

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR MAN FROM START TO FINISH

Part VI: God's Righteousness Applied To Practical Living, Romans 12:1-15:13

D. God's Righteousness Applied To The Believer's Relation To Secular Government Authority (Romans 13:1-7; Acts 5:29)

I. Introduction

- A. Having been positionally made perfectly righteous in Christ through belief in the Gospel, the believer must still live in a world where a godless secular government is the civil authority over him.
- B. Secular government is ingrained with sin, for Satan is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) and he rules its kingdoms (Matthew 4:8-9), so the believer needs insight in wisely relating to such authority.
- C. Romans 13:1-7 directs us on relating to secular government authority, so we view the passage for our insight:

II. God's Righteousness Applied To the Believer's Relation To Secular Government Authority, Rom. 13:1-7.

- A. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans in A. D. 57 or 58 (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 436), his "initial readers" who were "residents of Rome . . . were aware of both the glory and the shame of that city in the days of Nero, who reigned from A. D. 54 to 68," *Ibid.*, p. 490.
- B. However, those readers "were also citizens of Christ's kingdom (Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13)" (*Ibid.*), what required Paul to address the believer's relationship to his secular government's authority.
- C. Paul then wrote that believers must be subject to secular governing authorities for several reasons, v. 1-5:
 - 1. First, all government authority in existence is ordained of God to exist, Romans 13:1. So, even if the secular government itself is unrighteous, the believer must respect its **authority** since God has ordained that secular government's **authority** to exist to fulfill His broader purposes in history!
 - 2. Second, resisting government authority thus leaves one resisting the ordinance of God, and they that rebel against government authority will bring the government's just punishment upon them, Romans 13:2-3.
 - 3. Third, any government official, be he a security officer, ranger, policeman, fireman or military person at any level of government authority, is God's servant for the welfare of society, Romans 13:4a. This fact should make the believer respect that servant of God, for he does not bear a lethal weapon in vain, but as God's servant is meant to administer God's revenge to the point of taking human life as an agent of God's wrath against evildoers, Romans 13:4b. This truth is illustrated than in the case of capital punishment in Genesis 9:6: God required the secular government to administer capital punishment on murderers as His agent in expressing His wrath against murderers for their wicked deeds of murder!
 - 4. The believer must thus be subject to secular government authority not only to avoid the government's punishment for disobeying its rule, but also to heed his conscience that calls him to obey God, Rom. 13:5.
- D. Subjection to secular governing authorities thus has practical applications as noted in Romans 13:6-8:
 - 1. First, the believer must pay what taxes the government calls him to pay, Rom. 13:6a. The government is God's minister in administering such dues, so the believer must pay them to heed God, Romans 13:6b-7a.
 - 2. Second, the believer must show respect to whomever in the government he owes respect, Romans 13:7b. Whether it is a bailiff, judge, security officer, ranger, animal control officer, public school official, school bus driver, town policeman, state police officer, fireman or military person assigned to civil duty (in cases of national emergency), if the believer is legally responsible to show respect for that party and to heed his authority, the believer is responsible to heed that authority in obedience to the Lord Himself.
- E. However, there is a **limit** to the believer's heeding all such secular government authorities: in Acts 5:29, the Apostle Peter declared that it is better to obey God than man. Thus, if a secular government authority demands a believer heed its command, but obeying that command leaves the believer disobeying God, the believer must practice "civil disobedience" and obey God instead of obeying the government, but do so in as respectful and honorable way as is possible! (1 Peter 2:17)

Lesson: *Since God has ordained every secular government authority that exists to exist, the believer is obligated to obey that government authority lest he suffer punishment from the government, lest he be guilty of disobeying government officials who are God's servants and lest he also then sin against God. Thus, the believer must pay all financial dues levied by the government upon him and all respect legally due such officials. The sole exception is the matter of civil disobedience where the believer is required to obey God rather than man when the rules of God and man contradict each other. Even in civil disobedience, the believer must be respectful and godly in demeanor.*

Application: *May we relate to the secular government authorities in the will of God for His approval and blessing.*