

# Where We Stand As A Christian With Government

## ROMANS 13:1-7

**Romans 1:17b** “The righteous [just] shall live by faith.”

Three great Reformation principles:

- 1) Man is justified by faith alone.
- 2) Every believer has direct access to God.
- 3) The Bible is the sole authority for faith and life

Luther was summonsed to appear before the Diet of Worms (pronounced “Vormz”). A “Diet” was a formal assembly of government and church leaders to mete out punishment. Martin Luther’s response, “*Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of Popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise.*”

### I. The Biblical Role of Government

**Romans 13:3-4** – In a sentence, God instituted government for protection of the populace. God instituted government because the world is full of sinners. There are two words that describe the role of government.

#### A. Protection

The government is to provide protection for its residents in several ways:

First, there is protection from aggressive countries. Second, the government protects us from fellow residents who would do evil from the inside. Third, the government is to protect us from injustice through a legal system.

#### B. Punishment

All responsibility for vengeance belongs to God. **Romans 12:19** “*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’*”

The government that God has ordained and allowed to be in power is God’s agent chosen to delegate authority to human governments to punish evil deeds. **Romans 13:4b** “*For he [the government] is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.*”

**Vs. 4** – The sword speaks generally of punishment and the use of force. It may also have reference to capital punishment since the common method of capital punishment was being beheaded with a sword.

From the Old Testament we learn the principle that the punishment of evildoers by the government is to be proportionate to the wrong done. Exodus 21 is speaking of the governing of Israel. **Exodus 21:24-25** “*... eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, <sup>25</sup>burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*”

This principle is still valid today for government (not individuals.) The principle is that the punishment is to be in proportion to the crime. Punishment is also to be swift, **Ecclesiastes 8:11** “*Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.*”

### II. The Christian’s Response to Government

**Romans 13:1-2** “*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.*”

We are to submit to the government that we are under; this involves giving honor and respect to governing authorities. Jesus gave us an example of how we are to respond to governing authorities in **Matthew 4:41** “*And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*”

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### II. The Christian's Response to Government (continued)

**1 Peter 2:13-14, 17** <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. <sup>17</sup>Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*"

The word "subject" is a military term that means to line up under the one who has authority over you. This command has nothing to do with whether or not the governing authorities are "worthy."

### III. How Christians Influence the Government

Wayne Grudem in his book, *Politics According to the Bible* says that there are six views concerning religion and government in our world today. Remember, these are the views of the world and not necessarily the views of Christians.

#### A. Government Should Compel Religion

Jesus distinguished the realms of God and the realm of Caesar when He said in **Matthew 22:21b (ESV)** *"Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

#### B. Government Should Exclude Religion

This is basically the view of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). This view proclaims that religious views should be kept at church, home, and kept quiet.

The phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the constitution. It was pulled out of context from a letter Thomas Jefferson sent to a group of Baptists in Connecticut. Jefferson's comment was aimed at protecting the churches from government designating certain denominations as the state church. Our founding fathers would be shocked and appalled at how that phrase is being used today.

#### C. Christians Should Seek to Influence Government

Christians *should* seek to influence civil government according to God's moral standards and God's purposes for government as revealed in the Bible (when rightly understood.)

Ways to influence the government: 1) run for political office to be able to influence from the inside 2) examine the views of all candidates at every level and vote based on how they line up with biblical principles 3) Christians should pray diligently for those in government **1 Timothy 2:1-2** <sup>1</sup>*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.*" The verse I most often pray for our president is **Proverbs 21:1** *"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will."*

### IV. When Civil Disobedience Is Proper

Simply disagreeing with something in government does not give the right to civil disobedience (**Romans 13:6-7**).

Justified civil disobedience: 1) when it is illegal for someone to receive Christ, or share the gospel message 2) When we are forced to hire a person who is living in what the Bible calls sin 3) When disallowing parts of the Bible to be taught 4) When we are required to perform marriages that the Bible forbids, or our facilities are required to be used for weddings that are ungodly 5) When we are required to accept non-believers as members. Those who practice civil disobedience must be willing to pay the penalty for disobeying the law.

### V. The Priority of the Church

The church (pastors and teachers in the church) must preach the Word – however countercultural and however opposed to government its truths may be. But the church must never be lured into a time consuming crusade against bad laws and bad government.