

The Sixth Grace of Justification by Faith - Responsibility How the Justified in Christ Benefits Our Neighbors and Nation

Who would think that the justified in Christ would have such a practical benefit! But that's precisely the point. How our testimony spills over into those around us is tremendously important. Although our passage covers mostly our relationship to our nation and neighbors I want to add a personal comment regarding our family. Anything we can apply from Romans chapter 13 can be also applied to our families. I hope to cover that later on.



The problem in Paul's day was that a lot of criticism from the detractors came from the idea that Christians were not loyal to their nation. Indeed. Even Jesus Christ and his followers were accused of this form of criticism. Remember Jesus' "interview" before Pilate? The Jews "trump card" so to speak was that Jesus was a subversive.¹ This accusation was to follow on throughout Paul's day and so we have this emphasis: that the justified in Christ is loyal to his country and that there was no conflict between the believer's loyalty to Christ and to his country.

This is a matter of testimony to the unsaved. It is a matter that we all should take seriously.

The Believer Is to Be Subject to His Government.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Romans 13:1 (King James Version).

MacArthur says it succinctly:

"These seven verses contain the clearest and most specific New Testament teaching on the Christian's responsibility to civil authority. Every Christian, no matter what form of government he lives under, is under command from the Lord to maintain proper and useful submission to that government for the sake of leading a peaceful life and having an effective witness. This recurring theme of submission to society's controlling power is nowhere more forcefully dealt with than here." —The MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

There just is no room for the subversive. We need to understand the practical application of Acts 17 where it affects us today. God, in his wisdom and power has set up the various nation, and boundaries so that his gospel can be preached in one form or another – the Message will get out and sinners will be saved. We may have our ideas about how proper governance may be framed. But at the end of the day, we owe

¹ See [John 18:33-37](#) on this.

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our allegiance to our country.

Shepard does a good job on this section:

"...For the rulers, as a class, have the general ideal of ruling for the good of their people and are not a terror to the good work of the people but to the evil work of some. Dost thou wish not to be afraid? Practice doing habitually the good and thou shalt have praise from the same. The Roman persecutors of the Christians later in history rose from the mistaken notion that Christians were against the state because they refused to worship the emperor. That error arose from the wrong conception of the union of the state and religion, the state forcing some of the people to worship the emperor, a mere man, which was idolatry. Christians could not engage in that worship and please God. So they had to be burned as torches in the public park by Nero who had become a monstrous ruler later in life."²

How can paying our taxes be a good testimony for the Lord?

**Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due;
custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom
honour. Romans 13:7 (King James Version)**

This duty is mentioned by Jesus "...give to Caesar what is Caesar's..."³ Be a responsible citizen. Notice in verses 8-10 that the underlying motivation for being a good citizen is love. This is the graciousness that can come only from a believer who has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.⁴ So this whole practical Christian experience is one of being gracious – not grouchy. It is part of the overall witness of believers among many who would grumble about the state of affairs. This is not to say a believer should do NOTHING about the current political workings. But within the law exert our Christian core values to change, lawfully, our town, state, country to reflect the values found in Acts 17 so that we can have a good background for the preaching of the Gospel. Read [Romans 13:10](#).

Our Challenge Is Balance Our Relationship with Our Government and Our

² [The Life and Letters of St. Paul](#), J. W. Shepard, pg 435

³ Read [Matt 22:15-21](#)

⁴ Read [Gal 5:22-26](#)

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Neighbors with the Coming of Christ.

¹¹ **And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.** ¹² **The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.** Romans 13:11-12 (King James Version).

The early church was very mindful of the imminent coming of Christ. It was the ruling motivation, along with the love of God for their daily witness. I fear that we have lost that excitement today. I remember many a challenging message from a preacher (especially out of my past association with the holiness movement) who would on one hand exhort the brethren to show God's love to the unsaved but on the other hand to be constantly expecting Christ's return and to act accordingly. The motivation of Christ's coming should not be underestimated. If we love his appearing – we will break with the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Wear Your Testimony on Your Sleeve.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Romans 13:14 (King James Version)

Wear your testimony on your sleeve so that people will know you belong to Christ – without being obnoxious. That can be a challenge in and of itself. Again, I quote MacArthur:

“Following his declaration that godly love fulfills the law (13:8–10), Paul next focuses on the urgency of believers becoming more and more like their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, who is Himself the source and power of that divinely-required love. We are to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 14a). That phrase summarizes sanctification (the theme of chapters 12–16), the continuing spiritual growth of those who have become children of God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. The faithful, obedient, loving Christian grows spiritually by becoming increasingly like Jesus Christ. As we clothe ourselves with Christ, His righteousness, truth, holiness, and love become more and more evident in our own lives. His character becomes reflected in us.” —The MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

Yes, wear your Christian testimony on your sleeve for all to see but do not become “holier than thou.” A tall order indeed.