

The Christian's Relationship to Government

Romans 13:1-7

Introduction

Good morning Lighthouse! It is good to be back up here and I want to thank everyone for the prayers so that I could be back up here when it's my week. I wanted to share an update to all of you this morning. Many of you are aware of my daughter Naomi's condition with Cystic Fibrosis. Back in May she got very sick with the rhinovirus (aka common cold) and it was rough and hard on her. Her specialist doctors had her do a culture test because she could have caught the rare bacteria that CF individuals can have. Overtime, these bacteria would damage the lungs if not kept at bay and left untreated. The treatment plan was a month long two times a day treatment of antibiotics received orally through her nebulizer machine. Not an easy task and no 100% guarantee it be would successful. If not successful, then she would have to try again, and if not successful then she would have to receive antibiotics through IV and stay in the hospital. Because of my family and I getting sick we were delayed by over a week on knowing what the results and would be next. We got her results, and the treatment was a success. Praise God! I am grateful for her team of doctors and the prayers and love from this church.

Are you ready for the Word of God? Even if that means the message may tough to swallow? How are we as Christians – God's people to respond towards our governing leaders? What is our relationship to them? Are we supposed to submit to them even when they're ungodly? I ask this morning – where are we to seek answers from to these questions? The Word of God – which is The Bible. 66 books – 39 OT 27 NT. A reminder and one of things we ought to be grateful for is that God didn't keep us here to be without answers and for us to figure it out for ourselves.

2 Peter 1:3: According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

God has given to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him . . . Knowledge of him is going to be found where? In the Scripture. All the things that pertain to life and godliness – This of course is talking about spiritual things. It doesn't necessarily mean every natural thing such as how to cook, grocery shop, open a bank account, drive a car, etc. . . but even with those things that Word leaves us many principles to follow that relates with natural.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (16) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

If these statements are true and we believe them, it sounds like this is an essential book to engage in. The Word of God even speaks to relation to government.

Scripture

Romans 13:1-7

(1) Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (2) Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. (3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: (4) For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. (5) Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. (6) For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. (7) Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Outline

I. The governing authorities' legitimacy and response of the believer, vv. 1-2.

A. Every soul – including believers are to be subject to the higher “powers,” v. 1a.

(1) Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers . . .

1. To answer the question if believers should submit to government, the answer is yes.

a. The word here for “power” is the Greek word “exousia” it means “Authority.” The same word Jesus used when He commissioned the Church and passed the authority to preach the Gospel.

Matthews 28:18-20 (18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All **power** is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

b. This is not to be confused with “Dunamis” as used in Acts 1:8 for power that means “strength, might or ability.”

2. Remember when it comes to understanding God's Word, the principle is to draw out the meaning within its own history and its own context. We are not to read stuff into the Bible but draw out the meaning for what it is. There is only one meaning and we seek out what the author intended.

3. Application is different, after we draw out the meaning we then apply to our own lives and not every application will be the same for the individual.

4. So, who would be the governing authorities Paul is talking about? The Roman empire. This of course wouldn't be exclusive in application to governing authorities in Rome. Hence, as mentioned in the first chapter he writes:

Romans 1:7 “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. Furthermore, if Romans was written while Paul was in Corinth as most NT scholarship agrees on, then that would place the timeline around A.D 57. Thus making Emperor Nero the successor of Emperor Claudius the highest governing authority of Rome territory.

a. Was this the ideal ruler for Christians? Not at all.

b. This was before the intense persecution that came from Rome, but Christians especially Jewish blooded Christians were not treated fairly.

6. So even to wicked rulers, be in subjection. This contrasted with groups of zealous Jews in those times who rebelled and claimed no king but God and refused to pay taxes. Christians were to have no part in this kind of behavior and mindset.

B. The reason every soul is to be subject, v. 1b.

... For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

1. This is why every soul is to be in subjection – meaning to be placed under.

2. God established three institutions we see in Scripture. In Genesis 2, the home, which would include marriage and family. We see in Luke 6 He established the church beginning with Jesus and His 12 disciples. We also see in Genesis 9, government.

3. It is because God gave them and placed them in that authority. God is the ultimate authority.

4. Jesus made a remark to Pilate regarding this before sentenced to crucifixion.

John 19:10-11 (10) Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? (11) Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

5. Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan ruler recognized this in his 2nd dream he had after the fiery furnace event.

Daniel 4:17

(17) This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

6. Not all rulers were given by God to bless a nation. Often God gave wicked rulers to judge a nation. Think about that as you considered American government.

C. To resist the authority is to resist what God ordained, v. 2.

(2) Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

1. This idea of “I only obey God, not man’s law.” Is unbiblical and against God.
2. Those zealous Jews that thought they were serving God by causing uprising were doing just the opposite.
3. It is true, God is our ultimate authority, and He should be our foremost in our submission. Just as James writes:

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

4. Since governments have authority from God, we are bound to obey them.
 - a. Those speed limit signs that you might think are just suggestions. Obey them.
 - b. As much as we can hate some of these traffic laws and other laws, to

disobey is to sin against God.

5. Now let's think about this for a second. What about those that resisted rulers in Bible narratives?

a. Let's go back to an account that happened in the book of Daniel.

Nebuchadnezzar built a golden image and commanded everyone to bow down and worship it or be cast in the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down and worship. They were cast into the fiery furnace and even turned the heat by 7 times the normal. It got so hot that it burned and killed the men that bound them. They were safe and unharmed. I love what happens next, Nebuchadnezzar sees a 4th and said his form is like the Son of God. It was Jesus that appeared in the fire and protected them.

b. Daniel knowing that King Darius established law and decree for no prayer for 30 days, went and prayed anyways with his window open towards Jerusalem. He was then cast into the lion's den where he remained unharmed.

c. David himself resisted and fled Saul.

6. We see based off in the Scriptures that these cases and many were right to resist those in power. So, what is going on here? Is Scripture contradicting itself or is Paul establishing something new? It can appear that Paul is teaching to obey government ruling no matter what.

7. The key to understanding when to obey and to defy is in this phrase in verse "For there is no power but of God." If this is true, then does anyone or anything

have the authority to command you to sin? Absolutely not. God's will always trumps governments and man's will.

8. John and Peter themselves when commanded by the religious authorities to quit preaching the Gospel said this.

Act 4:18-21

(18) And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. (19) But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. (20) For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (21) So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

9. A chapter later this was the Apostles account:

Act 5:27-29

(27) And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, (28) Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. (29) Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

10. May verse 29 be that guideline. We ought to obey God rather than men. When the government or any authority contradict God's Word and Will, we must obey God rather than man.

11. If man's laws have no contradicting to God's, obey, even if you don't like it.

II. The objective of the governing authorities, vv. 3-4.

A. The objective of the government should be to protect good.

(3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

1. Paul's idea is that Christians should be the best citizens of all. Even though we

are loyal to God before they are loyal to the state, Christians should be good citizens in their honesty, pay their taxes faithfully, and most importantly pray for the state and the rulers.

- a. We ought to be living so upright in our walks with Jesus that our local authorities and communities want us to be around.
- b. Men like Joseph and Daniel were great examples of this.
- b. There is no guarantee in that because we also have a duty to preach the Gospel and uphold God's commands. Not all those who are in authority appreciate that.

2. We should fear consequences, but there is no reason to be afraid of the authorities if we law-abiding citizens.

B. The objective of the government should be to punish evil.

(4) For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

- 1. Now this an interesting statement – He is minister of God to thee for good.
 - a. This word minister means servant. It does not mean that the individual ruler is a believer.
 - b. It means God uses them. He uses them to punish evil. He does not bear the sword in vain – capital punishment.

2. There is a connection between this and the previous chapter.

Romans 12:19-21

(19) Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (20) Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

3. Personal vendetta is prohibited, God established government to handle this.

What about when justice isn't served? If the government doesn't, He will.

Leave it to Him.

4. This passage also teaches that forgiving sins or even having your own sins forgiven does not escape punishment by the law if the sin was a crime. We are indeed to forgive even the worst crimes against us, but there is still the law to go through.

Illustration: Christian music artist Matthew West wrote a song called "Forgiveness." This song is about story of a woman named Renee who lost her 20-year-old daughter to a drunk driver. When she faced the young man face to face in law that killed her daughter. She looked him in the eye and said "I forgive you" and even hugged him. The rest of the family even pleaded on his behalf to reduce his sentence. An amazing story, but he still had to face the law and consequences. The judge did reduce his sentence and today he is out of prison and serving Jesus.

III. The duty of the Christian towards governing authorities, vv. 5-7.

A. Our duty is to submit to our authorities not just out of fear of punishment, but also because it is the right thing to do, vv. 5.

(5) Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

1. It is one thing to obey the law because you fear the consequences. And we should fear the consequences. Many out there do, but still hope to not get caught.

2. We are called to not just obey because to escape, but because it good and right. Living in grace is to live above and beyond.

B. Our duty is to render what is due, whether its taxes, custom, respect, or honor, vv. 6-7.

(6) For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. (7) Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

1. Here we are. Our favorite thing about our government. Taxes. That is what this word tribute means.

a. The Pharisees obsessed so much over this issue that they tried tripping of Jesus over it.

Matthew 22:17-22

(17) Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? (18) But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? (19) Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. (20) And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? (21) They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (22) When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

b. Render unto Caesar the things that Caesars and unto God the things that are God's.

c. Pop quiz challenge for the teens in here. Who is on this \$20? And on the back of it the Whitehouse. But what phrase here and all other bills? "In God we Trust"

2. We make American money, we owe our dues. I know we don't always like it and sometimes we they can seem unreasonable. The intention is to support the government salaries and care for our roads, and schools.

a. Joseph and Mary were right to travel and pay their taxes, which led to our Savior being born in Bethlehem.

b. This does not mean we cannot seek out deductions or loopholes or aim to pay less, but it does apply you must do what is legal and your

obligation.

c. Neither does this mean that churches are supposed to be paying taxes.

This is towards the individual and their income.

d. Thankfully our government doesn't mandate us to, and we have the benefit of being tax exempt. But if the tax laws changed, we would be due to it. We would trust in the Lord to care for us if it ever came to that.

3. You take a loan, you pay it back, and we owe our fear (respect) and our honor to whom it is due.

Conclusion

A challenge and conviction even for myself. Respecting and honoring our leaders. When was the last time we prayed for our leaders? And by name. When was the time we prayed for Joe Biden? Whether we like it or not or you believe it was legit or not or if he is even the one calling the shots – He was sworn in. He is the president of the United States. Even if it was meant for judgment. We don't have to agree, we don't have to like him, we can get angry about the decisions made, but we are commanded to respect, be in subjection when its not against God's commands, and we are exhorted to pray. Even for our local authorities. As Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:1-6 (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. (3) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; (4) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (6) Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Jesus died even for those in authority. He desires all to be saved and come unto the knowledge of truth. That salvation is available to all, His death on the cross, His burial and

Resurrection secured this and anyone who will place their trust in Him will be saved. Ask yourself this, do you spend more time complaining of what's goes on in leadership or do you spend more time praying for your leaders? This doesn't mean their above critique, but we are not to attack the person's character. I see it many times of people hoping and getting excited when our governing leaders fail. Why would we ever want our president to fail? That's like being on an airplane and hoping your pilot is bad at his job. When Paul was before the Chief Priests council, He was struck by the High Priest Annias, He called him a whited wall. He was rebuked for reviling the High Priest and He responded "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." When did this command ever change? Those who testify to be God's people have to do better when it comes to respecting those in governing authority. Whether we like it or not, they've been put their by God – our ultimate authority. Because God is the ultimate authority and ordained the governing rule, this doesn't neglect our responsibilities. We are of course to speak out when we can and should and we have a seek out and vote according to our Biblical values. We have far more freedoms and have it better off than Christians under Rome rule had it. Under constitutional republic – which is form of a democracy we get to vote. When we are in conflict where we have to choose between what the government says and what God says – We must obey God rather than man. If a Church is going to cancel worship services, that is not up to government. The church is not Caesars. The church belongs to Jesus.