

Submit to the Governing Authorities

The election is over and officials have been sworn into office. It is time to carry on with the governance of our nation, state and local communities. The Bible doesn't take sides in the political process but it does affirm our role as citizens. *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established (Romans 13:1).*



The Bible tells us God established the institution of human government. A bible study guide* says, "God's purpose in human government is that it serve as both a custodian and an enforcer of His eternal law." It has been noted that many laws are, in reality, amplifications of the Ten Commandments*.

"The general function of human government, as instituted by God, is to protect, punish, and promote*."

- **Protect:** At the time of Adam's original sin it was obvious that civilizations would need some form of restraint and rule to protect citizens from themselves.
- **Punishment:** Punishment is the consequence of unlawful actions. It is carried out by the governing authorities to keep order. ... *whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13:2).*
- **Promote:** refers to the duty of government to promote the general welfare of the community. *I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Timothy 2:1-2).*

"We cannot be a good Christian and a bad citizen at the same time.*" As children of God our responsibility to human government is to obey the laws, recognize and accept that governmental authority is ordained by God, even when we don't agree with their decisions. The only time when we should not follow the rule of government is if it asks us to do something contrary to scripture.

The verses quoted in this devotion were penned by Paul and Peter. The ruler in power at the time was Nero, an evil emperor. We know that Pontius Pilate executed the only perfect man who ever lived, yet Jesus was submissive to Pilate, even when His life was on the line. Both Paul and Peter advocated for submission to those in authority. As we know, it is not our role to judge evil. Only God can and will do that. Romans 13:4 tells us that God will "execute wrath on him who practices evil."

Our nation is in an anti-authority mood. Unless something is in our own best interests the tendency is to resist authority. It is part of our desire to be in charge of our own lives, rather than to be submissive to God and authorities. We resist not only the authority of elected officials, but that of teachers and even parents. We simply don't want someone else telling us what to do. Paul says that submitting to authority is a matter of conscience. *Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience (Romans 13:5).* Without governing authorities lawlessness would occur and something would fill the void.

So, as long as we are not asked to do something that God forbids, we should submit to the authorities by obeying the law of the land, paying taxes and showing respect, regardless of whether we agree with them or not.

The Bible says: *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, (1 Peter 2:13)*

Prayer: We pray for our leadership, that they may govern our land in a way that is pleasing to you. Amen.

*Quotes are from "The Christian's Guide to the New Life," a preface to the New King James Version study bible, page 29.