

Is it Right for a Christian to Resist a Mandate to Get a SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine?

(James R. Hughes: 2021-08-31; updated 2021-09-14)

In Ontario, as of August 28th, 82.73% of the eligible population (12+) had had at least 1 dose of a SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine, and 75.87% of the eligible population (12+) had had 2 doses.¹ Thus, there was over 15% of the adult population in Ontario which had not received at least one dose of the vaccines.

Many reasons may be given for why this portion of the population has resisted the request made by Provincial authorities to be vaccinated, including a:

- Fear about the risks associated with the vaccines.
- Conviction that the vaccines have not been adequately tested to determine their side effects, particularly since the mRNA form of the vaccines is based on new technology.
- Belief that they will be fine if they contract COVID-19.
- Belief that the vaccines are ineffective, or only partially effective.
- Belief that since they have already contracted COVID-19 and survived, they now have a natural immunity that is better than that provided by the vaccines.
- Mistrust of government officials.
- Concern that a vaccine mandate is an overreach by government.
- Belief that governments and health care authorities are withholding information and deceiving the public about the risks associated with the vaccines and with COVID-19.
- Belief that the risks associated with COVID-19 are dramatically overstated, particularly by the hyperventilating media.
- Belief that many people who are pushing vaccines are relying on medical technology and not trusting God to care for them.
- Conviction that governments have no right to tell individuals how they should manage their personal health.
- Claim that a decision about whether to be vaccinated falls under the domain of liberty of conscience or freedom of conscience, as defined by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.²

Without question, governments have (widely) over-stepped the boundaries for their God-defined mandate, and a number of the reasons stated above have credibility to varying degrees. However, let us assume that:

- The current situation of government overreach is a ‘given’ and that resisting vaccination is not going to change the current state of affairs. Only a major revival of true religion and a reestablishment of personal responsibility will bring about meaningful change in society and in the administration and delivery of government services.
- The government has mandated that all adults be vaccinated unless they have a truly valid medical reason for not being vaccinated. [Note: as of the end of August, the Ontario government had *not* mandated vaccines. They were leaving the creation of a mandate to other entities such as major employers.]
- We wish to apply the Bible’s rules in our lives and ask the question, is it right for a Christian to resist a mandate to receive the vaccine. In this respect, what the Bible teaches should guide our consciences.

Our consideration for how to address this question must begin with what Paul and Peter state:

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. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a

¹ [COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) in Ontario](#)

² [Freedom of Conscience - Centre for Constitutional Studies](#)

terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. [Romans 13.1-7]

¹³Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. [1 Pt 2.13-16]

Paul and Peter do not say, "Be subject if you agree with the requirement." or "Be subject if you feel that there are no risks." Of course, the Bible is clear that we are not to be subject to governments when they command us to do something that is contrary to God's law (e.g., abort a child, kill an elderly person, stop preaching the Gospel, refer to a biological male as 'she', perform a same-sex 'wedding' ceremony, or worship a pagan deity). Examples that support this proposition are the behaviour of the Hebrew midwives who refused to obey the command of Pharaoh and to kill the Hebrew male babies (Ex 1.17), the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to bow down to the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up on the plain of Dura (Dan 3), Daniel's refusal to stop praying to God after Darius commanded it (Dan 6), and the Apostles' refusal to stop preaching the Gospel when commanded to do so by the Jewish officials (Acts 4.18-20; Acts 5.27-29). In the last instance, Peter says that we must judge if it is right in the sight of God to listen to the rulers rather than to God (Acts 4.19) and then, that we must obey God rather than men (Acts 4.29).

However, we must obey the government, as long as obeying a specific law is not morally wrong by God's standards, even if:

- The law is stupid—such as banning plastic bags or enacting a 'carbon' tax on gasoline.
- The government is using 'ungodly tactics' (which governments often do) to achieve their ends
- The law is oppressive.
- The law creates divisions between people groups—for example, a law might favour people of a particular ethnic group or skin colour or create a 'medical apartheid' (e.g., between 'vaxed' and 'unvaxed') with vaccine 'passports'.
- We believe that a concession of obedience to one foolish law will encourage governments to enact even more foolish laws.

Our obedience is not to be premised on whether a law makes sense or is just in our eyes but on whether by obeying the law we would break God's law, or we will end up living as the covenant people did at the time of the judges with everyone doing what is right in his or her own eyes (Judges 17.6; 21.25).

Paul and Peter wrote about obedience to government under the rule of an excessively wicked Roman emperor (Nero). It is clear from their teachings that rebellion against government is unlawful before God. Some Christians today attempt to justify revolution by saying that our governments are wicked. Quoting John Calvin (*Institutes*; 4.20.31) and claiming that current governments are run by 'criminal gangs' does not provide a warrant for rebellion against governments—even tyrannical ones. The Christians living in Rome, and suffering persecution, during the three centuries after Christ, present a model of how we should relate to government.

If a government commands that we pay our taxes, be vaccinated, not use plastic straws, obtain a permit to pave our driveways, wear a mask, wear a seatbelt, or wear a beanie hat with a propeller ..., then we should obey its command. Our means of resistance is not to be through disobedience but through means such as patient suffering, electing different politicians, using the civil courts to annul their law and expose their foolishness (Rom 1.22), or fleeing their jurisdiction. If we do not take a truly principled approach (willing to go ‘to the death’, as were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) in our protests against governments’ stupidity or tyranny, we will be forever ‘tilting at windmills’.³

In addition, a mandate to obtain a vaccine is not contrary to God’s law. No one can legitimately argue that receiving a vaccine as a preventative against SARS-CoV-2 would break any of the Ten Commandments or any of the associated case laws in the Bible. The closest one could come for arguing against vaccination, based on a principle derived from the Ten Commandments, is self-defence based on the 6th Commandment (“You shall not murder.”). However, this is a stretch. There are many things that we do (often ‘blindly’) which have risks (in some cases, high risk) associated with them and we don’t think much about the risk. For example, we purchase fruits and vegetables and rarely think about the possibility of getting food poisoning.⁴ We trust that food inspections put in place by governments will minimize the risk. Likewise, the risk of being injured or killed in a vehicle accident is significant, yet most people give no thought to the risks of riding in or driving a vehicle.⁵ A person who argues against being vaccinated because of the potential risk would have to demonstrate convincingly that the risk of becoming sick or dying from receiving a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine⁶ is statistically significantly higher than other risks that he or she is willing to take on a regular basis.

Reasons why every Christian adult (without a valid medical exemption) should receive the SARS-CoV-2 vaccines, include:

1. It is required, and we should obey—yes, there is no law yet in Ontario mandating vaccines, but the implied behaviour (e.g., planning for vaccine ‘passports’) of the Provincial government is that it is a requirement. As Paul states, to resist a government mandate which does not break God’s law, is disobedience against the 5th Commandment.
2. Overwhelmingly, individuals who are not vaccinated in Ontario are the ones who are contracting COVID-19 and being hospitalized, as indicated by the August 28th statistics:⁷

	Cases		In Hospital		In ICU	
Unvaccinated	500	59.88%	140	76.50%	90	85.71%
Partially vaccinated	100	11.98%	16	8.74%	6	5.71%
Fully vaccinated	160	19.16%	27	14.75%	9	8.57%
Vaccination status unknown	75	8.98%				
	<u>835</u>		<u>183</u>		<u>105</u>	

3. The vaccines are saving lives and reducing the impact of breakthrough infections. The overall societal benefits associated with vaccinating the adult population outweighs the relative risks, to a small cohort of individuals, associated with complications which may be caused by the vaccines. Someone who

³ Added paragraph, 2021-09-14.

⁴ [Produce safety - Canada.ca](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/food_safety/produce_safety)

⁵ [23+ Car Accident Statistics in Canada \(2021 Update\) \(carsurance.net\)](https://www.carsurance.net/23+Car-Accident-Statistics-in-Canada-(2021-Update)-carsurance.net)

⁶ [COVID-19 vaccine safety: Weekly report on side effects following immunization - Canada.ca](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/diseases/communicable/covid-19/vaccine-safety)

⁷ [COVID-19 vaccinations data | COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) in Ontario](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/diseases/communicable/covid-19/vaccinations)

disagrees with this statement must be able to present actuarial data which demonstrates the contrary to be true, not the mere anecdotal evidence being promulgated on the internet.⁸

4. Those who refuse to receive vaccines are putting themselves and others at risk of infection and more serious consequences, including death. This is contrary to the 6th commandment. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* states it well (Q68): “What is required in the Sixth Commandment? The Sixth Commandment requires all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others.” Jesus states that the second greatest commandment is that we love our neighbours as ourselves (Mt 22.39). Christians should not be waiting for a ‘law’ to be vaccinated but should be doing what they can to avoid the consequences of a viral infection that could cause their death or the death of another person. Some Christians claim that they are trusting God to care for them through the COVID-19 situation and they don’t need to receive a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine. This is similar to a claim made by Satan to test Jesus (Mt 4.5-6). Jesus replied to Satan, stating that we are not to put the Lord to a test (Mt 4.7). Jesus’s actions align with the premise that taking precautionary physical measures and/or avoiding doing stupid things is a wise course for a Christian.
5. The costs associated with COVID-19 (e.g., businesses not operating, unemployment benefit disbursements, testing for infections, treatments for those infected, etc.) are astronomical and unsustainable. These costs are largely being born by taxpayers and are being foisted upon them by those who are unvaccinated. If a person wishes to remain unvaccinated, then he or she should waive all rights to participation in the taxpayer-funded unemployment insurance programs and in the health care system. The irony is palpable—if antivaxxers were to become infected with SARS-CoV-2, they would still expect that their medical costs should be covered by the Provincial system. This is sheer selfishness, and a form of theft, breaking the 8th Commandment. Delta Air Lines, rightly, plans to charge unvaccinated employees an additional \$200 per month for participation in the company's health care plan because of the increased costs associated with providing care for someone who becomes infected.⁹
6. The physical (e.g., lack of exercise and weight gains), psychological (e.g., depression, abuses of drugs and alcohol, and suicides), relationship (e.g., divorces, loneliness), educational (e.g., a lost year of schooling) and spiritual impacts of COVID-19 have been devastating. Everyone, particularly Christians, should be doing whatever they can to help us get us out of the COVID-19 situation as quickly as possible and back to a ‘normal’ life of interpersonal relationships, economic activity, and assembling for worship.
7. Paul states, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Rom 12.18) Christians who are agitating against the SARS-Cov-2 vaccines are causing division in churches among Christians and appear to be aligned with rude and belligerent individuals¹⁰ who are causing discord in the broader community. This is not a good witness for Jesus Christ, which is to be done with gentleness and respect (1 Pt 3.15).

⁸ [Should Christians vaccinate? CMI, vaccines, and vaccination - creation.com](#)

⁹ [Delta Air Lines to charge unvaccinated employees more for company health care - CNET](#)

¹⁰ [Anti-vax protesters force Justin Trudeau to cancel three campaign events in one day as angry anti-vax protesters - Madness Hub](#)