

The Christian's Responsibility to Government Part 4

Scripture: Romans 13:3-5

Code: 45-100

Let's open our Bibles to Romans chapter 13, and we're glad all of you are here ... wonderful to be together and look to the word of God. We're endeavoring to get through the first few verses of Romans 13 on the subject of the Christian's responsibility to the government. In the epistle to the Romans, obviously, the familiar portions are about salvation. The great sweeping argument of Romans is from chapter 1, really, all the way to the end of chapter 11, laying out the doctrine of justification, sanctification ... we went through that in great detail.

Then beginning in chapter 12, based upon the fact that we've been saved and set apart unto God, we are to commit ourselves to a certain kind of living. And within the range of the living that a Christian is to be committed to is a proper relationship to the government ... to the authority under which He exists. And so we're looking at how we are to respond to the government.

And basically in verses 1-7, Paul tells us there are two responsibilities that we have. One, in verse 1, is to be subject to ... in verses 6 and 7 ... to pay our taxes. So we are to be subject and pay our taxes. This first point ... being subject to the higher powers goes all the way down through verse 5. And in this, he gives seven reasons why we are to be subject to the government under which we live. And by the way, our subjection is unqualified. It's not determined by the kind of government, the benevolence of the government, the theology or absence of the government. It is strictly and simply a matter of obedience to the plan of God in which He has ordained governmental authority for the protection of life and property. And those are the two basic things, as we've seen, regarding government. They are to protect life and property.

Now we may not agree with all that they do. We may not like all that they do. We may feel some of our freedoms are encroached upon. But unless they countermand the specific instruction of God in the Scripture, we are to be submissive. And he lays out for the reasons for submission to the government.

Reason number one comes in verse 1, and I'll just review it. "For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God." In other words, government is by divine decree. We submit to government because God has designed government for its role of protection of life and property.

Secondly, there is a great reason why we want to submit to the government, and that is that if number one is true, and government is by divine decree, then point number two in verse 2 follows logically.

"Resistance to government is resistance or rebellion against God. Whosoever therefore resists the power" ... referring to the higher power, referring to governmental authority ... "resisteth the ordinance or the institution of God."

That leads to a third reason which flows out of the first two at the end of verse 2, and it is this: "Those who rebel against the government which is ordained of God, and are therefore rebelling against God, will be punished." Verse 2 at the end says, "And they that resist shall receive to themselves judgment." And that is not only judgment from the government, which has been given the right to exact punishment for those who violate its law, but it is the judgment of God who is behind the government as well. So government is by divine decree. To resist is to resist God. And to resist is to bring upon oneself punishment, not only from the government, but from the Lord as well.

Now there are four more reasons for submission. We at least began to look at the fourth one, and we'll move through them, I trust, in a brief time tonight. Reason number four is that government serves to restrain evil. Therefore, to go against the government is to go against the restraint of evil. So point number four, government serves to restrain evil.

Notice verse 3 ... "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil works." Now that's a very basic thought. Government is designed to put fear in the hearts of people who do evil things, not to put fear in the hearts of people who do good things. "Will thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same." And we'll get into that in a moment.

So closely connected to the last idea about punishment ... the thought of verse 2 ... is this idea about fearing the government if you do evil. The word fear, by the way, is the word "phobas." We get phobia from it ... it has to do with a certain terror. And it tells us that that terror is not to people who do the good works ... the good works being a class of deeds which are inherently good. But it is a terror to those who do the evil works ... a class of deeds, the nature of which is inherently evil.

The people in society against whom the government moves are those who do the evil deeds ... who defy the law, who break the law, who violate the law. And the Apostle says they have reason to have a certain amount of terror, for rulers are to bring terror to those who do evil. In other words, the government, to do its work, must put fear in the hearts of evildoers. That's a very basic factor. And you and I are well aware of what happens in a government that doesn't put fear into the hearts of evildoers. The results of that are indeed tragic. Rulers should be causing evildoers to have fear.

Now what this indicates to us ... and I want to just digress for a moment ... is this. That generally speaking, rulers who are just secular ... not speaking about those who know the Lord or know biblical truth or any of that, but rulers in general know the difference between good and evil. Is that not so? They know the difference between the class of deeds that could be categorized as good, and the class of deeds that are categorized as evil. That's patently obvious to them.

And I can show you why. Go back in your Bible for a moment to Genesis chapter 2. In Genesis chapter 2 verse 15, the Lord God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat ... you can have food from everything that's here ... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." What did Adam do? What did Eve do? Disobeyed God and what? Ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, Adam and Eve, when they sinned, entered into knowledge of what? Good and evil. That knowledge has been passed down through all the sons and daughters of Adam. And every man and woman coming into this world has an inherent and basic knowledge of good and evil.

We find in Romans a similar idea in chapter 2 and verse 14. It says, "When the heathen" ... that is those who are unconverted, those who are not a part of the covenant of God ... "who have not the law" ... that is the written law ... "those who have not the written law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves who show the work of the law written in their hearts." And you can stop at that point.

The unregenerate world has the law of God written in their heart. What does that mean? The knowledge of good and evil. That's a part of conscience. That's a part of what we call in theology "natural revelation," as opposed to special revelation, which is Scripture. So the government of man knows the difference between good and evil. Even pagans understand basic morality through human reason, through natural revelation, through common grace. They understand what is a basic morality.

Now that basic morality may find itself eroding over a period of time, as we see it even in our own society today. But nonetheless, there are some bottom-line principles of good and evil that all society recognizes regarding the preservation of life and property. And society recognizes that they are absolutely essential for any kind of quality of living. You cannot go around and take other people's property. Men understand that that creates an absolutely impossible chaotic situation. It'll create a situation of self-destruction. You cannot go around and take other people's life or injure other people. So there is a basic sense of good, right, and wrong built into the heart of even unregenerate people. And that is reflected in the government that God has set for the protection and preservation of man.

Now even the most evil society ... even the worst government will hold to a basic preservation of property and life. And frankly, some good governments do very poorly at this. And some evil dictators do very well at it. Even the poorest government is a blessing compared to no government. Can you imagine what would happen, for example, in a society where there was absolutely no one in control? It would be an instant self-destruct. If no one could protect his or her life, except by himself, no one could protect his or her property, except by himself, you'd have constant war.

So even in a corrupt government, there has been built in by God to the heart of man a sense of what is right and wrong, at least in very basic terms. And so government then is placed by God for the preservation of life and the protection of property, and that it functions in doing. It then becomes a terror to those who will do evil, who steal property, to take lives. It is not a terror to those who do good. Government is designed to create this fear and terror by taking swift action against those who do evil.

Now let me give you a little bit of an insight into how a government is to act if it fulfills its God-ordained role to the maximum. And I don't want to belabor it, but there are some passages that you might find interesting.

Back in chapter 19 of Deuteronomy and verse 13, we learn that a government is to act against evildoers without pity. It talks here about a murderer, someone who's taken a life. And it says in verse 13, "Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel that it may go well with thee." In other words, if you don't do to that murderer what he has done to someone else, and therefore put away the guilt of the innocent bloodshed, you can know that it will not prosper with you ... that's God's promise. This thing is to be dealt with without pity. A government is to act against an evildoer without pity, it says.

And down in verse 21 ... "And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." In other words, there is to be equal retribution without pity.

Why? Verse 20 says, "So that the people will fear and henceforth commit no more, any such evil among you." And if you do not exact punishment without pity, then people don't have that fear that restrains them from doing evil.

Back to chapter 17 of Deuteronomy for a moment and verse 12. "And the man who will do presumptuously and will not hark unto the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord, thy God, or unto the judge ... even that man shall die. And thou shalt put away the evil from Israel, and all the people will hear and fear and do no more presumptuously." In other words, when someone does not obey those in leadership, they must be sentenced without pity, and sentenced in a way that causes other people to fear the same thing if they act the same way.

Now I'll go back to Deuteronomy chapter 13, and I'll give you a second principle in which the government is supposed to express its leadership. It is not only to act without pity, but it is to act by God's design without partiality. In other words, there is to be no one set apart because of some respect of persons, because of some preference.

Verse 6 of Deuteronomy 13 ... "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend who is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying let us go and

serve other gods which thou hast not known, nor thy fathers, namely of the gods of the people who are round about you, near unto you, far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him. And thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage."

Now the principle here, of course, is unique, in a sense, to Israel because it was a theocracy. And the crime was leading people to the worship of a false God. But the point that I want you to see is, in the restriction of bringing death, there was a clear word that it doesn't matter if it's your brother, your son, your wife, your friend, or whoever it is ... there's no partiality in exacting the law of God.

And then verse 11 says, "Then all Israel will hear and fear and do no more any such wickedness as this among you." If government would act without pity and partiality, it would go a long way to convince evildoers to change their ways.

There's a third principle in the 25th chapter of Deuteronomy: "And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten." And the judgment comes in verse 1. Then verse 2 says, "If he's worthy to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten before his face according his fault by a certain number ... 40 stripes he may give him and not exceed," and so forth and so on. In other words, when he finds him guilty, he puts him down right on the spot, and he beats him and gives him what retribution is due. This means government is to act without pity, without partiality, and without delay. It needs to be an immediate kind of punishment ... an immediate response ... so that it is apparent and obvious to all that there is fast judgment.

In Ezra 7:26, a very important statement: "And whosoever will not do the law of thy God and the law of the king" ... notice that ... you don't obey government ... "let judgment be executed speedily upon him" ... that's Ezra 7:26 ... "whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or imprisonment." In other words, you can take his life. You can banish him from the country, confiscate his goods, that is to fine him or put him in prison in some way so that he would be under some ... it isn't the idea of a prison as we know it, as I mentioned last week ... but put him into some kind of a situation where he's made to pay consequences for what he did, until he has paid back what is right. But judgment is to be executed speedily.

If government acted without pity, without partiality, and without delay, it would be a terror to evildoers, right? Unfortunately, we have seen the erosion of that kind of principle, haven't we? And very often, we hear all the hue and cry of pity for the criminal, and I understand that, and I understand the need for mercy. But I also understand what happens when that becomes the norm, and everybody thinks they can do whatever they want and escape judgment.

And then we are well aware of those kinds of times and places where some people seem to receive partial treatment for things that they have done, for which others are more severely punished. And then we all know that punishment is anything but without delay, isn't it? This will deter the criminal, and this will put fear in the hearts of the evildoers.

So we are to submit, then, to God's ordination of government. It is from Him. To rebel is to resist Him. To resist Him is to bring punishment. And government is designed to restrain evil. And certainly we, as Christians, want to hold up anything that restrains evil, don't we? We don't want to tear down what God has put in place to uphold goodness and restrain evil.

And we might stop at this moment and ask the question, but what if government treats you badly? What if government takes your freedoms? What if government encroaches upon you in ways that you feel are unfair, unjust, or inequitable?

Well, the pattern that you need to look back to would be the example of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was put in jail in Philippi, wasn't he? He was put in jail there. He didn't do anything to deserve it. He was accused, it says in Acts 16 ... it says, "These men being Jews exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them. The magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded to beat them." The whole place is in an uproar in Philippi, and they haven't done a thing. It's just a mad mob. And they laid many stripes on him, threw him into prison, charged the jailer to keep them safely. They made their feet fast in the stocks. And what did they do? What were Paul and Silas doing at midnight? Singing praise, weren't they?

Yes, they were treated badly by a government. Yes, they were treated unfairly and inequitably and unjustly ... absolutely. But it's the same Paul that was treated that way who said that we're to submit to the government. The Apostle Paul knew what it was to endure injustice. In fact, he endured it rather frequently from place to place ... three times he was beaten with rods, once stoned.

Still, the truth stands in spite of the fact that there are those times when government oversteps its bounds, when government goes beyond its limits. There are those times when there is injustice and inequity. Still, the principle stands.

In the 19th chapter of Acts and verse 35, do you remember the story in Ephesus? When the town clerk had quieted the people, he said, "You mean of Ephesus, what man is there that knows not that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess, Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter. Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly, for you have brought here these men who are neither robbers of temples, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a

matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies. Let them accuse one another."

And here the town clerk stops the mob that would have just eliminated those who were proclaiming Christ, and says, "Let's bring this to the law. Let's bring this to lawful assembly," he says in verse 39, "for we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar. For there being no cause for which we may give an account of this concourse." And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

On one hand, we see in Acts 16 where government acts against the Apostle Paul. We go to Acts 19, and government acts in his defense and rescues him from a mob. So we don't want to obviate the principle. There are times when government may overstep its bounds. There are times when we may be very dependent upon its provision.

And you remember when they were going to scourge the Apostle Paul in Acts 22. He said to the one who was going to lead him into the scourging, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a Roman citizen?" And he pulled rank, didn't he, in a sense? He reached out for his Roman citizenship as a protection against what they were going to do to him. So the truth stands. Whether government is protecting us or seems to be overstepping its bounds, acting unjustly toward us, we need to be submissive.

Now that leads us to a fifth principle ... back to Romans 13. We are to be submissive because government serves to promote good. In verse 3 again it says, "Will you then not be afraid of the power? Do you want to have it so you're not afraid of government? Then do what is good, and you'll have praise of the same." And I still believe our government is in place to bring praise to those who do good.

I was given a plaque the other day, and there is supposed to be a formal presentation from the community and from the local state representative for the contribution that they think I made, but Grace Church made, to this area. And when things are as they ought to be, society recognizes that there is a good contribution being made.

And so Paul says, "Do what is good, and you don't have to fear, because you will have praise from the same." That is, from those in authority. If you enjoy a quiet and peaceful life, if you live a life of goodness, if you demonstrate the love of Christ and godliness and virtue, and if you are not a troublemaker and a rebel-rouser, you will find that you will receive praise. And government becomes, in a sense ... verse 4 ... "The servant of God to thee for good." Isn't that a wonderful statement? The deaconos ... the deacon of God ... to thee for good.

And here is the ruler's purpose...not only to be a terror to those that do the class of deeds called evil, but to be a praise to those who do the class of deeds called good. And his title is one of great honor ... he's a servant of God. The president of the United States is a servant of God. The senators and

assemblymen of the united states, the justices, all the way down into the states, the mayors and the people who function in the city level of government ... they are all servants of God. That is, in a unique sense ... not in the sense of a believer necessarily, not in the sense of one who ministers in the church, but in the sense that they carry out a God-ordained service. They uphold the divine institution. Personally, they may not know God at all, but they represent Him. They represent His desire for peace and safety among men. And so we do all we can to keep peace, to live honorably, to live with sobriety and dignity, to cultivate harmony, to be model citizens ... that those who are carrying out a service to God in government may honor us.

And certainly, beloved ... and we've been trying to say this in the whole series ... we who are evangelical fundamental Christians who really hold the name of Christ up should be the model of what a citizen should be in society. That those who are in the governmental sense the servants of God may see in us something utterly unique and attractive.

Robert Halldane many years ago wrote a marvelous commentary on Romans. And in it, he says this: the institution of civil government is a dispensation of mercy. And its existence is so indispensable that the moment it ceases under one form, it reestablishes itself in another. That's a very good statement. When you see a coup in a country, or you see the country overturned, or a revolution, it'll never be the elimination of government. It will only be the exchange of government, because man cannot survive without that.

Haldane goes on to say, "The world ever since the fall, when the dominion of one part of the human race over another was immediately introduced, has been in such a state of corruption and depravity that without the powerful obstacle presented by civil government to the selfish and malignant passions of men, it would be better to live among the beasts of the forest than in human society. As soon as its restraints are removed, man shows himself in his real character. When there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes," end quote.

So Paul is still building his case. We are called to submission because God is a source of government. To rebel is to resist God. To resist God brings judgment. Government is set to restrain evil. And we want to uphold a government that restrains evil. And government is there to promote good. And we want to be good so that we might enjoy the benefits of government.

Sixthly ... and this is a very important one ... rulers are empowered by God to inflict the severest punishment. In verse 7 ... pardon me, verse 4, he says, just after the first sentence, "If you do what is evil, be afraid." Why? "For he bears not the sword for nothing. For he is the servant of God and avenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil." Very strong verse. If you do what is evil, be afraid. You have every reason to be afraid because God has given to government the right to bear the sword, and he does not bear the sword for nothing. He bears the sword for something. And it doesn't take a Phi Beta Kappa to figure out what you do with a sword. You don't spank people with a sword.

You don't fine people with a sword. You kill people with a sword. And what he is saying here is that government is given the right to inflict final punishment, irremedial and irreversible punishment ... the punishment of death.

Civil government is not just a pageant. It is not just a symbol of power. It is not just a weak threat. God has ordained that civil government bear the sword. And the sword means nothing other than death. If you ever question whether capital punishment is biblical, this verse should end that questioning. Indeed it is. The sword is always the symbol of death.

And you go back into Genesis 9, and there we have the institution of this principle. Genesis chapter 9 verse 6 ... when God was laying down some basic matters regarding human government in verse 6 ... "Who so shedeth man's blood. By man shall his blood be shed. For in the image of God made he man." In other words, man is so sacred, having been made in the image of God, that if you take the life of a man, you forfeit your own life ... without pity, without partiality, and speedily that should be carried out by government.

In Matthew ... have you been with us ... in chapter 26 and verse 51 ... do you remember it? Peter took out a sword and started to cut up the first person in line. And Jesus said in verse 52, "Put up again your sword into place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." What he meant was, "If you take a life, Peter, then you will die." Because that is the law. So if you try to fight that way, then you're going to die, and justifiably so. The Lord is upholding there capital punishment. "If you take a sword, Peter, you will die by the sword." That is a divine institution.

Over in the 25th chapter of Acts, verse 11 ... Paul, appealing to Caesar, says "If I be an offender," talking to Festus, the governor, "If I have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die." Now there again is the Apostle Paul saying, "Look, if I have committed a crime worthy of death, then I ought to die." Why does he say that? Because he knows that's God's standard. That's a God-ordained principle. Paul affirms the right of government to take his life if he has violated law.

The Old Testament prescribes the death penalty for murder, for striking your parent, for blasphemy, for witchcraft, occult, false prophecy, rape, immorality, homosexuality, kidnapping, idolatry, and a blasphemous violation of the holiness of the Sabbath. God has ordained that government has the right to take a life.

And so it says ... back to verse 4 again ... "He is the minister of God. And part of the ministry of God in government for the good of man is to make evildoers afraid of the sword which is not carried for nothing, but rather he is a minister of God who further is an avenger." Now listen to me ... taking the life of a murderer, bringing capital punishment against one who has committed the crime of that magnitude, is a matter of an avenging. And it is an avenging that God requires.

One writer has said, "What must not be lost sight of is that unpleasant as is the task of the jailer and the use of the whip, the cell, the noose, the guillotine ... these things stand behind the stability of civilized society, and they stand there necessarily, for God has declared it so, in harmony with reality, rather than with apostate sociological opinion. Government, with its coercive powers, is a social necessity, but one determined by the Creator, not by the statistical tables of some university social research staff. No society can successfully vote fines and corporal and capital punishment away permanently. The society which tries has lost touch with the realities of man...his fallen sinful state ... realities of the world, and the truth of divine revelation in nature, man's conscious and the Bible," end quote. You can't do that and survive. God has ordained government to bear the sword. And vengeance belongs to God and comes often through the government.

Remember back in verse 19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves" ... chapter 12 ... "Vengeance isn't ours. Give place unto God's wrath, for vengeance is mine, says God, I will repay." And here's one way God says he has to channel his vengeance. That is through the government. And we as Christians can thank God for government. We can thank God that government has the right to use the sword.

Now I don't like to think of people losing their lives. And I think the way to stop it is to make it very clear and certain that if you take a life, you'll immediately lose yours. That protects the sanctity of life.

Now when this is not satisfied ... and I want you to listen very carefully to what I'm going to say in the next few minutes ... when this is not satisfied, a nation comes under blood-guiltiness.

I want you to do a little Bible study. Let's go back to Genesis chapter 4, and I want you to listen very carefully to what I'm going to say. Genesis chapter 4 verse 10 ... Cain killed Abel ... he murdered him ... first murder. And the Lord said, verse 9, "Cain, where is Abel, your brother?" He was not only a murderer, by the way, but he was a liar ... that figures. Satan was the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. And so Cain was mirroring the one who had no doubt inspired him to do this. He said, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" And he said, "What hast thou done?" Listen to this ... "The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth which has opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand." When Cain killed Abel, Abel's blood cried out to God. It was unrequited blood. It was unsatisfied. It was a life taken with no life given. There was no retribution. And the blood cried out to God.

In chapter 9 verse 6, we come then to that principle, and God lays it down ... "Whoever sheds man's blood by man, shall his blood be shed." And so God later on puts down the principle that a murderer is to lose his life. That and that alone ... listen now ... will satisfy the unrequited blood. That and that alone will satisfy God.

Go to chapter 44 of Genesis, and I'll just show you another illustration of this. It says, "And Reuben answered them saying, 'I spoke I not unto you, saying do not sin against a child.'" Do you remember the brothers had sold Joseph ... do you remember that? And of course they're concerned and feeling guilty by now in the story.

And so in verse 22, Reuben says, "Didn't I tell you, don't sin against the child, and you wouldn't hear. Therefore, behold also his blood is" what ... "required." In other words, until there is a life for His life, God is unsatisfied. They realized the principle that had been established in Genesis ... blood for blood.

Joshua chapter 2 verse 19 ... "And it shall be that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless. And whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head if any hand be upon him."

In other words, again we just want to draw this one principle. I don't want to take the time to go into all the story here about the spies going into Jericho and Rayhab, and all the things that were happening here. But the point is this: whenever there was guilt in the loss of a life, somebody was to pay ... somebody was to shed blood. And so the statement, "his blood shall be on our head if any hand be on him."

In second Samuel chapter 4 ... and you'll see where all this is going in a moment. Again this chapter describes a murder, a murder of Ishbosheth, Saul's son. You come down to verse 11, and the principle is there: "How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed, shall I not therefore now" ... here it comes ... "require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?" If you take a life, you give a life. And your blood is required for his blood.

First Kings ... just another passage ... chapter 2 ... just so you'll understand how really comprehensive this is. Again it's the same idea. The king said unto him, "Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him, that thou mayest take away the innocent blood which Joab shed from me and the house of my father." What God says is to executive Joab for shedding innocent blood.

Backing up for just a moment, I want to draw your attention to one verse I probably should have mentioned earlier. It's Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 9: "For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." He has cursed his father or mother ... here it is ... "His blood shall be on him." In other words, again the idea of blood-guiltiness. He is a bloody murderer ... there is blood on him.

Verse 13 ends with, "His blood shall be on them." And I think it's verse 27 which is the same ... yes ... "Their blood shall be upon them."

So the pattern is the same all the way through the early part of the Old Testament that blood was required for the shedding of blood.

Now I want to just draw you to one other book in the old testament ... that is the prophecy of Ezekiel ... Ezekiel chapter 7 and verse 20 ... "As for the beauty of his ornament, he said it in majesty. But they made the images of their abominations and their detestable things of it. Therefore have I said it far from them?" God is talking about the temple, by the way, which they had desecrated. "And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil, and they shall pollute it." And do you remember when the Babylonians came in and took Jerusalem, they profaned the temple terribly. "My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute My secret place, for the robbers shall enter in and defile it. Make a chain, for the land is full of bloody crimes." I want you to stop there.

One of the reasons, and a primary reason that God brought judgment on the nation, Israel, and the Babylonian captivity was because the nation was full of bloody crimes. In other words, murders for which there was no retribution. And the blood was crying out to God. And the city is full of violence. You show me a place where they don't deal with murderers, and they don't execute those who commit severe crimes, and I'll show you a place full of violence.

And that was exactly what Ezekiel saw. "Wherefore I will bring the worst of the nations, and they shall possess their houses. I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled. Destruction cometh, and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor upon rumor. And then shall they seek a vision from the prophet, but the law will perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. The kind will mourn. The prince will be clothed desolation. The hands of the people of the land shall be troubled. I will do unto them after their way. And according to the deserts, will I judge them. And they shall know that I am the Lord." In other words, God says, "I'm going to come in and bring a terrible judgment because there is a land full of bloody crimes, full of violence where judgment is not executed on evildoers."

In Ezekiel chapter 18 verse 10 says, "If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood" ... that's a murderer ... "and doeth the like to anyone of these things, and that doeth not any of those duties, but even has eaten upon the mountains and defiled his neighbor's wife, has oppressed the poor and needy, has spoiled by violence, has not restored the pledge that is keeping his word, has lifted up his eyes to idols, has committed abomination, has given forth upon interest, has taken increase that is extortion, shall he then live? He shall not live. He hath done all these abominations. He shall surely die. His blood shall be upon him." And there's that idea of blood-guiltiness. It must be requited. It is required that those kinds of crimes be paid for with blood.

Now why does God do that? Because God hates people? No. Because God knows that that, when executed properly, becomes a terror to evildoers and restrains them from doing evil. And men need restraints because men are basically so vile and wicked.

And you can see the same thing in Ezekiel 36. Now the point is this. All the way through here, God requires the death penalty. You say, "Is that so that God can kill people?" No. That's so that people will not have to die. That's so that there are no victims, and there are no criminals. Do you understand that? If you make the law of the land according to the law of God, it restrains the criminal. And therefore, there are not victims, and there are not perpetrators. That's the whole point. But where there is bloodshed, and where that blood is unrequited blood, the nation becomes guilty, and God moves in to judge.

Listen to Numbers 35:33: "So you shall not pollute the land wherein you are, for blood defiles the land. And the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." Did you get that? You ought to mark that down, Numbers 35:33. The land will never be cleansed of the blood that is shed until the blood of the one who shed it is shed.

You ask yourself why America is in the mess that it's in, and I could give you a myriad of reasons. One major reason is that this nation is under the judgment of God for unrequited blood. The ground of the United States of America cries out to God for retribution against murderers, robbers, and those who are worthy of death. And were they properly dealt with, there would be the minimizing of victims and perpetrators. But instead, we do the very opposite, and our land is blood-guilty.

And friend, I want to tell you, I believe with all my heart that abortion is murder, and that we are guilty to an absolutely inconceivable extent in the matter of massacring unborn children.

Passivism finds no advocacy in the New Testament. Government is given the right to use a sword. It is true that when harlots were converted, Jesus said, "Go and sin no more." But when soldiers were converted, he didn't say, "Go and soldier no more." Government has the right to the sword. If it doesn't use it, the land cries out for unrequited blood.

And this land cries out from the blood of millions upon millions of those who are unborn, and many who were born, the killers of which have never been brought to retribution. And I believe that is reason enough for God to bring against us judgment even as He did against Israel. For we have become a land full of bloody crimes, a land filled with violence.

Finally, we are to submit to the government for conscious sake. Verse 5 ... "Wherefore you must needs be subject" ... now we're back to the key idea from verse 1 ... "You must needs be subject not only for wrath, not only because you fear God as God acts through the government, not only because

you don't want to feel the vengeance of God, but for conscious sake also" ... not only because you fear the consequence, but because you know what is right, you see? So it isn't all negative. This should be the highest motivation.

Yes, there has to be a fear factor. Yes, there has to be a judgment factor, a vengeance factor. Yes, there has to be punishment that is without pity, without partiality, and without delay. Yes, there has to be blood for blood, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot. Yes, yes, we are to conform because we fear. But on the other hand, what a much higher motive it is that we conform in submission, not only for wrath's sake, but for conscious sake. That is, because we know it is right ... because we have a conscious regard for love for the law, a conscious commitment to obey God. This is a higher motive. This is a purer motive.

And that's what it means in 1st Peter 2:13: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Not just so you can avoid the consequences, but for the Lord's sake. When you think about obeying the law, you think about it because you're afraid of what will happen if you don't.

Do you govern your life by fear, or do you think about not breaking the law for the sake of honoring your Lord? That's the higher motive. I mean we need them both, but I hope you've come to the commitment to the higher one.

So what did we learn here? The conscience is that inner voice. We've studied it in detail in Romans earlier. The conscious is that little place inside of us where God speaks to us of what is right and wrong. It is in that conscience, that inherent sense of what honors God, that we should find our strongest motivation. There's no place for rebellion on the part of a Christian, no place for lawbreaking, no place for uprising and resistance. We are to do what is right, to submit.

I love the story of Genesious. He was an actor. And was an actor in the days of Diocleshian, who lived about 245 A.D. to maybe 315 A.D. Diocleshian was violently anti-Christian and used to be loved to be entertained by plays that mocked Christianity. Genesious was an actor in such a play mocking Christianity. And as a play was going on and being watched by Diocleshian, according to the historian, in the middle of the play, Genesious broke from his normal lines and cried out with these words: "I want to receive the grace of Christ, that I may be born again and be set free from the sins which have been my ruin." And there before the whole audience, including the emperor, in a play mocking Christianity, the message got to his heart, and he cried out for salvation. The unbelieving crowd saw the mockery ... which, by the way, at that point in the play, was a baptism ... turned into a hallow moment of conversion. And Genesious turned to the emperor and said this: "Illustrious emperor, and all of you who have laughed loudly at the parody, believe me, Christ is true king." Unmoved except to rage, Diocleshian ordered that he first be ripped with claws, then burned with torches, and finally beheaded. Before he died, he cried, "There is no king except Christ, whom I have seen and whom I worship. For Him, I will die a thousand times. I am sorry for my sin and for

becoming so late a soldier of the true king."

I like a lot of things about this guy. I want to find him in heaven. One of the things I like about him is that he came to Christ with such courage. The other thing is that when he spoke to the emperor, he said, "illustrious emperor." That tells me where his heart was. He understood the place of authority, though he knew who the true king really was. May it be so with us.

Let's bow in prayer. Oh Father, we would pray that the church would be the church, a nation of priests, not politicians, heavenly citizens, yet earthly models of citizenship. That we would so live in peace and quiet and honesty and integrity, seeking to make peace, demonstrating love and the graciousness of Christ. Accepting our lot, submitting willingly and joyously, and counting it even worthy experience ... blessed experience to suffer for Christ. And in so doing, silence the critics and attract men to the only one who can give such peace, and in so doing change our society. May we be committed to loving, living, and preaching the saving Gospel. May we be all that we ought to be, as Your children, for Christ's sake, Amen.

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