

## **“Justice And Government”**

### **Romans 13:1-14**

#### **Sermon Series: “True Justice In An Unjust World”**

**Introduction:** As we approach a contentious and crucial election, as we deal with issues of racial justice in our nation, as we see protests and riots in cities, as we try to navigate the coronavirus; it is vital that we understand government from a biblical perspective. Government functioning properly and justly is necessary for us to have a truly just society so we are going to look at Romans 13 to see both how the government and governed are to function. In Bible study, context is key so let's set the context as we begin.

1. Context of where we have been and where we're going in the series
2. Context of wicked Roman rulers when Paul was writing this
3. Context of our day of our nation being a democratic Republic
4. Context of Romans being about salvation and this section being about how we live as a living sacrifice with a renewed mind who is not conformed to this world
5. Context of Romans 12:17-21 regarding living at peace and vengeance

#### **I. The Nature And Responsibilities Of The Government**

##### **1. The government is appointed by God to function as His servant so it stands under God (v. 1-2).**

- Different spheres He has appointed
- The separation of church and state
- Government can get corrupted like the other spheres
- The Kingdom of God is ultimate
- God uses even wicked rulers to accomplish His purposes (Isaiah 44:28-45:1)

##### **2. The government exists to promote the common good (v. 4).**

- Equal opportunity, not equal outcomes
- The Constitution says, “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

##### **3. The government exists to protect the people from evildoers (v. 4).** This means that military and police are necessary for our protection because we live in a fallen world of

sinner so people will do evil, harmful things (Genesis 3:22-24). Obviously, this does not give representatives of the government the right to perpetrate evil acts.

**4. The government exists to punish evildoers (v. 4).** The sword is a reference to capital punishment (Genesis 9:5-6).

## **II. The Responsibilities Of The Governed**

But remember that he is specifically writing this to Christians.

**1. Submit to government authorities (except when that would require disobeying God and civil disobedience is necessary) [v. 1, 5].**

-R.C. Sproul writes, "We are always and everywhere to obey the authorities over us—boss, police, governor, whatever that authority may be—unless that authority commands us to do something God forbids, or forbids us from doing something God commands."

-Martin Luther King Jr. writes in Letter From A Birmingham Jail, "One may well ask: 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?'" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all." Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law."

**Biblical examples include: the Hebrew midwives saving Jewish babies (Exodus 1:15-22), Daniel's companions refusing to bow down to the golden image (Daniel 3), Daniel continuing to pray (Daniel 6), the apostles refusing to stop preaching the gospel (Acts 4 and 5).**

**2. Pay our taxes (v. 7).** Paul is here reflecting what Jesus said about rendering unto Caesar (Matthew 22:15-22).

**3. Have a respectful attitude toward government officials (v. 7).** Are we honoring those in authority over us? Even if we do not respect the person, we are to respect the office.

**4. Treat all people with love (v. 8-10).** Denzel Washington has said, "You can't legislate love," and the reality is that government cannot create a good and moral society without people loving each other.

## **5. Live under the Lordship of Jesus and temper our expectations of human government (v. 11-14).**

-Human government is temporary and limited, but the Kingdom of God will stand forever (Daniel 7:13-14).

-Our ultimate allegiance is to Jesus and not to a nation or a political party. Jesus did not come to take sides but to take over (Joshua 5:13-15).

-We must repent of looking to government and politicians as functional saviors because government has a limited role and power and only Jesus can ultimately save and transform.

-However, we are not to avoid the political process, but we are to engage society as salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16).

-We are to pray for those in authority over us (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

-We must not forget that being a good citizen will not make us a citizen of heaven, but we must be born again (John 3:1-3).