



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Citizens of the Kingdom Living as Citizens of a Nation

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Veto Session is upon us already. So before the day's schedule gets started, come and join us for Bible Study, cinnamon rolls, coffee and fellowship—Wednesday, September 10 at 8am in Hearing Room #1.

When it comes to the relationship of a Christian with the government of his or her nation, the New Testament does not have much to say. Yet, that which is said is clear and very important. Not solely for the believer's own benefit, but primarily for the promotion of the gospel of Jesus Christ and for the glory of the name of God.

While many of you reading this are a legislator or one which the Apostle Paul would call "governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1), it is still good for you to go through this study for several reasons. First, unless you become "dictator" or "king" of the United States, you will always have someone in authority over you so you need to understand what God desires. Secondly, you need to interact with your fellow legislators and the principles brought up in this study are helpful. And third, you will not always be a legislator.

A higher motivation, though, is that an understanding of what God desires in the interaction of people to their state should spur the legislator to take his duty very seriously. If the governing authorities realize that God has appointed them as His servants for the good of the people and that the people are called to submit, honor and pray for them, those authorities should realize they have a significant task before them; a task that should drive them to their knees in prayer seeking God's wisdom in their decisions and actions. May this study be used as a reminder of the governing authority's high calling.

INTRODUCTION

Colossians 1:13-14 *For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Because of the glorious and gracious work of Christ, those who are His disciples have been made citizens of His Kingdom (Phil. 3:20). This does not mean His disciples have physically moved and taken up residency in His kingdom because His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). And obviously, Christians are still here; and so are still citizens of some nation on earth. Therefore, they have a dual citizenship.

And "because the Christian person is a citizen of two kingdoms—one earthly, the other heavenly—he has an obligation to both. He cannot divorce himself from either. He is under divine mandate to both."¹ The mandate to the kingdom of heaven can be summed up in Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength and loving our neighbor as our selves (Mk. 12:28-34; Mt. 22:34-40). In other words, the believers mandate is to become more and more like the King (Phil. 2:1-11).

But what is the disciple's mandate in relationship to the nation in which he or she lives? That is our question to address today. Today, we are going to examine the four main commands handed down in the mandate from the Heavenly King through the Scriptures and then look at the reasons why believers should live by such a standard

I. WHAT?

A. SUBMIT

The first thing believers are called to do is to submit.

Romans 13:1-2,5 *Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.²*

In this section of Romans, Paul is giving instructions for the proper behavior of those who have been redeemed by God. As believers are being transformed by the renewing of their minds (12:2), Paul says to think with sound judgment about yourself (12:3), to exercise your gift (12:4-8), to love without hypocrisy (12:9), to bless those who persecute you (12:14), and do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good (12:21). Then Paul writes, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities..."

The word here for "be in subjection" or "submit himself" is from *ὑποτάσσω* (hupotasso). In its form in this passage (imperative passive), it means to place oneself under the authority of another or to take a subordinate place. It paints the picture of a soldier obeying orders given by to him by his commander. It is the same root word used to describe

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, ROOM #134

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, BROADWAY BUILDING 3RD FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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Jesus' submission to His earthly parents (Lk. 2:51), demons to the name of Jesus (Lk. 10:27), the church to Christ (Eph. 5:24) and believers to each other (Eph. 5:21).

In the Scriptures, God has commanded His subjects, citizens of His kingdom, to be submitted to the laws given in the land where they may reside. This command is stated again by Paul in his letter to the young pastor, Titus—*Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men* (Titus 3:1-2).

IF ONE DOES NOT CARE FOR OR AGREE WITH A LEADER'S LIFESTYLE, HE OR SHE IS STILL CALLED TO OBEY. IF BELIEVERS THINK THAT THEIR GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS ARE HYPOCRITES, IT DOESN'T GIVE THEM A LICENSE TO BREAK THE LAWS ESTABLISHED BY THEM.

Now as we look through Scripture, it can be observed that there is an exception to this mandate. The exemption comes when those in authority command people to do something contrary to what God has commanded. Simply put: A believer is no longer under this mandate if, in order to obey the state, he or she must disobey God. Examples of this are seen throughout Scripture, such as the Hebrew midwives who were ordered by Pharaoh to kill all the baby boys who were born to Hebrew families (Ex. 1). To obey Pharaoh, they would have to disobey God—so they chose to disobey Pharaoh. Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego were told by the King to worship the idol he had set up. They chose to obey God and to worship no other gods (Dan. 3). Daniel obeyed God over the king when it came to food (Dan. 1) and to whom he should pray (Dan. 6). Peter & John made the well-known statement to the Jewish leaders when they were commanded to quit preaching Christ, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29b; cf. Acts 4:19).

But note: There are no exceptions given in reference to who the officials may be or to the kind of character they may have. There is no footnote in Paul's letter stating “If those in authority over you are corrupt, mean or unbelievers, then feel free to disregard the aforementioned command.” If one does not care for or agree with a leader's lifestyle, he or she is still called to obey. If believers think that their governmental leaders are

hypocrites, it doesn't give them a license to break the laws established by them.

Be reminded of whom Paul is writing to in this passage: the church in Rome. When he wrote this in AD56 or 57, Nero had just taken the throne. Nero will be the one who sets Rome on fire (AD64) and then blames the Christians; basically proclaiming “open season” on any who are followers of Jesus. And when Peter wrote, “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men” (1 Pet. 2:13a), he addressed people who were in midst of persecution by the governing authorities—which, increased dramatically with Nero's persecution of Christians.

The first mandate given to the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven by their King is to submit themselves to the authorities placed over them.

B. PAY TAXES

Following the obedience to the state is the command to pay the taxes.

Romans 13:6-7 *This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*

Paul is basically taking his lead from Jesus when He answered the Jewish religious leaders who were trying to trap with a question concerning paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus told them “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (Mk. 12:17).

Implied in Jesus' answer and in the Apostle Paul's command is that there is an obligation owed by the citizens of a state for the services that are rendered by the state. Much debate (which is beyond the scope of this study) constantly takes place concerning the nature of the services that the state is under obligation to give to its people. But nonetheless, it is fair and right for the state to expect “payment for services rendered” and it is proper for the people to pay—especially, if those people are also citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Again, no exception clauses can be found as to whether it is a God-fearing government or not, and whether your taxes are used for things you agree with or not, and whether one thinks the tax is fair or not. Jesus and Paul both command to pay what one owes.

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C. HONOR

Romans 13:7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

1 Peter 2:17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Exodus 22:28 Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

Friend, we live in a society where “honor” seems to be a thing of the past. To disagree with someone and still show respect to that person has, for the most part, been lost. The norm for today is to call names, ridicule, mock and deride those who are not likeminded. You-Tube videos are produced; sarcastic emails are made and sent and late-night comedians add to the laughter—and it is so easy to join in the “fun.” Both political parties are guilty. Pastors and Christian leaders are guilty. Talk show hosts are guilty.

But these things have no place in the Christian’s character. Regardless of who may be in authority over us (again, no exception clauses given), believers are called, by the King of the Kingdom, to show honor and respect to those He has place over them (Rom. 13:1-2). One may not agree with the actions of our current president, governor, senator, or representative, but he or she is still deserving of respect and honor for two reasons: #1—because of the office and #2—they are a fellow human being created in the image and likeness of God.

As difficult as this can be at times and as difficult it can be with certain leaders, this is the call. Besides, if we are to be obedient in the fourth area of praying for our leaders, it is relatively impossible to pray evangelistically for those we are dishonoring.

D. PRAY

1 Timothy 2:1-4 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

“First of all” comes from the word *πρῶτος* (protos) meaning first in importance rather than first in a chronological order. The most important thing is to offer up all types of prayer for all men. Paul then highlights and emphasizes “kings and all who are in authority.”

And what is the content of these prayers? Salvation and a knowledge of the truth. Paul is instructing Timothy to instruct his congregation to be in evangelistic prayer for all people; especially those in authority. God desires for these men and women to be saved. It is much more important than any type of legislation or law they may pass or vote on. Salvation is eternal and legislation is temporal. And one is not saved by their voting record; no matter how biblical it may be. Salvation is found only in Christ (Acts 4:12). Therefore, Paul urgently prods Timothy to teach the people the necessity of these prayers for these people.

No doubt, friend, that believers are praying for their leaders—but what is the content of these prayers? Wisdom, good choices or even for one to be removed and a “better” person be voted in? These can be good requests, but they are trumped by the greater request that they become followers of Jesus. It is a simple matter of living all of life from an eternal perspective rather than a temporal one. The best prayer that a believer can offer up for the legislator who does not know Christ is that God will save them. If the legislator is already a believer, the prayer is that they will grow in the grace and knowledge of God (2 Pet. 3:18).³

II. WHY?

A. THE AUTHORITIES ARE ESTABLISHED BY GOD

The Romans 13:1-2 passage has already been quoted above and it contains the truth of God’s sovereignty over those who are in authority over others. Verse 1 states “there is no authority except that which God has established.” And then Paul repeats it “The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

This truth is observed throughout the Old Testament:

- Judges 3:9—God raised up the judges to deliver Israel
- 1 Samuel 9-10—God chose Saul to be king of Israel
- 1 Samuel 16—God chose David to be the next king
- 2 Kings 9:3—God anointed Jehu as the next king of Israel
- Hab. 1:6—God said "I am raising up the Chaldeans" to punish Judah
- Daniel 1:1-2—God gave Judah over to Nebuchadnezzar

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- o Ezra 1:1-2—God stirred up the heart of King Cyrus and Cyrus stated "All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given to me."

And in the New Testament, as Jesus stood in silence as Pilate's questioned Him, Pilate stated, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realize I have power either to free you or crucify you?" Jesus finally spoke and stated, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (Jn. 19:10-11a).

THERE IS NO PERSON OR NO SYSTEM IN POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY THAT GOD HAS NOT APPOINTED.

The truth presented is that there is no person or no system in positions of authority that God has not appointed. This is the lesson King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had to learn as he was admiring the great empire he claimed he built in Daniel 4. Shortly thereafter, he began to live like an ox—eating grass and living wild—until he came to the realization ...*that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes* (Dan. 4:25 cf. 4:17, 32).

Friend, remember this: President George W. Bush did not become president simply because the chads weren't counted or the recounted count was still in his favor. He did not become president because he out-spent, out-smarted, out-campaigned his opponents. He became president because God established it (besides even if the chads were recounted and Al Gore would have been declared the winner that also would have come about according to God's purposes, right?). And this will be the same for the next president, governor, federal and state legislators.⁴

Would God place in authority someone who seems to be against everything that seemed to be biblically right and godly? Possibly!! He has done it in the past, and He may do it today and in the future. Why? Only He fully knows!! God is the only complete sovereign in the universe and He places people and systems in positions of authority as He desires for His purposes.⁵

All of this is to show that to go against those in leadership is to go against God—they are His servants set in place by Him. God has instituted governing authorities to keep a reign on those who do evil (Rom. 13:3-5; 1 Pet. 2:13-14) and to maintain an ordered society. Therefore, to break the

laws of the land (except in the aforementioned exception), to refuse to pay taxes, to show dishonor and not to pray for them is to ultimately rebel and sin against God.

B. FOR THE LORD'S SAKE

1 Peter 2:13-14 *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, 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.*

Verse 12 sets the stage for understanding verse 13—"Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation."

By being in submission to those in authority and doing so with excellent living, the believer glorifies the name of God. If the believer lives in disobedience, God's name is tarnished. Paul teaches this same principle in Titus 2. He instructs Titus to teach the people of the church to live in the way he commands so that "the word of God may not be blasphemed" (2:5) and so "they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (2:10).

The disciples of Jesus are God's representatives here on earth. They do not merely represent themselves, they are a reflection of God to the unbelieving world around them. Thus, the name of God becomes "mud" if His people are observed living lifestyles of disobedience and dishonor. This is a lesson that all those who claim to be followers of Christ need to have firmly implanted in their hearts and constantly brought to their minds.

The believer is to submit to those in authority because they are God's appointed servants and for the sake of His reputation, and thirdly, for the sake of His people.

C. THAT IT MAY GO WELL WITH YOU

The 1 Timothy 2:1-4 passage referenced earlier instructs believers to pray for their leaders "...in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (2:2a). In the middle of the Romans 13 passage, Paul notes:

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Romans 13:3-5 *For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.*

While Paul is referencing the “ideal,” the principle still stands—it is for the good of a person to live in submission to their governing authorities. Again, if the state is not commanding a believer to disobey God, it is best for that believer to live according the laws of the land; to do otherwise will bring about the wrath of God and the state (Prov. 24:21-22).

CONCLUSION

We live in a unique situation as citizens of the United States where there is a freedom to express ourselves even if it calls into question what our leaders are doing and the policies they are establishing. Therefore, the believer must use great wisdom in how they interact with those in leadership.⁶

The disciple of Jesus has a higher law than the constitution of any country. His laws—especially the law of love (Mk. 12:28-34; 1 Cor. 13:1-7; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 6:2)—need to be carried out and expressed by those who are subjects of His Kingdom; in order that the name of the King will not be stained and so His gospel may be fully adorned.

¹ Ed Dobson and Cal Thomas, *Blinded By Might* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 44.

² All quotations from the Bible are taken from the New American Standard Bible Update.

³ This is the foundation for our ministry work in Capitol Commission. We do not seek to influence legislation but rather seek to influence legislators with the truth of the gospel. Policy is not our aim; the heart of people is our goal. This is why our Bible studies do not attempt to steer leaders in one direction or another concerning laws. We seek to disciple those who are believers and to evangelize those who are not. This goal may be offensive to some (offensive to believers who think we should work more to change the laws and offensive to unbelievers who think we should not try to proselytize) but it is the mandate given by Christ to the church (Mt. 28:12-20; 1 Tim. 2:1-4).

⁴ A side note to our elected officials who are reading this: I hope you realize that you are here now, and will be here or not here after November according to God's plan and purpose. It is true that you are to go out and campaign—just like we all need to be diligent in our jobs and duties—but ultimately, it is all in God's hands. (“Duty is ours; the consequences are Gods.” – Gen. Thomas J. Jackson)

There may be some who are reading this who will get “upset” by their opponent in this year's election. Is it because they did not raise enough money or knock on enough doors? From an earthly perspective—maybe. But from the ultimate perspective—no. Some may do everything right, but still lose.

I hope you have the knowledge and trust in God that will lead to a peace about this if you lose. I hope also that you are humbled by this teaching if you win. Always remember, God is sovereign over all things and God is good in all ways. Therefore, He can be fully trusted even though we cannot understand or see the outcome.

⁵ And God's concern is not primarily on the kingdoms of the world. His first concern is with His Kingdom and people. He puts people in positions, and raises up kingdoms and tears down kingdoms, so as to benefit His Kingdom.

⁶There are a number of issues that can bring about great discussion that are beyond the scope of this study. Questions such as

- When are believers commanded by governing authorities to disobey God?
- What does proper civil disobedience look like?
- How involved should the church, as an institution, be in government? Or is there any place for it?

These, along with other questions, are very important and need to be biblically thought out before individual believers and churches proceed with their actions.