

"Lifting High the Cross and Waving the Flag"

by Rev. John C. Tittle

Scripture Reading: Romans 13: 1-7 NRSV

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; ⁴ for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. ⁶ For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you appreciate most about our country? In what ways can we become a more perfect union?
2. Is it hard for you to pray for presidents and politicians who differ from you?
3. How would you define good citizenship? How does being a good citizen help others? Help yourself? Could being a good citizen ever conflict with being a good Christian?
4. Paul says in Romans 13:1 "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God." Is Paul saying that we do whatever the State tells us to do? Are there situations where Christians need to disobey the state? When might that be?
5. Do you think Christians should be a part of political protests? What are additional ways to engage the government for change?
6. There are a number of spiritual disciplines (prayer, service, Scripture reading, fasting, etc.) Do you think that being a good citizen is one of the spiritual disciplines?
7. The message mentioned that Christians are not to exhibit a blind or mindless obedience to the State. How can Christians be thoughtful about their expression of patriotism? What are practical ways the church might be the conscience of the nation? What are the limits of patriotism for a Christian?
8. Why do you think that Americans and Christian Americans have such a diverse understanding of how far the state should be followed?
9. The message talked about how lifting high the cross and raising the flag are two different things. What happens when we equate waving the flag with lifting high the cross?