

Living Sacrifice 5

Civic Responsibility

Romans 13:1-7

Memory Verses: Romans 13:1

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Being a living sacrifice is hard! Or at least it is for some of us. I mean, I know that some of you probably got up real early this morning, put on some coffee, did your devotions, prayed, said, "Lord, today is your day and I will rejoice in it." Left early to serve the poor and needy on your way to church and then you came in here and greeted everyone and said a prayer over everyone and then you found your seat just so excited to worship Jesus. Being a living sacrificee is easy for you guys! How nice! I just want you guys to know that we love you, we need you, but you frustrate the rest of us.

Because the rest of us, we woke up late, hit the alarm 12 times, chugged a coke or monster, and wrestled with God for about 30 minutes in the shower... saying, "I don't want to worship today, I don't feel like going to church, I can just watch it online." And then of course that led to a fight with our family, and dad saying some choice words. But then we made the right call and decided to come, so of course we lost our keys, and wallet, and made three wrong turns to get here, and barely made it on time! So some of us are here happily... and some of us... less so! And you know what... that's fine! Why? Cause you made a sacrifice to be here! Thank you!

For the past four weeks we've been learning about what it means to be living sacrifices. What does it mean to sacrifice my body and my mind to Christ? What does it mean to sacrifice my life for my church and become a covenant partner? What does it mean to sacrifice my apathy and mediocrity and resist the exist? What does it mean to sacrifice my desire for vengeance and return evil for good? What does it mean to serve my government while also sacrificing my life for the glory of God within governmental structures?

Everything we do for Christ and for his glory is going to take a sacrifice! What we do with our Mondays, our money, our marriages, our jobs, our relationships, our enemies, and today, our citizenship! If my life belongs to Christ then so does my citizenship. And Romans 13 speaks directly to that. Let's read **Romans 13:1-7**.

So here's our struggle today. I believe this is one of the most misunderstood passages in the entire Bible. I believe that this passage is the very reason why many Christians have forgotten what it means to be a Christian citizen. I believe it is why many have abdicated the public

arena and left it to be run by those who do not love Christ at all and may in fact actually hate him!

I believe this is why Dearborn, Michigan and Minneapolis, Minnesota are now primarily Muslim cities and why New York City has a Marxist, Muslim Mayor a mere 25 years after 9/11. I believe our misconception of this passage is why we have homosexual pornography in our school libraries instead of Bibles, why we have LGBTQ flags in our school classrooms instead of prayer, and why millions of unborn babies are murdered every year in our country.

And so the message this morning is twofold. One, I'm hoping for you to see the sacrifice that this passage demands of us. And two, that you would reclaim your calling as a shepherd of the culture and warrior of righteousness in the public square. The main point this morning is simple... **God has called us to serve faithfully under human authority without forgetting that He is our ultimate authority!** Today we are going to see three responsibilities that come with being a Christian Citizen!

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First... **We Must Submit To Our Government's Laws**. Look again with me at **vs1**. Paul starts with, "everyone should be subject to the governing authorities." Note, he doesn't say that we should be subject to them or obey them only when they agree with our beliefs, or when the guy we voted for is in charge, or even when they are good people! He simply says, be subjected to them... or obey their laws... period! Why? Because there is no authority except from God. Basically, God has put them in charge so they can make laws and keep order!

Don't misunderstand. Paul isn't saying that every government leader is righteous or that every law is just. He's not even saying that everything government does has God's okay. He's saying something more foundational, more generic and universal. One of God's designs for us is submission to authority for the sake of order. Our God is a God of order! He likes things in their proper place and working in precision with one another. Remember a couple of weeks back, when David talked about how the church is made up of many people who, in unity, make up the body of Christ. When one person isn't functioning properly within the system, then the whole system struggles to achieve maximum capacity! God wants us running at maximum capacity and efficiency. Thus, when we are obeying the governing laws of our earthly authorities; judges, police officers, lawmakers, etc.. then we are in effect obeying our God!

But, we don't just obey the laws of our land because God wants us to keep order. We also obey the laws of our land because if we don't we will face retribution. We will be brought to justice! Look at **verses 2-4**. The point is simple. You don't have to fear punishment for something you haven't done! Government couldn't function if they were condemning

everyone to jail or the gas chamber. It really only works when they punish those who are evil. In fact you could say from this verse, that God thinks a government is good and moral when they protect the innocent and punish the guilty! When Government functions they way it should, we have no reason to despise it.

For example: how many of you get nervous when a cop pulls in behind you while you are driving down the road? You know why you are nervous? Cause you were speeding! Cause you know that he could pull you over... maybe even should pull you over. But if you weren't speeding... you would not need to fear him pulling you over... because you didn't do anything wrong and the cop would have no reason to pull you over. So we submit to our government's laws because they bring order, and because by obeying them we will escape punishment.

And so... **1 Peter 2:13** tells us to be subject to the government for the Lord's sake. This is also why we pray for our government officials to remain in alignment with God's heart. Look at **1 Timothy 2:2**. So it all boils down to this... **we respect human authority because we recognize God's authority.**

So Shevi, where are we misunderstanding... where are we getting it wrong? Let me make this as clear as I can! Romans 13:1-6 IS telling us that we have a responsibility to submit ourselves to the good laws of a good government! It IS NOT saying that we don't have a right to resist evil laws from an evil government, or that we shouldn't seek to correct government when it goes off the rails! These two are very different! Too many people have read this passage and thought, well that means as a good Christian I should always walk in step with the government no matter what! It's unfortunate they haven't read the rest of the Bible. What about the three Hebrews who stood against the laws of Nebuchadnezzar? What about Daniel who didn't stop praying? What about Moses who led a revolution against the Egyptian Empire? What about John the Baptist who threatened the King of Jerusalem. The bottom line is this... **Submission to authority doesn't mean surrender to tyranny.** You can honor government without worshipping government. You can fight corruption and immorality without hating civic structures and policy makers. Why? Because we understand one very simple fact... As Peter said in **Acts 5:29**... we must obey God rather than men! **God has called us to serve faithfully under human authority without forgetting that He is our ultimate authority!**

Secondly... **We Must Seek The Good Of Our Community.** Look again with me at **vs7**. Paul moves from the government's responsibility to ours. The government should protect the innocent and judge the guilty. We should give what is owed! Let's face facts! Not to get into the nitty gritty of how government works... but if you want police

protection, if you want fire fighters, if you want a military, if you want roads and bridges... on and on and on... then someone has to pay for that! So... you owe taxes! No one likes them but... that's just a fact! Now, are we over taxed... that's another conversation entirely.

But we, as good citizens, also owe respect to others and honor to others. In other words. Be a good citizen! First by obeying the laws and secondly by contributing to society in some meaningful way! In the spirit of President John F. Kennedy... What if Christian citizenship isn't primarily about what your country can do for you but what you can do for your community? In other words... **don't just complain about the culture... contribute to it!**

Think about the Israelites in captivity to pagan Babylon. A culture that doesn't worship God. A government that doesn't honor God. And yet in **Jeremiah 29:7** God commands his people to... "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you." Don't escape the city, don't hate the city... instead love it and seek its welfare. Why? Because the God of Jerusalem is still the God of Babylon. And the God of Danville, Kentucky, Chatham, etc... **God has called us to serve faithfully under human authority without forgetting that He is our ultimate authority!**

Lastly... **We Must Stand For God's Kingdom.** Again, this passage has been used to promote a theology that backs away from any civic responsibility! I'm trying to tell you it's actually the opposite. Yes, you have a responsibility to obey the laws of the land. Yes, you have a responsibility to seek the good of your community and be a contributing citizen. And if your government has some flaws and failures and maybe even some very evil intentions... Then you have a responsibility to stand against those specific things, hold your government accountable, and help them make the appropriate corrections. Because there is a higher authority than government! **When human authority contradicts God's authority, God always wins.** Again, look at **Acts 5:29**. **When the government forces us to do something that is against the commands of God... we always obey God over man!** And sometimes this looks like standing in the public square and speaking against things our government is doing! When the government tells us to bow down before a new idol... we refuse. When the government says we can't pray... we pray more. When the government promotes the murder of innocent children... we march and pray and protest. When the government tries to indoctrinate our children with marxism and trans-queer ideology... we show up at the school board and hold them accountable. When the government advocates for a culture of post-christian morality... we stand up and make our voices heard. Not for us alone... but for the good of our community and the glory of our God! **God has called us to serve faithfully under human authority without forgetting that He is our ultimate authority!**

Application

We have three responsibilities when it comes to being a Christian citizen of our government. We submit to the laws of the land. We seek the good of our community as we serve our community. And we stand for God's kingdom first!

I personally, along with many friends from our church and community have begun to take our civic responsibility a bit more serious as of late. And so I want to introduce you to two organizations that I am a part of and I would love for you to join.

The first is called Friends For Life Danville. We are a very public facing pro-life ministry with the goal of rallying pro-life people together to make God's word on the issue of abortion clear in our community! As of now our plan is to hold two major rally's / marches every year. The Danville March For Life in the spring and a Prayer Vigil For the Unborn in the fall! Our prayer vigil this year is set for Friday night, October 16th 6:00 at Ballou Park. We are also planning on developing sanctity of life month curriculum for churches, billboard and other pro-life marketing avenues, as well supporting other pro-life ministries and bringing them together. We need to bring on new team members to help us.

The second ministry I would love to introduce you to is called Faith In Action. It's a local team of people who are given specific roles and projects to help engage our community with Christian values. Some areas of involvement would be board of supervisors, city council, and school board accountability. Also, election integrity. We are still looking for at least 4 high level volunteers who have been wanting to find a way to make a difference in the civic arena. This is your chance. If you are interested in getting involved in either of these ventures as part of your civic responsibility please let me know.

Conclusion

In conclusion, today, what are you willing to sacrifice to put God back into our culture and community? How will you submit, serve, and stand? Holding the crowbar - Let me tell you about a man who leveraged his life for God in the civic arena. His name was William Wilberforce. He was a member of the British Parliament in the late 1700s. He was young, wealthy, politically connected. But then something happened that he didn't expect. He met Jesus and gave his life to him. And things began to change. He started praying, studying the word, taking his faith seriously. And because of this he thought about leaving politics all together. "If I'm really going to follow Jesus, maybe I need to get out of parliament." But an older, wiser friend suggested that he stay, saying, "God has you there for a reason." And so Wilberforce stayed and for two decades he fought to change society for good and eradicate evil laws and

policies. Eventually, after 50 years of submitting, seeking, and standing... he, almost single handedly, by himself, abolished the british slave trade! 3 days later he passed away! You can make a difference! You can leverage your life. You can be a living sacrifice within the public square and civic arena. Don't back down! Give it all! **God has called us to serve faithfully under human authority without forgetting that He is our ultimate authority!**