

The Christian and the Government

One of the more difficult situations a Christian finds himself in is just how to deal with our love of God and our respect for governmental authority. I thought that in this *NEWSLETTER* article, we'd briefly look at what God's word says about the relationship and come to some logical conclusions. This will not be a thorough study—perhaps a sermon on the Sunday before Election Day will be the best time for that.

In *Romans*, Paul has a great deal to say about the Christian's existence in this secular world. But his main point concerning government is found in the opening verses of *chapter 13*. Briefly, these are the points he makes:

1. We are to accept human authority, because God has established that authority. The leaders that are in places of authority are there because they will eventually bring about His will for us. Even bad rulers can cause us to be more dedicated to our Christian principles.
2. Ideally, government is given the responsibility to praise those who do good and cause no trouble and punish the trouble-makers. This is generally true of civil law, but often not true of moral law. We, if we violate civil law, should expect for the authorities to punish us.
3. We should pay our taxes, since those who govern should expect to be recompensed. They are, as Paul states, deserving of our respect and honor. Of course, we must not obey any civil law that violates God's law.
4. We should submit to all authority and set an example of just how Christians should accept civil law. Christians should show good citizenship in all instances, although we are really only citizens of the kingdom of heaven. As aliens, we need to obey the laws of the "country" in which we live.

Peter also said much the same thing in *1 Peter 2:13-17* when he said:

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves. Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.

Throughout mankind's history, God has accomplished His will by using some of the worst and most evil leaders in history. He allowed them to come to power just so they could inspire His children to redirect their energies to create change. That kind of inspiration has changed the course of history.

Time and space doesn't allow me to speak of the civil disobedience of those like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Jesus, Peter, John, and countless others. Peter and

John's statement in **Acts 5:29** of "**We must obey God rather than men**" is the call for all who have been faced with the dilemma of choosing between civil law and God's law.

When we finally do choose a new President, please keep in mind who really is in control. We may not like His tactics, but accomplishing His will is what's important. And trust me, no matter who's elected, His will WILL be done.