

Dual Citizenship

Romans 13:1–7 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: In September of 1596, Scotland was ruled by King James 6th (who would ultimately give us the King James Bible), son of Mary, Queen of Scots. Many worried about the influence of Catholicism on young James's heart. The major decision before the King was whether Scotland would be ruled by the episcopal system, placing James at the head of a body of powerful Bishops, or the Presbyterian system, with no Bishops, but rather ordinary pastors who governed the church under the authority of King Jesus.

In a private audience at **Falkland Palace** in Scotland, a Presbyterian minister named **Andrew Melville** did something that could easily have cost him his head. He stood before King James, who had begun to meddle in the affairs of the church, appointing and controlling, treating the Church of Scotland as one more department of his government.

Melville had come with a delegation to protest. When the king began to lecture them, Melville stepped forward, took the king of Scotland by the sleeve of his robe, and called him “**Your Majesty, Thou art God’s silly vassal.**” To the Scots of that day, “silly” meant weak, frail, mortal. Then he said this:

“Sir, we will always humbly reverence your Majesty in public.... Therefore, sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again I must tell you, **there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland.** There is King James the head of this Commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus the King of the Church, whose subject King James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member.”

James Melville, Andrew's nephew, records the King's reaction as being in the most “**Crabby and Choleric Manner**”. Yet King James eventually listened to Melville, as he reminded the king that the man whose name would appear on the most famous English translation of the Bible, the Earthly King, was subject to the Divine King who authored it.

That moment in history is one of many that remind us of the proper balance of Earthly Power and Authority.

ILLUSTRATION: In 1954, our Nation went through a similar realization in the midst of the Cold War, as **President Eisenhower** signed legislation adding the phrase, “One Nation, Under God” to our pledge of allegiance. Why is this significant? Very simply, “If there is no God over the state, then the State becomes god...a role for which it is utterly incapable.” You see, no human authority can be absolute. God alone is absolute.

Where then does this leave the church? Are we subject to the rule of human authorities or not?

CONTEXT: Perhaps that was the question that the Church in Rome was waiting for Paul to answer most anxiously as they read this letter for the first time.

The Lord faced similar questions as Israel formed into something of a party system, with Herodians gladly embracing the rule of a Puppet King set up by Rome, and Zealots anxious to overthrow the house of Herod.

How would Paul lead the church to respond to the rule of Rome? Would the church lead an insurrection against Rome? Would we become anarchists? Or would we become like sheep to the slaughter?

Keep in mind, at this time **Nero was Emperor**. Nero began well enough; in fact, the great Stoic philosopher Seneca mentored him. Seneca's teachings restrained Nero's brutal tendencies, leading Rome into something of a golden age. Then, in AD 59, Nero had his own mother put to death and commanded Seneca to commit suicide, which he did. From that point on, Nero wrecked Rome, and he poured his wrath out on the Christians of the city. All of this was brewing as Paul penned Romans. How would Paul lead the members of the Roman church to respond to Nero's government?

There were three possibilities according to the categories of H. Richard Niebuhr.

- One is **Christ against culture**: This is the Amish Option - retreat, build the bubble, and never come out.
- The other is **Christ of culture**: baptize whatever the culture is already doing and call it Christian - this is the option of many mainline denominations. They've very simply refused to call anything sin and embraced the values of culture, regardless of Scripture.
- The third option is the one Paul gives - It is **Christ in culture**: present, distinct, redemptive. Obeying the state when we can, disobeying when we must.

1. God Rules Government -

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.

Notice first how general this is. Paul does not mention Nero by name. He does not mention a party, a policy, or a form of government. He is not telling the Romans that Empire is God's plan. **He is talking about the existence of government itself.** It applies to a believer in Beijing, Moscow, London, Cuba, and Fernandina Beach.

The word "subject" is *hupotassō*, which was often used as a military term for soldiers ranked under a superior officer. Such a soldier is to respect the rank of the office, regardless of who holds it. It is also something we do willingly; we are not to be subjected, but we subject ourselves.

Paul is not thinking of blind obedience. We must get rid of that notion altogether. ***Subjection means you recognize the order God has built and you place yourself***

within it. You trust God to work through proper authorities.

ILLUSTRATION: If you are going 65 in a 50, and an officer of the law writes you a citation... you may properly presume that God wants you to slow down.

We are told in **1 Timothy 2:1–2 (ESV)** that we are not only to be subject to them, but we are to pray for them. ¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

So this is the attitude of a believer toward the governing authority. Not insurrection, not disrespect, but honor, prayer, subjection. Then notice the next part of verse 1.

1b. 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.

God is a God of order, not chaos and confusion - he instituted order in the Church, appointing Pastors and Elders; he instituted order in the home, placing a husband and father as the Head; and he establishes human authority as well.

The first principle that Paul lays down is that God ordained human government. That fact alone makes two things perfectly clear: elders;

- a. Government **IS** God's Idea
- b. Government **IS NOT** God

Consider: The man who wrote "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" ALSO evaded arrest (remember when he was lowered down in a basket?), Paul was beaten and imprisoned more times than he could count, and called one authority a washed-up tomb. So whatever "be subject to governing authorities" means, it does not mean the state is always right.

The bible is filled with examples where people performed acts of civil disobedience and were commended for doing so:

- Daniel in the Lion's Den
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Fiery Furnace
- The Apostles before the Sanhedrin in Acts 5
- Peter escaping Herod's Prison in Acts 12

Well, which is it? Obey the Government or not? Jesus gives us the answer that makes sense of Romans 13, and Paul evading arrest.

Luke 20:21–26 (ESV)

²¹ So they asked him, “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God.” ²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” ²³ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ²⁴ “Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” They said, “Caesar’s.” ²⁵ He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²⁶ And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.

The coinage bears Caesar’s image; you bear God’s image. Give Caesar the coinage, but give yourself to God.

At times, the state will try to take more authority than God has given. In those times, like the Apostles, we must obey God rather than Man.

John 19:10–11 (ESV)

¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

Daniel 2:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.” ²¹ He changes times and seasons; **he removes kings and sets up kings;**

God Rules Government...

2. God Uses Government -

³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval.

Human Government is one of the means through which God has historically restrained the unabated tide of evil sweeping over humanity. The Church and the Holy Spirit are another. Why does the world fall into chaos of the Great Tribulation? The Church is removed, the Holy Spirit no longer restrains evil, and the governments of the world are overtaken by a demon-possessed man - the Antichrist. At that time, all Hell will literally break loose on the World as we know it.

For now, generally speaking, peaceful, law-abiding citizens have been treated favorably by their governments throughout history. Even the most wicked regimes were a deterrent to murder, theft, and many other crimes.

⁴ for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, 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.

ILLUSTRATION: I picked up a habit I learned from Jessie James; I always sit in restaurants facing the door. He did it out of fear of getting caught; I do it out of fear of not remembering someone's name. But I'm not worried about the man in blue walking in on me - because I'm not breaking any laws.

Drive the speed limit, pay your taxes, don't embezzle; you don't have to fear the governing authorities. We have members of our church who are in jail right now - and they should be, because they didn't obey the law.

As we said last week, God has established three institutions, and each has been given a particular role and gift.

- **The Church** was given to proclaim the Gospel and the Keys of the Kingdom through preaching.
- **The Family** was given to provide and care for the family, and to it was given the rod of discipline through which to train the next generation.
- **The State** was given to prosecute evil and protect the innocent; thus, it was given the sword of justice.

That's why it is wrong for the state to become a Nanny State; it is doing the job that the family is supposed to do.

The unique thing about our particular form of government is that the citizen is part of the state. It is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. How do you rule? By your vote, first of all. If you fail to exercise your duty of voting, you will likely get the sort of government you deserve.

ILLUSTRATION: The ideal government was Theocratic Israel. They had a prophet, a priest, and a king. So long as each did his job, the nation flourished, but if they ever got out of their lane, trouble soon followed.

EXAMPLE: Remember why God removed Saul from the throne? He tried to do the job of Samuel the Prophet.

EXAMPLE: If a King got out of line, there was always a prophet with access to speak truth to power, but if you see a King with no Prophet, catastrophes follow. Remember Solomon's excesses? There was no Samuel like Saul had, no Nathan as David had.

When the Church does as it ought, and the State does as it ought, the Family will always flourish. The Family unit in America is at an all-time low; people are marrying later, having fewer children, divorcing faster than at any time in history - someone is not doing their job.

⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

Why should a Christian submit to authority? Paul gives three reasons in this paragraph, and parents, listen closely, because they are the same three things that raise a healthy child: **theology** (what is true, vv. 1–2), **consequences** (what happens when you ignore what is true, vv. 3–4), and finally **conscience** (when the truth becomes your own, v. 5).

- Give a child theology without consequences, and you train a **rebel**.
- Give him consequences without theology, and you train a **legalist**.
- Give him both, and you train a **conscience**.

God Rules Government...God Uses Government....

3. God Provides for Government -

⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.

ILLUSTRATION: I had the opportunity to speak to the special forces of Honduras once; I began by saying, "It is an honor to speak to my fellow ministers. I am God's minister for the Gospel; they are God's minister for Justice, but we are both God's servants."

⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Have you noticed that in these **Dystopian Apocalyptic movies where society crumbles**, every household has to fend for and protect itself? How long would you last if a gang of crazed lunatics wanted to take over your home? Well, the alternative to that is to form governments, pay taxes, and staff and equip law enforcement.

The dumbest idea I've heard in my lifetime is to defund the police. Look, either they do the job, or we have to do it ourselves.

ILLUSTRATION: When I tithe, I try and remember all of the things we do as a church in a week. In the same way, I try and remember when I pay taxes that I drove across a bridge and didn't have to swim to church this morning because someone paid taxes.

But we don't only provide revenue for the government to operate; notice what he says... respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

ILLUSTRATION: I have observed a principle for many years. The men who seem to be the most blessed in life are also the same men who make an art out of showing honor to others. They buy meals for police officers; they pull over when a funeral comes by; they stand for the national anthem. **It seems that when HONOR goes up, BLESSING comes down.**

There is a measure of respect and honor that is owed to civic leaders- including the

military, officers of the law, and first responders. They are taking risks you don't have to take. Their families take risks as well.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

1. Pray Like a Christian -

Pray for those who serve in Government far more than you criticize them.

2. Pay Like a Christian -

Don't cheat on your taxes; render to Caesar what is Caesar's.

3. Vote Like a Christian -

We are 16 days from the midterm elections. We live in a system of government that is of the people, by the people, and for the people. The simplest way to obey Romans 13 is to vote like a Christian.

4. Serve Like a Christian -

I believe every single Christian should prayerfully consider running for public office. NOW - The vast majority of us have no business running for office. But take it a step further - Pray and ask God to lay someone on your heart to encourage to run. I'm convinced that some of you have a duty to run for office.

5. Obey and Disobey Like a Christian -

That means that if we are talking about speed limits, paying taxes, etc., you obey, but it also means that you take a stand when human government usurps the authority of the Creator. But you do it in a Christian way.

6. Honor Like a Christian -

Teach your kids how to behave if a police officer pulls them over; you may save their lives. Teach your kids how to show proper honor to authorities.

7. Hope Like a Christian -

Listen, we know above all people that our biggest problems can't be solved by Washington D.C. or Tallahassee, FL. But Paul tells us in **Philippians 3:20**

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"

Government is a good Servant, but it's not a good Savior. On November 4, Jesus is still King no matter who wins.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: You can't do anything like a Christian until you become one.

Look again at the list. Pray like a Christian. Pay like a Christian. Vote, serve, obey, honor, and hope like a Christian. Every one of those assumes something. ***You can't live as a citizen of a kingdom you have never entered.***

Melville called the king “God’s silly vassal”: weak, frail, mortal. So is every president, every governor, and every one of us in this room. The good news is that the true King doesn’t wait for frail vassals to climb up to Him. He came down, carried our sin, and offers us a citizenship we could never earn.

Ephesians 2:19 (ESV)

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”