

## **The Christian's Attitudes and Actions Toward Governing Authorities (*Part 2*)**

*Romans 13:1-7*

**Thought for the Day:** As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our duty to be good citizens who are living in respectful submission to the governing authorities while maintaining a clear conscience before God.

In Romans 13:1-7, Paul outlines the Christians' obligations, responsibilities and duties toward civil government. As Christians, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, our relationship with God should affect and control all of our other relationships. When we placed our trust in Jesus Christ to be the Savior of our soul and the Lord of our life, the Bible says we received the very righteousness of God. And as we grow in the Christian life, His righteousness *in* us is to become His righteousness *through* us! In short, we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. In this passage, Paul explains, in very practical terms, how we are to be channels of God's love to those who have been appointed to govern over us. What, then, should be our attitudes and actions toward human government?

### **1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities...**

- Just as a soldier submits to and obeys the orders of his superior officer, so we as Christian citizens, are to submit to and obey the laws of our governing authorities. (1 Peter 2:13-17)

### **...for there is no authority except that which God has established.**

- Human government is a divine institution established by God to govern the affairs of human society.
- Why is human government necessary? Because humankind is sinful; therefore, we must have some kind of authority to restrict our sinful nature.
- Without human government, anarchy reigns and the result is chaos, destruction and death.
- Human government was established by God to promote law and order on earth and the overall good of the civil society.

### **The authorities that exist have been established by God.**

- "It is God who establishes the governments of the world... This does not mean that He is responsible for [or that He condones] the sins of tyrants, but only that the authority to rule comes originally from God." (*Wiersbe, Be Right, p. 154*)
- The Bible clearly states that governing authorities will be held accountable by God for the laws they establish.

### **2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted...**

- As a general principle, to rebel against the governing authority is to rebel against God Himself; to disobey the government is to disobey God.
- There are certainly appropriate occasions when we must resist and oppose our government: Rahab the harlot (Josh. 2, 6); Gideon; Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah (Dan. 1); Shadrach, Meshack, Abednego (Dan. 3:16-18; Daniel (Dan. 6:7, 10); Peter and John (Acts 4:20); Jewish Holocaust; Amer. Revolution; Christians who will defy Antichrist (Rev. 20:4).

- However, we must not use this verse as an excuse for blindly submitting to the dictates of a totalitarian government. It is hard work to be a good citizen and many Christians simply take the path of apathy and indifference.
  - Revelation 21:6-8
  - “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men should do nothing.”  
(*Attributed to Edmund Burke*)
- “It is plain from the immediate context, as from the general context of the apostolic writings, that the state can rightly command obedience only within the limits of the purposes for which it has been divinely instituted—in particular, the state not only *may* but *must* be resisted when it demands the allegiance due to God alone.” (*Oscar Cullmann quoted by F.F. Bruce, Romans, pp. 235-36*)
- “The obedience which the Christian man owes to the State is never absolute but, at the most, partial and contingent. It follows that the Christian lives always in a tension between two competing claims; that in certain circumstances disobedience to the command of the State may be not only a *right* but also a *duty*.” (*Sir T.M. Taylor, ibid*)

**...and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.**

- When government is functioning in its proper, God-given capacity, those who rebel against the authority of the state should be punished; the judgment or punishment will come *through* the governing authority but it is ultimately *from* God Himself.