**Lesson 36: We the Christian Citizens of the United States**

Text: Romans 13:1-7

**Introduction**

The believer’s relationship with government is an important topic of consideration for our day and time. God has used believers to influence their society. He used Joseph in the administration of Pharaoh to spare the lives of those living in Egypt and the surrounding countries. He used Daniel during the days of Nebuchadnezzar. He used Paul during the wicked rule of Nero, Emperor of Rome. He can use us to have a positive influence today in our own country. Romans 13 provides biblical insight into God’s purpose for civil government. It also provides guiding principles as to how we are to conduct ourselves as Christian citizens. We are to respect those who have leadership in our country, state, and city. It is important to understand why we should submit to human government as part of being under the headship of Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. **The first reason believers should submit to human government is because it is appointed by God. (v. 1-2)** 
   1. “Every soul” indicates believers and unbelievers. Government has a role in every life.
   2. There may have been a misunderstanding regarding the believer’s new position in Christ. It is possible that some might have taken the admonition to avoid conformity to the world to mean that they should not have anything to do with the secular government. This was not Paul’s intent. Rather, their faith in Christ should make them better citizens.
   3. The same principle holds true regarding the institution of marriage. Marriage was established by God in the Garden of Eden. Trusting Christ did not do away with the institution of marriage. Rather, it makes a husband and wife to be better equipped to fulfill God’s original plan for marriage.
   4. They needed to know that God established human government. This is evident in parallel passages.
      1. God is sovereign over the nations and sets up rulers. (Daniel 2:21; 4:17, 32)
      2. Jesus taught that we are to respect human government. (Mark 12:13-17; John 19:11)
      3. Peter echoed the same to believers of his day who were living in a society that was becoming increasingly anti-Christian (1 Peter 2:13-17).
   5. It is God’s will that a Christian fulfill his obligation as a citizen as long as it does not place him or her in opposition to God’s will in other matters. We will consider this later in the lesson.
   6. Those who resist government are found to be in opposition to God and face His judgement. (v. 2)
2. **The second reason believers are to submit to human government is because it designed to maintain order in society. (v. 3-5)** 
   1. God’s plan is for rulers to serve as a deterrent to evil and as an encouragement to right behavior. (v. 3) Those who are doing right do not have to be afraid. For example, those who are driving the speed limit do not need to slow down when they see a police officer.
   2. Those who are breaking the law have reason to be afraid. (v. 4) The ruler does not bear the sword in vain. This refers to the right of the government to punish wrongdoers. This removes vengeance from individuals and places punishment in the hands of those appointed by God.
   3. In this verse, the secular ruler is referred to as the “minister of God.” In other words, he is God’s servant who administers punishment for violation of the law.
   4. Believers should also be in subjection to the authorities because they ought to keep a clear conscience toward God and man. (v. 5)
      1. Those who know God and His will ought to stand as prime examples of submission.
      2. They ought to be submissive because it is pleasing to God and proper in relationship to others.
3. **Central Idea: Paul admonished believers to submit themselves to government because it is appointed by God to bring order to society.**
4. **Paul applies this truth to the fact that believers should pay their taxes. (v. 6-7)** 
   1. Doing so acknowledges their submission to the government under which they live.
   2. It is only proper and right to financially support the public servants who bring order to our society. We benefit from the service of police officers, fire fighters, teachers, administrators, and others who serve our community.
   3. Verse 7 summarizes this important duty as citizens. We are to pay taxes and show the proper respect for those in authority.
5. **The chapter presents government the way God intended it. What are we to do when the laws of the land conflict with the laws of God?** 
   1. Believers have encountered this situation throughout history. The Hebrew midwives secretly spared the lives of the Hebrew male babies that were ordered to be killed by Pharaoh. The three Hebrew young men refused to bow to the image in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel continued to pray even when it was outlawed in the land. Peter and John gave the proper Christian response in Acts 5:29. They were commanded by the governmental rulers to cease preaching in the Name of Jesus. They selected to obey God rather than man. We are to obey the laws of our land as long as they do not violate the laws of God.
   2. “A willingness to resist the demands of secular rulers, when those conflict with the demand of God we serve, is part of that transformation of life which Paul speaks about in these chapters” (Douglas Moo).
   3. Clearly government does not have to be thoroughly Christian for Christians to be submissive. Paul was submissive to the Roman government. It was not known for its Christian values! He was aware that it was the Roman government that executed Jesus on the cross. It was also the Roman government who removed Christians from their homes and disrupted their lives. Nonetheless, he wrote these instructions to believers living in Rome!
   4. The Christian faith does not have to be in an ideal climate to thrive. It thrives in climates that are very hostile to the gospel. However, it cannot thrive where there is apathy on the part of Christians.
6. **Application**
   1. This is an important time in our nation’s history. We are to pray for those in leadership. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)
   2. Teach children to respect authority early in life. Provide the proper example before them. Plan special trips to our capital building, the local fire department, and other locations that will instill respect for community leaders.
   3. Obey the laws of the land. This includes everything from the speed limit to hunting and fishing regulations. It also applies to paying your taxes.
   4. We must obey Christ’s command to take the gospel into all the earth even where human governments prohibit it. Pray for those who take the gospel into restricted access countries. It is best to obey God!

**Conclusion**

As Christian citizens living in the United States of America, it is our responsibility to present Christ to those living within our nation. The people of our day desperately need to see true biblical Christianity. We have a wonderful opportunity before us. May the Lord help us to make the most of it as the Christian citizens of the United States.