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Faith And Civil Disobedience: A Biblical and Historical Exploration

Is it ever right to disobey an authority as a Christian? How can we face unjust laws? Should we join or resist the protest? This essay will show the way Christians need to face crucial and unjust laws and if it is right to disobey them. We will look into the Boston Tea Party and the events that cause this civil disobedience.

In Daniel chapter three, King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue and ordered everyone to bow down to it. If anyone refused to bow down, they would be thrown into a blazing furnace. The law that King Nebuchadnezzar made went against God's law. Exodus 20: 3-5 says, 'You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.' Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to obey the king's order because it went against God's command to His people. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were defiant of the king's order even to the point where they were thrown into the blazing furnace. Even when they were confronted by the king himself, they said that God had the ability to save them, but even if God chose not to, they would still follow His commands, Daniel 3:17- 18. Romans 13:1 says, 'Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.' God put kings and authorities in charge and we should submit to that authority unless it is in opposition to God's word. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were each loyal servants of King Nebuchadnezzar until his order directly opposed God's word.

In 1773 American Colonists, disguised themselves as Native Americans and dumped 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor as a protest against the British crown for unfair treatment, violence and taxation without representation. The colonists had been taxed on imported goods such as dice, paper, playing cards, sugar, and tea. They were being taxed so heavily because of the debts Britain needed to pay for the French and Indian War. Britain thought that the colonies should contribute money through taxes to pay off their massive debt. Taxes were not the only issue. There were several other factors which led to the civil disobedience against Great Britain at the Boston Tea Party. In 1770 five colonists were killed when British soldiers fired into a crowd of protestors in Boston. Although many soldiers were arrested, they were either found not guilty or charged with much less severe crimes. This horrible incident became known as the Boston Massacre. The demonstration of violent behavior against the colonists led to mistrust of the British soldiers who were often quartered in colonists' homes. These events, along with many others led to the uprising against the British crown at Boston Harbor, which ultimately became a catalyst to the American Revolution in 1776.

If I were a Christian living in that time I would have supported the protest at Boston Harbor. While unfair taxation may be an annoyance, the mistreatment and killing of colonists is not something I could stand by quietly and allow to happen. While Romans teaches us that we should submit to the

governmental authority, Jesus demonstrated when it was appropriate to stand up against sinful behavior. In Matthew Chapter 21, Jesus entered the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem and witnessed people buying, selling and collecting taxes. Jesus saw these things and became angry that people were turning the temple of God into a market. In Matthew 21:13 Jesus said, 'My house will be called a house of prayer.' But you are making it 'a den of robbers.' Jesus was the perfect example of how and when it was appropriate submit to governmental authority and when it was appropriate to stand up against injustice. We can always look to Jesus as the example of how we should respond in any situation.

Through historically impactful events such as the Boston Tea Party and remarkable Bible events Christians can learn and understand how to respond appropriately to unjust laws and treatment. Obedience to Jesus does not mean that we get to avoid struggles, but that it is often obedience that brings us into the harsh trials we face. God has placed leader in charge so we should honor Him by obeying the governing authorities. However, if their orders are contrary to God's will, we are obligated as His servants to obey His commands. Being obedient to God is not always easy and can create hardships such as losing a job, respect in society and even our lives. We need to stand strong in faith, trust God and pray for guidance in every decision we make. As it says in Proverbs 3:5-6, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.'