**The Christian and Civil Government**

1. Primary Texts

Romans 13:1-7

1 Peter 2:13-17

Titus 3:1

1. Like many subjects the Bibles teaching on the Christians relationship to Civil Government is complex. It calls for study, contemplation, and nuance.
2. What are the complexities?

A. Regarding Romans 13:3-6. Is this prescriptive or descriptive? v.1 Is the higher power a document or a person? v.3-4 Are all governments at all times, punishers of evil and praisers of good? If a government punishes good and praises evil is the Christians duty to that government in any way changed?

1. There is a biblical teaching that seems to advocate resistance to civil government.
Exodus 1:17 Judges 3:20-21 Daniel 3:18 Daniel 6:10 Acts 4:19 Acts 5:29 Is resistance permitted only in the unique circumstances described in the passages above? Is resistance permitted in any circumstance where obedience to the civil government entails disobedience to an explicit command of God? Is resistance permitted in any circumstance where obedience to the civil magistrate would entail disobedience to any command that by good and necessary deduction may be deduced from scripture?
2. There is biblical teaching that seemingly gives the same unqualified authority to multiple entities.

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things…

Colossians 3:22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters…

Ephesians 5:24 …Let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive…

1 Peter 2:13-14 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man…

The obvious conflict between the various human authorities can be resolved in one of two ways.

* Subordinationism- Amongst the various authorities there is an established hierarchical structure. Of the various human authorities, one is recognized as supreme and all others are subordinated to it.
* Sphere Sovereignty – Each of the various authorities has sovereign authority in its own sphere. None of the authorities has any authority outside of its own sphere.
1. Does scripture present either Subordinationism or Sphere Sovereignty as the biblical option?

Yes, sphere sovereignty is supported by scripture. This assertation is necessarily inferred from the following:

* Scripture teaches the separation of powers (most clearly seen in

2 Chron. 19:11)

* Scripture limits the authority that may be exercised by the various entities that God has ordained. (A. 2 Chron. 26:15-21, B. Exodus 21:15, Lev. 20:9 vs Deut. 21:18-21 C. Matt. 18:17, 1 Cor. 5:9-11
1. How are we to discern the boundaries of the Civil Governments sphere of authority? (For that matter, the boundaries of any human authority.)

Based on the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture. It should be asserted that scripture alone is sufficient to declare the boundaries of the civil governments sphere.

This is consistent with other conclusions regarding civil government:

* By scripture alone we learn that civil government is ordained by God.
* God expects civil government to define good and evil in accordance with his word.

Hence: Scripture alone can tell us what things belong to Caesar and what things belong to God.

1. Summary
2. Honoring and submitting to all legitimate civil authorities is of prime importance to Christians.
3. This is a complex issue.
4. As with all issues we should hold to Sola Scriptura and Tota Scriptura.
5. We may disobey the command of the civil authority when:
* The command contradicts an explicit command of God.
* The command contradicts a command of Gods as deduced from scripture by good and necessary inference.
* When what is commanded is outside of the civil authorities God ordained jurisdiction or sphere of authority.
1. We may comply with a command that is outside of the civil authority’s jurisdiction in order to live peaceably.
2. Further considerations

Practical application

Civil Government:

1. Self Defense
2. Physical Health
3. Corporate worship
4. Military Service