

Government in Biblical Perspective

Scripture: Romans 13:1

Code: 80-363

If you will, open your Bible to Romans chapter 13...Romans chapter 13 is the most formidable New Testament chapter summing up the believer's responsibility to the government. And I want to say at the very beginning that this is a universal chapter as to its application. Whatever kind of government, whatever era, whatever century, whatever circumstances, the general principles that we see here about our conduct apply. And this, of course, is the supernatural wonder of Scripture that two thousand years after it is written, it speaks specifically and applicably to the times in which we live.

Let me read the opening seven verses.

"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority, has opposed the ordinance of God and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same. For it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid for it does not bear the sword for nothing, for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience's sake for because of this you also pay taxes. For rulers or authority are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all that is due them, tax to whom tax is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."

There's really not a lot that's complex about that, or difficult, or confusing. It identifies government as an institution established by God in all its forms for the punishment of those who do evil and for the protection of those who do good. Our responsibility is to submit and pay our taxes.

For some people living in our country, that is becoming a little more difficult, a little more challenging. For many of us, particularly Christians, we don't like the direction that our government is taking. We don't like the moral choices the government is taking, legalizing gay marriage, abortion, stem cell research and a myriad of other things...elevating immoral people, encroaching on our lives, taking away our freedoms. These are things that disturb Americans and many Christian Americans.

And they have generated among many Christians an attitude that is rebellious toward government. It may not take the form of an outright revolution, but it is a heart revolution for sure. Let me just give

you a little bit of a picture of the government that existed at the time the Apostle Paul wrote this, the time that our Lord was on earth.

Slavery flourished. There were millions of slaves. Slavery could be very abusive. But even at its best, it was owning people. That age was not only an age of slavery, but it was also an age of absolute rulers. After the Roman Republic had ended, Caesars came into power. Caesar was king. And although there were reactions to the abuses of that singular unilateral authority that the Caesars possessed, even to the point that in 44 B.C. Julius Caesar himself was murdered in the Roman Senate, that really did not overthrow that absolute rule. In fact, the murder of Julius Caesar only accelerated the centralization of power in the Roman Empire so that it became more centralized. The Roman Senate declared Augustus to be Pro Consul and Tribute of Rome for life. He was Commander-in-Chief of all soldiers. He stood above all senators. He controlled all civil affairs and he could do exactly what he wanted to do. He was even deemed to be a god and to be worshiped. All the power of the entire Roman Empire was vested in one man. And if he had not all the power, it was because he had delegated it to someone else by his own authority.

In Israel, or the Land of Palestine, Herod was not a dissimilar kind of king, he was a king with great power. He was a king who at his own whim could behead a prophet with no consequences, no temporal, civil, criminal consequences. Even a Herod before, the one who beheaded John, Herod the Great, his father had such unilateral power that if he desired, he could massacre all male babies under the age of two with absolutely no repercussions. This is an amazing amount of power.

At the same time, taxes were heavy and tax collectors were extortionists and thieves and robbers. And they were permitted to take as much as they could get, as long as they paid the authority what the authority required. Beyond that, they were on their own. And there were people like Zacchaeus who knew that he had extorted far more than was right, and so, you remember, when he came to faith in Jesus Christ, he returned the money he had stolen from people fourfold. Tax collectors were abusers of the people. They were surrounded by thugs, strong-armed people like the Mafia who would beat you up, or terrorize your business if you didn't pay them. They were essentially in Israel the Jews who had bought Roman tax franchises were the Jewish Mafia.

Caesar Augustus had so much power that he could say the whole world is to be taxed and he could demand that everybody go to his own city and the rolls be counted, everyone be identified and everyone pay the tax. This was a unilateral decision on his part. Jews, by the way, under this Roman tyranny were an oppressed and underprivileged minority with no voice in Roman government. They had no voice in this essentially monarchy. They paid heavy taxes, exorbitant taxes to their Roman tax masters with absolutely no say, no rights to weigh in on any decision.

You might say that in an environment like that, maybe it could be okay not to pay your taxes. But Jesus washes that thought away very, very rapidly in Matthew 22:21 when He says this, "Render to

Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Give God what is due Him and give Caesar what is due him. As unfair, as unjust as it is, as uninvolved as you are in the use of it, or the abuse of it, pay tax to Caesar. And He did Himself, as well as paying His regular taxes in Israel and His temple tax too, as we are learning, an apostate and corrupt temple system. Jesus did not come to seek social change. He did not come to alter the tax code. He did not come to address economic issues. They were not a concern for Him.

Was He aware of them? Absolutely. He had perfect knowledge of absolutely everything. There was no abuse, no iniquity that He was not fully aware of. He knew that there was a great need for social reform. He knew that there was a great need for tax reform. He knew that there was a great need for care of the poor and the sick who were believed, even by the Jews, to be under the punishment of God and who were treated with indifference and abused. He knew that widows were mistreated, orphans were mistreated. And yet He never came to bring about a social revolution. His appeal was always to the hearts of men, it was always to the souls of men, not their political freedoms. It was not their social justice that He sought. He didn't participate in civil rights. He wasn't involved in a crusade to abolish slavery. He preached the gospel and He knew that all that is just and all that is equitable and all that is good, and all that is noble, and all that is elevated will come when hearts are changed. He was not interested in a new social order, He was interested in a new spiritual order. And so He didn't come to create a new nation, He came to create the church.

Now there have been other people through the history of our world that have been in abusive situations like existed in the Roman Empire, some of them far worse than that. There are people living in certain places of the world today who are under highly abusive systems. Their problems, the problems of the people in the New Testament time, the problems of people who are under severe duress in the nations in which they live are much more severe than ours. We can complain about the way things are in America, but no minority group in America has had their infant children massacred. That hasn't happened. Nobody in Washington or in Sacramento has made an edict to kill all the baby boys under two, while mothers stood around and wept.

And even those that are struggling with difficulties in life seem to be able to find a TV set, the next meal, conveniences and transportation. And cannot allow the fact that everything isn't the way we would like it to be to cause us to turn our attention away from an appropriate responsibility to government to an inappropriate one. Nor can we turn away from the necessary message of the gospel to any other lesser message that relates to politics or social change. We are obviously to live godly lives in the world. We are obviously to demonstrate righteousness, to pursue righteousness, call for righteousness, uphold righteousness. We are obviously to speak the revelation of God into this society so that this society can enjoy more of the common grace that God provides when people live according to His laws, even non-believing people.

We are obviously called to do all of that. We are the very expression of divine righteousness in the world, in the culture. But our responsibility specifically to the government is stated here and there are two things. Be in subjection, verse 1, be in subjection...that's one. The second, render what is due, pay your taxes, verse 6. Submit to the government, and pay your taxes.

So that's what we're going to look at and we're going to kind of work our way through...there's a lot to say about this. You'd be amazed how this passages leads us all through Scripture. We'll try to contain ourselves a little bit in the process. This is what it means to render to Caesar.

When Jesus said that, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars," He hears explaining it by the inspiring of the Holy Spirit in the mind of Paul who says, "Here's what that means. Be in subjection to the governing authorities and pay your taxes." This is submission to civil order.

Now just to give you a little bit of background, go to 12:1 of Romans and let's kind of understand the context. The practical part of Romans begins in chapter 12, the doctrinal part is the first eleven chapters; 12 to 16 is the application, that's why the therefore is there. "Based upon the mercies of God, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God..." The mercies of God are all of the elements of salvation that are unfolded in the first eleven chapters, all those mercies of God that relate to our salvation, our election, our justification, our sanctification and our glorification. Based on that, "Present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship."

So here we are called to living holy lives, acceptable to God as a spiritual act of worship. And the next verse says, "Don't be conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may know and prove what the will of God is that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

So, here we are told, "Present your body as a living sacrifice to God," which means you submit all your desires and all your goals and ambitions to those that are His. You sacrifice yourself to do His will, this is good, this is acceptable, this is perfect to do the will of God.

And then, starting in verse 3, there are a number of categories in which the Apostle Paul speaks about the will of God. He talks about the body of Christ. He talks about the family of God. He talks about attitudes toward unbelievers. And he ends up, chapter 12, by talking about enemies. As we live our lives a living sacrifice, as we live in the will of God proving what is good and acceptable and perfect, it affects all our relationships. It affects our relationship to the body of Christ. It affects outsiders, it affects even our enemies. And being a living sacrifice, doing the will of God which is good and acceptable and perfect, is also important as we consider our relationship to the civil authorities. And that's where we get in to chapter 13, the civil authorities.

Paul is emphasizing a principle here. And at the end of chapter 12, as he talks about our enemies, it sets this up. Verse 17, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone." You don't want to live with vengeance on your mind, retaliation, respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him a drink, for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." You'll bring conviction upon him. "Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Now in the world in which these people were living, evil could come in personal forms, but evil could also come in governmental forms. So it's an easy transition from the fact that we're to bless, verse 14, when we're persecuted, to bless and not curse. We're to never pay back evil for evil to anyone. No matter what society does to us, no matter what the authorities do to us, we never pay it back with evil. As far as we can, in verse 18, we seek to be at peace with all men. We leave vengeance to God. We serve our enemies and so we are not overcome by evil but we overcome evil with good.

The principle is clear there when it relates to the government. No matter what they do in persecuting us, and that's exactly what it said as I read it to you in verse 14, we don't retaliate. There's no place for personal vengeance. The believer is to be a peacemaker, and we'll see a little more of this as we go. Now this then is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In Paul's day, this was a very critical issue. The Jews were notoriously zealous of their identity. They've always been that way. I think God hard-wired them that way so that they would preserve their people to the element purposes of God at the end of the age. And because they were so zealous for themselves and their own identity, and their own national independence, their own religion, they rebelled constantly against the Romans.

Now you remember, the Romans had extended their power across the Mediterranean and engulfed that part of the world in the Great Roman Empire. In fact, the Roman Empire was somewhat benign. Once they took over a nation, they were beneficent, benign in dealing with that nation. They gave independence to those nations, let them maintain their own language, their own customs, their own religion. And the Jews enjoyed, frankly, the exceptional privileges...privileges much, much greater than in past historical conquerings by other conquerors. The Romans let them have their own religion.

Imperial Roman Law safeguarded the worship of the Jews. They could keep their Sabbath laws, they could keep their food laws. They could maintain the prohibition against idols. They had a prohibition against idols and there were a couple of times they made it known they didn't want any idols, they had to do with Pilate coming into town with his troops and an image of Caesar was horrendous to the Jews, they saw it as an idol. They backed Pilate down. The Romans backed down. The Romans wanted to acquiesce to their resistance to any such images, even though Caesar's picture still remained on their coins. The Romans were not allowed to bring images of Caesar inside the walls of

Jerusalem.

The Romans allowed the Jews to uphold the death penalty for trespassing Gentiles who came in to the inner courts of the temple. So they gave the Jews amazing freedoms. In spite of this, the Jews hated the Romans, they hated the Roman occupation, they hated the Roman domination and they always questioned its legitimacy. In fact, they basically flatly denied what was reality. John 8:33, they said, "We've never been in bondage to anyone." Are you kidding? You're under Roman dominance even as you speak. And the Jews fought back. You remember the name Barabbas? What crime did Barabbas commit? Barabbas was a murderer. Under what circumstances did he murder somebody? According to Mark 15:7 he murdered someone in an insurrection. This is a terrorist act against Rome by Barabbas. This is an example of the kind of behavior that was common among the Jews as they resisted the Roman presence and the Roman power, even though it gave them so much freedom.

In Acts chapter 5 we are introduced to a man named Theudas who rose up claiming to be somebody. And a group of about 400 men joined with him. So here's a somebody who thinks he's a somebody any way who gets 400 men to strike a blow against the Roman occupiers, but he was killed and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man there comes another one, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him. He too perished and all those who followed him were scattered.

There are a couple of unsuccessful insurrections and apparently Barabbas was a part of another unsuccessful insurrection. Now from the Jews standpoint they were basing this attitude on Deuteronomy 17:15 which says, "You shall surely set him king over you whom the Lord your God shall choose. One from among your brethren shall you set king over you, you may not set a foreigner over you who is not your brother," Deuteronomy 17:15.

Well, that was true for the theocracy. The theocracy was long gone. God was no longer the king, the true king, the true ruler in Israel. Israel was a nation at this time, at Bible times, under divine judgment. And the very presence of the Romans was part of that divine judgment. In the theocracy, the way the theocracy was supposed to be, they would have the king which God appointed, but, boy, that did not last very long. God allowed them to have Saul. God allowed them to have David. God allowed them to have Solomon and from there it became a disaster after disaster after disaster so that in the Northern Kingdom there wasn't even one good God-honoring king. And it declined from there.

But there were still Zealots who camped on Deuteronomy 17, thought they were still the theocratic kingdom and so they believed there was no king but that one appointed by God and no tax could be paid to a king who had not been appointed by God. So some of them became terrorists. They were called *sicarii*, they carried daggers and they went around stabbing Romans, starting insurrections. Their aim was to make civil government impossible, disrupting civil government. Middle-Eastern

terrorism isn't new...it isn't new.

Because of their tendency toward murder, insurrection, assassination. They were known as dagger-bearers, fanatical nationalists sworn to terrorism. They were ready to rise to rebellion at the slightest indication that the Messiah had arrived. And that's what they wanted Jesus to do, lead the revolution.

This attitude, as I said, led to terrorism against Rome and finally the Romans put it down, 70 A.D. They not only put it down, they tore the temple to the ground. After that, they went through Israel and they massacred people in 985 towns, a blood letting. Stop this madness of revolting against a benign and basically beneficent government. And yet here and there in local governments there were certain tolerance. The Apostle Paul was accused by some Jews of propagating an illegal religion and the proconsul of Achaia, this in Acts 18, the proconsul of Achaia named Galileo paid little attention to their accusation. His notion...Well, it's just a sect of the Jews and the Jews so far here haven't been a problem.

It was good that they felt that way in certain places because it essentially gave Paul protection for the next ten years of his ministry. So while on the one hand the Jews were banned from Rome, outside Rome in various places where Paul traveled, there was freedom. The animosity came from angry Jews and pockets of Gentiles. This attitude really was a pervasive attitude. Even the people that didn't engage in the terrorism were somewhat delighted that the terrorist did what they did.

People are saved in the land of Israel. People are saved in Jewish synagogues, as Paul goes out and preaches the gospel. People are saved in Rome to whom this letter is written. They need to understand that this is not acceptable behavior...not acceptable. And this is not just Paul's opinion, I want you to hear from Peter, 1 Peter chapter 2...1 Peter chapter 2, verse 12, "Keep your behavior excellent among the pagans, the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evil doers, they may because of their good deeds as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Peter's writing to believers, scattered in Gentile areas. They're going to be slandered as evil doers. And you need to change that attitude by overwhelming them with your good deeds. To borrow what we read in Romans 12, "You overcome evil with good."

How do you do that? Verse 13, "Submit yourself for the Lord's sake, to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, in an absolute monarchy, or to any other form of government, such as governors as sent by the king into regions for the punishment of evil doers and the praise of those who do right." That is an exact parallel of what we read in Romans 13, isn't it? These are authorities who have as their primary agenda the punishment of evil doers and the protection of those who do right..."For such is the will of God, that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men. Do not use your freedom for a covering of evil but use it as slaves of God, honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God and...what?...what's the last

one?...honor the king...honor the king.” And if you’re a slave, verse 18, servants, slaves, “Be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only with those that are good and gentle but also to those who are unreasonable.” Wow! Submit, even to a master who is unreasonable, even to a king that’s unreasonable, even to a governor that’s unreasonable. “For this finds favor if for the sake of conscience toward God, a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.” Amazing. There is something to be gained for the gospel even when you suffer unjustly in silence, for the sake of keeping a pure conscience before God. You want to be an influence for peace, we read that in Romans 13, you want to do right and thus silence the ignorance of foolish men, do right as that society and as every man knows because right is written in the heart, you want to honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God and honor the king.

So Peter and Paul agree on this, as we would expect. We have a serious responsibility to live out our justification by grace through faith, our self-sacrificing lives should be models of submission to government authority, no matter whether that government authority is what we want it to be or not. This is a biblical pattern for all people.

Now let’s go back to Romans 13. As we look at this initial responsibility, we’ll just take the first one. We’re going to look at the taxes in a little bit, but the first responsibility is to be subject to the higher powers, the powerful governing authorities. That is the standard. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, the governing powers, every...literally in the original...every soul...every soul, be subject. It’s imperative which means it’s a command, it’s the verb *hupotasso* which is a familiar New Testament verb, *hupo* means under, *hupotasso*, essentially a military word which means to line up under a commander, speaks of soldiers lining up under the one who commands them. Get in line underneath the powers that govern the governing authorities, the existing civil government without limitation here, without qualification, without caveat. The Greek is the authorities which are over you, those supreme ruling authorities. Verse 3 refers to them with the word rulers...rulers. The text makes no distinction between good ones, bad ones, moral ones, immoral ones, fair ones, unfair ones.

And here were not so much talking about persons, we are to honor the person, the king. And we’ll see more about that. We’re talking about governing authorities, institutions that exist whether they are monarchies with all their elements, or democracies with all their elements. The obedience of Christians to the laws and the rulers and the authorities of the system in which they live, even though they are persecuted, is a matter of obedience to God and a clear conscience before the Lord.

For us, this is a sometimes hard pill to swallow because we have in the past had a nation where certain Christian principles dominated, certain Christian principles dominated. I just read that the first of the fifty states, Hawaii, has outlawed prayer...prayer that was offered before the gathering of the Senate of Hawaii, no longer can be prayed because from time to time someone mentions Jesus Christ. And so they’re the first of the fifty states to ban prayer.

Does that concern me greatly? No, because token prayers mean nothing. But it is an evidence of the fact that there is a massive effort to get God out of everything, unless it's some other god than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of holy Scripture. That's what makes us struggle, doesn't it? Because we have a history of acknowledging God, but we're way down the path in a post-Christian America.

How do we respond? Listen to 1 Timothy 2:1. "First of all, I urge entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men for kings and for all who are in authority."

Did you get that? "Entreaties, prayers, petitions, and...what was the last one?... Thanksgiving be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." This is a far cry from a revolution, right? This is a far cry from terrorism. This is Christianity. This is how real Christians behave in a society.

You say, "What about all these problems of Christians and Catholics, Protestant Christians and Catholics fighting in Northern Ireland? What about Serbia, Kosova and Bosnia, Christians and Muslims?" Those aren't real Christians. Those aren't real Christians. False Christians devastate the name of true Christians. This is how true Christians act, they don't kill people, they don't start revolutions, they pray for the kings, the ultimate dictators. They pray for all who are in authority and our prayer is that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity because this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.

You know, when I think about America and what I would want for this nation, I would want this nation to live in peace, wouldn't you? Truly disturbing, isn't it? It's horribly disturbing. We have more people in prison than any nation in the world and we have the highest crime rates in the world. Prison doesn't fix anything. We have horrible things going on in our streets all the time. I don't want that. I want a tranquil and quiet life with all godliness and dignity. I wish this country was full of peace. I wish this country could experience the common grace that God can provide, and we want to be an influence for that. We don't want to be a part of the problem, we definitely want to be part of the solution. We do that with the gospel and godly living.

Titus chapter 3, essentially the same idea, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, Titus, you tell those people in Crete to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men." Verse 8, "This is a trustworthy statement concerning these things. I want to speak confidently so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."

You know, I really do think the Lord...the Lord knows that our influence in the world is greatest when we live a quiet, peaceable life, a life of godliness, a life of prayer on behalf of our leaders and

authorities and the very duly constituted bodies that rule over us. I think it speaks volumes when our preoccupations are that the grace of God may come down, save them, transform them and use them to bring peace to the land. This is a principle without reference to exception. Peter gives us no exceptions. Paul gives us no exceptions in Titus, Timothy or in Romans. But I want you to know there is a legitimate exception to obedience to the government. There is a time when we're allowed not to obey the government.

Go to Acts 4. Acts 4 verse 13, "These are the powers that be in Jerusalem, they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood they were uneducated and untrained men." They hadn't gone to rabbinical school. "They were amazed at what they knew without all the schooling and they began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply but when they had ordered them to leave the council, they began to confer with one another saying, 'What shall we do with these men, for the fact that a note worthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, we can't deny it. But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.'" Okay, that's the law. That's the law from the powers that be, you cannot speak any more in the name of Jesus.

"When they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." Now here's a dilemma, folks, right? You're supposed to be subject to the powers that be, you're supposed to be obedient to the authority that is over you, and now the authority that is over you is telling you, you cannot speak in the name of Jesus. Verse 8...er, verse 19, "Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge. We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.'" Here is where the authority of the government ends, when the government forbids you to do what God commands you to do, you do what God commands you to do. When the government tells you to do what God has not allowed you to do, that's where you stop. You don't do that because you have direct revelation against that sin. When the government mandates what God forbids, we obey God. And accept the consequences, accept the consequences. We don't get guns and shoot the government authorities, we don't get baseball bats when they show up and beat them in the head, we refuse to disobey God. We do what God has commanded us to do and we accept the consequences. That's exactly what we are called to do.

Go to the fifth chapter of Acts for a minute. They brought them before the Council. The High Priest comes in now and is trying to shut them up. They're preaching Christ. They haven't stopped. The High Priest says to them in verse 28 of Acts 5, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name and yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood on us." Not only did they fill Jerusalem with the teaching, but they blamed the Jews for the murder of Jesus. Here's Peter's and the Apostles' answer, verse 29, "We must obey God...what?...rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a

cross.”

In case you didn't fully understand what we were saying, that's what we were saying. They raised Him up. He's the one whom God exalted to His right hand to a prince and a Savior and grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin. Start evangelizing these guys. We're witness of these. And so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. And when they heard it, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.

Yeah, you may come to a point where you have to disobey the government when the government tells you to do what God forbids you to do, or mandates that you stop doing what God commands you to do.

I remember talking to one of the members of the Russian underground church, Georgy Vins years ago and he said, “There's so many abuses in Russia, so many abuses toward our people under Communism, horrible abuses. Life is so very, very hard.” But he said this, “If any Christian is ever to suffer imprisonment or punishment, it will never be for anything other than the sake of Jesus Christ. In all other matters, we obey the government.”

There's no such thing, by the way, folks, as a Christian country and there's no such thing as a Christian government. Well there will be a Christian government in the Millennium with Christ ruling. But we have our command and it's an unequivocal command.

Well, go back to Romans 13 for a moment and that's...that's the basic command and I think you understand it. After this command in verse 1, every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities, Paul gives seven reasons why we are to obey that command. Don't get nervous, that's next Sunday night. I'm a man of mercy. That's next Sunday night. Seven reasons and they're really good and helpful. And we'll dig in down a little deeper into this whole thing, even talk about capital punishment and other things like that, talking about what is a righteous and sensible retribution and punishment for people who commits crimes. The Bible is clear on that as well. We'll have a good time on that next Sunday night.

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