

Sunday, June 13th, 2010

Living Hope EFC

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The Christian's Responsibility to Governing Authorities. (Rom.13:1-7)

(Part 2)

INTRO: What is the **Christian's responsibility to Government?**

ILLUS: *Ravi Zacharias' friend* that escaped Viet Nam. 191

- If the gov't says not to read the Bible, must we obey it?
- Can governing authorities tell us what to think, to not pray?
- Are we obligated to give up our God if gov't legislates such?
- Is it right to rebel & make plans to escape from your gov't?
- Should we involve others in anti-gov't plans, plots?
- Who has higher authority over us, God or Gov't?
- It's 1776, the American Revolution. Whose side are you on?
- If you lived in Germany in 1939, would you join the military?
 - What was the responsibility of *the Church* to Hitler?
 - Dietrich **Bonhoeffer**: asked to join assassination attempt.
- It's 1975, you live in Russia – a Christian. Smuggle Bibles?
- Are we obligated to pay taxes when the gov't misuses them?

Rom.12-15 - *What loving God looks like applied to relationships.*

- 12:9-13 = Loving those in the church. 12:14-21=Love your enemy. **TODAY:** The Christian responsibility to governing authorities, part 2

ARGUMENT: the Christian is to live in loyalty to those given gov- erning authority without compromising his greater loyalty to God.

Seven principles of responsibility to government.

1. Vs1 Every person is to be in submission to governing authority

2. Government is an institution established for man by God.

- Absolute authority belongs to God. *Government is God's idea!*

Why did God establish this system? Where did it begin? – **Gen.9:5-7.**

- (1) To control crime. Man's nature is sinful & man will act in ways that harm others. (2) To preserve the dignity of mankind. (3) To
- remind mankind of God's eternal standard of justice & judgment.
- **If man does not control himself internally, he must be controlled externally.** LAW & PUNISHMENT – help inhibit & control crime.

POINT: Christians are to recognize government as God's appointment.

Q: What about Evil Governments? Are we to submit to these?

Q: Are there any "righteous" governments?

EXAMPLES:

- 1- Jesus said of Pilate: "You have no authority except that given you."
- 2- Paul is writing during the time of Roman Caesars who don't know God
- 3- **Jer.27:4-8,11. 4- Dan.4:17,25.**

17 "So that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men."

POINT: Political power is in God's hands. He gives it to whom He wills.

Both good & bad. Those appointed are responsible to rule as under God's appointment. Either way...they will fulfill His purposes!

- **WW.** "This does not mean God is responsible for the sins of tyrants, but that authority to rule originates from God."

3. (Vs.2) To rebel against Gov't is to rebel against God.

- Gov't is not a matter of human invention, it is a moral issue of obedience to God. To resist gov't is to take a stand against God's order.

POINT: Submission is not rooted in the character of the leader but in God's sovereign ordinance/appointment. Gov't is a divine institution.

Q: What if Gov't should persecute Christians? **1Pet. 4:12-16,19.**

POINT: If it is God's will for us to suffer unjustly, we are to submit to it. Christ, our Example, and many others – have gone before us.

4. (Vs.3.4) Gov'ts primary responsibility is to punish evil & commend good. = To provide safety and justice for it's people.

³For 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. ⁴For 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.

1- Gov't is to be a cause of fear to those who do wrong & break the law.

- The **sword** was worn by Roman soldiers as a reminder that the state had the right to carry out justice against wrongdoers & protect others.
- **Crime is to be punished.** This is God's decree & government's resp'y
- Fear of punishment was meant to deter criminals.
- When punishment is **withheld**, crime & harmful behavior increase.

Q: Doesn't this contradict 12:14,17 &19 "It is mine to avenge"?

- **No.** Chap.12 addresses *personal responses* to those who harm us.
- Chapt.13 addresses the *role of Gov't* in preserving justice & peace.
- **12:19** = "Don't *avenge* yourself, It is God's *to avenge*." **13:4** = The one in authority is "God's servant **to avenge for wrath.**" (Same root.)

POINT: One of the ways God avenges those who do us harm, is through His appointed agency of Gov't. **Gov't acts in behalf of God for justice.**

- **μ&v:** Those in places of authority have a responsibility before God to carry out justice for citizens. (Judges in the OT had the same role.)
- **δ&ε:** As citizens we should expect gov't to punish those who do wrong & we should support them. **Just punishment** is not unkind, immoral, unchristian, outdated, unhealthy, barbaric or uncivilized.
- The only way to maintain the value & dignity of man is to punish wrongdoers; otherwise it is the "good citizen" who is punished.

ILLUS: Loretta Brown's trial, sentence of criminals. (Paris News Article)

- While Aud & Loretta *did not* return evil for evil, but forgave those who hurt them, the government rightly punished these men.
- It is the role of government to punish evil-doers!

2- Gov't is to commend those who do good, who keep the law.

- Men are made in God's image. God values man & so must we.

NOTE: Government is not, nor will it ever be, the remedy for sin.

Christ is the only remedy for sin. Gov't is a means to restrain evil.

- **QUOTE:** Chuck Colson, *K'doms in Conflict*, 90-91

It is, in one sense, God's response to the nature of the people themselves...While it cannot redeem the world or be used as a tool to establish the Kingdom of God, civil gov't does set the boundaries for human behavior. *The state is not a remedy for sin, but a means to restrain it. Its limited task is to promote 'the good' of the community in temporal concerns, the protection of life and property and the preservation of peace and order.' -91*

So while the Christian is not to return evil for evil (he must instead exercise forgiveness, breaking the cycle of evil), he may participate in the God-ordained structure [government] that restrains the evil and chaos of the fallen world by the use of force. -90

Barnhouse: *Church & state are totally separate; God and the state are never to be separate."*

SUMMARIZE

The Christian is to live in loyalty to those given governing authority without compromising his greater loyalty to God.

God's view of Government & our relationship to it:

- 1- Gov't exists and is appointed by God.
- 2- Citizens of a country are to respect and submit to governing authorities
- 3- LAW & PUNISHMENT – help inhibit & control crime, preserve man's dignity, while they remind mankind of God's eternal standard of justice.
- 4- To resist or stand against authorities, is to stand against God.
 - Submission is not rooted in the character of the leader but in God's sovereign ordinance/ appointment
- 5- Government's primary responsibility=to punish evil & commend good
- 6- We should support government in the punishment of criminals.
 - One of the ways God avenges those who do us harm, is through His appointed agency of Gov't