***The Purpose of a Government Ruler  
Romans 13:1-7  
RO167-01***

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We are studying Romans 13:1-7. Our subject is "The Christian and the State," and this is segment number seven.

**Capital Punishment**

God, in His infinite mercy and wisdom, has provided mankind with the institution of human government. This was designed after the Noahic flood to enable the human race to restrain the destructive effects of the old sin nature in man. When people give full vent to the old sin nature, they have an intense hatred which expresses itself in murder. All you have to do is listen to the nightly news. We cannot even have people who attend public schools without regularly hearing about students killing one another. For this reason, after the Noahic flood, mankind was authorized and required (and please get both) by God to execute the person or the animal who willfully murdered a human being. From the divine principle of execution for murder, upon verifiable eyewitness testimony, comes the authority for all lesser punishments in society by government for less serious crimes. Good government always flows from compliance with this divine institution built upon the divine injunction of capital punishment. That is a principle of life. No politician will change it. No liberal can outmaneuver God in this matter. Nobody can undermine that fact of life. Good government always flows from compliance with the divine institution of government based upon the authority and the requirement to execute first degree murderers.

Government is not to be a tyrant over people, hindering their freedom to life, liberty, and property. Government is to encourage and commend the obeying of the law, and for maintaining order in the state. Government authorities must always comply with the laws of God when they create human laws, or else they do violate the divine institution of human government, and they will be removed from power. We have seen politicians come and go in rapid order in recent times. That was not simply because of the circumstances that befell them, nor the decisions of the electorate. This was God, up in heaven, pushing the buttons for bringing about the consequent results. A politician can only go so far in getting out of line with the intent of the divine institution of human government, which is that it maintains law and order to preserve justice in a society. He can only go so far to get out of line with the laws of God (the moral code) before God jerks him out of office. He does it by bringing death to them. He does it by simply voting them out of office. But it's all the hand of God that's operating.

In the United States, people are blessed with the means for controlling the conduct of government officials. This, of course, is not true in communist countries where the people do not have a voice in who rules over them, nor do they have the capacity for removing the tyrants that may come into office. For this reason, Christian voters should not elect those who are in disagreement with God's laws as found in Scripture. The voters should be aware of what the elected officials actually do in office. If someone has been in public office, and he's asking you to vote for him, and to put him again in public authority, always consider what his voting record is. Ignore his speeches, and certainly ignore any debates in which he may be engaged. Those are public relations froufrous that are put on for the suckers in order to cover up what the candidate really is like, and what he really intends to do. So, when you're smart, you don't listen to speeches and you don't pay any attention to debates. You just want to know: how did this person vote when authority was in his hands before?

God establishes governments and nations, and He brings to power those public officials so that the nation actually gets the government that it deserves. And indeed, there are some very tyrannical governments in the world today. But the nations and the people who are suffering under those tyrants had it coming to them. They invited it, first of all, by their turning their back upon the Word of God and upon the God who is out there.

**Ministers of God**

We now come to Romans 13:4, where we read, "For he (the government official) is the minister of God to you for good." The word "minister" here is a familiar Greek word to us. It is the word "diakonos." This is the word from which we get our word "deacon," and it does mean "servant." But these public officials are very special kinds of servant, you will notice. They are said to be "servants of God." The civil authority is therefore a servant of the eternal Creator God. The phrase "a minister of God," furthermore, in the Greek Bible is placed at the very first of the sentence. And when words or phrases are placed in the Greek at the first part of the sentence, that is to bring emphasis to that thought.

**Servants of God**

So, the Holy Spirit is making a big point here of saying that these public officials belong to Him. They are His servants. And it is referring here back to verses 1-2, which identify the ruler's source of his position and his authority. It is God who establishes government, and it is God who places people in authority to run those governments. So, the civil ruler is invested with the dignity and the authority which belongs to a person who can be described as nothing less than "the servant of God." In the sphere of human government, those who are in elected positions are the servants of God. Very often they don't care. Very often they're oblivious to that. Very often they ignore it, even if they know it.

Furthermore, the Greek Bible adds the word "you" as a separate word. When the Greek does that, it makes again emphasis upon that particular word. Here it is stressing that every Christian citizen has a big stake personally in the fact that the public official is the servant of the eternal living God. He is that servant for a very specific purpose, and the Bible says, "For our good." And he uses the Greek word "agathos." This word, "agathos," means "good" in the sense of beneficial in its effects.

**The Purpose of a Government Ruler**

This specific good that comes to us from government officials and for which government has been designed is spelled out for us in 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Here is the primary good that government provides every human being: "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, and intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority." He is referring to government rulers here: kings and all that are in authority. For what purpose? "For this good, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life;" that is, law and order in society; that you can walk the streets without worrying about having your purse ripped out of your hand; that you could walk the street without being afraid of being mugged and beat up by somebody who wants to take something from you; and, that you can live a quiet and peaceful life in your home without being fearful – being afraid that in the middle of night, you're going to wake up and see somebody rummaging around, carrying your TV out of the house: "a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty."

That is the specific purpose of a government ruler – law and order in a society, so that that society can enjoy peace and piety. Our government officials usually say, "Elect me to office, and I will bring you peace and *prosperity*." The Bible says that the government official should say to you, "Elect me to office and I will bring you peace, by controlling the criminal element; and, I will bring you piety by creating the condition for you to be able to study the Word of God in maximum freedom, and to exercise godliness in every area and every institution of American life."

Where do you think a politician would get today if he stood up and said, "I am for peace and piety." But, of course, prosperity comes from that, doesn't it? It is a condition of peace and piety that also produces prosperity. So, you get the whole package when indeed government does what it is supposed to do.

**Rulers are Placed in Authority by God Himself**

Rulers, thus, are placed in positions of civil authority by God Himself, not by the electorate. And he is placed there in order to serve God by doing divine good for the citizens. Rulers who do evil to the people, through either legislating things that are sinful, or legislating human good works, are not serving God, and they will be removed from office through losing an election or through personal death.

The next part of Romans 13:4 says, "But if you do that which is evil." Here he is introducing the opposite condition of receiving good: "But if." The word "if" is this word "ean," and it introduces a third-class condition. Now you may do evil; or, you may not do evil: "But be aware," he says, "if you do start breaking the laws" (if you do evil). This word is "kakos," a thing that is just vile intrinsically in itself: "Then you should fear." The word is "phobeomai." "Phobeomai" refers to "a state of terror," or "a state of fear." It is constant. It is present tense. This is what you will constantly be in when you break the laws. You'll always be looking over your shoulder. It is middle voice, which means that the reaction will be on yourself. You will terrorize yourself. And here it is an imperative. That means that it's a divine command. God is commanding you. You better be afraid. You've got good reason to be. If you are going to do that which is evil (breaking the law), you better believe it that you better be afraid.

"For he does not bear the sword in vain. The word "bear" is the Greek word "phoreo," and this simply means "to carry." Human civil government has the authority to execute punishments. The word "sword" is the Greek word "machaira," and this was the little short 18-inch long sword sharpened on both sides, which was the basic weapon of the Roman infantry soldier. When the Bible refers to a sword, it basically is referring to the authority to apply punishment. It refers to the authority and the duty (get it both) of government under the divine institution of government to execute criminals.

In the New Testament, the sword was the instrument of execution. People were decapitated as the basic mode of execution. If they wanted to really punish them, and make them really suffer for their crimes (if their crimes were of such a heinous nature), then they were crucified. But basically, execution was with the sword. In the New Testament, when it speaks of the sword, it is referring to execution. You may consider this (consult this) on your own in Matthew 26:52, Luke 21:24, Acts 12:2, Acts 16:27, Hebrews 11:34-37, and Revelation 13:10. All those passages use the word "sword" in terms of the authority to punish.

**Capital Punishment**

The Bible authorizes, and it requires, capital punishment to control certain evil acts. We find this based upon Genesis 9:6, and upon our passage here in Romans 13:4. There is no question whatsoever that God requires the use of capital punishment in dealing with the crime of murder. And, in fact, under the Old Testament Mosaic Law, if you kidnapped the person, you were also subject to capital punishment. In the Old Testament Law, if you consulted with demonic spirits (if you were a medium – we call them "channelers" today), you were executed. That was a capital crime. If you were guilty of rape, that was a capital crime. You were executed. So, there were certain crimes that were in the heinous category of first-degree murder, under the Mosaic code, which were also subject to capital punishment. But certainly, for murder, there is no question to this very day, that principle has never been neutralized (has never been removed by God), and it still applies to society today. Any political leader, therefore, who is against capital punishment is out of line with the divine institution of government, and is in violation of God's code.

Civil magistrates are also empowered, as we've indicated, by God, to apply lesser punishments for lesser crimes. The magistrate himself does evil if he does not apply punishments. The sword is the most significant part of the civil ruler's equipment – not his ability to vote you a check for some personal project. Today, political leaders view the capacity to vote financial favors to elements in society as their most powerful weapon. God says, "Your most powerful weapon is the authority from God Himself to stop the criminal, and to restrain him, and to apply the appropriate punishment." And if you don't do it, the magistrate himself is guilty of a great evil.

So, the Bible says here that: "He does not carry the sword in vain." The Greek word looks like this. It's the word "eike," and it means without reason. The authority of government rulers to punish lawbreakers is the reason. And when law breakers are punished, the sin nature is restrained in two ways. It is restrained either through fear; or, it is restrained through termination of life. When you have a political leader who opposes capital punishment, it is a sign of very bad judgment. It is a clear sign of a person who is not trustworthy with handling the levers of power. Those who understand the Bible know how to put two and two together. And when they find someone opposed to capital punishment, they know that that person should never be trusted with great political power. He is untrustworthy, and he will use it in a way that would bring injury to the citizens, and to the nation.

We are having a great deal of political debate on the presidential level right now as to who's got good judgment, and who's got brains, and who's got sense, and who's got discernment to be qualified for office. And they're jumping on one of the candidates that he's not qualified for office, and the people who are jumping on him have demonstrated that their judgment is absolutely ludicrous. One of these presidential candidates has followed a policy until the people of his state rose in such anger and demanded that he stop. He followed the policy of permitting weekend furloughs for the most bestial kind of criminals: murderers; rapists; and, people who had been condemned to crimes that if the state had not outlawed the death penalty, these people would have died. Instead, they got life imprisonment. And the governor of this state has the opinion that people are bad because of their surroundings. If you get them in a good environment, then people will be good. So, he takes these gross criminals, and he's been sending them out on furlough so they can associate with good people.

Well, many of the criminals have not returned, and others have proceeded to commit the most horrendous crimes while they're out of their weekend furlough. And it did happen just once. Now whose judgment is bad? Who has lack of discernment? Would you have to be told that when you have a vicious, bestial, criminal type, who has done the most heinous kinds of crimes, that you shouldn't say, "Here's a few bucks. Go out and have a good time on this weekend, and be sure you come back Monday morning?" I figured it out. Right off the bat, I said, "That isn't good." Now we have somebody who is attacking another person running for the highest office. (He) has bad judgment. Who is he to speak? But who am I? The Word of God says that power in the hands of an antagonist of that upon which the divine institution of human government is based, namely capital punishment, is a dangerous person to be entrusted with political power, and you do it at your own great hazard.

"For he is the very minister of God to you to bring you divine good. But if you do that which is evil, which you may or you may not do, be very much aware that you should be afraid. For he does not bear the sword without reason." He bears it to punish your evildoing: "For he is the minister of God." Here again we have this expression "minister of God." Again, it is in the emphatic position in the sentence to stress the divine authority of the civil ruler. The Holy Spirit just cannot come down on this hard enough: that politicians, once they're in office, are the ministers of God. And it is a pity that we do not remind them more often that that is the role they carry. It would dignify their office, and it would perhaps sober them in the awareness that what they do is under the direct evaluation of the living God, because they are to be His agents. People who hold public office, I can assure you, are going to answer to God.

**God's Wrath**

As a minister of God, he is God's avenger. The Greek word looks like this: "ekdikos." This is the word for the one who exacts a penalty. We translate this as: "He is God's servant as an avenger." The civil authority acts as God servant, not the peoples' servant, when he publishes lawbreakers. When the cop on the beat stops you for speeding, he is acting as God's avenger first. He is the peoples' avenger secondly. And he is doing this, we're told (he is an avenger) to execute wrath. The Greek word is "orge," which is a word we've had before, which is a settled condition of anger. This is not a hot-headed right, but a settled condition of anger against injustice and against lawbreakers. It refers to God's wrath against evil, such as is described in Romans 12:19: "Dearly beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. For it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine. I will repay,' says the Lord."

God has a wrath against what is evil. So, suppose that you are in a political debate, and suppose that some hotshot, fat-cat politician, who is known for pandering to the moneyed forces, gives a horrible, insulting, snide remark to the candidate that he is debating. What should that candidate do? I thought of several marvelous things to say back. When this happened the other day, I was interested in noting that the candidate who was abused, whether knowingly or unknowingly, followed the godly course of action of not returning evil for evil. He observed the evil, but he did not return the evil for evil. He did not resort to saying a "Same to you, fellow" type of response, or others that I can share with you later that are more appropriate. But instead, he followed vengeance being left with the God who can exercise "orge," and here's the word. This wrath of God is His vengeance being exercised because God has a settled indignation toward what is evil, and toward what violates His moral righteousness.

**God's Avenger**

So, he is God's avenger to execute wrath upon the person who is doing evil. The word "do" is the Greek word "prasso," from which we get the word "practice." He practices this as a lifestyle. These are actions directed toward evil that are practiced as a lifestyle.

It is God alone who can set the standard for moral conduct which defines evil for people. Moral evil is not determined by majority vote. Only God determines what is morally right and what is morally wrong. He does that as per His character. American society thinks that 51% decides what's right and what's wrong.

**Why are People Bad?**

So, government is a benevolent institution from God for human happiness. Therefore, we are to respect it upon pain of punishment. Government is to do good as God's agents for law and order. Government is also to exercise God's vengeance on lawbreakers. Human viewpoint sentimentality substitutes the interests of the criminal for the satisfaction of God's justice. Once you leave the principle of the sin nature of man, and the total depravity of man, then you move over to the liberal view that people are only bad because they were born in economic deprivation. They had bad social background. They were born in a bad neighborhood. They were deprived in some way of the essentials of life, and that that's why people are bad.

Some of the finest human beings have come out of the worst kinds of backgrounds, and they never had to resort to being lowbrow, lowlife, criminal types, because that was not their character. Their volition chose to rise above the circumstances that surrounded them. But the liberals believe that if you can take a terrible criminal, and let them float around out here with the people who have good food, and who have nice cars, and who wear good clothes, and who act with responsibility toward one another, that it will rub off on him. Nothing could be more naive, and disoriented, and detached from reality. Man is vile by nature. And until he's regenerated through faith in Jesus Christ, he continues to be vile in nature. And once he has demonstrated how vile he is, and that the lives of other people and their property is a threat, only the most naive idiot would think that that will change just because he's given freedom to move around people – the very people he wants to terrorize and to abuse.

**The Obligation of Subjection**

In Romans 13:5-7, closing this section, we have the obligation then of subjection. Romans 13:5 says, "Wherefore," which introduces a deduction, based now on verse 4. Civil authorities are ministers of God who execute God's wrath on violators of the law. Therefore, something follows from that: "You must be subject." You must indeed be subject. The word subject is the familiar word we've had before: "hupotasso." "Hupotasso" is that military word that means "to line up under someone's authority." It refers to the necessity of a Christian to be in subjection to the authority of government. This is present tense. This is what the Christian's constant role is to be. It this middle voice. The Christian will benefit personally if he does this. And it is infinitive, which indicates that this is God's purpose.

We translate this as: "Wherefore, it is necessary to be in subjection." Then you notice that you have two words: "not only; and, then a little later, "but also." "Not only" and "but also" balance two sides of a statement. "Not only" identifies the first of two basic reasons for subjection to human government. And the word "not" is the strong word for not: "ou." And the word "but" in "but also" is "alla, which is the strong negative of the words that are available for that.

So, here he says, "Not only should you be in subjection to government for wrath." And we're back to the Greek word "orge," which is the indignation of the authorities toward law breakers: "Not only because you know that you are going to be punished," because you are going to get the consequences of your act. This is an external necessity for subjection so that you can escape legal punishment. Obey the law, or you will bear the consequences.

**Your Conscience**

"But also," he says (for another reason), and that is: "for conscience." The word "conscience" looks like this: "suneidesis." This word refers to that sense which is in every human being about rights and wrongs. Now it's only the sense that there are rights and wrongs. The conscience has to be taught what is right and what is wrong. Otherwise in full conscience, you can do something that is completely in violation of the Word of God. The old saying, "Let your conscience be your guide" is not good advice unless you're a Christian who is well-versed in the principles of doctrine. Then you can let your conscience be your guide, and it will guide you in the right direction.

Your conscience can be given the wrong information. This is as some years ago, when the missionaries went to Ecuador to the Quito Indians, the conscience of the Quito Indians had taught them from the earliest days that when a stranger walked into their territory, he was to be killed, because that was the right thing to do. The person was immediately to be murdered when he walked into their territory. When the missionaries came, these people thought they were doing the right thing by killing those five splendid young men. So, your conscience can lead you astray.

However, there is an internal necessity for subjection to government authority – an emotional stability from your moral integrity. It's acting out a sense of obligation to God, Whose character determines right and wrong, and the God who is watching. Your conscience demands certain conduct before God. It is the principle of obedience to what is right as an act of conscience, which is stated also in 1 Peter 2:13-15. Peter says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake (the laws of government); whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them to do well. For so it is the will of God that with well-doing, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

So, that here we have the same concept stated that, because our conscience leads us and tells us we should do what is right, we who have been taught Scripture and know what is right, we should obey that. Part of that, that we have been taught, is objection to the laws of government. It's not only a civil duty in order to escape the wrath of the sword (the punishment), but it is also a religious duty. A Christian in good conscience, however, must also oppose any government which does evil by violating the divine institution of government.

This conscience that is in the human soul is a faculty of the decision-making capacity of your mind. The decision mentality is what gives us the capacity to evaluate conduct on the basis of some set of standards. And the mind functions with understanding, and with conscience. The word "conscience" in the Old Testament, such as in Proverbs 23:4, where it is translated as "thinking" is the Hebrew word "shaer." "Shaer" in the Hebrew means "to cut" or "to divide." So, it connotes thinking in separate categories. Proverbs 23:7 says, "So, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he." As a man's dividing categories of actions, and he says, "This is right, and this is wrong," that's the kind of person he's going to be. In the New Testament, this word, "suneidesis," which is the comparable Greek word, is actually made up of two words. This word "sun" is a preposition, and it means "with;" and, the second part, "eidesis," comes from the Greek word "oida," which means "to know something." So, it is referring here to knowledge so that the Greek word "suneidesis" means "joint knowledge." Conscience is something that works on the basis of knowledge that you have brought together, knowledge that you have divided into categories of: "This is right; and, this is wrong. I can do this to a person. It's OK. I cannot do this to a person because that is wrong."

**Ethics**

So, a person's sense of ethics is the result of information which is fed into the conscience of the mind. Then he may have a good conscience, if he has doctrine (1 Timothy 1:19); or, he may have a bad conscience as we find in 1 Timothy 4:2. A good conscience, in other words, comes from the programing of Bible doctrine fed into the human spirit, which sets your divine standards and your divine rules.

So, how a Christian divides things up, and how he looks at things, is determined by the available knowledge that he has joined together within himself from the Word of God. The unsaved person picks up his basis of knowledge for his conscience simply from the sin nature of other people, and of himself. He does not get it from the Word of God. So, the unsaved person can say, "I'm acting in full freedom of my conscience." But he is acting on nothing more than the deceit of his sin nature.

**A Good Conscience**

A good conscience gives a person a great sense of confidence before God, as 1 John 3:21-22 point out. When you are negative to the Word of God, something very terrible happens to your conscience. When you say, for example, "I do not believe in capital punishment," then the Bible tells us that something happens to your conscience, and the Bible uses the word seared. You have this in 1 Timothy 4:1-2 that describes evildoers who finally have seared their conscience. The Greek word here, in 1 Timothy 4:1-2, translated as seared, is kind of interesting word. It looks like this in the Greek Bible: "kausteriazo." This is the word from which we get the English word "cauterize." And as you know, cauterize is placing a hot metal so that you burn or brand an area of skin. You create scar tissue so that it becomes insensitive to pain. And the scar tissue is the result of this cauterizing effect. When your conscience is burned by negative volition to doctrinal principles, then you create scar tissue on your conscience, and you can do the wildest things, and feel that you're in full conscience against doing it.

What we have seen in the government official (the governor I referred to earlier) of furloughing condemned monstrous criminals is that his own conscience has been seared, and become insensitive toward reality concerning these people because he has refused God's order that these people should not even be living, let alone to be turned loose once more upon society. A seared conscience makes me go crazy up in your spiritual discernment, and in your mental processes.

**Taxation**

Verse 6 gives us the reason for taxation. This will make your day because there is good reason for taxation. The apostle Paul says, "For," indicating an explanation: "For this cause," and the word "this cause" refers back to everything that he's talked about of the role of government in verses 1-5. It introduces the practical consequence of having given government: "For this cause, we pay tribute." The word is "phoros," and that is translated as "tax:" "For this reason, we pay taxes, for they (government officials) are God's ministers."

**Government Officials**

This time he does not use the word "diakonos." He uses a totally different word for ministers that places the political leader in even a more awesome position than before. This time, the word for minister is "leitourgos." This is not "diakonos" like we had up in verse 4, which is the ordinary word for "ministers." This word is made up of two words. The first is the Greek word "laos." That is the word which means "people." The second part is made up of the Greek word "ergon," and that means work. So we have "people" and "work." So, what this word literally means is that this is somebody who works for the people. A "leitourgos" is somebody who serves the people. He's a government official.

However, this word, in contrast to the other word, "diakonos," has also a religious implication. When this word is used in the Bible, it is used, for example, of the Lord Jesus Christ, in Hebrews 8:2, as the high priest of God. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is the servant (is the minister) of God, but he is the minister of God in a religious sense.

This is also used of the apostle Paul in Romans 15:16. We will later come to that, where Paul is described as a minister of God in terms of being a "leitourgos," meaning that he is God's minister to the gentiles as a sacred mission. He is upon a sacred duty. It's not just an ordinary servant who does housekeeping and cleaning and missions like that. This is a person sent upon a sacred duty. What a dignifying that is of the political office – to realize that you, in that office, are the servant of the living God upon a sacred mission. As God's ministers, they owe their position of authority to Him, not to the people who voted them into office. As God's agents, therefore, they are entitled to respect and to obedience from the citizens. God in Heaven, even now, is moving people to act in this political election in order to bring about the next step of His plan by putting into office the person who will execute that plan, whether for good for this nation, or for its judgment and its discipline.

"For this cause (what government does) you pay taxes also." And you do this because these men are God's ministers on a sacred mission, attending continually upon this very thing; that is, they spend all their time devoted to the work of government. That's what the very thing refers to – to the work of government. We have a long word: "proskartereo," attending continually. This word means "to devote to." These people devote themselves to full-time government office. Because they are in this position, they are not free to earn a livelihood by some other work. They don't have the time. They're fulfilling the mission of human government – of maintaining law and order in a society based on God's law. They're there suppressing crimes and upholding justice.

**Taxes for Legitimate Purposes**

This tending continually, this very thing, may also include the act of collecting taxes to pay for the mission (the operation) of government. Without taxes to pay government servants for their full-time service, crime would run amuck, and people would become vigilantes, handling their own law and order. And then you would have a jungle. Since government serves such an essential purpose, we should be glad, therefore, as Christians to pay taxes to meet the purpose of legitimate government.

**Taxes for Illegitimate Purposes**

We should not, as Christians, however, be glad to pay taxes to meet the illegitimate purposes that government is willing to assume for itself, such as creating a socialist society, and passing laws which are contrary to both biblical principles and the American constitution, for the explicit purpose of government encroaching itself into areas that are beyond the keeping of law and order internally and externally. Americans, unfortunately, have been so brainwashed by courts which look the other way when government encroaches into areas beyond the limits of the Constitution, and Congress, which is willing to violate the Constitution for political benefit, such that the average American today has grown up expecting that government is an agency for providing all kinds of goodies to the citizens, as if government had the money to do that unless it takes that money from those of you who are out there, and by the sweat of your brow, are producing that money for the government to take.

So, we are to be glad to pay taxes for a government that gives us what 1 Timothy says that government should give us: peace and piety – to give us a condition in which our lives may grow and develop, and our families may prosper, and we have the freedom to proclaim the Word of God.

**Render Taxes, Fear, and Honor**

We close with verse 7, that says, "Render, therefore." The Greek word "render" is "apodidomi." The word "apodidomi" really means pay back: "Pay back, therefore, to all their dues; that is, that which they're legitimately entitled to. This is the Greek word "opheile." "Opheile" refers to something that a person has coming. So, pay back to the person what he legitimately has coming. Then he lists what we should give: "tribute to whom tribute is due." This is the Greek word "phoros," and it means "taxes" – taxes from the earnings of people: "custom to whom custom." Custom is the Greek word "telos," and it refers to "taxes on goods" (excise taxes). The third is: "fear to whom fear." The word "fear" is "phobos," referring to respect for the office which a person holds. And remember, sometimes we respect the office, even though we have cause to have little respect for the office-holder at some point in time. And then: "honor to whom honor." The word is "time." This is referring to esteem for the person so that you treated with dignity.

That's the Christian call to dealing with human government: giving taxes from your earnings; paying customs upon the goods you use; being fearful of the authority of the sword, and of breaking the law, and of the person who bears that authority; and, to give honor (to give dignity – exercise dignity) toward the one who has been placed as a minister of God in public office.

This is a marvelous provision we have from God – the institution of human government, to preserve us from ever having to return to the jungle that existed upon this earth before the flood, when man was on his own, and there was no restraint upon any evil that came to his mind. Any vile thing that he wanted to do, he was free to do it. Thank God for the institution of human government. Pray to God that the American people may yet somehow find themselves coming in touch with teachers of doctrine who can put back into perspective in the American mind what American government is all about. As you look out upon the politicians, it really does make you mad. It's getting me so mad that I'm almost thinking about running for political office. And that would be the end, as is now this sermon.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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