

# "The Christian and Government"

Romans 13:1-7

Skip Heitzig

January 12, 2020

connect  
groups

## PATH

There has always existed a tension between God's people and human government, especially when we are not in favor of those who are in power. We may find it hard to "render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21) while being faithful to God. The Christians in Rome were no different when Paul wrote this letter. In this teaching, Pastor Skip considers five principles that form a practical theology for Christian believers in relationship to secular human government.

I. Our Role with Government (vv. 1, 5)

IV. The Response to Government (vv. 6-7)

II. The Rule of Government (vv. 1b-2)

V. The Rival against Government (v. 5b)

III. The Reason for Government (vv. 3-5)

## POINTS

### Our Role with Government (vv. 1, 5)

- God's people have dual citizenship—a physical and spiritual address—that doesn't always work in harmony, but we should live with integrity and responsibility in both. How do we live in both? Jesus said, "Do business till I come" (Luke 19:13).
- One of the struggles we face as Christians is balancing our responsibility to God and state. Paul used the word *subject*, referring to a "voluntary attitude of cooperation, offering help to carry a burden." Believers are to be model citizens, fostering an attitude of cooperation, helping the government fulfill its God-given responsibilities.

### The Rule of Government (vv. 1b-2)

- Power has one source: God (see John 19:11)
- The function of government falls under common grace—the blessings of God given to all. Part of the way God restrains evil in the fallen world is through laws and governing authorities. Christians are to respect these God-ordained systems, if it is not in opposition to God.

### The Reason for Government (vv. 3-5)

- Paul gives two reasons for government: to protect the community and punish the criminal.
- Government acts as God's servant. God distributes power according to His purpose. Paul used the word *minister* to refer to the government—our governing authorities occupy a divinely appointed office.

### The Response to Government (vv. 6-7)

- The Christian's response to government should be to support (through paying taxes) and respect the government.
- We must be careful how we speak about political figures, including those we disagree with. Jesus didn't call for political insurrection; He called Christians to live responsibly in both God's kingdom and man's (see Matthew 22:21).
- God is honored when His earthly representatives are stabilizers in society. A good Christian should be a good citizen with a clear conscience.

### The Rival against Government (v. 5b)

- God has given us a conscientious recognition of government's God-given authority; submission to government should give you a clear conscience, if the government isn't in opposition to God.
- Paul followed his God-given conscience: "I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16). Christians are to submit to the government only until obeying means disobeying God. When the government calls you to obey it over God, choose God. A Christian is to be a good citizen until being a good citizen means being a bad Christian.
- Pharaoh ordered Hebrew midwives to kill newborn boys (see Exodus 1:15-22); the Sanhedrin banned preaching in the name of Jesus (see Acts 5:40); the Nazis passed laws against Jews, but many Christians refused (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

## PRACTICE

**Connect Up:** Although we can't always answer with certainty, why do you think God allows some leaders to rule (e.g., Nero, who persecuted Christians)? Why doesn't He superintend godly leaders? What does this tell you about God's providential care of people? Use these verses in your discussion:

- Psalm 22:28 (God is the ultimate ruler); Matthew 5:45 (God's common grace); Matthew 22:17-21 (kingdom of man vs. kingdom of God); Romans 8:28 (providence)

**Connect In:** Even when we disagree with the leaders in our government, Christians are called to respect and pray for them. Some of the key elements to pray for include purity, peace, openness to God's truth, sincerity, and wisdom. Use the following texts to determine specifics. What are some other areas?

- 2 Chronicles 7:14; Romans 13:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:17

**Connect Out:** Take time to pray for our leaders using the previous texts:  
Local: Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Lt. Governor Howie Morales, Secretary of

State Maggie Toulouse Oliver, Mayor Tim Keller (Albuquerque), Mayor Alan Webber (Santa Fe), Senators Martin Heinrich and Tom Udall, and Representatives Debra Haaland, Xochitl Torres-Small, and Ben Ray Lujan

National: President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, and the White House Cabinet (executive branch); Supreme Court, Federal Courts (judicial branch); House of Representatives, Congress, Senate (legislative branch); Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy