during our worship services, during singing and that only people who officiate can remove the mask.

Why bring this up? Not because I personally have conviction that wearing masks makes any significant difference. My wife and I, along with many others wear those



“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

hot, hard to breath, eyeglass fogging mask because of our

love for the brethren. In concern for others as Paul said, *“³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”* (Phil. 2:3-4). Jesus said, *“love one another; as I have loved you”* (John 13:34). Back to Philippians 2 verse 5 through 8 notice: *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”* (v.5), Jesus *“emptied Himself”* (v.7) and *“humbled Himself”* (v.8). Jesus’ mind was, I will empty myself of the glory of heaven to come down to the earth full of sweat, sins, hate, hot, cold, having no place to lay My head (Matt. 8:20), and be humbled because I love them, even to the cross. Jesus obeyed every law, of which I am certain because it is written, *“...tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin”* (Heb. 4:15).

It is important to understand that civil authority must be obeyed even when law seems stupid to me, when the ordinance seems unfair, when it is uncomfortable, or just feels plane silly. There are laws that make me shutter and quake, but obey them, be subject to them, I must, unless I can perfectly prove they would cause me to breach the law of the New Testament.

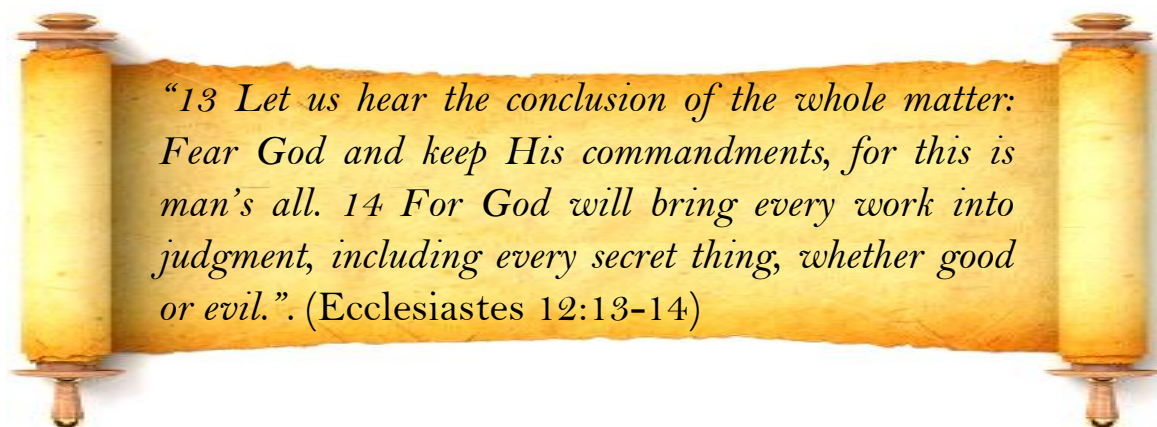
Remember, *“Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God..”* and *“Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake”* (Rom. 13:2, 5). To rebel against civil law, regardless how foolish it seems, is to rebel against divine law and that is sin, that means damnation. As members of the body of Christ we are all commanded to obey first the law of Christ, and secondly the civil laws.

There is the most important issue at hand. Do we love one another enough to suffer the mild discomfort and nuisance of wearing a mask to worship and during worship? If so, then we should consider others greater than ourselves like Christ Jesus did. We

must not become a stumbling stone, that prevents those we love from attending worship because of their concerns for their health, and for obeying the ordinances as they see them. Let them know assuredly your love and desire for them to come back to worship.

One last point. I am in no way validating fear as justification for abandoning the assemblies. I believe we need to fear God more than the virus. Fear didn't stop David, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, John or Peter. *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love"* (1 John 4:18).

In Love
Dave Scarpino



Our faithful Creator is worthy to be praised in this assembly. All praise to Him who reigns above in majesty supreme! He gave His Son to die, for all mankind, that He might redeem all. Our blessed Redeemer suffered and died for our sins and is now risen and sitting at the right hand of God as Head of the church. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, knowing that He is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:8-9) ***"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"*** (Isaiah 6:3)

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

1. Hear the gospel ----- John 6:45; Romans 10:17
2. Believe the gospel ----- John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6
3. Repent of sins ----- Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30
4. Confess Christ ----- Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized ----- Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38
6. Remain faithful unto death ----- Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:22