

## The Christian and His Government

Christian, what is your idea of the government? Do you abide by the laws of the government? Do you support the government with prayer? Do you pray for the leaders? Often folk find themselves thinking the government is evil and unfair. For sure, the government has elements of corruption and makes its share of mistakes. Some religious circles teach Christians are to have no dealings with the government because the government is “a big, bad, evil empire.” Such a teaching is not in accordance with God’s Word.

Let us look at God’s word and ask the Bible how a Christian, as a citizen, should feel toward the government.

### ***Government is God’s idea***

Romans 13:1 reads “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*” In this verse, the word “ordained” means “ordered.” Thus, government is not man’s idea—it is God’s idea! God thought of government- not man. This verse in Romans tells us that every soul should be subject unto the higher powers. Perhaps some place on planet Earth you could reside and there would be no government. But, I do not know where that place is. Every place I have lived or visited has a form of government. Wherever you live or visit, you are subject to the government of that land. I have visited 20 or 30 countries and not one of them granted me exemption from their laws. The government is the higher power, and I was compelled to be obedient to the laws of the land.

Where do some people get the notion that the government does not apply to them? Where do some folk get the notion that the government is something we ought to hate? Such an attitude is not scriptural. Christians should be the best citizens a government has. Later in this discussion we will show that Christians are compelled to pray for the government and its leaders. If your attitude toward the government is an attitude of rejection and resentment and bitterness, you are not right with God in your heart. Again, let it be said from Romans 13:1 government is God’s idea. The government is empowered by God, and every soul is to be subject to the power of

the government. No, I don't always agree with the government. I do not always agree with how they spend our tax money. Yet, as a citizen of the United States of America, I am to be subject to the powers of the governmental entities that have jurisdiction in the district in which I live.

### ***Government is empowered by God***

Who gives government power? When I was born in 1954 I was not given a choice as to whether or not I wanted the government to rule over me. Now, having lived more than 50 years in America, no one has asked me even one time whether or not I want the government to rule over me. It is not a choice that people are given. We are in subjection to governmental power until we die, according to Romans 7:1 *“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?”*

Governmental power is given by God. Proverbs 8:15 reads *“By me Kings reign, and princes decree justice.”* “By me” refers to God. God empowers government, and they rule over men by the power that God gives them. In the passage of John 19:8–11 we find Jesus in trial in the court of Pilate. When Pilate asked Christ questions, Christ would not answer. In verse 10 Pilate, in a manner of threatening Jesus, boasted unto Jesus that he had the power to crucify him or release him. What did Jesus reply to Pilate when Pilate boasted of his power? In verse 11 Jesus answered *“Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above...”* Pilate boasted of his power, but Jesus made it clear to him that his power was from heaven and was not from earth.

The power that police officers have is given from heaven. The power that the court system has is given from heaven. The power that Congress has is given from heaven. God originated the idea of government, and then it was God who empowered government to operate. With this in mind, are you sure you are being a good citizen?

### ***Obedience to government is a Christian's responsibility***

Let us read Romans 13:1 *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that*

*which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."*

No section of Scripture in God's Word gives us a greater understanding of the Christian and his government than do these seven verses of Romans 1. Verse two makes it clear; if you resist the power of the government, you resist the ordinance of God. If you resist the government, verse two says you are subject to receive damnation. Do you see the importance of being a good citizen? Verse three explains the government is not against those who do good. But government is against evil. A person who behaves and obeys the law should not be afraid of the power of the law. Verse three explains that if we do that which is right, we shall have praise of God. God is pleased with the man or woman or boy or girl who obeys the law. If you want God against you, go ahead and break the law! The police will arrest you and God will be after you as well.

Verse four calls the government "*the minister of God to thee for good.*" The government is good and is for those who do good. Yes, I realize there are elements of corruption in government. But that does not exempt a Christian from being a good citizen and being in compliance with government. Verse four gives the government the power to punish the lawbreaker. Did you get that!! The government "*beareth not the sword in vain*" but is "*the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*" The next time you break the law and get locked up, don't curse the law officer. Take the matter up with God. The law officer is only doing the job God asked him to do.

I thank God for government. When someone steals from me, I do not have to get revenge. That is the government's job. If someone murders a family member, thanks to the government the family does not have to take up arms and execute the guilty. God gave the government for this purpose.

Verse five instructs us that we are not to be subject to the government just because we fear the government. We are to be subject to the government because we desire a good conscience toward God. Do you obey the government because you fear the government or because you respect God? Big question- meditate. We are to obey the government and be good citizens out of respect unto God, for it was God who set up government. When a man breaks the law, he has disrespected the government and has disrespected God!

Verse six requires us to pay taxes to operate the government. We are told in this verse to pay tribute. While I am sleeping at night police officers are patrolling the neighborhood. It is my duty to help pay for that. I am not a bum. I want to pay my share. Verse seven instructs us that we are to “*render therefore to all their dues.*” In Matthew 17:27 Christ instructed Peter to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth so that he and Peter could pay their taxes, i.e., render unto Caesar those things which are Caesar’s.

A good Christian owes the government these things as outlined in verse seven:

- We are to pay tribute and custom, that is, take out our wallets and pay taxes to operate the government
- We owe the government fear, that is, we owe respect to the government and obedience to its laws
- We owe the government honor. Don’t badmouth the government. Christians don’t do that. We speak things honorable and give thanksgiving to the government.

I worked in the census for a short while going door-to-door counting the citizens. I came to one house and knocked on the door. These people were Christians so I had been told. The husband came to the door. He told me he did not have time for me. He told me he was “anti-government” and “anti-establishment” and was not willing to cooperate with me, a federal employee gathering information on behalf of the government. I said nothing to him. I wish I could have told him two things: one, you are a sorry Christian and two, you are unfit to live in the United States of America. Pack up and move.

***Christians are required to pray for governmental leaders***

I Timothy 2:1–2 reads “*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks, be made for*

*all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*” Christians are commanded by the Bible to pray for our governmental leaders. This fact is clear in God’s Word. If all the criticism of government was converted to prayer there would be revival in government.

Are you a government hater? Have you spent your life bitter against authority? I trust now you see what the Bible says about the Christian and his government. I trust you will fine-tune your soul through prayer and God’s word and come to the realization that, as a Christian, you should be the *best citizen of the country*.

Lawbreakers offend man and God.