

GOD and GOVERNMENT (Part 2)

“What are the primary responsibilities of citizens to the governing authorities?”

What does it mean to be a good Christian citizen?”

INTRO: KEY Question (PPT) ... SUPPORTING Questions (PPT) ...

REVIEW: “What is the role of government?” (Gen. 9:1-6; Rom. 13:1-7) – Established as God’s “servants/ministers” (vv. 4, 6) to protect society by: Restraining evil, Rewarding good, Maintaining order, Guarding freedom, and Upholding justice. No such thing as a Christian nation or government, just individuals.

TODAY, “What are the duties of citizens? What do we owe the government?”

- **“WHAT must we do?”** OVERALL DUTY (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1, 5; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13 “submit”) – We are subject to all governing authorities and their laws. All are under human authority of government as granted by God. Paul is not thinking about any one particular form of human government, such as democracy, aristocracy, oligarchy, monarchy, or socialism, communism or dictatorship: *All human governments anywhere are ordained by God*. Even the cruel Roman empire that governed in the days of Jesus and Paul. Abortion flourished, homosexuality was seen as normal, masses worshiped Caesar as Lord. Sorcery and black magic abounded. America has never had a government come close to the pagan and evil one in ancient Rome. Yet, Paul said all governing authority is from God. Those same authorities would behead Paul and Peter in a few years! Both Paul and Peter tell us to “submit” – unqualified, unlimited, unconditional; no ifs, ands, or but! “Submission” means believing that God is able to accomplish His purposes through those He places in authority over us. He can get His will done even through evil leaders. The focus is not on those over us but on God. Submission and obedience are related but aren’t the same. *Obedience* relates to *external* performance, while *submission* touches the *internal attitude* of the heart toward those in authority over us. We may not always be able to obey, but we can always have a humble submissive heart. WHAT do we owe government? Our overall duty as citizens to governing authorities is to SUBMIT (Titus 3:1-2 “submit” – written 7-10 years after Romans; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).

“WHY are We to Submit?” Paul gives his reasons:

1. Government is *ordained by God*, the Supreme Authority (Rom. 13:1b)
2. *Avoid God’s Wrath*. To resist government is to rebel against God and to invite God’s wrath, resulting in punishment, and potentially death (vv. 2, 4)
3. Government restrains and punishes evil to protect citizens (v. 3a)
4. *Promotes and rewards* good and moral behavior (vv. 3b-4a)
5. *Builds conscience* (v. 5). We know it’s right to obey God.

“HOW are We to Submit?” Attitude is just as important as action in our submission.

- Honor, respect, obey laws (Rom. 13:7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:17) (exceptions?) – *All* government leaders deserve respect since their authority comes from God. Includes respecting the rights and properties of others as well.
- Support by paying taxes that can provide public services and needed support for the weak and needy (13:6). Joseph introduced First taxation in Egypt to prepare for famine (Gen. 41:34). Jewish history on giving. Taxes to fund government were compulsory. Offerings to God were voluntary and free will. (**Welfare** 10% Tax every third year – Deut. 14:28-29). **Levite** (acted as civil government) tax (10%) - plus **Festival** Tax (10%). Total? 23 ⅓% Rome’s taxation was brutal ... Misuse of funds is no excuse for avoiding taxes.

General obligation? “Pay to all what is owed them” (v. 7) – We are paying back a debt, an obligation to the government. Taxes are debts owed. If you fail to pay, you’re a robber!

Specific obligations – Paul uses 4 different terms to explain. 1st two are actions related to taxation; next two are attitudes toward all public officials

1. “taxes to whom taxes are owed” (phoros) – head or census tax, poll or land tax – like our income tax (fund salaries, roads, police, fire, etc.)
2. “revenue to whom ... “(telos) – revenue raised from selling goods, like our sales tax

3. “respect to whom ...” (phobos) – more of an attitude of respect for what they do and fear of consequences if we disobey
 4. “honor to whom ...” (timé) – also an attitude of respect recognizes their authority over us. We show respect and honor because God established with our best interests in mind.
- Involvement – Participate (Both OT & NT examples of how believers influenced government – Joseph, Judges ..., Prophets ..., Daniel, John the Baptist, Paul ...) – Suggestions for involvement ... Vote, Run for office, etc. Be salt and light. Examples ...
 - Be a peaceful citizen (1 Tim. 2:1-3)
 - Promote goodness (1 Pet. 2:12-15). Our response impacts our witness.
 - Pray for (1 Tim. 2:1-5) – this pleases God (v. 3). Often we complain more than we pray!

To choose to disobey government one must also accept the consequences (vv. 2, 5). I must treat governing authorities with honor, respect, and obedience -without regard to how I feel about their decisions. Because they are God’s servants and ministers.

“TO WHOM are We to Submit?” Choose servants – Must understand they are doing God’s work (Rom. 13:6) – “This very thing” is leading people. Must choose wisely people who are most of all humble and committed to: truth and justice, maintaining order by enforcing the law, avoid self-seeking, kind and compassionate to the less fortunate, enforce public decency and morality.

CONC: Citizens are to submit to government. That is the biblical pattern for every age, every nation, and every Christian – it has nothing to do with America alone. Neither Paul, Peter, or Jesus made a distinction between good rulers and bad rulers or fair laws and unfair laws. Any failure to submit can cause people to question the influence of Christ in our lives.

NEXT? Civil Disobedience: When is it permissible to disobey the governing authorities?