

Romans 13

Historical Setting

Jews of the Roman empire were notoriously bad citizens. Christians had not yet been persecuted when Paul wrote his Roman epistle.

AD 49	Roman Emperor, Claudius expels Jews from Rome
AD 57	Paul writes epistle to the Romans
AD 64	Nero burns Rome; blames Christians Apostle Peter executed
AD 64-67	Apostle Paul executed
AD 66-70	First Jewish-Roman War

Jewish thinking:

A gentile ruler over Jews was sinful.

Laws Concerning Israel's Kings

¹⁴“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. *Leviticus 17:14-15*

Submission to the Authorities

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷Pay 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.

What does Paul say about Christians living under civil, secular government?

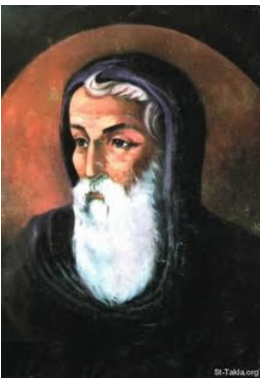
Apostle Peter's similar command (1 Peter 2:13-17)

¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.



Justin Martyr (100-165 AD); Rome

"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, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men, and praying that, with your kingly power, you may be found to possess also sound judgment."



Athenagoras (133-190 AD); Athens

"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 (160-220 AD); Roman province of Africa

"We offer prayer for the safety of our princes to the eternal, the true, the living God, whose favor, beyond all other 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."

"Caesar is more ours than yours because our God appointed him."

“Bearing the Sword” - Capital Punishment

“Bearing the sword” means...

3 Key Scriptures

Genesis 9:5-6

⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

**⁶ “Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.**

Context

God speaking to Noah after the flood waters receded. A new Covenant was established. Reinstated creation principles and a new standard for life.

What are the principles here?

Romans 13:4

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Context:

Submission to civil magistrates

Civil authority is God's servant

Civil authority is ordained by God to promote good and restrain evil--by force, if necessary

What are the principles here?

Acts 25: 9-11

⁹ But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?” ¹⁰ But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.

Context:

Paul, in Rome itself, before Festus at the Caesar's Tribunal. Had originally appeared before Jewish & Roman authorities in Jerusalem on penalty of death but, using Roman Law, appealed to be tried before Caesar.

What are the principles here?

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT VIEWPOINTS

	MANDATORY	PROHIBITED	PERMITTED
1	<p>Absolute language. Affront to God Himself; sanctity of life and image-bearing creation (Gen 9:6)</p> <p>Gen 9:6 pre-dates & transcends Mosaic law and is rooted in universal creation ethic</p>	<p>Israel's theocracy was unique; no longer exists; Israel's civil law does not apply now</p>	<p>Mosaic Law limits execution: Intent, proportionality, proof, due process</p>
2	<p>Ordains the sword for certain offenses;</p> <p>Punishment is proportionate to crime. When not executing for murder, civil authorities fail to perform their God-appointed responsibility (Gen 9:6; Mosaic law; Rom 13)</p>	<p>Christ's sacrifice ended requirement for blood recompense (Heb 9:14)</p>	<p>Gave room for mercy when justice was due. God did not execute Cain, Moses, David.</p> <p>God demonstrates His love for us by not condemning us (Romans 5:8)</p>
3	<p>NT does not denounce; assumes right of state to use it (Acts 25:10-11)</p>	<p>Gospel has different approach to responding to evil (John 8; woman caught in adultery)</p>	<p>State has authority, but not the obligation.</p> <p>Permitted, not mandated, not prohibited</p> <p>Caution: often unjustly administered by law enforcement & courts; risk of executing an innocent person (racism, poverty)</p>

Are Christians inconsistent by supporting capital punishment & war while opposing abortion?

Fulfilling the Law Through Love (Romans 13)

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

St. Augustine of Hippo; Roman African (354–430 AD)

Give me chastity and continence... but not just yet!"

"I myself was exceedingly astonished as I anxiously reflected how long a time had elapsed since the nineteenth year of my life, when I began to burn with a zeal for wisdom, planning that when I had found it I would abandon all the empty hopes and lying follies of hollow ambitions. And here I was already thirty, and still mucking about in the same mire in a state of indecision, avid to enjoy present fugitive delights which were dispersing my concentration, while I was saying: 'Tomorrow I shall find it...'"

Romans 13:13

¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

1 Thess 5:9-10

⁹ For God has not destined [you] for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for [you] so that whether [you] are awake or asleep [you] might live with him.

3 KEY SCRIPTURES & PRINCIPLES BEHIND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Genesis 9:5-6

⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

**⁶ “Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.**

Context

God speaking to Noah after the flood waters receded. A new Covenant was established. Reinstated creation principles and a new standard for life.

What are the principles here?

- After the flood, God has a new standard: He requires the death penalty for murder
- Humans can kill animals, but neither animals nor humans can murder mankind
- The nature of human life is different: made in God’s image
 - Murder destroys an image-bearer
 - Direct affront to God Himself
- Human life is unique (one of a kind)
 - No animals are created in God’s likeness
- Murder requires a reckoning involving the murderer’s life
- Simple, sweeping, absolute principle
- Capital punishment is not restricted to the law code of OT Israel. The principle is rooted in creation. So long as creation lasts, it is place for 1st degree murder.

Romans 13:4

But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Context:

Submission to civil magistrates

Civil authority is God’s servant

Civil authority is ordained by God to promote good and restrain evil--by force, if necessary

What are the principles here?

- Assumes the death penalty (sword = deadly force)
- Shows state has the authority, but not an obligation, to use death penalty
- Capital punishment is permitted, but not mandated, and also not prohibited

Acts 25: 9-11

⁹ But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?” ¹⁰ But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.

Context:

Paul, in Rome itself, before Festus at the Caesar’s Tribunal. Had originally appeared before Jewish & Roman authorities in Jerusalem on penalty of death but, using Roman Law, appealed to be tried before Caesar.

What are the principles here?

- Paul does not deny the right of the state to execute people.
- Instead of denouncing capital punishment, Paul assumes its validity
- Appeals to Caesar, as was the right of Roman citizens, when a crime worthy of death was involved.
- New Testament does not denounce the idea of capital punishment-- but instead-- assumes the right of the state to use it.

