

## The Christian's Response to Government and Society Romans 13

### Introduction:

1. This week a new president was inaugurated in our country. There are some who are excited about this new administration. There are others who are very disappointed. Then are those who are crying out, "The sky is falling. America is doomed."
2. I thought it would be timely to teach you what the Bible says about the Christian's relationship to government and society. While we are not of this world (we belong to Christ's heavenly kingdom), we do live in this world (temporarily).
3. Does the Bible give us instruction on this subject? The answer is "absolutely." But this is another one of those issues that a Christian must go to God's Word and rightly divide it. If not, confusion will reign.
4. There are many Christians and preachers today who believe it is their job to reform the government, and decry the government when it does wrong.
5. They go to Scriptures where the prophets are warning and admonishing the nation of Israel and their kings and leaders. They try to function like a Jewish prophet and they rail on everybody and everything they don't like in government and society.
6. But what does the apostle Paul teach the church about this? What is our doctrine for today? What should be our response to government and society? Romans 13 teaches us very clearly. This is our direct mail doctrine for today.

### We should respond with a submissive attitude. vs. 1-7

1. This passage teaches us clearly what civil government's responsibilities are:
  - It is to preserve order. vs. 3
  - It is to promote justice. vs. 4
  - It is to provide protection. vs. 6-7
    - This is a major reason why we pay taxes. Government is to protect us from enemies who would overtake us.
2. The concept of governmental authority originates from God (vs. 1-2). Government is there for the orderly maintenance of society and our God is a God of order and structure.
  - "...ordained of God" is not referring to God putting **individuals** in an office. It is referring to the general concept of national government. Governmental powers are God's idea. It is the "*ordinance* (arrangement, institution) *of God*."
3. What should be the Christian's response to government? Paul says that we should have an attitude of subjection. Twice he uses the word "*subject*." vs. 1, 5
  - This word "*subject*" means "to obey, to subordinate." cf. **Titus 3:1**
4. Keep in mind, Paul was living under the oppressive and dictatorial Roman government when he wrote this. You don't see Paul on a soap box decrying the wicked Roman government or trying to get the church to rally and picket government structures.
5. Paul never advocated trying to change government or culture by force or religious coercion. He wasn't trying to lead a revolution and take over power structures.
6. What was he doing? He was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel has social impact, but not by attempting to take over power structures. The gospel of

Christ has impact by purifying the hearts of the people **within** those structures and culture.

7. Paul says, "Be a good citizen, pay your taxes, and show respect for those positions."

#### **We should respond with true love. vs. 8-10**

1. One of the basic functions of government is to provide boundaries - not only national boundaries, but boundaries that govern how its citizens relate to one another. It provides freedom within restrained limits. I don't have the **freedom** to kill you or steal from you.
2. But believers, indwelt by God's Spirit, should not need a governmental law to force us to show forth a loving attitude. We should love instinctively because we have experienced and understand God's love. **1 John 4:7-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9**
3. What a shame when Christians get the label of being hateful, mean-spirited, and angry people. This happens when they treat society and culture with the attitude, "I'm God's child, you are the lowly heathen, so let me show you how to run your business or government, etc."
4. Paul said in our text, "Be a good citizen, pay your taxes that you owe, and owe no man anything, but to love one another..." vs. 8
5. In verse 9, Paul basically says to believers, "You should not need a list of laws - just simply love your neighbor as yourself." **Galatians 5:18**
6. **Titus 3:2** instructs us as to the attitude we are to possess towards government and our surrounding culture. We are not to compromise with this world system on the principles of God's Word, but we aren't to intentionally antagonize them either by displaying an arrogant and obnoxious spirit.
7. Paul says that we should be praying for governmental leaders. Why? "...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life..." **1 Timothy 2:2** Do you want to love people and have a right attitude towards them? The best way to do this is to pray for them.

#### **We should respond by showing forth Christ in our daily walk. vs. 11-14**

1. Paul tells the church, "You know the time we live in." Do you know the time we live in Christian? The next verse explains. "*The night*" refers to sin and spiritual darkness. We live in a time in which wickedness abounds, but God's grace more abounds.
2. God is temporarily withholding judgment on this world and allowing sin to continue. Why is this? So that He might offer grace and reconciliation to sinners everywhere.
3. So what is the answer to the darkness in this world? Is it to try to reform government and pass laws so sinners can't sin anymore? No, when a person is a sinner and is in bondage to sin, they are **going** to sin. Why does this surprise us when they do?
4. The answer is for believers to live a life that is distinctly **different** than this world. "...cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." vs. 12-13
5. If you are saved today, you have been placed **in Christ** and He lives **in you**. God's desire is for you to live out who God has made you in Christ. This is what He means in verse 14 - "...put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

6. Christ lives in you, but God wants you to put Him on each day. As we refuse fleshly lusts, allow Christ to live through us, and proclaim the gospel in love, we demonstrate to this world of darkness the transforming power of God's grace.
7. Too many Christians have a defeatist mentality. They focus on the wickedness of the world, the world's disdain for Christians, political corruptness, etc. They get a negative, cynical, defeated attitude. They bad-mouth everybody and everything.
8. What a shame. Let me remind you that we are people of **hope** (vs. 11). Our deliverance will be when Christ returns for the church. We are looking for this blessed hope. When He returns we will bid adieu to this old world and lay hold on eternal life. **Titus 2:13**
9. Our lives and attitudes should reflect the **hope** and **victory** we have in Jesus Christ. **1 Corinthians 15:57; Romans 8:37**

### **In Conclusion:**

1. What should be our response to the governments of this world and the society and culture we live in? We are not to try to Christianize the world and make it a holy place.
  - Only Christ can do this and He will at His Second Coming to earth.
2. Christian, you are called to live out the grace of God in your daily walk with the responses we saw here in our text.
  - We are not to have arrogant and defiant attitudes, but submissive attitudes towards civil authority.
  - We are not to be hateful and mean-spirited, but full of the love of Christ.
  - We are not to be combative with the world, but rather show them a different life by allowing Christ to live His life through us.