

Romans, pt.19, 4.15.07

The Believer's Relationship with the Government

Introduction

1. Didn't realize in planning this message it would fall on Income Tax Day.
2. Your house as viewed by... – slide show
3. The historical context of the passage – in the heart of Roman empire; before wide scale persecution; Jewish leaders were pressing the Romans to do something about this new religious sect
4. Paul's experience with Roman gov't – he appeals for his rights as a Roman citizen (Acts 16.37); he is protected by them; he received due process; he is treated fairly by them

GOVERNING AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED BY GOD (13.1–2)

1. Explanation – you can't get much clearer
 - a. All those in authority have been placed there by God. Jesus echoed those words in Jn.19.10f
2. God has established the authorities
 - a. Earth reflects the realities of God's Kingdom. In heaven, where God's kingdom is fully established, there is order. Rev.4 & 5 describes the order of Heaven composed of both heavenly & earthly beings.
 - b. God established the order of heaven & the order of earth. God does things decently & in order; there is an order in your heart; the home; in the church; in society; in eternity.
 - i. Life works much smoother when we line up with those spheres of authority...God created it that way
 - ii. The devil is always trying to resist & overrule God's established order
 1. Example of division in the home...you have a break down of authority...leads to all kinds of societal problems
 2. churches where there have been many splits...break down of authority & increase of sin

- c. Christians should not ignore gov't or look upon it as a necessary evil; even with corruption & beauracracy it is still ordained of God; to dishonor it is to dishonor him; **Christians should be the best citizens.**
3. Rebelling against authority is rebelling against God – 13.2.
- a. Authority is to be respected & obeyed; they are God's agents of leadership & change.; **this is an emphatic statement!**
 - b. We shouldn't try to work around the system, but rather to work w/in the system...try to change the system from the inside out.
 - c. What constitutes rebellion?
 - i. Changing the laws to suit you; intentionally overlooking laws that we dislike...selectively obeying laws; doing what is right in your own eyes; outright disobedience
 - ii. I think complaining in a critical & destructive way; we have the freedom of speech, but that speech should be leading us somewhere...as a believer you don't have freedom to complain/whine...I'm not sure believers have the right to express their opinion unless it's meant to bring about change.
 - 1. Rob & Connie Haws working on the # of parking spots for their business...disagreed so doing all that the city requires to make the appropriate changes.
 - 2. Striping the walking trail down Oyster Creek Drive...just obey the law...otherwise it's a form of rebellion.
 - 3. Complaint bracelet
4. What about evil gov't? Is it established by God?
- a. God doesn't supplant mankind's free will. If a group of people consciously choose a bad candidate or a sinful course of action they have to live with the consequences. We can't blame God for bad decisions or bad candidate based on

a country's choices; Hitler wasn't God's choice; the people chose him

- i. The Bible says "righteousness exalts a nation". When we collectively are living morally pure lives then the natural consequence is that our gov't will reflect those qualities
- b. God creates the structures of authority but who fills those structures & how they are developed is by & large mankind's decision

5. When is it okay to rebel against those in authority?

- a. When they try to take the place of God
 - i. Dan.3 – Shadrach, Misach & Abidnego
 - ii. Dan.6 – refused to worship the king as god
 - iii. Rev.13 – The anti-Christ forcing everyone to receive a mark who worship him; martyrdom to those who don't; there is war betw God's children & satan.
- b. When they establish laws/rules which run contrary to God's Word
 - i. Ex.1.15–22 – Hebrew midwives told to kill Jewish babies
 - ii. Acts 4.19; 5.29 – they had to obey God rather than man
 - iii. Modern abortion debate – everything must be done legally to remove or change this law; South Dakota's ban; fewer & fewer doctors performing abortions; minors receiving parental consent; choosing Supreme Court justices;
- c. It should not be considered rebellion when we are taking a stand against an unjust law, yet still submitting myself to the authorities. "One can be subject to the authority of the state in general, recognizing its overall legitimacy, but refuse to comply with a given requirement that is contrary to divine standards." This distinguishing it from the act of the terrorist, anarchist or revolutionary, who sees no legitimacy to the established gov't.

6. Summary: We are to submit to the state's God given authority.

GOVERNING AUTHORITIES ARE ESTABLISHED BY GOD FOR THE COMMON GOOD (13.3 - 4)

1. They are God's servants
 - a. The same word to describe deacons; the gov't is the deacon of God and is to humbly serve its constituents.
2. They reward good people (13.3b)
 - a. Similar to 1 Pet.2.14
 - b. Common practice from 5th Century BC to the 2nd century AD there was a long held tradition of honoring noble & good citizens...today citations & certificates are given.
 - c. They establish fair laws & regulations; use tax money wisely.
3. They punish bad people (13.4b)
 - a. The gov't "bears the sword" (NIV) - they have the right to carry out justice & capital punishment...**when the state punishes evildoers they are carrying out their God given responsibility...**
 - b. They should strike fear in evil doers (13.3a)
 - c. There should be a little fear in our lives towards the judicial parts of the gov't - law enforcement; judges;
 - d. They are instruments of God's wrath...Rom.12.19 & 13.4 must be viewed together...they are the ones carrying out vengeance...**the gov't isn't just filling a societal need, they are in fact part of the righteous anger of God against injustice & those who perpetrate it.** This is another reason why Paul encourages us to pray for those in authority (1 Tim.2.1f), so they make right decisions regarding meting out justice

CHRISTIANS SHOULD INTERACT WITH GOVERNING AUTHORITIES BY:

1. Submitting to them (13.1, 5)
 - a. "Submit" is not necessarily saying complete obedience; but the conduct & attitude becoming those who recognize the God ordained structures

- b. Titus 3.1f – Be a positive witness for God; no adversarial relation is needed; sometimes Christians are portrayed so negatively, b/c we are so negative...let our demeanor & candor be grace filled & truthful...screaming & yelling & pushing your way to the front never gets you anywhere
- c. Jesus didn't go out of his way to pick a fight with Rome, which was a terribly corrupt culture.
- d. Some Christians love picking a fight with the culture...Jesus was counter cultural...but he focused on the inside/out... We must submit to them in order to have a **clear conscience**...I think the reason some people have such an antagonistic relationship with the gov't is b/c their conscience is convicting them. They are pushing against God's will and their conscience is responding. The antagonism they have isn't from the gov't position, but from them reacting against their conscience & they place blame on the gov't.
- e. Our normal interaction should be one of cooperation...when we have to take a stand let it be like the early Christians who were noted for their civility even when they refused to acknowledge Caesar as god...we don't want to be known as rebel rousers and non-compliant citizens, but as good neighbors...and when we stand against the current our neighbors will take note & may be moved as well.
- f.

2. Paying taxes (13.6–7a)

- a. Jesus paid his taxes – Matt.17.24–27; 22.21
- b. The words used here “servants of God” means: representatives commissioned by God for his service. low, The IRS is the servant of God...serve God by paying taxes!
- c. You can't get around this one...you need to pay your taxes; self employed; run a little side business; cash operation; must obey the laws & IRS code
- d. The gov't has been established by God & needs to be funded...**Just like you are robbing God by not tithing; you are robbing God by not paying your taxes.**

- e. we must pay our taxes with a good attitude & thank God for the role of the gov't
3. Showing respect & honor (13.7b).
- a. Note how both Jesus & Paul inter-related to the governing authorities...they paid taxes...they had positive not hostile relationships with governing authorities (not necessarily in the religious community)...they didn't challenge Rome's right to rule over them...
 - i. In my opinion, there's too much contentiousness in certain sectors of the Christian community towards political leaders...Paul encourages us to live at peace with everyone.
 - ii. I absolutely believe we must express our beliefs about legislation & issues of the day, but we can't have an antagonistic & critical spirit towards those with whom we disagree...even if what they say is wrong...
 - iii. Rick Warren's statement: I'm not for the right wing or left wing; I'm for the whole bird.
 - b. It doesn't matter if you agree with a particular leaders politics...if he's embroiled in controversy...if he is of little character...we are to show him respect, b/c God established the gov't.

Conclusion: What's your relationship with the governing authorities...antagonistic...do you pray for them...