

MAINTAINING A BIBLICAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT

(April 2000 – EKB)

Readings: *Rom 13:1-7, 1Tim 2:1-8, 1Pet 2:13-17*

A *Romans 13:1-7*

All authority stems from God and in each nation **He has appointed** a group of people known as “The Government” to control and preserve society. The Government carries the authority of God.

For these reasons **God commands every citizen to be obedient to the governing authorities.** Those who resist the government are resisting the ordinance of God. Our obedience to the government is showing honour and respect to God.

The Bible refers to our government as the **ministers or servants of God**, *Rom 13:4,6*. God has given to them three overall responsibilities:

- a. **to do good for the people** of the nation which includes maintaining law and order and peaceful co-existence, *Rom 13:4, Ac 24:1-3, Ac 21:31,32*.
- b. **to punish evil doers** and restrain evil practices, *Rom 13:4*.
- c. **to collect taxes** which are to be used for the organisation and function of government, and to provide services to meet the needs of society, *Rom 13:6,7, Mat 22:17-21*.

The government is responsible to control and preserve society while the church’s responsibility is to bring salvation to society.

In the days of Paul, the government of the Roman Empire, under Caesar, had established a general atmosphere of peace known as “Pax Romana.” They had constructed an excellent system of Roman roads for orderly travel while Greek and Latin were the lingua francas for easy communication, e.g. *Ac 21:37, Lk 23:38*.

B *1Tim 2:1-8*

In this passage Paul exhorts us **to engage in all manner of prayer and giving thanks, for all people, for kings and all that are in authority, v1,v2.**

The reason God’s Word exhorts us to pray for those who govern us is so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. When this is the state of affairs in our society God is pleased because His desire to see all people saved and come to know the truth is much more likely to come to pass, *v3,v4*.

God has provided the Mediator, Jesus, and He gave His life as the ransom price for our souls, *v5,v6*.

God appointed Paul to preach this message to the Gentiles, and Paul urges the men to focus on prayer so that God’s desire will be fulfilled, *v7,v8*. (The “men” are singled out because the women pray anyway. The men are frequently “too busy getting the job done,” too busy to pray.)

C *1Pet 2:13-17*

Peter adds his teaching on this subject. **We are to obey every regulation of the government whether central or local.** In this way, by doing good, we put to silence those who oppose the preaching of the gospel, *Mat 5:16*, and set forth an example of service to God. Our attitude should be to honour every person, love the believers in Christ, fear God with all our heart and dutifully respect those who rule over us in society.

D **General thoughts and conclusion**

1. Our attitude to the government over us is a reflection of our attitude to God, *Rom 13:2,5*, *1Pet 2:17*. They are His appointed representatives and carry the authority of God, *Rom13:1,2*.
2. Whether or not we agree politically with the present government, we need to pray for them, honour and respect them as “God’s ministers,” *Rom 13:4,6*.
3. Refuse to join with others in criticising or ridiculing the government, *1Pet 2:17*.
4. Pray for the government as God’s ministers to us, that they will:
 - a. do us good,
 - b. punish evil doers and restrain evil,
 - c. use the tax money rightly, *Rom 13:4,6*.
5. God spoke to David and told him that those who rule over society must act justly and in the fear of God. Pray that our government will act in this way, *2Sam 23:3*.
6. In situations involving people in authority, we have found that praying *Ps 89:14* is powerfully effective. This verse says that justice and righteousness are the foundation of God’s Throne, and that mercy and truth are before His face. In our prayer we pray that these things will be established in those who have authority over us, and in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ that injustice, unrighteousness, mercilessness and lies will be destroyed and cast out.
7. Finally, *2Chr 7:14* assures us that as we humble ourselves before God in prayer and fasting, pray with all our hearts, seek God’s face until He reveals Himself to us, and diligently, by faith, turn from our iniquities and sins, then God will hear from heaven, forgive our sins and heal our land.
8. Should any government and authority over us decree that we act in a way that is contrary to the revealed will of God through His Word, then we must firmly but respectfully refuse to obey them. Instead we are to obey God. We see an example of this in *Ac 4:13-33*, where Peter and John and the believers refused to stop preaching the Gospel even though the Jewish leaders commanded them to, *Ac 4:18*.

The end result of this was imprisonment and punishment, *Ac 5:17-42*, on the one hand, but great boldness, miracles and many souls saved on the other, *Ac 5:11-16*.

Our attitude to God’s appointed government in our land is a key to releasing the revival we desire and pray for.