

177—Election Issues: The Christian and Government

1 Peter 2:13-17

Introduction: During an election year, questions about governance our flashed before our eyes on a daily basis. As with any issue, our first response when it comes to how to answer these questions ought not to be our feelings, our traditions, or our political alliances. We need to consult God's Word and consider, above and beyond anything else, what God's Word says on any issue. So, let's spend some time today thinking about what the Bible says about the Christian and Government.

I. Christians Can Participate in Their Government

A. When Jesus was asked about whether one should pay taxes to the Roman government, his answer was "*Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's*" (Matthew 22:17-21).

1. This passage admits a dual citizenship.
 - i. We are citizens of God's kingdom, a heavenly kingdom (Philippians 3:20).
 - ii. Yet, we are also citizens of our earthly governments and have duties to them (Romans 13:1, 5).
2. Jesus does not allow His people to excuse themselves from government duties.

B. As we look at some of the early converts to Christianity some of them were working for and under the local government.

1. Zacchaeus, a tax collector, remained in his role after turning to Christ (Luke 19:2,8).
2. Cornelius, the Roman centurion, converted to Christ (Acts 10).
3. The Philippian jailer, a government employee, also was a Christian convert (Acts 16).

C. In fact, in the Scriptures we find godly men and women who had positive impacts upon their government for the sake of God's people.

1. Esther protected the lives of thousands of Jews by speaking to the king about an unethical decree he had signed.
2. Daniel and his friends were respected, admired, and promoted within the Babylonian government as a result of their faith and the favor of God.
3. Erastus, the treasurer of Corinth, is noted as a friend of Paul in Romans 16:23.

D. So, yes, you can participate in the governmental process either by occupation or by your rights as a citizen within that local government! In fact, I'd encourage you to participate. You have a say in not just your next President, but your governors, your mayors, your town councils, your school boards and all of these positions impact you and your family. If we want a community and country that holds to Biblical ideals then we need to vote for people who hold God-shaped values.

II. Christians Must Be Subject To Their Government

A. Both the apostles Paul and Peter emphasize the importance of subjection and submission to our local government.

1. Romans 13:1, "*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities...you must be subject*" (13:5).
2. "*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good*" (1 Peter 2:13-14).
 - i. Subjection is a word which refers to our rank.
 - ii. Submission is what we do realizing we are of a lower rank.
3. Our responsibility is clear...
 - i. Submit yourself to any level of governmental power.
 - ii. Follow every government ordinance (taxes, car insurance, immigration law, speed limit, parking laws, etc.).

B. While subjection is the rule, the Scriptures also give us the reason.

1. Romans 13:1 says, "*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*"
 - i. Government, even unjust governments, are part of God's will.
 - a. Chaldea--Daniel 2:20-21; 4:17,25,32
 - b. Egypt—Exodus 9:16
 - c. Assyria—Isaiah 10:5-12
 - ii. To resist government is to resist God Himself so we must submit, even if there are unjust rulers (Romans 13:2-4; 1 Peter 2:13-15).
 - iii. Furthermore, we should view the role of government in the same way God views it despite what our country may believe.
 - a. We see government officials as "the people's employee."
 - b. Yet, first and foremost, Biblically, they are "*God's ministers.*"

2. If Christians are known for obeying the law it will be easier to silence false charges made against us (1 Peter 2:15).

C. Subjection and submission and the rules and God's command is the reason.

1. Yet, there is an exception...
 - i. Not just when we think our governing leaders are evil (Nero was evil—1 Peter 2:13-14).
 - ii. Not just when we think our government is oppressive (high taxes, socialistic, etc.).
2. The only time we are permitted to refrain from obedience is if the law conflicts with God's law (Acts 4:18-20; Acts 5:29).

III. Christians Pay Our Government Their Dues

A. Pay your taxes (Romans 13:6-7).

B. Pay your respects to the governing authorities (Romans 13:4; Jude 8; Titus 3:1).

1. The same word for "honor" is used in Romans 13:7 as is used in Ephesians 6:2.
2. If you spoke about your parents the same way you speak about the governing authorities would you be "honoring" them?

C. We tend to point out the problem of government or those who govern as an excuse to disobey these commands rather than pointing out the positive reasons we should obey these divine laws.

IV. Christians Are to Pray for Our Government Leaders

A. Paul called upon Timothy to lead the way for three-fold prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

1. He was to pray for *“all men.”*
2. He was to pray *“for kings.”*
3. He was to pray for *“all who are in authority.”*

B. The key goal of our prayer for all people was so Christians could *“lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”* (1 Timothy 2:2).

1. Knowing this our prayers are that God will use others to protect us from evil.
2. Our prayers should be full of thanks for the times we live in peace and prosperity.

Conclusion: As citizens in this country, we have a few obligations laid upon us by God regardless as to what our party wants or the people of this country want. We have the right to participate in our government whether that be by working a government job, running for elected office, or just choosing to vote. We have a duty to subject ourselves to the righteous rule of our governing officials and submit to the authority of the officials of our government. We are required by God to pay our taxes and our respects to those who serve in official capacities. Furthermore, we ought to feel burdened to pray for our leaders and that they might govern in a way that satisfies God’s will and that allows peace to reign for God’s people. Some may want to argue about many aspects of our role towards the government. Yet, may we all agree that each of these duties comes from the word of God and may we endeavor to try harder to help our nation be what God would have it to be by being the citizens God calls us to be.

Let’s conclude with a final thought. Proverbs 14:24 says, *“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”* As followers of God, we have a duty to be and stand for righteousness. When those of Noah’s day became wicked, the entire generation was destroyed by a flood (Genesis 6). When Ham sinned, all of the descendants of Canaan were cursed after him (Genesis 9). When Israel was given over to sinful idolatry, God allowed them to be taken into captivity as a punishment for their sin (Deuteronomy 28). Likewise, as the Jews’ cup of iniquity was full, God allowed the holy city of Jerusalem to be destroyed as a judgment upon the people (Matthew 23-24). There is a basic lesson for us here. It is the lesson of Proverbs 14:24, *“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”* May we endeavor to help our nation pursue righteousness and may we pray for it in every branch of government from the judicial system, to the executive branch, to the legislative branch of our government.

Even so, whether our nation is obedient to the Lord’s will or not, may we also remember we are part of a far greater, everlasting kingdom. Hebrews 12:28 calls it a *“kingdom which cannot be shaken”* and whether our nation rises or falls may we find hope in knowing we belong to the kingdom of Jesus Christ and serve a King who reigns forever.

Choose principles over party.