



[Baptist Ministries - Baptist Church Directory - Find a Church / Ministry](#) :: Your Favorite Site

I think I'd Better Think It Out Again

<http://teampyro.blogspot.com/2020/07/i-think-id-better-think-it-out-again.html>

by Phil Johnsonot this question today in more than one Tweet (regarding the Grace Church elders' statement "Christ, Not Caesar, Is Head of the Church"), so I'll answer it here: Thanks for the question. I'll answer candidly. Speaking for myself alone, I'll acknowledge that yes, my thinking on the question of the COVID-19 quarantine and Romans 13 has changed somewhat or at least been refined, illuminated, qualified, and enriched. I've been forced by circumstances to rethink and amplify my answers carefully because of the government's relentless attempts to keep churches closed despite the fact that months have passed without the apocalyptic quotas of death and disease that were originally predicted. My original concern about the virus was clearly overblown. At the time, I needed to be cautious, because we could not possibly know how serious the threat really was. My concern now is for people whose need for fellowship and pastoral care is going unmet. I do have firsthand knowledge of how critical this emergency is. In the weeks since March several things happened that affect my perspective. For one thing, the California Governor's edicts have become increasingly onerous. He has told churches they should not have congregational singing. He wants to limit church attendance to 100 (even in a massive 3,000-seat auditorium). He says churches are "nonessential" while insisting that marijuana dispensaries, liquor stores, and casinos are vital businesses that must be kept open. Although he briefly showed signs of backing off the policy of church closures, he then immediately doubled down to try to force the mandatory re-closure of all places of worship "indefinitely" (even though there's no evidence churches have been hotspots for passing the virus). Meanwhile, government officials have not only permitted but actively encouraged mass demonstrations (including riots) for political causes. With all of that going on, I was forced to rethink my position on Romans 13. The elders of our church also realized the need for us to answer in greater detail the question of who has the authority to govern the doctrine, worship, and polity of the church. The elders' statement that was affirmed on July 23 and made public the following day is the result. It's a clarification and qualification of everything we have previously said about the duty imposed on us by Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2. Without denying that duty, we're endeavoring to explain biblically why those passages don't call for blind, automatic acquiescence to government overreach into church business. It is of course still the case that in a real and impending health crisis, the elders and pastors of a church may wisely decide to follow the recommendations of health officials with regard to protecting against dangerous contagions. That's precisely what we did at the start of the quarantine. Circumstances have changed, however, and we have adapted (and explained) our response accordingly. An observant person who has been following me might have noticed subtle shifts in my position since the quarantine began. I knew from the start that things might change if politicians began to use the health crisis in an opportunistic way. When explaining our position on Romans 13 several weeks ago, I wrote this: How long until the government-ordered quarantine is undeniably excessive, or we conclude that it's targeted persecution against our worship and therefore an illegal attempt to make us disobey Hebrews 10:25? That time may come, and when it does, we may have to implement the principle of Acts 5:29. The question of whether we have already passed that point is another subjective issue.

Date created: 2023/05/13