

Our Biblical Convictions as Citizens Of Heaven While Living On Earth

Romans 13

We have been examining the Discipline of Truth: that God is the source of truth, and that we are to know and defend His truth. So that leads us to ask: What are the Biblical Convictions—of a Citizen of Heaven, while living on Earth?

If I were to apply the truths or doctrines of the Scriptures as far as they relate to the current climate in human society, I would say that God has revealed Himself in His Word as:

- **GOD is Pro-Life**—God is opposed to Abortion and Euthanasia. He is the Creator of Life, the One who grants conception.
- **GOD is Pro-Marriage**—God is opposed to Gay Unions, as well as divorce, adultery, fornication, pornography, and any other form of immorality.
- **GOD is Pro-Justice**—God is opposed to murder, violence, discrimination, prejudice, and abuse of the weak, poor, and unborn; He invented capital punishment, and commands societies to have a just legal system.
- **GOD is Pro-Work**—God is against indolence, sloth, entitlements, oppression of the poor by the rich, and every form of false hope produced by gambling and lotteries.

Point One—Biblical Convictions start with the Bible

Open with me to our starting place for Biblical Convictions, Romans 13.

As Paul sat to write perhaps the clearest words to frame the Biblical convictions of a Citizen of Heaven, living on earth—he was sitting in Corinth. Looking down across the city must have grieved his soul. Paul lived around gymnasiums filled with nude men were wrestling, boxing, and sprinting. In the distance seeing the men and women going into the bath houses, brothels, and heading up the trail to the shrine prostitutes up on the acrocorinthus must have even more grieved his Spirit filled heart. Just as it grieved the Lord He served.

Just a couple of days by ship from Corinth was the center of the Earth in Paul's day—Rome. Swarming with soldiers, citizens, slaves, and commercialism, Rome reigned over nearly all of the known world of Paul's day. How were Christians to live in the world of the

New Testament? Especially in the capitol city of Rome--rife with homosexuality, abortions, gambling, infanticide, slavery, oppression of the poor, egalitarianism, and every form of the occult?

Paul sits down to write to that very city where saints had to live, work, and vote. He writes to them seven verses that summarize their responsibilities of citizenship on earth. We often forget that the Roman World had much citizen involvement. There was a long history in Rome of elected bodies that variously guided, counseled, and at times legislated the Roman World. Although there was an Emperor who ruled, there was still much about daily life that was determined by a very advanced and regulated representative government.

So into this advanced and thriving world of nearly worldwide power—what were Paul’s instructions? Look with me to Romans 13. This passage has long been regarded as the ultimate statement of the Biblical Responsibilities for a Christian and their relationship to whatever government they are under.

Stand, read Romans 13.1-7, and pray.

Romans 13:1-7 (NKJV) 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.

Citizens of Heaven Respect Authority on Earth

Now for the shocker. Paul, the voice for God, writing God's Word down on paper for us the first of our Biblical responsibilities as citizens, he said **be subject** to the leader of your land in which you live, whenever it is in the future, where ever you live on the planet. That was quite a sweeping Word from God Paul gives us. But even more shocking is to step back and look at the man whose shadow fell across Paul’s world—it was Nero’s.

Nero was a public sodomite who paraded his male slave Florus around in public as his wife. He was debased, depraved, defiled, and deliberately an outspoken advocate of the homosexual lifestyle. And Paul said to be subject to him? Yes, and he says the same to us whatever administration comes to wherever you live, whenever you live.

Does that mean fatalism, uninvolvedness and withdrawal from society? Not at all.

No one was more involved than Paul. He preached, prayed, wrote, and lived against sin in every form, at every level. As a citizen you can be sure he voted in any manner he was allowed because that is just the type of believer he was—INVOLVED. Paul was involved in his culture, in his country, and in the lives of all who would let him in. But he had no delusions that he could ever change society. His only hope was to change individuals one at a time.

Now turn with me to Ephesians 5:11. Paul most likely wrote this letter from Rome where he sat in prison. What does a citizen of Heaven do while being subject (even to the point of being in prison) to the powers that be? In Ephesians Paul adds the second element of our responsibility as believers—**expose sin**.

So--the responsibility of a Biblical Christian is to **be subject** to government and to **expose evil**.

Of all people on earth we should have the most consistent, loving advice—***abstain from everything that is evil***. We should have the most compelling reason—***it doesn't please God***. That is why we should engage our culture and point out that there are absolutes. Let me repeat again some current issues that touch upon our Biblical convictions, we will look at briefly this morning.

- **GOD is Pro-Life**—God is opposed to Abortion and Euthanasia. He is the Creator of Life, the One who grants conception.
- **GOD is Pro-Marriage**—God is opposed to Gay Unions, as well as divorce, adultery, fornication, pornography, and any other form of immorality.
- **GOD is Pro-Justice**—God is opposed to murder, violence, discrimination, prejudice, and abuse of the weak, poor, and unborn; He invented capital punishment, and commands societies to have a just legal system.
- **GOD is Pro-Work**—God is against indolence, sloth, entitlements, oppression of the poor by the rich, and every form of false hope produced by gambling and lotteries.

But what if we do not see the culture heading the right way as is the case even this morning? That takes us to our second point—

Point Two—Biblical Convictions start with the Bible, because we are Citizens of Heaven

The clearest word for us as we face the decline and degradation of human society is when God's Word speaks to us.

This world is only my temporary home.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

God rules over every part of this world.

*Daniel 2:20-22 Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. 21 And He changes the times and the seasons; **He removes kings and raises up kings**; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. 22 He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him.*

God selects the rulers of this world.

*Daniel 4:17, 25 'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the **Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.**' 25 They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, **till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.***

God allows rulers to do what is perceived by us as evil (crucifying Jesus) to accomplish the larger purposes of God (the redemption of sinners).

*John 19:11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it **had been given you from above.** Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."*

God tells us our primary responsibility is to PRAY, that is how we influence the outcome of any current political situation.

1 Timothy 2:1-3 *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,*

Point Three—Biblical Convictions start with the Bible, because we are Citizens of Heaven—Living on Earth

How do we live out those Biblical Convictions about God’s revelation of what is right and wrong? How do we reconcile living on earth with all this evil and all of the sin that surrounds us? To answer that let me just address three areas of current controversy. There are countless other areas I could address from the Scriptures, but this morning let me limit this to just these three:

- **GOD is Pro-Life**—God is opposed to Abortion and Euthanasia. He is the Creator of Life, the One who grants conception.
- **GOD is Pro-Marriage**—God is opposed to Gay Unions, as well as divorce, adultery, fornication, pornography, and any other form of immorality.
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- **GOD is Pro-Work**—God is against indolence, sloth, entitlements, oppression of the poor by the rich, and every form of false hope produced by gambling and lotteries.

Remember the responsibility we have to expose evil? Here is how we do so, using God's Word! Open with me to Ephesians 5:11 *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them”*.

Paul tells us that we have a personal responsibility to *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”*. That means ‘avoid, stay away from, have no contact with’ evil. But that doesn’t mean isolation, it means a personal commitment to consecration. But the verse goes on to say that we have a public responsibility, one that we often have forgotten—we are to expose evil.

The Greek word ‘reprove or expose’ means to point out in a public way those things that are in opposition to God's Word. Here is the dictionary definition of **elengcho**: “to convict, refute, confute; generally with a suggestion of shame of the person convicted; by

conviction to bring to the light, to expose; to admonish, reprove, to call to account, show one his fault, demand an explanation.”¹

So how should we respond to abortion since **GOD is Pro-Life**—God is opposed to Abortion and Euthanasia. He is the Creator of Life, the One who grants conception. All human life is His personal act of power as the God of this Universe allowing another human in His image to be conceived.

We should Expose the Dark World of Abortion

*“Abortion is one of the darkest works of the human race – **it is child sacrifice**. And the only way it can survive is for darkness to survive. Wherever the light of truth and love comes, darkness flies away. Therefore it is one of the great callings of the followers of Jesus to let their light shine in both ways: to live a holy life and to expose darkness. The aim is partly negative: reveal the error hidden in the darkness, but mainly positive: to bring people to love the light and be made light in the Lord Jesus.”²*

So what do we, as Christ's children, need to expose in our world as His salt and His light to those around us? We need to expose the fact that there are nearly 1.2 million children murdered by abortions each year in America. That means we have hidden the remains of over 50 million murdered bodies since the Supreme Court overturned the right to life of babies over 40 years ago.

We need to expose the fact that 70% of abortions are performed between the seventh and tenth week when the baby is already sucking his thumb, recoiling from pricking, responding to sound. All his organs are present, the brain is functioning, the heart is pumping, the liver is making blood cells, the kidneys are cleaning fluids, and there is a fingerprint. His genetic code is uniquely and unquestionably human. And, if we are willing, he can be seen by ultrasound.

We Declare the Truth: Abortion is Murder

Remember that modern day abortion is as hideous as the horrific child sacrifice by wicked parents recorded in the Old Testament. God hates both eras of child sacrifice. He condemned and judged the worship of false gods (Moloch and Baal) in the Old Testament, and the child sacrificing gods today--convenience and materialism.

So, first GOD is Pro-Life—God is opposed to Abortion and Euthanasia. He is the Creator of Life, the One who grants conception. **Second, GOD is Pro-Marriage**—God is opposed to

¹ *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

² John Piper in <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/92/012692.html>

Gay Unions, as well as divorce, adultery, fornication, pornography, and any other form of immorality.

Remember the responsibility we have to expose evil? Here is how we do so, using God's Word!

We should Expose the Grave Errors of Homosexuality

And you can see whom Paul is talking about in Romans 1:28 (when he says, “God gave them up to a debased mind”) by reading verses 26 and 27, “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” Romans 1:28 says, “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.” In verses 26 and 28 Paul says that God “gave them up” to these dishonorable passions and behaviors. God Himself calls all homosexual behavior an “exchange” of the God-ordained natural relations for the dishonorable unnatural relations.”

We Declare the Truth: Marriage is only Between a Man & Woman

God has given us two reasons why two men or two women cannot have a marriage God recognizes: First, God’s will in creation was for one man and one woman to be married. In Mt. 19:4-6 (NKJV) Jesus said:

And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

From cover to cover the Bible always says the same thing: God designed marriage as a covenant with a sexual union between one man and one woman.

Second, God says that marriage is to be “held in honor” (Hebrews 13:4), but also declares that any homosexual activity is: dishonorable, shameless, and contrary to nature in Romans 1:26-27. Homosexuality can never be held in honor, because God says it is not marriage but is rather contrary to nature and shamelessly dishonorable in His sight. So no matter what public opinion or the State says: there is never such a thing as homosexual marriage in God’s sight, nor in the convictions of His people the Church.

We need to expose the World to Christ's Powerful Gospel Hope

To all of us who have sinned in any form, there is the power of the Gospel. Jesus Christ's death as an innocent substitute, perfectly bore the penalty for sin on the Cross. When Paul explained the Gospel to pagan sinners in the Roman province of Asia (Acts 13:38-39 NKJV), listen to his powerful, hope filled words:

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man (Jesus Christ) is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹ and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

When God forgives it means that every, and any, sin (yes even abortion which is the murder of a helpless baby) is forgiven. Plus God adds to forgiveness His justification. God takes the penalty and record of the sin and nails it to Jesus. God treats Jesus like He committed every sin that God forgives. When we realize the power of the Gospel of hope we respond as Jesus said (Luke 7:47): "to whom much has been forgiven, the same loves much". Today everyone of us who have been forgiven of any and every sin, including abortion, should love Jesus much today.

We need to Shine Our Life into the Darkness of Abortion

If God is Pro-Life, and He is, what would He have us do in light of our child sacrificing culture that lies in darkness all around us? Here are just a few suggestions that all of us should pray about today.

- 1. Consider adoption.** If you are physically and spiritually able to—you should at least be praying about helping take some unwanted children of this world into your home and raise them in the light of the Gospel and for the Glory of God.
- 2. Consider support of our local Alternatives Pregnancy Center.** Most of us can't interact with young girls (and older ones) at the point of their crisis. There is a ministry that can and does. They have the plan, they have the skill, and they have the track record—all they need is the support of God's people. Think about this—is it enough to be **against abortion** without being **for life in a tangible way**? Serve and support pro-life ministries in Christ's Name.
- 3. Consider using your most powerful tool--always pray.** If you haven't started yet, get literature about the horrors of abortion, and start to plead with the God of Heaven to deliver us from this evil. Ask for lives to be intercepted by loving believers before that babies life is taken, pray for a baby to be born and adopted, for a godly home to take it, and for a soul to come to faith in Christ's offer of salvation through your investment. Think of it as another way to take someone with you to

Heaven.³

³ Appendix: Dare to be a Daniel IS the challenge of our new century in which we live is to bring leaders of great moral conviction to the forefront of our nations government without the baggage of moral imposition. The greatest example of this is in the trio of great politicians from three of the greatest empires of ancient history. These men are so great they are known by their first names: Joseph of Egypt, Daniel of Babylon, and Nehemiah of Persia. Each of these men was of unwavering biblical integrity. Each of these men had convictions they would stand for, suffer for, and even go to death for. But none of them ever imposed by way of legislation, those convictions upon those they governed. There is a revealed civil code god laid down after the flood – human government in genesis 9. It is basically restated in the 2nd half of the law of Moses (commandments 5-10) and is known in one way or another around the world. Basic laws against murder, theft, lying, and so on make up the laws for mankind's good. But these statesmen - Joseph, Daniel, and Nehemiah, did not impose all the rest of the religious laws of Israel upon society. One of the great needs of American governance is to see men who can be trusted as men of integrity, yet who will not be seeking to impose morals upon the citizens that are not the black and white clearly written laws of god for society. The clear laws are against murder of the born and unborn, sodomy and all other clearly described sexual perversions, and witchcraft, which is always linked to drug abuse in the bible. The rest of the areas of society such as blue laws, alcohol, gambling, lotteries, and so on, are not part of the laws of society, they are for the individual not the society. They are matters of personal conviction, not of government imposition. If we can have deeply religious leaders who are not bringing their convictions to bear on other individuals through policies, laws, and legislation, then the character of government will be less partisan, the people will be more open to the persuasion of those individuals who live out their personal convictions, and government will not get confused with the church.