

**Sermon Title: The Responsibility of Government and the Response of Christian Citizens**

**Sermon Text: Romans 13:5-7**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to demonstrate biblical characteristics of submissive citizenship.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 3 principles necessary to fulfill the purpose and practices of biblical citizenship.**

**Introduction:** "Tax fraud is stated to be probably the most widespread crime in the United States. Some years ago, the Internal Revenue Service estimated that the gap between what was paid and what should have been paid in income taxes was \$93 billion for the most recent year." Not all taxes are justly applied, it must be understood the only just or divinely inspired tax code ever established is found in the Mosaic law of ancient Israel. Even in a just tax system, sinful men found a way to cheat the system. Many taxes which are justly applied are not justly spent by governing officials.

Some background on Rome may be helpful in understanding our text for today. As already discussed the government of Rome was pagan, ran by dictators, and often merciless. Some of the dictators declared themselves gods and legislated or demanded worship from all its citizens and the empire. The Empire of Rome also had more slaves than freemen. In the latter years Rome became more of a giant welfare state, in which large numbers of people did not work for a living, but survived on government assistance. This led to increases in taxes and a tax burden on the people. A special concern for the Roman Christians was the fact that part of the taxes paid were being used to support pagan temples and some other religious institutions throughout the Roman Empire. Tax collectors were despised because of their allegiance to Rome (Franchising), they would collect the taxes, charge more than required to make a profit, this made them despised by many.

**Matthew 9:10-11** Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. **11** And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

This is the background needed to understand this section of Romans.

**I. The biblical motivation for submitting to governing authorities. V.5**

**II. The biblical mindset for submitting to governing authorities. V.6**

**III. The biblical methods for submitting to governing authorities. V.7**

**I. The biblical motivation for submitting to governing authorities. V.5**

A. The external motivation revealed. V.5a

B. The internal motivation revealed. V.5b

C. The witnessing motivation revealed.

**1 Peter 2:15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—

**II. The biblical mindset for submitting to governing authorities. V.6**

A. The mindset is based on their servanthood on behalf of God. V.6a

B. The mindset based on their service on behalf of God. V.6b

**III. The biblical methods for submitting to governing authorities. V.7**

**(1 Peter 2:16-17)**

Consecrated and transforming Christians render submissive obedience to government, as a debt and obligation Christians owe to governing authorities, as well as a debt and obligation of obedience and submission owed to their Lord and Master God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Method 1 Paying taxes was a method of submission. V.7a

**Matthew 22:18-21** But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites? **19** "Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. **20** And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription *is* this?" **21** They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Jesus demonstrated that paying taxes to human government is a God ordained obligation. Taxes referred to personal and property tax.

Method 2      Paying **customs** was a method of submission. V.7b  
Customs “telos” referred to taxes put on imports or exports, could be a toll or goods tax. Christians have every right to exercise whatever legal oppositions that may be available to contest a civil law or policy, including what may be considered to be wrongful tax assessments. But when those appeals have been exhausted, we are obligated to pay, even if it is unjust or excessive.

“Justin Martyr, the second-century theologian and church Father, wrote to the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius, ‘Everywhere we [Christians], more readily than all men, endeavor to pay to those appointed by you the taxes both ordinary and extraordinary, as we have been taught by [Jesus] .... Whence to God alone we render worship, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men, and praying that with your kingly power you be found to possess also sound judgment. (“The First Apology of Justin,” chapter 27 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rep. 1973, p.168])”

John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 9-16*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, p. 235-236

Method 3      Paying the obligation of **respect** was a method of submission to governing authorities. V.7c

This has to do with our attitude toward governing authorities of the state. Fear “Phobos” means respect due to the position they hold. (Ex. David and Saul) Paul in Acts 23-26.

Method 4      Paying the obligation of **honor** was a method of submission to governing authorities. V.7d

This means that it is never Christian, right or just to speak in a disrespectful way to or about any governing official of the state, there is to be high esteem that is real.

**(Titus 3:1ff)**

Method 5      Paying the obligation of **prayer** was a method of submission to governing authorities. **1 Timothy 2:1-4** Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, **2** for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. **3** For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **4** who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

**1 Timothy 2:8** I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

**Jeremiah 29:7** And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

“During a time when Rome was especially hostile toward Christians, a later church Father, Tertullian wrote, ‘Without ceasing, for all our emperors we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged; for security to the empire; for protection to the imperial house; for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, the world at rest, whatever, as man or Caesar, an emperor would wish’ (“Apology,” chapter 30 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p.42)”

John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 9-16*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, p. 236

- Method 6      Paying the obligation of seeking the welfare of the city was a method of submission to governing authorities. **(1 Timothy 2:1-4)**  
**Jeremiah 29:4-7** Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: **5** Build houses and dwell *in them*; plant gardens and eat their fruit. **6** Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters-- that you may be increased there, and not diminished. **7** And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.
- Method 7      Paying the obligation of proclaiming the Gospel as a method of submission to governing authorities. Acts 5:1-42  
 6 reasons why "Our witness is more important than our rights"  
 1.      The importance of the purity of the church. V.1-11  
 2.      The importance of the power of the church. V.12-16  
 3.      The importance of the persecution of the church. V.17-28  
 4.      The importance of the persistence of the church. V.29-32  
 5.      The importance of the providence of the church. V.33-39  
 6.      The importance of the praise of the church. V.40-42

### Conclusion:

Can we speak out against injustice, lack of mercy, and compassion? Yes

**Isaiah 14:4-6** that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: "How the oppressor has ceased, The golden city ceased! **5** The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of the rulers; **6** He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, He who ruled the nations in anger, Is persecuted *and* no one hinders.

**Isaiah 14:11** Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, *And* the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you.'

**Daniel 4:25-27** (Daniel & Nebuchadnezzar) They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. **26** And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump *and* roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules. **27** Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being* righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."

**Daniel 5** (Daniel & Belshazzar)

For his indolence, laziness, stupidity, blasphemy, sacrilege, drunkenness, pride, and failing to glorify God.

**Daniel 34:12-22**

Judgment by God for dereliction of duty, as well as on the disobedient slave owners they failed to chastise.

- 1)      The Lord requires that rulers maintain order by just and firm enforcement of the law. Where we have the freedom to speak when this is not done, we should.
- 2)      The Lord charges rulers not to seek their own welfare at the expense of their citizens. **(Isaiah 10:1-2)**  
**Jeremiah 22:13-17** "Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, *Who* uses his neighbor's service without wages And gives him nothing for his work, **14** Who says, 'I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers, And cut out windows for it, Paneling *it* with cedar And painting *it* with vermilion.' **15** "Shall you reign because you enclose *yourself* in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, And do justice and righteousness? Then *it was* well with him. **16** He judged the cause of the poor and needy; Then *it was* well. *Was* not this knowing Me?" says the LORD. **17** "Yet your eyes and your heart *are* for nothing but your covetousness, For shedding innocent blood, And practicing oppression and violence."

God warned the oppressive and unjust King Jehoiakim of Judah:

- 3) Civil authorities are accountable for enforcing public morality and decency. Jonah 1:2 Although Christians are to be submissive to civil leaders, they also are compelled, like the prophets, to speak out against authority that is unrighteous.

“In his *Epistle to Diognetus*, an anonymous second-century Christian wrote the following beautiful description of believers who genuinely obey the divine commands of Romans 13:1-7:

‘Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them had determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rep. 1973], pp. 26-27)’”

John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 9-16*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, p. 239.