

Christians and the State (Romans 13:1-8)

1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour. 8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law.

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What is the government, according to Paul?

- The government is a servant of God, to do us good (v4). Law and order are good. The punishment of criminals is good. A good government is like God – bringing joy to the obedient, and terror to the disobedient. A bad government is like Satan – bringing terror to the godly, and joy to the wicked.
- Is this how you think about the government? Note, that this makes corruption a far *worse* thing than we realised before. They are corrupting something *God* created, and sinning after being appointed as *God's* servants.

Why should Christians obey governments?

- Because they have God's authority, v1. At the time, the government in Rome was pagan and immoral. But the authority it had was from God, even when it was used badly. God is not a God of anarchy (disorder, chaos) but of order. So, our obedience to the state is part of our obedience to God, v5. When the state punishes us for disobedience, it is part of God's wrath, v4.
- This authority is not total. Daniel disobeyed Darius when Darius made a law against praying. Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego disobeyed Nebuchadnezzar when he told them to worship an idol. No government has authority to tell us to sin.
- Will you remember next time: this state officer has the authority of *God*?

Should Christians pay taxes?

- Yes, they should – v6. Governing takes time. Government officers need to be paid, so that they can eat and be clothed. This is part of our duty to God.
- Truly, we should pay *everyone* what we owe them. It is not Christian to remain with debts. Taxes are one of those debts, that help to keep a stable and orderly country going.