

Romans 13:1-6 – God, You, and the Government

TSK, GreekLexicon, Handfuls, Rienecker, Steele, Vincent, Robertson, Hendriksen, Geneva, Poole, Trapp, PNT, JFB, Family, Calvin, Henry Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: At the time of writing this letter, Jewish members of the church in Rome had great contempt for the cruel Roman government and wanted to shake off their rulership. Why? Many Jews from Rome had just been thrown out of Rome by Caesar Claudius. Further, Rome maintained cruel control of their homeland - Israel.

How should the holy church of Jesus respond to the state, even a tyrannical state? This is what you will hear about today.

Our headings are:

Command: Submit to the authorities

Consequences if you don't submit

Consequences if you do submit

Our goals are: That you will learn how to deal with the civil authorities to maintain your Christian testimony and yet fulfill you kingdom building activities.

Command: Submit to Authorities

1 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.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

1. As a general rule, every person, Christian or non-Christian, is to be obedient to the state.

Even if the law were onerous and costly, everyone is bound to obey.

1Peter 2:13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,

2. The ground for obeying the state is that God ordained the establishment of government.

Those ruling in the civil government are literally "God's ministers." This is a term that is used even to describe the angels in heaven. (Hebrews 1:7, 1:14) It is even used in reference to priests. (Hebrews 8:2)

Proverbs 8: 15 By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice.

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."

3. Part of showing that obedience to the state was to pay taxes, just as Jesus himself did.

Governments need taxes to perform their duty of punishing the wicked and protecting the innocent. (More on this next time.)

4. Lessons:

a. Obey the laws of the land. Pay your extremely high taxes – even if it is hard. Remember, not having a civil government is worse. Follow the rules on the road. Check your smoke detectors. Be honest when you file your taxes. Vote at election time.

Submission to God did not remove the need to submit to the state, as the Anabaptists argue. Roman Catholics believed the state should be subjected to the church. Both are wrong! Both the church and state are under God. Neither is over the other.

b. Governments aren't a human invention; governments were commissioned by God, so you must submit to them, support them, pray for them, and if possible, play a part in them. Love is fulfilling the law!

c. When governments don't obey God, they are declaring themselves to be God, just as the government of Canada has done. God will hold them accountable for condoning the murder of babies, the robbing of babies through reckless spending, and the brainwashing of babies with anti-Christian teaching.

Daniel 4: 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.

They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

d. Sometimes God gives men evil government to punish them, much like he used Nebuchadnezzar and Shalmaneser V. But God is always the controlling one.

Consequence if you don't submit

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

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.

1. Since the state exists by God's ordination, anyone who resists the state, either actively or passively when it is doing God's work, is going to be punished by God.

Of course man should be afraid to do wrong in the first place, but he should also be afraid of the punishment that is coming his way. **The sword is for fear.** Look at one example of God ordained civil authorities...even under a theocracy.

Ezra 7: 26 Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily on him, **whether it be death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.**
Numbers 35:16 'But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17 'And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. **18 'Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.** 19 'The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.

2. Moreover, Apostle Paul warned that the punishment for those who resist the state would start on earth from the state itself.

He described the state as the "avenger," because the state is the hand of God to exact revenge or justice.

This was flowing from the previous verses of not seeking revenge but leaving vengeance in the hands of God.

This is most remarkable because the Apostle Paul himself was unjustly punished by the state and would be executed by it later.

Ecclesiastes 10:20 Do not curse the king, even in your thought; Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; For a bird of the air may carry your voice, And a bird in flight may tell the matter.

3. That judgment against those who are rebels against the God ordained authority continues after this life as well.

4. How does this line up in the face of evil governments all around the world...like in Kazakhstan, Iran, or Saudi Arabia where Christians are routinely arrested and persecuted for worshiping God and sharing the Gospel?

Why would Apostle Paul say this **when Nero, was the horrible ruler of the Roman Empire** at this time, and demanded worship from Christians?

How do you deal with **Dr. Fauci who said in 2022 on behalf of the government** if you take the Covid shot you will be safe but he had 6 shots and Covid 3 times?

How do you deal with government officials who said **if you don't take the harmful shot you wouldn't be able to worship.**

How do you respond to the government when it says **don't spank your kids or we will take them away from you?**

How do you respond to the judge who **said if you don't call your daughter your son you will go to jail?**

Apostle Paul was not speaking in an absolute sense or of blind obedience. Apostle Paul was a firm believer in the Old Testament. He knew there were times of obligatory disobedience.

He supported the **3 Hebrew men who rejected Nebuchadnezzar's direction to worship and idol.**

He supported **Daniel's refusal to close his window and pray when Darius demanded that!**

He supported the **Jewish midwives in Egypt who refused to murder babies.**

He supported **Rahab in Jericho who misled the murderous soldiers and committed treason.**

He supported **Apostle Peter who defied the ruling counsel and told them they would rather obey God than man!**

All of these people were blessed for their disobedience.

So while Christians were obligated to obey even hard civil laws, they had an obligation to break civil laws if those laws required them to break God's laws. God's laws had the priority.

5. The "sword" was not intended to teach about long periods of incarceration, but a short period of a quick death.

This is consistent with what God instructed Noah in Romans 9:6. Killing resulted in execution.

6. Lessons:

a. This does not mean there is a "divine right of kings" as James I of England argued. He was bound to bow the knee to the Savior, and if he demanded things contrary to God's law, he ought to have been opposed. **Governments must work for God by punishing the wicked and protecting the innocent.**

b. This does not mean that there aren't times when revolution is necessary. But those times are rare and only when specific conditions are met, and only with the support of the lower magistrate.

c. If you don't submit to the authorities in all lawful things, even if is hard, it will result in chaos, which will further hinder the kingdom of God from being established.

d. There is something important about public executions for serious crimes. They deter others – at least one other! Now there is no way in Canada to instill fear in people as there is no capital punishment, and in the US where there is some capital punishment, it is usually hidden away with injections. Rebellion!

Consequence if you do submit

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**.

1. *Apostle Paul then declared a statement that has been questioned millions of times: "For rulers are not a terror to good works."*

Again, he was not speaking in an absolute sense; for many governments are wicked and ignore good citizens.

2. *So what would those rewards look like, if they were given to the citizens by the government?*

Proverbs 14:35 The king's favor is toward a wise servant, but his wrath is against him who causes shame. When the king is delighted, good comes to the country – things like peace, safety, and freedom!

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but **also for conscience' sake**.

3. *There is another benefit of obeying the state in all things lawful: It frees the conscience.*

They were to pay taxes and do it with a clear conscience, not with one of hate for the civil authorities.

4. Lessons:

a. *Even if you don't get praise from leaders for doing good, you will get your right due from God.*

Romans 2: 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; **whose praise is not from men but from God.**

b. *Keep in mind when you submit to the state you are doing this for the glory of the Lord.*

1Peter 2: 13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man **for the Lord's sake**, whether to the king as supreme,

c. *It surely is better to submit to the authorities to honor God, rather than doing it for fear of punishment.*

d. *Wouldn't governments do well if they are reminded to praise people who do well, rather than those who could hire the best lawyers or lobbyists?*

e. *Have the courage to defy the government when it demands that you sin against God.*

Acts 4:29 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

Conclusion:

Christians are called to submit to the governing authorities and do to so with a clear conscience, knowing governments are there at the ordination of God. **If they don't submit to the lawful commands of the lawful authorities, they can expect judgment now and certainly after (and chaos in society too).** If they **do submit to the lawful commands from lawful authorities, blessings that will come in this life** (safety in laboring for Christ's kingdom) **and in the life to come** (eternal rewards in heaven).

Beloved in the Lord:

1. *Be thankful for civil authorities, submit to them insofar as what they are requiring does not make you sin against God. Pray for them.* Remember, they help to maintain peace, even with their weaknesses.

2. *When there is peace, the kingdom can prosper...the kingdom of Jesus Christ.* You will be free to advance Christ's cause. You will help to get peace between God and man.

3. *Fight in legitimate ways to make sure you do have good civil government.* Get involved in politics. Vote for good men. Promote good policies.

Finally: The only way to properly submit to the state is to have a heart change. You can't do the heart change; it needs to be done for you. If you want to be able to obey God, ask him to count Christ's life and death as yours and make you his child, and give you a new heart, and new record, and a new life.