

Part 1 - Powers that be are ordained of God
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Haunted by the thought of visiting Rome Paul writes to the Romans from Corinth. It was sometime in A.D. 58 Paul wrote the epistle to the Church of God at Rome. Always his dream to visit and preach there, he was planning to go through Achaia and Macedonia to Jerusalem, and then Luke shares a sentence obviously dropped straight from Paul's heart; after I have been there, I must also see Rome (Acts 19: 21 ASV). When in Jerusalem, the situation looked threatening and the end seemed near, Paul had a vision that lifted his heart. In the vision the Lord stood by him and said; be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome (Acts 23: 11 ASV). The Church of God at Jerusalem was mother church, but a poor fellowship. Paul organized a collection from the younger churches for Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16). It was opportunity for young fellowships to apply Christian charity in a practical manner. Just as Paul was about to set out he writes; now, I say, I go to Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem (Romans 15: 25-26 ASV).

Why write then? Paul was mobilizing prayers before starting his journey. I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen (Romans 15: 30-33 ASV).

Text: Romans 13: 1-7 ASV

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of

God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

At first reading this is an extremely surprising passage, for it seems to counsel absolute obedience on the part of the Christian to the civil power. In point of fact, this is a commandment which runs through the whole New Testament.

Text: I Timothy 2: 1-2 ASV

I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.

Text: Titus 3: 1 ASV

Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work.

Text: I Peter 2: 13-17 ASV

Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a

cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. Honor all men.

In the Acts of the Apostles frequently the tribunal of the pagan magistrate was often the safest refuge against the fury of the Jewish mob. Time and again we see Paul receiving justice and protection at the hands of the impartial Roman justice. But the interesting and the significant thing is that many years, and even centuries later, when persecution had begun to rage, and when Christians were regarded as outlaws, the Christian leaders were saying exactly the same thing.

Justin Martyr writes Text: Apology I: 17,

Everywhere, we, more readily than all men, endeavor to pay to those appointed by you the taxes, both ordinary and extraordinary, as we have been taught by Jesus. We worship only God, but in other things we will gladly serve you as kings and rulers of men, and praying that, with your kingly power, you may be found to possess also sound judgment.

Pleading for peace for Christians Athenagoras writes Text: Chapter 37

We deserve favor because we pray for your government, that you may, as is most equitable, receive the kingdom, son from father, and that your empire may receive increase and addition until all men become subject to your sway.

Tertullian writes Text: Apology 30

We offer prayer for the safety of our princes to the eternal, the true, the living God, whose favor, beyond all things, they must themselves desire... Without ceasing, for all our emperors we offer prayer. We pray for life prolonged; for security to the empire; for protection for the imperial house; for brave armies, a faithful senate, a virtuous people, the world at rest, whatever, as man or Caesar, an emperor would wish. The Christian cannot but look up to the emperor because the Christian believes that the Emperor is called by the Lord to his office. Caesar is more ours than yours because our God appointed him.

In Christian gatherings Arnobius declares 4: 36
Peace and pardon are asked for all authority.

It was the consistent and official teaching of the Christian Church that obedience must be given to, and prayers must be made for, the civil power, even when the wielder of that civil power was a Nero.

It is most unfortunate that some hold and teach some scripture was temporary and local, or had reference to conditions that have now passed away. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever. Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace (Hebrews 13: 8-9 ASV).

The Hebrew nation was notoriously rebellious. Palestine, especially Galilee, was constantly seething insurrection. The Zealots believed and were convinced there was no king for the Jew but God; and they paid no tribute to anyone except to God. They were not content with passive resistance. They believed that God would not be helping them unless they embarked on violent action to help themselves. They were sworn and pledged to a career of murder and assassination. Their aim was to make civil government impossible. Known as dagger bearers, they were fanatical nationalists and sworn to terrorist methods. Not only did they use terrorism towards the Roman government; they wrecked the houses, burned the crops, and assassinated the families of their own fellow Jews who paid tribute to the Roman government.

In this Paul saw no point at all. It was, direct negation of all Christian conduct. He writes with such definiteness because he wished to disassociate Christianity altogether from the insurrectionist Judaism that at least a part of the nation thought was normal Jewish conduct. He makes it clear that Christianity and good citizenship went essentially and necessarily hand in hand.

There is more than a temporary relationship between the Christian

and the state. It may well be true circumstances caused by unrest of the Hebrews was in Paul's mind, but there were other things as well. No man can disassociate himself from the society in which he lives. No man can in conscience, opt out of the nation. As a part of the nation, he enjoys certain benefits which he could not have as an individual. He cannot reasonably claim all the privileges and refuse all the duties. He is bound in the bundle of life. As he is a part of the body of the Christ he is also part of the body of the nation. There is no such thing as an isolated individual. A man has duty to the state, and must discharge that duty even if a Nero is on the throne.

To the state a man owes protection. It was Plato's idea the state existed for the sake of justice and safety; that it secured for a man security against wild beasts and savage men. Men herded behind a wall that they might be safe. A state is that body of men who have banded themselves together, who have covenanted together, to maintain certain relationships between each other by observance of certain laws. Without the state, without the law, without mutual agreement to observe the law, the bad and selfish strong man would be supreme. Life would be ruled by the law of the jungle. Every man owes his security to the state and is therefore under a duty and a responsibility to the state.

To the state ordinary people owe a wide range of services which as individuals they could not enjoy. It would be impossible for every man to have his own water, light, transport system, and mail. It would be impossible for a man to enjoy social security. These things are obtainable only when men agree to live together. It would be quite wrong for a man to enjoy what the state can provide him and give nothing. No man can take without giving, is one compelling reason why the Christian is bound to be a good citizen, and to take part in his duties of citizenship.

The Roman Empire was a divinely ordained instrument to save the

world from chaos. It gave the Roman Peace allowing Paul the chance to do his missionary work. Ideally men should be bound together by Christian love. But they are not and the cement which keeps them together is the state.

The state is an instrument in the hand of God preserving the world from chaos. Those who administer the state play their part in God's work. It is the Christian's duty to help and not hinder.

My Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Luke 11: 2

I come boldly unto the throne of grace, that I may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4: 16

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

James 5: 16

First of all, I give thanks, for all that are in authority.

I Timothy 2: 1

That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

I Timothy 2: 2

This is good and acceptable in the sight of Elohim our Saviour.

I Timothy 2: 3

May they observe Your statutes and judgments,

II Chronicles 7: 17

and serve no other gods, or worship them.

II Chronicles 7: 19

Whatsoever they do in word or deed, may they do all in the name of Adhonai Jesus, giving thanks to Elohim and the Father by him.

Colossians 3: 17

Asking all in Jesus name.

John 14: 14

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven.

Matthew 6: 10

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6: 13