

Our Responsibility to the Government

Introduction:

This past week, our nation began a war with Iraq. It is a war that is very debatable as to whether or not we should have started it. No matter how you feel about the war, we each, as Christians, have an obligation to the government; especially in difficult times like this.

There are three main passages that we will consider today:

I Tim. 2:1-4

I Pet. 2:13-17

Rom. 13:1-7

I. We are commanded to pray for our leaders (I Tim. 2:1-4).

- A. Prayer has always been important for the Christian.
 1. We are commanded to pray for:
 - a. Food – Mt. 6:11
 - b. Forgiveness – Mt. 6:12
 - c. Wisdom – James 1:5
 - d. Enemies – Mt. 5:44
 - e. Laborers for the kingdom – Mt. 19:38
 - f. Do what is right – II Cor. 13:7
 - g. Be complete – II Cor. 13:9
 - h. We are even commanded to pray for our leaders.
 2. We are commanded to pray constantly.
 - a. Phil. 4:6 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
 - b. Eph. 6:18 - praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—
 - c. I Thes. 5:17 - pray without ceasing,
 - d. Especially in times like this, we should be praying continuously for our leaders.
- B. There is a specific reason that we are to pray for those who are in authority (2:2).
 1. We pray for our leaders so “that we may lead a quite and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”
 - a. Rulers have the opportunity to make our lives peaceable; and they also have the power to make our lives miserable.
 - b. We pray for our leaders that they might make those decisions in which we can “lead a quite and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”
 2. No one likes violence.
 - a. We all want to be able to live a quiet life.
 - b. We can do this best when those who are in authority live the kind of life they are to live.

3. Along that same line, if we are able to live a quiet and peaceable life, we will be more likely to be able to spread the word of God (2:3-4).
 - a. God says that it is His will that all will “come to the knowledge of the truth.”
 - b. There is no more important thing in this life than teaching others about Christ.

II. We are commanded to honor our leaders (I Pet. 2:17).

- A. Notice the definition of this Greek word (according to Strong).
 1. Literally means: “to prize, i.e. fix a valuation upon.”
 2. By implication, this word means, “to revere.”
 - a. When we honor someone, we respect them for the position that they hold.
 - b. Whether or not we agree with them, we respect them.
 3. It is translated as “honor” and “value.”
- B. It was always important to God that His people honored their leaders.
 1. Ex. 22:28 - You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.
 2. Ecc. 10:20 - Do not curse the king, even in your thought;
 3. There are two great illustrations in the Bible that help us to understand how we should honor those with authority.
 - a. I Sam. 24:1-7
 - 1) David refuses to kill Saul when given the chance (24:6 - will not kill the Lord’s anointed).
 - 2) Remember, at this time Saul was trying to find David so that he could kill him.
 - b. Acts 23:2-5 (Paul defending Himself before the Sanhedrin) - *And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. {3} Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" {4} And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" {5} Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, *You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.*"*
- C. Peter reminds those to whom he wrote, and us today, that we should honor those with authority.
- D. We should honor our rulers; and by honoring show great respect to our leaders in the government.

Closely related to honoring our leaders...

III. We are commanded to submit to our leaders.

- A. There are two key passages that tell us to submit to our government.
 1. I Pet. 2:13-16
 2. Rom. 13:1-7
- B. Just as with honoring the government, submission to the government has always been important to God.

1. **Ecc. 8:2-5** - I say, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God. {3} "Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him." {4} Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" {5} He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful; and a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,
 2. **Titus 3:1** - Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,
 3. **Mt. 22:15-21** – Jesus and taxes
- C. The authorities are appointed by God (**Rom. 13:1**).
1. There is no authority except from God (God allows and permits this earthly authority).
 2. **Jn. 19:11** - Jesus answered (Pilate), "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."
- D. The authorities have a job to do (**Rom. 13:3-4**).
1. The authority is a terror to evil.
 2. If we do what is right, we have no need to be afraid of the rulers.
- E. The exception to submitting to our government is when they tell us to do something that goes against the will of God.
1. **Acts 4:18-20** - And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. {19} But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. {20} For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
 2. **Acts 5:29** - But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.
 3. **Js. 4:7** - Therefore submit to God.

Conclusion:

You may or may not agree with the actions of our government at this time. However, we are all commanded by God to pray for our leaders, honor them, and submit to them. To help us get an idea of the seriousness of Peter and Paul, notice:

- A. The Emperor of Rome at the time they wrote their letters was Nero.
 1. Nero was possibly the most wicked ruler in all of history.
 2. It was Nero who probably had Paul killed.
 3. We know from history that he loved to persecute and kill Christians.
 4. One way in which he killed them was to cover them in tar and put them on a cross. He would then set them on fire and use them to light the streets of Rome.
- B. If Peter and Paul tell us to be subject to them, then we should be subject to our leaders today.

1. Paul says that if we refuse to submit to the government, we are refusing to submit to God (Rom. 13:2).
 2. The same would apply if we refuse to pray for them or to honor them.
 3. When we resist the authority, we “bring judgment on” ourselves.
- C. Our president will have to stand before God and give an account of the things that he has done in relation to this war; we will also have to stand before God and give an account of how we submitted to that government.
- D. As a child of God, we must submit to the government that exists; as long as we are not required of them to do something that goes against God.