

# THE ROLE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT: Romans 13:1-4

## INTRODUCTION

R.C. Sproul once asked Francis Schaeffer what his greatest concern was for the American church. Sproul says that without hesitation Schaeffer said, "Statism." Statism is when the Civil Government becomes unchallengeable and unquestionable by the people. In their minds, though they may not realize it, the State becomes essentially god. They command; we obey. They decide; we fall in line. Usually this happens until society starts getting wild enough that it wakes up even those lulled to sleep by this false god's lullaby.

## CONTEXT

Now, God has instituted several forms of Government on His earth. I) Personal government. II) Family government. III) Church government. IV) Civil government. Civil Government is what we will draw out attention to today, and we will do so for this reason: Francis Schaeffer's concern has become a terrible reality.

**Statism plagues America in general, and even the church. And before we are going to see justice happen in society, we are going to have to, first, repent of Statism in the church.**

The passage that I want you to look at is very familiar to many believers, yet most it seems ONLY LOOK AT WHAT DUTY WE OWE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES, rather than looking also at everything the Lord God reveals concerning THE DUTIES OF GOVERNING authorities themselves.

## BIG IDEA

For our purposes, I want to look at these few verses in Romans 13:1-4 and see what we can glean from God Himself, speaking through Paul, when it comes to the role of Civil Government.

**But what is even more helpful is, first, looking at the IDENTITY of governing authorities.** Identity determines activity and responsibility. Who you are determines what you do and what you are accountable for.

## I. GOVERNING AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN APPOINTED BY GOD AS HIS SERVANTS (vv. 1-2,

## 4)

**Romans 13:1-2** "1 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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. . . . 4 for he is God's servant [*deacon*]. . . *For he is the servant of God.*"

- Civil rulers and lawmakers are table servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They do not get to choose what is on the menu; they get to bring the food to the table.
- **There are at least *EIGHT POINTS*** that need to be made concerning this truth that governing authorities are God's "servants."

### I) The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords right now (1 Timothy 6:15, Psalm 2:10-12)

- **Christ is the master of civil servants!**
- **1 Timothy 6:15** "[Jesus] is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,"
- **This is why David sings in Psalm 2,**  
"10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
11 Serve the Lord with fear,  
and rejoice with trembling.  
12 Kiss the Son,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

### II) All human authority is delegated by God, and therefore accountable to Him (Romans 13:1)

- **Romans 13:1** "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."
- **God is the source of civil servants and His revealed will in the Word is the standard by which they must be judged!**

### III) A servant does not get to choose what he does; his duty is to be faithful to his Master (Luke 17:10)

- **Christ is the lawgiver of civil servants!**
- **Luke 17:10** "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are **unworthy servants**; we have only done what was our duty.'"
- **John Howe (1630-1705):** "God is to be the [civil ruler's] first and last; and he is to be subordinate to God, both as his principle and end. Acting

by [God's] authority, [the civil ruler] is by consequence to act for [God's] interest; [God's] . . . servant is to serve him."

#### **IV) The only way for a servant to concretely know what his Master commands is through his Masters' words**

(Deuteronomy 17:18)

- **This is why God commanded the Kings of Israel to even copy down His law. Deuteronomy 17:18** "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests."
- **God's civil servants must master and be mastered by God's word!**
- **Richard Baxter:** "Remember. . . that all your laws are to be but subservient to the laws of God. . . and never to be either contrary to them, nor. . . independent [of] them. . ."
- **Richard Baxter:** "A man may be a good [theologian] that is no [legislator], but he can be no good [legislator] that understandeth not theology. Therefore let the government and laws of God have the first and chiefest place in your studies, and in all your observation and regard.
  1. Because it is the ground of human government, and the fountain of man's power and laws.
  2. Because the divine polity is also the end of human policy; man's laws being ultimately to promote our obedience to the laws of God, and the honour of his government.
  3. Because God's laws are the measure and bound of human laws; against which no man can have power.
  4. Because God's rewards and punishments are incomparably more regardable than man's. . ."

#### **V) The servant who makes it his aim to obey his Master will be rewarded (Matthew 25:21)**

- **Matthew 25:21** "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. . . Enter into the joy of your master.'"
- **Christ is the rewarder of faithful civil servants!**

#### **VI) If a servant does not *know* what his Master commands, the Master will give him a beating (Luke 12:48)**

- **In Luke 12:48, Jesus speaks of his servant who is *ignorant* with a *sobering* warning:** "the [servant] who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating."

#### **VII) If a servant does not *do* what his Master commands, the Master will give him a severe beating (Luke 12:47)**

- **In Luke 12:47, Christ speaks of his servant who is *disobedient* with a *brutal* warning:** "And that servant who knew his master's will but did not

get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating."

- **Christ bears the rod and He will not fail to use it on disobedient civil servants!**

### VIII) If a servant turns into a tyrant, the Master will cut him into pieces (Luke 12:46)

- **In Luke 12:46, Jesus speaks of his servant who is *tyrannical* with a *deadly warning*:** "the master of that (*tyrannical*) servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful."
- **Christ wields the sword of justice and He will not leave tyrants in one piece!**

## II. CIVIL SERVANTS MUST BE A TERROR TO THOSE WHO DO EVIL (v. 3a)

**Romans 13:3a** "For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad (*lit. evil*)."

- **Proverbs 21:15** "When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous, but terror to evildoers."
- **John Howe:** "in all equal government, it is the design of penal laws that the terror might reach to all, the punishment itself but to a few."
- **BY THE WAY: Servants do not get to define what is evil; the Master does!**
- **Isaiah 5:20** "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"

## III. CIVIL SERVANTS MUST APPROVE OF GOOD CONDUCT (v. 3b)

**Romans 13:3b** "Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,"

- **Q. Who gets to define what good conduct is? A.** God!
- **Romans 12:2** "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, *what is good* and acceptable and perfect."
- **Micah 6:8** "He has told you, O man, *what is good*; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"
- **Deuteronomy 12:28** "Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever,

when you **do what is good** and right in the sight of the Lord your God."

#### IV. CIVIL SERVANTS MUST PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WHO DO GOOD (v. 4a)

**Romans 13:4a** "for he is God's servant for your good."

- **Q.** Who gets to define what "good" or "well-being" means? **A.** God.
- **Proverbs 17:15** "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord."
- **Proverbs 16:13** "Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right."

#### V. GOVERNING AUTHORITIES MUST CARRY OUT GOD'S WRATH ON THOSE WHO DO EVIL BY BEARING THE SWORD, NOT IN VAIN (v. 4b)

**Romans 13:4b** "But if you do wrong (*lit. what is evil*), be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer (*the one who practices evil*)."

- **Proverbs 20:26** "A wise king winnows the wicked and drives the wheel over them."
- **This is what makes the abortion holocaust of the United States such a horror!** God has servants who have been delegated authority in order to prevent these travesties from taking place.
- **Look around at the myriad of problems with our civil government in general** and you will not find one issue even close to as serious as the fact that over 62 million reported child sacrifices have happened in the past 49 years with the approval of those whose duty it is to prevent it.

***Governing authorities must strike fear in the wicked, but currently they are striking deals with the devil, allowing the most innocent among us, little children in the womb, to be starved to death by pills.***

***Rulers exist to approve of good conduct, but currently they are approving of our tiny neighbors being sucked out of their mothers with a high powered vacuum into a sterilized vat.***

***God's civil servant's exist to punish evil doers as God's avenger, but currently they are pardoning evil doers when they hire someone to crush their baby's skull, rip their arms and legs off, and scrape them out of the womb with a curette.***

There are many things in our day that God's civil servants are doing that they should **NOT DO**, but the biggest issue is that they are **NOT DOING** what they **SHOULD DO**—namely, protecting the weak and the innocent from those that would do them harm. **Q.** And who is going to tell them their duty if we who are in Christ will not?

- **I) God's people are terrified about government overreach**, while God's image bearers are being butchered. **Q.** I wonder what God thinks of that?
- **II) Christians are freaking out about Critical Race Theory**, while eugenics influenced baby-murder has now made it such that more black babies are killed in some states than are born.
- **III) Christians are appalled by the fact that people cannot tell you the difference between a man and a woman**, while little men and little women are slaughtered seven days a week. **Q.** What do you think God thinks of this?
- **IV) Saints are obsessing over the untrustworthiness of elections**, while elective child sacrifice is happening every day by the thousands.
- **Q. Why do you think the Lord has given us wicked rulers?** Why is there such government overreach? Why have they lost their minds when it comes to what is a man or a woman or what actually constitutes sinful prejudice? Why do many feel that they cannot even trust election results? Why are our rulers calling evil good and good evil?
- **A. I would submit to you that the Lord God has brought judgement on this nation.** Why? Because like Abel, the blood of the innocent cries out for justice to be done! Even those who belong to Christ by faith have largely shirked their responsibility, not held those who represent them accountable, and have sat on their hands as millions of image bearers of God have been slaughtered in the womb right down the street from their church buildings and houses.

### **THE CROSS**

- **If God were to pronounce final judgement on His civil servants based on the simplicity of the Golden Rule—“do unto others as you would have them to do you”—almost every one of them would be in hell right now.**
- **Q. If God pronounced judgement on you based off the golden rule right now, where would you stand?**

**Praise God He sent His only Son into the world to ultimately go to the cross!**

**Oh see the necessity and preciousness of Christ crucified!**

- **The damnation sinners like me deserve Christ drunk!**

- **Christ's blood cries out a better word than Abel's; Where Abel's cried out for damnation, Christ's cries out for our redemption!**
- He died and rose again for every single person who will believe on Him! He is our only hope in life and in death. So, look to Christ and be cleansed of your sin.
- **The only road out of judgement is repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no alternate route!**

## CONCLUSION

**Q.** What should we do with all of this; how does all of this translate into our every day lives?

### **EXHORTATION**

- **I)** Resolve to figure out what God's civil servants are commanded to do by their Master, according to the Scriptures.
- **II)** Resolve to speak to God's civil servants, according to the Scriptures, so that they may clearly know what their identity and duty is.

**Q. Do you know your legislators? Do they know you? Are you an Abolitionist Rally abolitionist?**

- **III)** Resolve to hold God's civil servants accountable to their Master's commands.
- **IV)** Resolve to love God's civil servants enough to warn them away from the bad and exhort them toward the good.
- **V)** Resolve to confess to God and repent of any participation in or apathy toward the abortion holocaust that we have allowed to take place by not holding God's civil servants accountable.
- **VI)** Resolve to love your pre-born neighbors, and, by faith, speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.
- **VII)** Resolve to pray and beg God to raise up godly men who will run for positions in the government so that we may have godly men there, upholding justice as their Master's civil servant. Maybe you should run for office.

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## Text Work



## Romans 13:1-4

1 Let every person <sup>hypo</sup>be subject to the governing authorities.

Soul

imperative  
arrange under  
military term

For there is no authority <sup>adverb</sup>except from <sup>hypo</sup>God,  
Because adverb pref.  
Under

and those that exist have been instituted <sup>hypo</sup>by God.  
put in

2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

the ordinance  
arrangement

3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad.

"phobos"

Cause of fear

behavior

"kakos"

evil  
wicked

Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority?

phobēō

Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

adj.

praise  
commendation

4 for he is God's servant for your good.

one who executes  
the commands of  
another

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain.

"kakos"

phobēō

evil  
wicked

For he is the servant of God, an avenger

punisher

who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

kakos  
evil  
wicked  
practice



# Outline

**DOCTRINE:** The role of those in civil government is to obey their Master, Christ, be a terror to evil doers, approvers of good conduct, promoters of good, and instruments of the wrath of God on the wicked.

## **I. GOVERNING AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN APPOINTED BY GOD AS HIS SERVANTS (Romans 13:1-2, 4)**

**I)** The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords right now (1 Timothy 6:15; Psalm 2:10-12). **II)** All human authority is delegated by God, and therefore accountable to Him (Romans 13:1). **III)** A servant does not get to choose what he does; his duty is to be faithful to his Master (Luke 17:10). **IV)** The only way for a servant to concretely know what his Master commands is through his Masters' words (Deuteronomy 17:18). **V)** The servant who makes it his aim to obey his Master will be rewarded (Matthew 25:21). **VI)** If a servant does not *know* what his Master commands, the Master will give him a beating (Luke 12:48). **VII)** If a servant does not *do* what his Master commands, the Master will give him a severe beating (Luke 12:47). **VIII)** If a servant turns into a tyrant, the Master will cut him into pieces (Luke 12:46).

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## **IV. GOVERNING AUTHORITIES MUST PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE WHO DO GOOD (Romans 13:4a)**

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