

Difficult Texts In The Bible

The Christian & Civil Government

(Ro 13:1-7)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Evening
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on "Difficult Texts In The Bible."
 - a. We have looked at a number of difficult texts in the scriptures.
 - i. **Jn 8:2-11; Mt 24; I Co 7:36-38...**
 - b. As we have seen there really is no difficulty in explaining these texts if we use sound hermeneutics.
 - i. This is what we must do in examining **Ro 13:1-7** once again.
3. To understand this passage we must first notice the context by which it falls into.
 - a. When we looked at **Ro 1:16-17** we broke down Romans into three sections.
 - i. **Ro 1-8** - Deals with a right standing with God which is based on faith not the works of the Old Law and on justification of sin based on God's grace rather than the works of man.
 - ii. **Ro 9-11** - Deals with the Jews and their relation to the gospel.
 - iii. **Ro 12-16** - Deals with the practical side of the gospel ie how to live in this world.
 - b. This is a good outline of the book of Romans however I want for this study to give another I found that is just as good.
 - i. **Ro 1-11** - Deals with the doctrinal theme of salvation by faith. "The need for salvation (i.e., all have sinned), the basis of salvation (i.e., Christi's redemptive work), the means of salvation (i.e., faith rather than merit), and the result of salvation (i.e., newness of life for both Jew and Gentile in on body)..." (Fort Worth Lectureship 1981; Difficult Texts of the New Testament Explained "Romans 13:1-7 The Christian And Civil Government" by Shelly, Rubel pg. 204)
 - ii. **Ro 12-16** - Deals with the "practical problems which challenge Christians in giving their "spiritual service" to God." (Ibid)
4. Where as we found ourselves on the side dealing with truth concerning salvation with **Ro 1:16-17** we now find ourselves on the side of practical Christianity with **Ro 13:1-7**.

I. Breaking Down The Passage

- A. Civil government is ordained by God
 1. **Ro 13:1-2** "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."¹

¹ All scriptures are taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

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2. We know not when or where the first non-family government was established for certain though we do know the first mentioned.
 - i. **Gn 10:8-10** "Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."
 - a. We don't know if Nimrod set up his kingdom based on God's Word or on his own accord.
 - b. We do know however that God does approve of human government due to him appointing and ordaining such.
3. We see that we are to be in subjection to the "governing authorities."
 - i. There is only one justification for not submitting to the government and that is when the government or civil authorities creates unrighteous laws. God's children are not to submit to these laws, however we are to submit to the government still in the areas that break not God's will.
 - a. **Ac 5:29** "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."
- B. Civil government is to encourage right conduct and punish evil
 1. **Ro 13:3-4a** "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good..."
 2. Remember the time when Paul is writing this.
 - i. Nero is emperor - 54-68 AD
 - ii. Nero is one of the emperors that held parties at night by using the light of Christians burning to light his garden. (<http://tinyurl.com/3e6bhw>)
 3. Yet during this difficult time Paul writes submit to the government.
 - i. This seems to answer the question to I submit to a government that is creating and enforcing laws that are unrighteous or unfair. The answer is yes. We must submit but we are not to follow the unrighteous laws.
 4. Thinking to today's application we must submit to the government even with the laws we have that are wrong (abortion, homosexual marriage, euthanasia...) and even with a president that is not being righteous in his decisions. We still must submit to the government and honor those in authority.
 - i. **I Pt 2:13-14** "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good."

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- C. Civil government has the right to administer punishment by the sword
 - 1. **Ro 13:4b** "...But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."
 - 2. The government and its agents (i.e., police, soldiers, judges, lawyers...) have the right to use force to punish evildoers.
 - 3. The word sword here in the Greek is "μάχαιρα" or "machaira."
 - i. It is not the spiritual sword that is under consideration here it is the physical sword. As one brother put it, it "is no ceremonial piece; it is a weapon (Mark 14:43), a tool of injury (Heb. 11:34), and instrument of death (Acts 12:2)." (Fort Worth Lectureship 1981; Difficult Texts of the New Testament Explained "Romans 13:1-7 "The Christian And Civil Government by Shelly, Rubel pg. 206)
- D. Christians must respect and obey the government
 - 1. **Ro 13:5** "Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake."
 - 2. A Christian must not only fear the government's power to punish but more importantly God's power to punish those that fear not His minister.
- E. Civil government has the right to tax its citizens for support
 - 1. **Ro 13:6-7** "For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."
 - 2. This should not be a new idea as this is exactly what Jesus taught.
 - i. **Lk 20:22-25** "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 23 But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Why do you test Me? 24 Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?" They answered and said, "Caesar's." 25 And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.""

II. False Teachings That Have Come Forth

- A. As with many passages in scripture this section has found many false doctrines spring forth from it
 - 1. People, though sincere, have a tendency to use improper exegesis or hermeneutics to determine sound doctrine.
 - 2. Here are a few of these instances.
- B. Government can bear the sword but Christians cannot be the ones wielding it
 - 1. In other words, governments have the right to punish with the sword but they must use sinners i.e. those that are not Christians.
 - 2. Can this be the case?
 - i. First how can it be morally right for a Christian to ask a non-christian to do something that is wrong for the Christian to do?
 - a. He cannot if it is wrong in one instance it is wrong the other.
 - b. If it is wrong for a Christian to shoot a criminal as a policeman than it is just as wrong to ask a non-christian to do such.

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1. Notice though this is what Paul did in [Ac 23:16-35](#). When Paul learned of a plot on his life he appealed to the Roman government for protection which they granted. If the soldiers that were protecting Paul had killed protecting him and they sinned doing so than it would have been wrong for Paul to have asked them to do such.
2. Thus it is not wrong to ask for protection even if you know that could lead to the death of the one your needing protection from and thus it is not wrong to be the protector thusly.
- ii. Second notice that the one the government has authorized to bear the sword is a "minister of God."
 - a. Think about what this argument is saying then. Only those that are not children of God can be ministers of God.
 - b. This is crazy. No one would make that claim that I know of.
 - c. There is nothing wrong with a Christian or child of God to be the one authorized by the government to bear the sword because it is authorized by God and glorifies God.
- iii. Third Christians are not exempt from providing for the welfare and protection of their families, cities, and countries.
 - a. How can we morally ask others to do these duties we are not willing to do ourselves.
 - b. Do not get me wrong this only applies to those areas that will not contradict sound doctrine.
 1. Attendance is one of these areas that people confuse moral duty, as just mentioned, and compliance with God's Word.
 2. For example people will say it is fine for Christians to become surgeons, policeman, firefighters...even though these jobs require usually missing the assembling of the saints. It is argued, well wouldn't you want a Christian doing these jobs rather than a non-christian if you needed them.
 - i. This doesn't mean I think people can't be these professions biblically, because they can, they must simply follow God's Will in doing so.
 - a. [He 10:25](#)
 3. This argument doesn't hold water, because the best surgeons, firefighters, police officers...are not usually Christians anyway. Why because there are simply more non-christians than Christians.
 - i. I know of no one that puts says I will only go to a Christian for worldly services.
3. Thus what we have seen is that a Christian can righteously fulfill the role of sword bearer.

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- C. Jesus taught it is wrong for anyone to bear the sword against another
1. Many hold to the idea that God has always taught that man is not to kill anyone. They go to two passages for this.
 - i. **Ex 20:13** "Thou shalt not kill." (ASV)
 - ii. **Mt 5:38-39** "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also."
 2. For this purpose we will examine what Jesus said in Matthew for now and will look at Exodus in dealing with the next erroneous point.
 3. Jesus here is not dealing with civil government but rather personal conduct. Paul teaches this same thought.
 - i. **Ro 12:17-21** "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
 4. Both Jesus and Paul are dealing with personal conduct or one, as we often times say, "taking the law into their own hands."
 - i. This is condemned because, as Paul points out, it is the governments responsibility.
 5. It is completely wrong to take these verses and apply them to every situation when they were meant for the specific context of personal conduct.
 - i. Jesus also taught "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (**Mt 5:42**).
 - ii. Does this mean that the government has to give money to everyone that asks for it or banks? How about a Christian banker, is he/she to give to everyone who asks without turning them away?
 6. Also notice that if "turn the other cheek" was a universal law for all aspects of the world without qualification than Jesus violated His own law.
 - i. **Jn 18:22-23** "And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?""
 - a. Notice Jesus didn't turn the other cheek here He defended Himself.
- D. Aren't we supposed to love our enemies and if so how can we use force against or even take the life of one then
1. In other words if we love everyone then we would never take the life of anyone because that is supposedly unloving.
 - i. **Mt 5:44** "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"

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2. The major problem with this false teaching is the misunderstanding of love.
 - i. For example God is love.
 - a. **I Jn 4:8** "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."
 - ii. God did take life though.
 - a. **Ac 5:5** "Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things."
 - b. **Ac 5:10** "Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband."
 - c. **II Ki 19:35** "And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead."
 - iii. God command His children to take the life of others under the right circumstances.
 - a. **Gn 9:6** "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man."
 - b. We see it was commanded for...
 1. Idolatry **Dt 17:2-7**
 2. Rape **Dt 22:25**
 3. Kidnapping **Ex 21:16**
 4. Juvenile delinquency **Dt 21:18-23**
 - i. From this we can see that **Ex 20:13** does not apply to all killing but murder i.e. unlawful taking of life.
3. Thus the taking of life lawfully is not unloving but could even be described as loving.
 - i. Example if you take the life of one that is threatening to murder your family out of love for your family you would be lawfully killing for love.

III. Lessons Concerning Our Passage

- A. Capital punishment is not wrong
 1. If God made capital punishment righteous in the O.T. and He did.
 - i. **Gn 9:6**
 2. If God made capital punishment righteous in the N.T. and He did.
 - i. **Ro 13:4**
 3. Then capital punishment is righteous and we cannot find wrong with it.
- B. Paying taxes is not wrong
 1. As we can see we cannot exempt ourselves from taxes.
 - i. **Ro 13:6; Lk 20:22-25**
 2. However there is nothing wrong with using the rules given by the government concerning tax exemptions.

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- C. Patriotism is not wrong
1. **Ro 13:7** "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, **honor to whom honor.**"
 2. **Ro 13:7** "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, **honor to whom honor is owed.**" (ESV)
 3. Here is the reality we can be proud to be Americans. This country was formed based on God and Christianity.
 - i. Being patriotic doesn't mean we have to agree with everything the country does.
 - ii. It means we are proud to be American in general.

CONCLUSION

1. What we have seen is clear in these passages. God expects His people to obey that which He established...the government they are a part of.
 - a. We are to respect it.
 - b. We are to honor it.
 - c. We are to submit to it.
2. Let it be said of each of us that we honor and obey God's most precious Word concerning our government and the decisions it makes, and let us pray for our government most assuredly.
3. Invitation²
 - a. God's Plan of Salvation
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**

² Much help was taken from the manuscript titled "Romans 13:1-7: The Christian and Civil Government (Can A Christian Kill For His Government, etc.? Pacifist Position)"