

## The Christian and Civil Government

Rom 13:1-7 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

In the opening verses of this chapter Paul will be directing the church on the subject of the duty which we as Christians owe to the various civil governments under which the Church throughout history will exist. We shall receive extremely important guidelines for us as believers because the church will be subject to some exceedingly difficult times in her history. For the church will exist under pagan rulers. The church will be a separate kingdom serving Christ in kingdoms, nations, and empires that will be ruled by pagan laws and pagan customs. Because of this fact one is tempted to ask; are Christians then to acknowledge the authority of the magistrates of these ungodly pagan nations? For instance we live in a nation that permits divorce for any reason. That permits tax relief for unmarried couples living together. That not only permits infants in the womb to be killed but also provides the means whereby they may be aborted. Are we subject to such rulers? Dare we pay taxes to a government that uses our tax money to kill those babies? It is evident then that this would become a serious question before the church.

The early church under the new covenant would be subject to a nation that would soon be torturing and murdering their brothers and sisters in Christ. Without question Rome was a godless and god-hating nation. Is the believer still required to be subject to such rulers? Should they pay taxes to those murderers of God's chosen people? These are serious questions and Paul under the guidance of the Spirit of God will now proceed to answer these questions that confronted that early church and would continue to be before the church until our Lord's return. We shall consider it under these two headings; 1) the command; 2) the reason.

### A. The Command - Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.

1. Two questions no doubt immediately would arise.
  - a. Should Jews who have been taught to abhor and detest idolatry now submit themselves to a nation given over to such superstitions.
  - b. Should newly converted Gentiles who had ignorantly worshipped such gods now be subject to the rulers that continued in such deception?
  - c. The answer was clear cut, yes! - *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.*
2. Are there ever any reasons when the Christian is not subject to the governing authorities?
  - a. Christ set down the standard

*Matt 22:21 "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

- b. What if Caesar demands that which is against God's commands?
  - c. The Apostles provide excellent leadership in responding to commands of government that violate God's authority. (cf. Acts 4:18; 19-20; Acts 5:29)
  - d. Anytime worldly authority would cause you to violate God's authority one must obey God rather than man.
3. Otherwise it is our Christian duty to submit ourselves to the civil authorities.

### B. The Reason - All government is God ordained. - *For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*

1. We must always be mindful that no authority exist except God permits it to exist
  - a. No nation or ruler can come into existence except at God purposed decree

*Dan 2:21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He **removes kings and raises up kings.***

- b. God has ordained all civil government, both good and evil governments.

2. Civil governments are God decreed governments.
  - a. If we violate their authority we then violate God's authority - *Therefore whoever resists the authority **resists the ordinance of God**, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves*
  - b. At the same time we understand that their authority is subject to God's authority.
  - c. They cannot make any binding rule against the believers conscience.
  
3. God has established rules for civil authorities.
  - a. God established governments for the protection of mankind. - *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.*
  - b. God has given the state the sword to act as an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil
    - (1) God has given the state the right to exact vengeance against evil doers.
    - (2) The state does not bear the sword in vain.
    - (3) This does not change the fact that vengeance belongs to God.
    - (4) It simply tells us that God may give the right of exacting vengeance to whom he will
  
4. Since only evil doers are to be punished, the church then has nothing to fear from good government. - *Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good.*
  - a. If we obey the law we have nothing to fear.
  - b. As Christians we are to live lives above reproach in the community.
    - (1) Our conduct is to be "*honorable among the Gentiles*". 1 Peter 2:12
    - (2) We are to "*submit ourselves to every ordinance of man **for the Lord's sake***". 1 Peter 2:13
    - (3) "*For **this is the will of God**, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*" 1 Peter 2:15
  
5. Finally Paul closes with instruction regarding the paying of ones taxes.
  - a. It is a proper means of providing for the welfare of those in public office
  - b. Jesus taught render to Caesar the things that are Caesars.

#### CONCLUSION:

In Barnes Notes on this passage he lists the following "principles" that seem to be settled by the authority of the Bible. I felt they were well written and I desire to share them with you.

- (1) That government is essential; and its necessity is recognized by God, and it is arranged by His providence. God has never been the patron of anarchy and disorder.
- (2) Civil rulers are dependent on God. He has the entire control over them, and can set them up or put them down when he pleases.
- (3) The authority of God is superior to that of civil rulers. They have no right to make enactments which interfere with "His" authority.
- (4) It is not the business of civil rulers to regulate or control religion. That is a distinct department, with which they have no concern, except to protect it.
- (5) The rights of all people are to be preserved. People are to be allowed to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, and to be protected in those rights, provided they do not violate the peace and order of the community.
- (6) Civil rulers have no right to persecute Christians, or to attempt to secure conformity to their views by force. The conscience cannot be compelled; and in the affairs of religion man must be free.

Finally, we are obedient to lawful authority not out of fear of punishment but out of devotion to God

We give tribute to whom tribute is due  
 We give honor to those to whom honor is due

Therefore, no government need fear the Christian in their midst.