

Title: Christians and the Government

Passage: Romans 13:1-7

Summary:

Default principle: Submit to the governing authorities. Why?

I. Because of God's sovereignty in appointing governing authorities (v.1-2)

II. Because of the consequence of disobedience (v.3-4)

III. Because of our conscience (v.5)

Question: Is submission to government authority absolute? Answer: No.

A. When government forbids you to do something that God commands.

B. When government commands you to do something that God forbids.

Practical Ways to Submit to Governing Authorities

1. Pay Taxes (v.6-7)

2. Pay Respect and Honor (v. 7)

Application:

1. We need to submit to governing authorities.

2. Engage the political process with truth and justice with the common good in mind.

3. Lead with Biblical values as your goal to do good.

4. Rest in the providence of God.

5. Pray for those in leadership, especially in government.

6. Make your ultimate allegiance to King Jesus.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
 - How would God want us to respond if government leaders were openly persecuting Christians?
 - How do evil rulers serve God's plan and do good for God's people?
 - What is the Christian's responsibility for maintaining good government?
 - James 1:22 admonishes us to be "doers of the Word." What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have been exposed to?
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Introduction

Question: Should Christians obey the government that God has established over them?

- What does that look like?
 - Should we still pay taxes?
 - What happens when need to violate our conscience?
- Remember, God's Word is from Him. This is not from any human from God Himself. Focus and read from His Word:

Passage:Romans 13:1-7

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. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a 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, for 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. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay 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.

Context of Passage:Romans 12:18-19

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

- we are not to take vengeance but leave it to God.
 - In turn, the government is God's instrument to bring about justice.

Overview:

Key Point: Submit to the governing authorities

Why?

- I. Because of God's sovereignty in appointing governing authorities (v.1-2)
- II. Because of the consequence of disobedience (v.3-4)
- III. Because of our conscience (v.5)

I. BECAUSE OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN APPOINTING GOVERNING AUTHORITIES. (V.1)Romans 13:1

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.

- Those exercising authority is because of God's sovereignty in appointing them.
- Authority = any one who represents the government
- Submit = surrender oneself under the authority and guidance of another.
 - Includes obedience and attitude of deference.

- Question: What about bad rulers and leaders?
 - Even God has allowed them to be where they are for a reason.
- Example: Pharaoh

Romans 9:17

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

- Example: Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4:17

The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’

Daniel 4:25

that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

Daniel 4:32

and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.”

Daniel 4:34-35

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”

- Example: Cyrus
 - Did good but also bad things as well.

Isaiah 45:1

Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed:L

John 19:11

Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

- there is no leader that hasn't been there appointed by God.

Question: Is submission to government authority absolute?

Answer: No.

- A. When government forbids you to do something that God commands.
- B. When government commands you to do something that God forbids.

A. When government forbids you to do something that God commands.

- We are to obey God over the government.
- Example: evangelism (see Acts 4-5)

Acts 4:18-20

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 5:27-29

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.”

- Example: Richard Wumbrand
- Be ready to stand up for Christ and go to prison if need be.

B. When government commands you to do something that God forbids.

- Christians must resist governing authorities when commanded to do something immoral

Exodus 1:15-17

Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, “When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

- Are you ready to stand up if faced with a government mandate and respond with wisdom and discernment?
- Civil disobedience = refusal to obey governmental commands through non-violence and to seek concessions and the good for all in society.
 - May arise on occasion.
 - But the default principle is to submit to governing authorities.

II. BECAUSE OF THE CONSEQUENCE OF DISOBEDIENCE (V.2-4)

Romans 13:2-4

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

- "for he is God's servant for your good."
 - Government is God's servant appointed for the good for the citizens.
 - Government should be from position of service.
- "for he does not bear the sword in vain."
 - Government brings about good through use of force.
- "But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain."
 - Government exists to stop vices.
 - Only God can create virtue.

III. BECAUSE OF OUR CONSCIENCE (V.5)

Romans 13:5

Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

- Conscience = knowledge of God's will and purposes.
- We obey government out of our obedience to God alone.
 - Submission to the government is a powerful witness to others.
- Conscience is a powerful means by which we follow God's will and purposes.

Practical Ways to Submit to Governing

1. Pay Taxes (v.6-7)

Romans 13:6-7

For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay 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.

- out of respect of government in its God-given role.
- Be thankful for the many critical things that governments do provide (national security, judges, parks, etc.)

2. Pay Respect and Honor (v.7)

Romans 13:7b

...respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

- pay respect to the position.

Acts 23:4-5 (Paul's example)

Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" And Paul said, "I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people."

- referenced Exodus.

Summary

1. We need to submit to governing authorities.

- Be a good citizen.
- Thank God for all the good that is done.
- Be respectful.
- Find a way to live with a clear conscience

2. Engage the political process with truth and justice with the common good in mind.

- Be knowledgeable and be aware of what is happening around you.
- Consider running for office or a position or be engaged in the process.
 - If don't like what is happening, be engaged to help bring about change.
- Vote and even be actively engaged.

3. Lead with Biblical values as your goal is to do good.

Titus 2:11-13

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

4. Rest in the providence of God.

- no matter the circumstances, our testimony is still the same: our God reigns!

Psalms 46:1-3

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

5. Pray for those in leadership, especially in government.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

6. Make your ultimate allegiance to King Jesus.

- because He lives, we can always face tomorrow.

Luke 9:23

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.