

# **The Christian's Civic Duty**

**Romans 13:1-7**

# Scripture

**Romans 13:1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

# Scripture

<sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

# Scripture

<sup>4</sup> for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

# Scripture

<sup>5</sup> Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

# Scripture

<sup>7</sup> Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

# Introduction

This is the most clear and direct passage in all the New Testament about a Christian's civil duty.

By placing this teaching in the middle of God's commands about loving our enemies, we learn that civil authorities may do what an individual may not do, such as punish evil doers.

# Introduction

**Q.** Do Christians have a Biblical right to break the law in protest to unbiblical and immoral laws?

**Acts 5:29** But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than any human authority."



# Introduction

A Christian must obey God's Word and disobey human authority when humans require what God prohibits or prohibits what God requires.

The emphasis in Romans 13:1-7 is personal Christian citizenship.

Christians have duties to both God and civil government.

# Introduction

God tells us that the Christian's attitude toward government of any type (civil or religious) that is hostile to the church is to be one of submission and cooperation with the laws that do not contradict God's Word.

# Introduction

When human authorities command what God forbids, or forbids what God commands, our plain Christian duty is to resist, not to submit, and to disobey the state in order to obey God. (Acts. 5:29)

We are to pay our taxes and other state-imposed fees.

# Parallel Passages

**Titus 3:1-2:** Remind them [Christians] to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

# Parallel Passages

**1 Timothy 2:1-2:** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

# Parallel Passages

**1 Peter 2:12-17:** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

# Parallel Passages

<sup>13</sup> Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

# Parallel Passages

<sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. <sup>16</sup> Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. <sup>17</sup> Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.



# Context

- **A world of slavery - 3 slaves to 1 free man**
- **A world of absolute rulers**
- **A world of high taxes**
- **A world of religious persecution**
- **A world of evil and tyrannical rulers (i.e. Nero)**

# Context

**Capital Punishment:** is a God-given responsibility of Civil Government.

- God instituted capital punishment after the flood: “**Genesis 9:6**  
“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.”

# Context

- Man is sacred because he was made in the image of God.
- If someone wrongfully took the life of another person, the murderer was to forfeit his own life.
- Government should execute the penalty without pity, partiality, or delay.

# Context

- In **Acts 25:11** – Paul said to Festus the civil governor: “If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die.”
- Paul affirmed the right of government to take his life if he had violated a law and was deserving of death.

# Context

**Capital Punishment:** a God-given responsibility of Civil Government.

- Paul knew about the miscarriage of justice in the condemnation of Jesus.
- Paul knew about the Maccabees who initiated guerilla warfare against the Seleucids (1 & 2 Maccabees)

# Context

- Paul knew his Roman legal rights and appealed to Caesar (Acts 16; 21:39).

**When a Christian believes God's Word requires him to disobey human laws, he should:**

- Obey God and disobey the human law with a humble attitude, not a spirit of defiance.

# Context

- Be ready to accept the legal consequences of his obedience to God.

# Application

**Do Christians have God-given “civil rights” and God-given political “liberties”?**

- Within the bounds of civil law, “Yes.”
- Outside the bounds of civil law, “No.”



# Application

- Paul led in no civil “rights” demonstrations.
- He urged no civil revolt.
- He did not say, “Stand up for your “rights.”

# Application

We are to pay our taxes to those who have the legal authority to tax us.

**Romans 13:7:** Render [give, pay] therefore to all their dues: tribute [taxes] to whom tribute [taxes] *is due*; custom [import duties] to whom custom [import duties are due]; fear [respect] to whom fear [respect is due]; honor to whom honor.”

# Application

- It doesn't say to pay them if you agree with what they're used for; it just says to pay your taxes.
- In Jesus' day there was oppressive taxation occurring. God says: Pay your taxes.
- God expects Christians to be submissive to the government.

# Application

- But the Christian's ultimate loyalty and obedience belongs to God.
- We must always obey God no matter what the civil consequences may be.
- **Acts 5:29** But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than any human authority."

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