The Christian and the State

Romans 13:1-7

Introduction:

* 1. “What is the relationship between the believer and the state? The question has been debated down through the centuries. Which is supreme, the church or the state? God pulls no punches in dealing with the issue, and what he has to say to the genuine believer is startling to some persons. Simply stated, God expects the genuine believer to live as a testimony of righteousness (doing what is right) while a citizen of this earth.” (Tenn 244–247: 7)
     1. Be subject to civil authorities (Romans 13:1)
     2. Government is ordained of God (Romans 13:12)
     3. Government is ordained to promote good and restrain evil (Romans 13:3-5)
     4. Government is ordained to provide benefits through taxes (Romans 13:6-7)
     5. Outline (Tenn 244–247: 7)
  2. There is a political climate in our country that is quite divisive. It is heated and foments a lot of anger in some people. It is very easy to get caught up in politics that we can forget what our role and relationship should be in and with the state.
  3. All of us interact with the government more than we think:
     1. Pay taxes: sales taxes, income taxes property taxes, school taxes, federal taxes, state taxes. (Seffner Church of Christ)
     2. Licenses to drive, remodel, build.
     3. Vehicle registration.
  4. While everyone is affected and involved in government to some extent, it is the Christian who has a unique responsibility:
     1. Dual citizenship (Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:19)
     2. Christians must realize that we are passing through this world, however while we are on this earth we are to be in subjection to the laws of the land.
  5. Both citizenships provide blessings: (Seffner Church of Christ)
     1. National - protection and freedoms (Romans 13:3-4; Acts 16:37)
     2. Heavenly - all spiritual blessings come from God (Ephesians 1:3)

**Thesis: Believers are to be subject to the civil authorities. It does not matter how they were appointed or by whom-legitimate or not. God expects the believer to live as a model of righteousness while passing through this world. (Tenn 244–247: 7)**

Discussion:

1. Truths to keep in mind:
   1. God has always ruled in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:17, 32; John 19:10-11; Job 12:23; Psalm 22:28)
   2. Sometimes evil men are used to carry out God’s plan: Nebuchadnezzar - Jeremiah 28:1-12; Romans 8:28).
   3. Morality or lack thereof affects the life-span of nations.[[1]](#endnote-1)
      1. Evil continually shortened the life-span of all people (Genesis 6:5-7)
      2. Evil in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah brought an end to their society (Genesis 18:20; Genesis 19:24)[[2]](#endnote-2)
   4. God’s people can be involved in politics, even serve as leaders. This is an important role if we are to be lights of the world.
      1. Joseph (Genesis 41:43)[[3]](#endnote-3)
      2. Moses served as leader in the Jewish government to lead the people to the Promised Land (Exodus 5:1)
      3. Nehemiah was cupbearer to king Xerxes (Nehemiah 1:11)
      4. Esther was queen and had a great influence for good (Esther 4:14; Esther 5:1-14)
   5. Government was established by God for the good of the citizens (1 Peter 2:13-14; Romans 13:3-4)
2. Duties of Christians to the Government (authority[[4]](#endnote-4) (Mohrlang et al.)) Romans 13:1-7
   1. Be in subjection to the leaders (Romans 13:1-7)
      1. Be submissive (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14), because it has been appointed by God (Romans 13:4).
      2. Pay taxes (Romans 13:6; Matthew 22:17-21)[[5]](#endnote-5)
      3. Pay respect (Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17)
         1. Not all leaders are godly, or in line with our views, however the command still stands-we are to respect those who are in authority because of the office they hold.
         2. We should respect those in authority so we can have their praise (Romans 13:3), and for *conscience sake* (Romans 13:5).
   2. Pray for our leaders
      1. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 - so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life
      2. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God (1 Timothy 2:3).
   3. Pay honor (1 Peter 2:17)
   4. Obey the laws: This is not only commanded but inherent in the commandment to suit to our government. No matter how foolish the laws might seem to us, we are to submit. The only reason why Christians do not need to submit is when the laws go against God’s law.
      1. Acts 5:29
      2. Daniel refused to bow to the king (Daniel 3)
3. What can we do to make our government better?
   1. Pray for our leaders.
   2. Vote
   3. Write letters to our leaders
   4. Live right (this is the main point).
      1. “The Christian is to live above reproach before all men, and this includes being a good citizen of his government.”
      2. Proverbs 11:11; Proverbs 14:34; Proverbs 25:5; Proverbs 28:2; Isaiah 54:14

Conclusion:

1. Let us never forget that our eternal citizenship is in heaven. While on earth we are to submit ourselves to our leaders and obey the laws of the land.
2. Instead of lamenting because of our government, or complaining about it, let us resolve to make a difference by being respectful and, just maybe being a part of the change as Esther was in a foreign kingdom (Esther 4:14). “Who know whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”
3. All nations will one day fall. They will be destroyed and burned in the day of judgment, but the Kingdom of Christ will stand forever! (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 16:19; Hebrews 12:28) By obeying the Gospel of the King we can become a member of His Kingdom. (Plan of Salvation)

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Mohrlang, Roger, et al. *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Romans & Galatians*. Carol Stream, Ill., Tyndale House Publishers, 2007, ref.ly/logosres/cstonecm66ro?ref=Bible.Ro13.1-7&off=35. Accessed 12 Dec. 2019. 13:1 Everyone must submit to governing authorities. Here the “authorities” (exousiai [1849, 2026]) are not cosmic spiritual powers (as in 8:38; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15) but civil authorities or officials. Some see a double reference in this term, both to civil authorities and to angelic powers that stand behind and act through the civil authorities. For a fuller discussion of the interpretation of “authorities,” see Cranfield 1981:656–659; Moo 1996:795–796; for “submit” (hupotassomai [5293A, 5718]), see comments below. Cf. Moo 1996:797, who draws a distinction between “submit” and “obey.”

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1. “…family exist as the means by which family members share together, and the the office of parents rule within the family. …the church exist as the means by which people share with God, and that the office of the church leaders exercise authority within the church. …the government exist as the means by which citizens relate to each other, and that the office of government officials exercise authority within the state.” (Tenn 244–247: 7) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Manasseh’s sins caused the captivity of Judah (2 Kings 24:3-4; 2 Chronicles 28:19) Shedding of innocent blood contributed greatly to the fall of Judah. This should be an eye opener for us in view of abortion and the killing of innocent life. (Seffner Church of Christ) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Joseph asked to be remembered by the cup-bearer and knew he could be used by the king. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Everyone must submit to governing authorities. Here the “authorities” (exousiai [1849, 2026]) are not cosmic spiritual powers (as in 8:38; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15) but civil authorities or officials. Some see a double reference in this term, both to civil authorities and to angelic powers that stand behind and act through the civil authorities. For a fuller discussion of the interpretation of “authorities,” see Cranfield 1981:656–659; Moo 1996:795–796; for “submit” (hupotassomai [5293A, 5718]), see comments below. Cf. Moo 1996:797, who draws a distinction between “submit” and “obey.” [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “This was a difficult command. For most believers, the command caused anything but pleasure,, for the taxes levied by the Roman government against its conquered nations were heave to bear. There was income tax: 1% of a man’s income. There was a ground tax: a man had to pay 1/10th or 1/5th of the crops produced by his ground. He could make payment in money or in the actual crops harvested. There was a poll tax: paid by everyone between the ages of 12-65. it amounted to about one-day’s wage. There were also local taxes that had to be paid. There were import and export taxes, and there were custom duties including taxes for using the main roads, crossing bridges, entering markers and harbors, transferring animals, and driving carts or wagons.” (Tenn 244–247: 7) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)