

God's Righteousness at Work V

"Submission to the Authorities"

Romans 13:1-7

Going Beyond the sermons into the Scripture preached by Pastor Peter Oh on February 12, 2017

Entering In:

Share the national issue that you are most concerned about.

Why is it important for you and others?

[Limit your answer to one minute without explicating who is right or wrong.]

1. What are the pros and cons of the Church being separate from the State?

A few historical facts relative to the Jews to help answer the following questions:

- Jews are not supposed to be ruled by a foreign king (Deuteronomy 17:15)
- Revolts against Roman rule, led by Theudas and Judas the Galilean, were put down by Rome, resulting in death and dispersion (Acts 5:36-37)
- Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome (49 AD)
- Paul's letter to the Roman church (57 AD)
- Emperor Nero persecuted the Jews, blaming them for Great Fire of Rome (64AD)

If you were a Jewish believer in the Roman church, how would you feel when you read Romans 13:1?

Knowing Jewish culture and history, why do you think Paul still urged them to submit to the Roman authorities?

- A. To show that Christians were not rebels
- B. To teach that the Emperor was not God
- C. To encourage Christians to submit Rome to survive
- D. To encourage Christians to seek common grace
- E. Other

2. Who is the source of all authority?

What are the two "institutions" that are *directly* created by God?

- Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6
- Matthew 16:17-19

What is the human "institution" that is established by God? (v.2)

How is the purpose of this institution different from the first two "institutions" above?

How is the authority of this institution exercised differently from the first two "institutions" above (cf. Matthew 20:25 – 28)?

3. What does it mean to *submit yourself to the governing authorities*? Give two or three concrete examples.

Does Paul either state or imply anywhere in this passage that our willingness to submit ourselves to the governing authorities has anything to do with *their* faith, character, or agreeability?

What do you think Paul might say to a Christian in 21st Century America who goes around saying, “Not my President!”

4. The Declaration of Independence says, “Governments are instituted among Men, *deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed*.” In line with this view of government, the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States begins with the words, “We the People ...”.

Comparing this to Romans 13, would you agree or disagree with someone who claims that America was founded as a Christian nation? What difference might this make in the way you view politics?

5. List the four reasons for submitting to the authorities mentioned in the sermon.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

6. List three Biblical examples of civil disobedience and explain them briefly.

A. Midwives in Egypt - they disobeyed Pharaoh’s command to kill Hebrew babies. Moses’ life was spared as a result of their disobedience.

- B.
- C.

List three historical examples of civil disobedience.

- A.
- B.
- C.

Under what condition(s) does God approve his peoples’ disobedience to civil authorities?

7. If you were ordered by the government to execute someone who was sentenced to death for a crime committed, would you “follow orders,” or would you refuse to do it? Explain how you would decide. [See attached reference page.]

Living It Out:

Paul urges Timothy to teach the church to “pray for kings and those in authority” (I Timothy 2:1-2; cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14). What are some specific things that we ought to pray for governing authorities?

Addendum on Capital Punishment

Position of our denomination:

The CRC has declared that modern states are not obligated by Scripture, creed, or principle to institute and practice capital punishment. It does, however, recognize that Scripture acknowledges the right of modern states to institute and practice capital punishment if it is exercised with utmost restraint.

A study report adopted by Synod 1981 states that "capital punishment should . . . pertain . . . only to those exceptional instances . . . as are called forth by a substantial threat to the foundation and structure of a free and responsible democratic society, and thus to the safety and welfare of the people" and that the administration of justice should be surrounded "with such safeguards as will tend maximally to preserve and enhance life." The report concluded, "Given that human life is sacred, that the magistrate is fallible, that time for repentance is desirable, and that imprisonment will normally satisfy the demand for justice . . . it is not desirable that capital punishment be routinely inflicted upon persons guilty of murder in the first degree. Only under exceptional circumstances should the state resort to capital punishment". (Acts of Synod 1981, pp. 72-73, 489-91)

History

In the 1970s the issue of capital punishment was under a great deal of discussion in both the secular and religious worlds. The CRC began to study the issue formally in 1976 and adopted the recommendations of a study committee report in 1981. That report remains the most current study of capital punishment in the CRC, and its recommendations have not been challenged or altered in subsequent years.

[<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/capital-punishment>]

Scriptures to consider:

Acts 12:1-3 (NIV) It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Acts 25:10-11 (NIV) Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

Romans 8:35-36 (NIV) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

Genesis 9:5-6 (NIV) And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.