

Patriot or Subject? **(Subject Yourselves!)**

As Christians and patriots, we like to think of ourselves as “citizens” rather than “subjects” because “citizens” are *free* and have *rights* but “subjects” are *restricted* and have *obligations*. The truth is that we are both, cf. 1Cor.9:1,19-27.

In the New Testament, “subjection” is usually translated from the compound Greek word *hupotasso*, cf. Jas.4:7. *Hupo* basically means “under” or “below,” and “*tasso*” is to “order” or “arrange oneself.” Thus, *hupotasso* is to “order or arrange oneself under” the control of another. Before we consider specific applications of “subjection” that God commands of His people, please understand a couple of related points:

1. Subjection must be *voluntary*- the deliberate act of placing oneself under the control of another. Otherwise, it is not subjection, but oppression and/or tyranny.
2. Subjection does not require *agreement*- in fact, the real test of subjection (and submission) is when we disagree. Otherwise, there is no real subjection, we’re just doing that with which we personally agree.
3. For the reasons above, subjection is an important test of both our love of and faithfulness to God and His commandments.

God instructs His people to “*be subject*” or “*subject yourselves*” in several different areas:

- To Christ, Ephesians 1:22; 5:23-24. As the *Head*, we are to subject ourselves to Christ “*in everything*.” This subjection is *voluntary*, but must be *complete*. It is without exemption, exception, or exclusion.
- To Government, Romans 13:1-7; 1Peter 2:13-17; Titus 3:1-2. We would do well to remember that this requirement did not include the caveats of “as long as the government is democratically elected/run” or “requires only that with which you personally agree.” But what we must understand is that the *ONLY* exemption to the submissive requirement for Christians to government is when it requires something of us that violates God’s law, Acts 5:29; 4:18-20. Period.
- To Shepherds/Elders in the Local Church, Hebrews 13:17; 1Peter 5:5. Again, “agreement” is not required, but subjection is. As long as the Shepherds are not requiring something of us that violates God’s revealed will we are to submit, voluntarily, completely, and without *grumbling* or *disputing*, Philippians 2:14-15.
- To Masters, 1Peter 2:18-25. Servants are to *submit* not only to masters that are “*good and gentle*,” but also to those that are “*unreasonable*” (marginal rendering is *perverse*). The passage goes on to highlight the *favor* that is rendered toward those who “*for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows while suffering unjustly*,” and uses the supreme example of Jesus Christ to drive the point home. Of course, we again recognize that the only exception to this requirement would be if submission to a “master’s” directives would make us violate God’s law.
- To Husbands, Ephesians 5:22-33; 1Peter 3:1-6. Wives are to *arrange themselves under* the authority of their husbands “*in everything*” and “*as to the Lord*.” Such doesn’t mean they have to always agree, but it does mean that are required to subject themselves. And again, as in the previous examples (excluding to Christ),

this subjection's only exception would be if the husband required something of her that violated God's revealed will.

Hopefully the above information provides us with a basis of understanding from which to move into some areas I think we need to consider.

Our government is requiring us to wear masks and take other precautions in certain specified circumstances both in and outside of the assembly. Does this violate God's law in some way? Not as far as I can see. Then we need to subject ourselves to the government because God requires it. Will you chose what you consider "patriotic freedom" over/instead of Christian duty?

Our Shepherds (surely understanding the previous point) are asking us to wear masks and observe certain guidelines when we assembly. Do any of these guidelines require us to violate God's law? Not as far as I can see. Then we need to subject ourselves to our Shepherds because God requires it.

Our Masters (surely "employers" fit) may require specific guidelines to be met while "on the job." Unless and until meeting the specifications would require us to violate God's revealed will, we must subject ourselves because God requires it.

In all of these areas of *subjection* we have previously understood and correctly taught that unless a requirement puts us in clear violation of God's law, we are to *subject ourselves and submit*.

Why then do so many Christians now object and refuse to subject themselves? It doesn't matter what "I think" or "I believe" or even "what is factual vs. false." It doesn't matter what "expert" you believe or disbelieve. Your political views, opinions, or even "rights" as an American are not the point either. What God says trumps all, does it not?

But before concluding, bear with me for one additional area we've yet to consider. By inspiration, the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "*all be subject to one another in the fear of Christ,*" Ephesians 5:21. I don't have to agree with my brother regarding the efficacy of wearing a mask to *subject myself* to him. In Corinth (and Rome) there were brethren who believed that eating meat sacrificed to an idol made one an idol-worshipper. Paul knew better, and even said so, cf. 1Corinthians 8:4-6. Nonetheless, in *subjection* to his brethren he vowed to never eat meat again if it would cause his brother to stumble, 1Corinthians 8:13. How then can we ridicule and castigate one another over a simple mask from either side? Whatever our "rights" or "civil liberties" as Americans may or may not be is not the point we need to be considering when dealing with our brethren! Christian, please reread 1Corinthians 8:1 – 9:27 carefully before you start demanding and asserting your "rights."

What you and I believe or even "know" about masks and other requirements doesn't matter. God requires subjection to Government, Shepherds, Masters, until and unless such would require a violation of Christ's revealed will. "*For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another,*" Galatians 5:13. Think about it, won't you?

"Submit therefore to God," Jas.4:7a.

"Draw neat to God and He will draw near to you," Jas.4:8.

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you," Jas.4:10.