

ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
"Part XIX: Relating To Our Secular Government With God's Blessing"
(Romans 13:1-7)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Our American government and its government officials are **not** all that *righteous*. Consider the following facts:

(1) Regardless of God's call in the Ten Commandments that "Thou shalt not kill," our government permits a doctor to slay a fully developed infant who is proceeding down the birth canal to be born!

(2) A public school teacher **cannot** post in the classroom these Ten Commandments, and that regardless of the fact that historians admit they are the bedrock of Western Civilization's rule of morality!

(3) As for government officials, moral and ethical abnormalities are rather easily detected:

(a) Potential President-elect, Vice-President Al Gore responded to charges of his involvement in a political campaign fundraising scandal by saying, "there was no controlling legal authority" to deal with what he did at the time: his argument is what he did wasn't wrong because there was no authority to say so! (Editorial, "Decision 2000," Investor's Business Daily, 11/28/00)

(b) On the other hand, potential President-elect, Texas Governor George Bush selected four parties to the Texas State Supreme Court without asking their opinions on abortion and affirmative action. As a result, in a controversial case, three of his four appointees "voted to uphold a girl's desire to have an abortion without informing her parents." (Ibid., "Viewpoint" editorial by Larry Elder)

(c) Our current President, Bill Clinton, pledged in his 1992 race for the White House to have "the most ethical administration in history." As it happens, "he wagged his finger at the nation and said, I did not have sex with that woman, Miss Lewinski" only later to be impeached by the House of Representatives for legal misrepresentations of his lewd conduct performed with Miss Lewinski in the Oval Office itself. (Ibid., "Decision 2000")

Well, how is one to function in relation to a secular government that fails God's standard of righteousness? What if the government arguably fails its OWN constitution, or if it calls the Christian to do what is unrighteous in God's eyes?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "It is easy to be disillusioned with our country's government: it allows late term abortions but disallows the posting of the ten commandments in its halls, and then when officials act as they have in our recent history, I WONDER! Just HOW am I to relate righteously to our government and its officials with God's blessing?"

- I. **As Paul wrote his Roman epistle, his readers were having to deal with infamous emperor Nero's lies and murderous conspiracies:**
- A. Romans was penned either in the late winter or early spring of A. D. 57 or 58, Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 436.
 - B. At this time, wicked Nero was solidifying himself as a ruthless dictator under the deceptive front of exhibiting quality statesmanship:
 - 1. Nero assumed the throne in A. D. 54 upon the suspicious death of his father, emperor Claudius, Zon. Pic. Ency. Bib., v. Four, p. 410.
 - 2. From A. D. 54 to 58, Nero was content under the influence of his mother, Agrippina, to let able Seneca and Burrus run the empire as "a legend for sound administration and good order", Ibid., p. 411.
 - 3. Yet, when Nero tried to escape her control and she reacted by promoting Britannicus, Nero promptly poisoned Britannicus to death in A. D. 55 and had his mother murdered in A. D. 59! (Ibid.)
 - C. Thus, **Romans was penned between the death of Britannicus and Nero's conspiracy to kill his own mother ALL WHILE Nero was living under the false guise of being an ABLE administrator!**
- II. **In view of such government corruption, Paul directed Christians to function SKILLFULLY in relating to the government as follows:**
- A. The believer is **normally** required by God to submit to human government over him, Romans 13:1a. The **sole exception** is provided in Acts 5:29, 40-42: there, heeding human government would have been sin against God, so the disciples disobeyed human government!
 - B. The reason one must **normally** submit to human government is that such government **EXISTS only** by God's permission, Romans 13:1b. Hence, resistance against secular government [that Acts 5:29 does not permit] is seen by **GOD** as resistance against God **Himself**, 13:2.
 - C. Paul then explained the **role** God has for human governments over us:
 - 1. As imperfect as are human governments due to man's sin, God **uses** them to **inhibit greater** social evils, Romans 13:3. This is why government may use capital punishment for enforcement, Romans 13:4b, for the government as God's minister "beareth not the (capital punishment tool of the) **sword** in vain." (cf. Gen. 9:6)
 - 2. God also uses government to honor and help good people, 13:3b.

3. Hence, the believer is to see government as a **tool** of God's *own* using to check evils and promote good in a **general** context, 13:5.
 4. Conscience thus dictates we **normally** submit to God's minister in the governmental official as unto God Himself, Rom. 13:4a, 5.
- D. Such submission to government includes a believer's need to yield himself even to governmental taxation requirements, Romans 13:6-7:
1. Because of **flawed** government's use by God to keep even **greater** evils in check, and government needs money to do so, the believer should pay taxes as unto the Lord, Rom. 13:6, 7a; Mtt. 22:17-22.
 2. Thus, **every** government official at each level (town, state, federal) is to be treated with honor as a tool of God's, Romans 13:7b, 4a.
- E. Now, if secular government becomes SO **CORRUPT** that its rulers violate its OWN constitutional LAW, the believer must do what MOST preserves his TESTIMONY as "law-abiding" in the VIEW of the MAJORITY of unsaved onlookers, 1 Peter 2:15-16:
1. At times, a government may violate its own constitutional order (like **some allege** of the government's use of Federal Reserve Notes in place of gold-based money as per the U. S. Constitution).
 2. Peter calls us to live before the world as not misusing our civil rights, but silencing critics by doing what edifies, 1 Pet. 2:15-16.
 3. Hence, we should pay taxes with Federal Reserve Notes to be seen as "law-abiding" by government and citizen onlookers, and that even though our U. S. Constitution **MAY not** actually **require** it!

Application: *To live with God's blessing in relating to flawed human government, (1) believe on Christ as Savior from sin to become a subject of God and His coming kingdom, John 3:16; Phil. 3:20 NIV. (2) Then, realizing GOD USES even flawed human government to inhibit even broader social evils, we submit to EVERY official and ordinance of government, Romans 13:1-7a. (3) The ONLY time we disobey the government is when we must choose between obeying God's Word or obeying the government, Acts 5:29. HOWEVER, we ALWAYS show self-control and respect for officials even in times of Biblically required civil disobedience, cf. Acts 5:29 with Acts 5:40-42.*

Lesson: *Regardless HOW corrupt is a government, we must trust God's sovereign USE of it to inhibit even BROADER evils, and submit to government rule to the degree and way Scripture directs us to do so.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

God used our **flawed secular** American government to **direct** me in relationship to His leading me into the **pastorate** (as follows):

During the height of the Vietnam War, the Lord clearly revealed He wanted me to finish schooling at the Multnomah School of the Bible. As yet I was not exactly sure what **direction** the Lord would have me take regarding an occupation **beyond** schooling. However, it didn't take long for Him to clarify it in dramatic fashion!

It happened when the Butte County, California draft board decided to drop all of its draft deferment classifications. That left all of us eligible men in the county classified I-A and ready to be drafted!

I was confused and unsettled! "**Why** would **God** call me back to school only to let the **government** draft me **away from** school to the Vietnam War?" I wondered. It just didn't make **sense**!

Anyway, I found I could appeal my case to the draft board, and made an appointment to meet with the draft board's assigned lawyer.

When I entered his room, I saw he was a large, gruff man short on words and heavy on law. He asked what I wanted, and I told him about my predicament. In doing so I happened to wonder aloud if I should get my church to ordain me so I could get a draft deferment until I finished my Bible School training.

The lawyer's robust answer was what God used for me. He loudly charged, "**No, don't** you do **that!** Look, I'm a Catholic, not Protestant like you, but the last thing we need is another half-baked minister running around. You go back to school and get your beliefs down **right** and **then** get ordained. Don't worry about the draft board -- I will deal with it. Just go back to school and **then** pastor **RIGHT!**"

I left his office feeling that my ears had been pinned back, and was later re-classified with a student deferment (II-S).

But from then on, I began to think seriously about the **pastorate**. I considered the need for focusing on teaching the **truth** as opposed to the error I knew abounded in this country. It was as though God had used this crusty lawyer, an agent of the **government** with his faulty theology to make it clear I was to become a **Biblical pastor!**