

## How should Christians relate to Government?

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### Introduction

This week I was preparing a sermon on Philemon, Paul's shortest letter, until I watched President Jacob Zuma's response to the Constitutional Courts ruling about Nkandla on TV: 'Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.' (Prov 14.34)

- How should Christians relate to government?
- Two unbiblical extremes.

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### Romans 13.1-7

<sup>1</sup>Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup>Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup>For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority?

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### Romans 13.1-7

Then do what is right and you will be commended. <sup>4</sup>For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup>Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

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### Romans 13.1-7

<sup>6</sup>This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup>Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

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### Overview

1. What should our actions towards government be?
  - Priestly or prophetic?
2. Does God sovereignty and human government
  - The agents or the approach?
3. What should our attitude towards government be?
  - Positive or negative?

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### 1. Our Actions

- Rights vs. Responsibilities of government (Rom 13.1-3)
- Submitting to vs. Speaking to government, e.g. pastor on Rom 13 at ANC rally.
- Priestly vs. Prophetic action towards government
- Joseph and Moses.

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### 2. Agents and Approach

- Difficult as it may seem, according to this passage, the agents of government are sovereignly appointed by God.
- Dan 4.32: ...until you know that the Most High rules the **kingdom** of men and **gives** it to whom he will.
- If God sovereignly determines governments, He also sovereignly determines government approaches, i.e. democracy vs. monarchy.

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### 2. Agents and Approach

- The differences between democracy and monarchy are:
1. Level of participation (self-rule vs. royal rule)
    - Pay taxes, vote for, speak to, formulate and enforce laws, serve in, like Daniel, Ester, Wilberforce, Thuli Madonsela, Chief Justice Mogoeng.
  1. Separation of powers (Isa. 33.22)
    - The Reformers learned that only One could safely wield absolute power!

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### 3. Our Attitudes

- Positive: Submission, honour, respect, because God institutes government (Rom 13.1-7)
- Negative: Disillusionment, disappointment, and longing, because God judges (Ps 2) and replaces government (Dan 2.44; Rev 11.15)
- Tension between 'lawlessness without king' (Deut 17.14-20; Judg 17.6; 21.25) and 'God as king' (Deut 33.5)

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### conclusion

Christians should relate to government in:

- Priestly and prophetic service.
- Faithful participation.
- Hopeful anticipation.

Apart from registering to vote on 9 & 10 April, what should/could we do to participate constructively in democratic government?

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