

Romans 13:1-7

Why must I render to Caesar?

- **Lets start by some reflections on Jesus' teaching**

1. **A church-state coalition.** Because I am Lord of all, you are to occupy all in my name.
“Thy Kingdom come” Matt.6:10 “Lord of heaven and earth” Matt.11:25
2. **A church-state contempt.** Because My kingdom is not of this world, you owe nothing to Caesar.
“My kingdom is not of this world.” Jn.18:36
3. **A church-state coexistence.** Because you live in two spheres, you must show proper respect for both realizing that God uses human government.
“Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s” Matt. 22:21

- **The Apostles application**

1. Paul - Romans 13:1-7, I Tim.2:1-4, Titus 3:1
2. Peter - I Peter 3:13-17

- **Paul is clear on the following points**

1. **I “render to Caesar” because it is a way in which I show my faith in God. Human Civil Government is ordained by God and to resist it is to resist (take a stand against) God and incur condemnation.**

“¹ Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

- The vocabulary used in Romans 13 is the same vocabulary used elsewhere to describe our obligation to the Kingdom of God.

- “to be subject to” Rom.8:7
- “authority” Rev.22:14
- “servant” Col.1:7
- “minister”(leitourgos) Rom.15:16

2. **I “render to Caesar” because it is necessary for civil order. Human Civil Government is ordained for the purpose of maintaining justice - rewarding good and punishing evil.**

³ 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; ⁴ 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 upon the one who practices evil.

- a. If we do good we should have no fear of its wrath.
- b. It is one of the instruments God uses to control evil in this life.

3. I “render to Caesar” because human Civil Government is worthy of my tribute, both from the heart (conscience) and finances (tax).

⁵ Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for {rulers} are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax {is due;} custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”

- **This teaching is another example of the “renewed mind” (vs.2).**
- **But this teaching when taken seriously raises lots of questions.**
 - 1. Isn't this why a lot of people look at Christians with disrespect.
 - a. Christians are naively and blindly conservative and patriotic.
 - b. Christians support the status quo when it is unjust.
 - 2. Even under the best human government there is going to be just cause for activist and prophetic resistance.
 - 3. And then what do you do with a really evil empire - Hitler, Saddam Hussein
- **To appreciate the teaching of the Apostles on this subject we have to look at three contextual issues.**
 - 1. The historical circumstances
 - a. Rome was the seat of the empire's civil government.
 - b. As residents in Rome, Paul's initial readers were aware of both the glory and the shame of that city in the days of Nero, who reigned from AD 54 to 68.
 - c. The first years of Nero's reign were quite impressive. It was during this time that Paul appealed to Nero (Acts 25:10-11) for his freedom from the Jewish opposition.
 - d. Nero's marriage to Poppaea opened the second period of his reign. He killed his mother, his chief advisers Seneca and Burrus, and many of the nobility to secure their fortunes.
 - e. In A.,D. 64 a large part of Rome was destroyed by fire. In answer to those who blamed Nero, he singled out the Christian community as scapegoats. The Roman historian Tacitus describes the horror that followed.

“Their death (Christians) was made a matter of sport; they were covered in wild beast's skins and torn to pieces by dogs; or were fastened to crosses and set on fire in order to serve as torches by night. Nero had offered his garden for the spectacle and gave an exhibition in his circus, mingling with the crowd in the guise of a charioteer or mounted on his chariot. Hence there arose a feeling of pity, because it was felt that they were being sacrificed not for the common good, but to gratify the savagery of one man” (Tacitus, Annals XV, 44)
 - f. Both Peter and Paul were martyred under Nero.

2. The 12th chapter of Romans vs.9-21

- a. The exhortation to “be at peace with all men” vs.18 requires cooperation with civil government.
- b. The exhortation to “I will repay” vs.19 may involve God’s working through civil government.

3. The model of Jesus as described in I Pet.2:11-25

“¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe {them,} glorify God in the day of visitation.

¹³ **Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution**, whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ {Act} as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but {use it} as bond-slaves of God. ¹⁷ Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

¹⁸ Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. ¹⁹ For this {finds} favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer {for it} you patiently endure it, this {finds} favor with God. ²¹ **For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps**, ²² who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; ²³ and **while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting {Himself} to Him who judges righteously**; ²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. ²⁵ For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

Civil Disobedience – three views

A. Radical Patriotism – Civil disobedience is never right.

1. There are three arguments used to support this position.
 - a. God has ordained government both good and bad. Rom.13:1
 - b. God commands people to obey governments. Rom.13:1-7; I Pet.3:5-6; Titus 3:1
 - c. Obedience (even to evil governments) is necessary. Paul called Nero “God’s servant” (Rom.13:1,4). Dan.4:32 “the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.” I Pet.2:13 “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men.”
2. A critique of Radical Patriotism.
 - a. God does not ordain evil through government. Rom.13:4 indicates that Government “is God’s servant to do you good.” Isa.10:1 “Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees”

- b. Obedience to Government is not unqualified. Acts 4:19 "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God." Ex.1 and Dan.3,6 give examples of divinely approved instances of disobedience to civil authorities.
- c. We need not obey the evils of government. While we are commanded to obey evil leaders we are not commanded to obey them when they ask us to do evil. (Ex.1; Dan.3,6).

B. Biblical Submission - Civil disobedience is sometimes right.

- 1. There is general agreement that some exceptions to submission to civil government are necessary. Christians disagree as to when and how.
- 2. View #1 "I must disobey whenever the government promotes unbiblical laws." Francis Schaeffer held this view. The Law of God is over the king and he and his government is subject to it. Governments that rule contrary to God's law are tyrannical and must be resisted. This resistance takes the form of protest or in some cases force. Examples might include forbidding the teaching of creationism in schools, aborting children, etc.
- 3. View #2 "I must disobey only laws that compel me to do evil."

When to disobey government

View #1 Anti promotion	View #2 Anti compulsion
When it permits evil	When it commands evil
When it promulgates evil laws	When it compels evil actions
When it limits freedom	When it negates freedom
When it is politically oppressive	When it is religiously oppressive

- 4. Biblical support for Anti compulsion View #2
 - a. The Biblical examples of civil disobedience usually involve:
 - 1. A command from government to disobey the Word of God.
 - 2. An act of disobedience to that command.
 - 3. Divine approval of the refusal to obey.
 - b. Examples
 - 1. Ex.1:15-21 Refusal to kill innocent babies.
 - 2. Ex.5-12 Refusal of Pharaoh's command not to worship God.
 - 3. I Kings 18:4,13-15 Rescuing prophets who were to be killed by Queen Jezebel. Obadiah "had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves."
 - 4. Dan.3 Three Hebrew children refuse to worship an idol.
 - 5. Dan.6 Daniel in the lions' den because of refusal to pray to the king and not to God.

- 6. Acts 4:18-19 Refusal to stop proclaiming the gospel.
- 7. Rev.13:14 Refusal to worship the Antichrist.
- c. There are two kinds of civil disobedience.

How to disobey government

View #1 Revolt	View #2 Refusal
Revolt against it violently	Refuse to obey it nonviolently
Fight it	Flee it
Reject its punishment	Accept its punishment
Not supported by Biblical examples	Supported by Biblical examples

- 5. Challenges to Anti compulsion View #2 by those who advocate violence in saving children from abortion.
 - a. Prov.24:11 "Rescue those who are being taken away to death."
 - b. Problems
 - 1. Whereas the Holocaust was mandated by the state, legalized abortion in America is only permitted by the state.
 - 2. No one would suggest that force be used to prevent people from worshiping idols.

C. Revolution - The Ultimate revolt against Government.

- 1. One view holds that revolution is sometimes just. (Calvin, T. Jefferson, F. Schaeffer)
 - a. God-given moral rights can be the basis for revolution as Jefferson suggested in the Declaration of Independence.
 - b. Calvin taught that the government served under the umbrella of God's Law.
- 2. Others hold that revolution is always unjust.
 - a. God gave the sword to the government to rule, not to the citizens to revolt.
 - b. God exhorts against joining revolutionaries. Prov.24:21 "Fear the Lord and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious."
 - c. Slavery presents a possible parallel. In the N.T. slaves were encouraged to seek freedom but were never encouraged to use violence to gain freedom.
 - d. Moses was judged for his violent act in Egypt.
 - e. Jesus exhorted against using the sword. Matt.26:51
 - f. Jesus spoke against retaliation. Matt.5:38-39; Rom.12:19

D. How to respond to Oppression.

- 1. The best way to effect lasting change in an unjust system is by being a spiritual example, not by revolution.

2. Prayer I Tim.2:1-2
3. Work peacefully and legally to change unjust systems.
4. Refuse to obey oppressive commands and be willing to suffer the consequences.
5. Flee from oppressive governments.
6. Endure suffering as the Apostles did under Nero.
7. Some challenges to pacifism.
 - a. In II Chron.23 speaks of a God-appointed revolution against Athaliah.
 - b. Without revolution tyranny reigns.
 - c. Just war arguments can be used for just revolutions.