

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

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PART 27: LAW ABIDING CHRISTIANS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Paul's letter to the Romans was written before he came to Rome. Nero was the Emperor from 54-68 A.D. During the early part of his rule, Nero was benign and made life prosperous throughout the empire. It is impossible to know specifically when Paul wrote the letter to the Romans but Bible scholars have placed it between 51-56 A.D.

Thus when Paul wrote this letter, life in Rome was flourishing and Paul had no problems with the Roman government to preach the Gospel or to travel freely within the empire. Thus, Paul had a favorable view of the Roman government.

Paul ran into problems with the local Jewish government in Jerusalem around 57 A.D. and appealed to Caesar in order to avoid being executed in Jerusalem. He arrived in Rome around 61 A.D. and spent two years under house arrest before Emperor Nero heard his case. He was brought before Nero in 63 A.D., and after Paul had made his presentation, Nero dropped all charges against Paul and set him free. Paul then continued to travel and preach. **2 Timothy 4:16-17**

It was after the first trial that Nero began to degenerate into an unstable frame of mind and turned on the Christians. He ordered soldiers to burn down portions of Rome in order to make room for his new building projects and blamed the fire on the Christians and a terrible persecution soon followed. Paul got caught up in the persecution, was arrested and brought back to Rome and in 67 A.D. and ultimately executed. Nero fled for his life a year later during a revolt and eventually he was caught and killed.

THE MINDSET OF PAUL

Paul was a Pharisee and thoroughly trained in Jewish law. The Pharisee leaders had produced the Talmud, which contained an additional 600 laws which were used to control the Jewish people. As a result, rebelling against the Talmud would create havoc in the Jewish community and compliance with these man-made laws was instilled from childhood.

Paul was also a Roman citizen and he cherished the Roman law system which afforded him with the freedom to live, travel and do business as he saw fit. If the Roman law system broke down, it would mean chaos and make it difficult for churches to operate.

God bases the entire creation on physical, spiritual, and political laws to govern nations. When God called Moses to set up the nation of Israel, He provided Moses with a set of laws that would govern the new nation. **Job 38:1-33**

When Jesus set up the New Testament church, He gave precise instructions to the church leaders. **Ephesians 4:10-16**



Christians are to submit to leadership, whether it be political or church, if they are in line with God and the Scriptures. If the leadership is evil, a Christian cannot submit, because it would require violating the Word of God to do so.

BENIGN GOVERNMENT

The following points describe the conduct of Christians under a benign government:

1. As Christians we should accept the fact that nations and governments are ordained by God in order to avoid anarchy. **Genesis 9:19; 10:5; 10:32; Acts 17:26**
2. Christians are to accept the ruler over their nation whether it be a king, an emperor or a president. People living in the United States should be thankful since we live in a republic governed by a constitution that mandates authority comes from the people and not the other way around. **Romans 13:1**
3. If the people do not support a government and sabotage it instead, this leads to chaos and anarchy. Examples of this can be found in the French revolution in the 18th century, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917, Hitler's takeover of Germany in 1933 and communist takeovers in China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Cuba. **Romans 13:2**
4. A benign ruler is not a threat to law abiding citizens. **verse 3**
5. It is the duty of a benign government to write just laws and hold criminals responsible and execute murderers when necessary. **verse 4; Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 21:12; Numbers 35:29-34**
6. A Christian should not obey the law out of fear; instead, he should obey the law because his conscience tells him to do so.

No government can exist unless the population finances it. This is also known as taxation. At the time of Paul there were taxes and custom fees.

In the United States there are federal and state taxes, sales taxes, property taxes, school taxes, fire taxes, etc. There are all kinds of fees for building permits, business fees, etc. Unless a Christian wants a prison ministry, we should pay all applicable taxes and fees that are not contrary to the Bible.

7. Christians also need to respect government offices; from the president to the peace officer. **Romans 13:5-7**

PERSONAL CONDUCT

What should be our personal conduct in light of what Paul advocated?

1. The only thing that a Christian should owe to another person is love. **Romans 13:8**
2. We don't keep the Ten Commandments to be saved but because we are saved. **Matthew 5:17-19**
3. When we keep God's commandments, it should culminate in love for other people. **Romans 13:9-10**

4. Paul believed the second return of Jesus was imminent and that salvation from this earthly life was at hand. Therefore, Christians should put an end to all works of evil and live in the light, honesty, and reject all sinful desires of the flesh.
verses 11-14

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?