

Subject: *Biblical Truth about Government – Part 1*

Scripture: *Romans 13:1-7*

Truth matters. Biblical truth really matters. People are saying that black lives matter. Some are saying blue lives matter. I'm not here to debate or discuss that. I just want to say that God's Word matters. Believers need to know what the Bible says about the role of government. We are to think biblically and act differently from the world.

John 17:17 *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

Our text is the most complete Scripture on the God-given role of government. Believers should understand God's purpose for government and we should know our responsibility to the government. Churches and families should know this well so we can be faithful citizens.

1. Every person should submit to government authority

People are more interested in their rights than their responsibilities. We have the Bill of Rights that contain important amendments to the Constitution. But we must never get more worked up about these rights than the obligations we find in the Word of God.

2. God delegates His authority to government and its officials

The Bible teaches the separation of church and state, but it does not teach the separation of God and government. We need to think of the separation of church and state on a level beneath God's authority. God is over the church and government. People who resist government authority are resisting God's authority

God has delegated authority to four groups: 1) government has authority over its citizens; 2) the church has authority over its members; 3) parents have authority over their children; and 4) masters have authority over their servants (employers over employees).

We recognize God's authority over our nation when we pledge allegiance to our flag: "one nation under God." We acknowledge that we are under God's blessings and under His authority. The word *powers* (Gk., *exousia*) means authorities. Ultimately all authority rests in God. He delegates this authority to governments and their leaders.

Psalms 62:11 *God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.*

John 19:10-11 *Don't you know that I have power to crucify you, and I have power to release you? Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.*

3. God authorizes government to promote good and punish evil

Government is authorized to promote the public good. Law and order is a good thing. God ordained government as a way to restrain evil in the world. One of the best things any government can provide is law and order so we can live in peace.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 ¹ I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; ² For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Government is authorized to punish evil. If you do evil you should fear the consequences. "Revenger" is the same word used in Rom. 12:19 for "avenge" and "vengeance." God uses government as a revenger to execute wrath (God's wrath) on the guilty party. When someone is punished for their crime we say justice was done...that's right, God's justice. Ultimate justice is reserved for a future time and court, but God provides a measure of justice even now through human government.

The Bible contains several principles about crime and punishment:

A. Punishment should be a deterrent to crime

Deuteronomy 19:20 And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.

B. Punishment should fit the crime

Deuteronomy 19:21 And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

C. Punishment should be impartial

Deuteronomy 13:6-9 ⁶ If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; ⁷ Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; ⁸ Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: ⁹ But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

D. Punishment should be swift

Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

4. Government officials are God's servants (ministers)

A head of state is called the Prime Minister. The head of defense is called the Defense Minister. Rulers are those who occupy a position of government authority on the federal, state, or local level.

5. Every person should respect and support government

In our country we have a democratic republic, but in Romans 13, they had a dictatorship. The Roman Empire was the governing power and it was a dictatorship. Slavery was widespread and personal freedoms were limited. We have some idea what it was to live in those days. Under Roman government Herod ordered the slaughter of all baby boys under the age of two, John the Baptist was beheaded, Jesus was crucified and thousands of others who rebelled against the government, James was executed by the sword and Paul was beheaded under Emperor Nero.

We should pay government taxes.

Matthew 22:21 *Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*

We should respect government officials.

“Render” means to pay something that we owe. It is not voluntary, but mandatory. God demands that we have respect for government officials. It doesn’t matter if we agree or disagree with their policies.

Be thankful and respectful toward government officials. Don’t resent them or rebel against them. Believers are citizens of heaven, but we are also to be good citizens on earth. Daniel Webster said, “Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens.” In other words, you can’t be a faithful Christian and not be a faithful citizen.