

Practical Exegesis of Romans 13:1-7: God's Governments are to be Obeyed by God's People

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Celebrating its bicentennial in this year of our Lord 1976, the nation is joyful but perturbed. The festive mood is dampened by deep concerns about America's third century. Primary elections are unpredictable with yesterday's winner becoming today's loser and tomorrow's dropout. The one constant that emerges from all the preliminary ballot battles is a widespread dissatisfaction in the citizenry with the old faces in the political news and with the old and new scandals in Washington. Respect for the government establishment seems to be plunging to new lows.

Celebrating its centennial in the year of our Lord 1876, this nation gathered at the Philadelphia exposition in throngs, but not without national problems and concerns. Nine days before the country's birthday the Sioux War had taken a strange turn when 265 soldiers made a last stand at the Little Bighorns. In March of that year the Secretary of War had been impeached, though not convicted, for fraud at the Fort Sill trading post. In May and June revelations regarding railroad bribes to government officials rocked the country and influenced nomination convention results. A Washington administration was under fire, a ferocious fire equaled only in 1924 and unsurpassed only in 1974.

In 1876, also a presidential election year, the sharply divided opinion of the electorate was demonstrated by the fact that the results could not be definitely determined until four months later when Tilden supporters grudgingly accepted for specific favors a special election verdict that put Hayes in the White House. It was a near thing that prevented that election from being determined by bullets instead of ballots and the country from turning itself into a banana republic where post-election civil war is the order of the day. A more favorable outcome was obtained only because sufficient respect for law, order, and government carried the day.

In 1776 this country declared its independence with jubilant bell-ringing, but not without grave concerns about the conduct of a Revolutionary War and the creation of a national government. Individuals, especially the Christians, anguished over the issues of loyalty and obedience.

Seventeen hundred years before the issue was not that different and the situation was not that dissimilar. Converts to Christianity looked askance at a civil government not noted for the virtues of humility and patience that their religion fostered. Compared to most other contemporary and precedent powers, the Roman Empire wasn't all that bad. It stood for law and order, its law and order, and brought more peace into the world than ever seen before, the *Pax Romana*, still a standard two millennia later.

There were grave problems, however, nagging at the time and foreboding worse for the future. First of all, there was the problem of the one-man rule, the all-powerful emperor. When he was good, he could be very good for the realm. When he was bad, conditions could be horrid. The ruler in the 50's A.D. seemed to be doing well. His name was Nero. Following the advice of capable officials, he was conducting a government that looked good to the city of Rome and to the remote provinces. If all went well, he might even go down in history as Nero the Hero.

However, there were disturbing signs that he might emulate some of his predecessors—the moody Tiberius who granted the governorship to Pontius Pilate, a political hack, the mad Caligula who conferred the consulship on *Incitatus*, his favorite horse. The worst happened. Before his fourteen-year rule ended Nero would reveal himself to be a persecutor of Christians and a murderer of his own family.

Another fatal flaw in that government that prevailed in the world when Christianity was young and its New Testament was written was orderly succession. The result was strife and bloodshed in the corridors of power and widespread civil war in the empire when there were rival claimants to the throne. Four emperors claimed the throne in less than thirteen months after Nero's suicide. Obviously there were a multiplicity of loyalty issues and obedience problems for Roman citizens, Christian and non-Christian.

Finally the government of the Roman emperors was unable to cope with the basic function of tax collecting and put it on a system that supplied adequate funds for the government and was fair to the taxpayer. Profits of fifty percent were normal for the honest and upright tax collecting businessmen. What the dishonest garnered is anybody's guess. Paying taxes into such a system was not pleasant for pagan or Christian.

For Christians in the Roman Empire and in the American Republic, for believers of all times and seasons, for His people in America in 1776, 1876, and 1976 God provides instruction and guidance about government, about the political side of the sanctified life. Through his inspired and infallible writer, the Apostle Paul, he sets down in the first seven verses of the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the classic passage on the relation of the Christian to his government.

The first portion of Romans treats the cardinal truth of Christianity, the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus. There follows naturally and inevitably a section on the believer's life of righteousness. Included therein is the passage on government that we propose to apprehend and apply in this bicentennial gathering.

The key thought in the seven-verse section is: God's Governments are to be Obeyed by God's People. The first two verses stress the implication for obedience in the truth: Governments are instituted by God. The

next three verses urge obedience for the reason: Governments Serve as God's Agents. The final verses carry out the thought: Governments Merit our Service.

The procedure will be to highlight key thoughts in each of the three sections that have first been cast into a quite literal rendition. These key thoughts will then be scrutinized for the implication they have for the current national anniversary celebration and for the Christian life in general.

Part One: Governments are Instituted by God (1-2).

Let every person put himself under the higher authorities, for authority does not exist except by God, and those authorities that exist have been set up by God. Therefore he who puts himself into opposition to the authority opposes God's order, and they that oppose shall bring down on themselves judgment.

The first key thought is the broad principle we set down as point 1:

All government authority is to be obeyed by all under it because it stems from God.

The all-inclusive nature of the statement deserves to be noted at the outset. Normally we assume that there are exceptions to all rules. For the rule of the divine basis for government, however there is no exception, nor to the corollary that all are subject to government authority with such a basis.

It is significant that Paul does not go to any lengths at all to prove his claim that all authority is of God. He is writing to Christians who acknowledge God as the Creator of all things, also the natural law and the natural reason that compels and enables men to live in an orderly society with authority to enforce the order. As do we, so the Christians at Rome knew the Fourth Commandment and willingly applied it to the field of government. Therefore Paul simply declares that all authority is of God.

God Himself has set fast the authority principle; men with their endowed capabilities draw up the specific form that authority takes in a given instance. The form can vary from tribalism to communism, from absolute monarchy to pure democracy. The authority principle is the foundation of all of them and that is why they are all of God.

Christians in America should note this point. We prize our government of and by and for the people. We can rightly claim that no better system of government has ever been devised to insure the unhindered development of both state and church. We are celebrating the bicentennial with a deep sense of gratitude for the good government we have had for the two hundred years. We are this year rededicating ourselves to the effort to maintain our country's government in the third century.

It would be a mistake, however, for us American Christians to assume that only our form of government has God's authorization and blessing or that our system is some sort of additional means of grace that alone can insure the continuing existence of the church. It would be a violation of God's will for us to think that we must tear down all other types of government so that ours might prevail. All that would be misuse and abuse of a great blessing and would do violence to the Bible passage before us.

As we make no exceptions in the matter of the divine basis of all government authority, whatever the form or rank, so we will make none when it is a question of who is under the authority.

The Apostle tells us, "Let every soul be subject." This should almost go without saying but a word on the point may be of value for us believers in America.

We may roundly repudiate the attitude of the lawless criminal determined to live outside of the law or the philosophy of the would-be superman whose *Herrenmoral* places him above the law. But we have breathed in enough of America's free air to be susceptible to a scofflaw attitude, at least in instances. A generation ago many American Christians deluded themselves into thinking they were "striking a blow for liberty" by violating the Volstead Act. Today's version seems to be the premise that the national speed limit applies to all cars but the one we are driving.

Admittedly in such and similar cases, the necessity and wisdom and value of the specific bit of government in action may be open to serious question. What is not in question is the authority behind all law and government. This leads into the amplification supplied in Point 2.

It is the government authority actually in existence that is to be obeyed.

The Holy Spirit guiding Paul's writing knew well that in this sinful world there would be problems about government. Like everything else here below, government suffers change and decay. Empires sicken and topple, dynasties decay and die, constitutions are amended and scrapped, laws are rewritten and repealed. Sometimes the change is smooth and orderly, but often it is accomplished by strife and violence, revolution and civil war. In such times of conflict over authority it is not always an open-and-shut case when the determination is to be made as to who is entitled to wear the crown or the white hat.

The Holy Spirit made the matter as simple as possible for us. The essential epithet supplied for the authority that is of God and is to be obeyed is not "overwhelmingly popular" or "legally sanctioned" or

“sufficiently successful” or some other criterion difficult to determine without superior skill in taking polls or higher degrees in jurisprudence and political science.

The authority “existing,” says Paul, is the one to be obeyed. The state of being is the determining factor. This usually settles the issue automatically and immediately. The obviously “dead-letter” law can scarcely claim to exist. One may not like the idea of a Nixon-appointed occupant in the White House but it is easy to see who is living there and will be living there until January 20 at least. A West Germany and an East Germany exist in the place of the formerly unified country.

There can, of course, still be problems in recognizing the existing authority. In the days when monarchy was popular, there could be rival claimants to the throne, as in England during the time of the War of the Roses. Back in 1861 the Christian soldier, Robert E. Lee, had to decide whether to obey the federal government and lead its armies or to be loyal to Virginia and become a Confederate general.

In 1776 and earlier the issue of existing authority was real and earnest. Some feel that the chief element in the bicentennial celebration should be total repudiation of and repentance for the Revolution and the Declaration as resistance to God-given authority. It should be agreed that Paul in Romans 1.3, 1-7, holds no brief for revolutions as such, is not in harmony with, much of the rights-of-man Revolutionary literature of the time, and points the finger at much early Revolutionary activity.

It should also be remembered, however, that Englishmen through Parliament had before 1776 gotten quite used to the idea of having their say in setting up their governments and selecting their kings. Representation was in the natural order of things but was but impossible for the Thirteen Colonies. But these are all basically political problems and beyond the scope of our present study. Suffice it to say that there were, certainly after July 4, 1776, questions about the existing authority for Christians in the Thirteen Colonies—turned States. No doubt many of them followed their conscience bound by Romans 13, and were led to different answers and down different pathways of action. Their decision, it is to be hoped, was reached on the basis of which was the existing authority and not on how good or bad the government was that was being provided. Both good and bad governments owe their existence to God. Paul plainly teaches that in the passage before us in Point 3:

The existing authorities have been set up by God in accord with His providence.

Previously the emphasis has been on basic institutions of government authority; here Paul stresses the truth that every specific authority of higher or lower rank is what it is because of God’s world government, his all-embracing providence.

This is not saying that no human agencies and earthly affairs are employed by God. On the contrary, the next occupant of the White House, present dweller or newcomer, will have November and primary victories and campaign and convention decisions to look back to as milestones on the path to the presidency. This point does not mean that God is to be held directly responsible for every evil rule, that has fed on sin or every evil ruler who dared “to wade through slaughter to a throne.”

What is stressed is that God is ultimately the One who, by shaping the affairs of men and events of history and by preventing or limiting or turning the evil involved, has set up each authority. Nebuchadnezzar made a lot of mistakes but the biggest was when he boasted about his palace and power and claimed: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty.” The Voice from heaven corrected him and condemned him to a beast-like existence until he would “know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

This truth has been a comfort for devout believers of all ages when the misrule of a tyrant brought calamity to the country as a whole and to its individual citizens. The Pharaoh of the Exodus and Herod, the murderer of the infants, did not ascend their thrones without God’s foreknowledge and providence.

America has had some inept and corrupt administrations in Washington. The same goes for state and local governments. Their corruption is not to be met by open rebellion but by legal opposition, if possible, or, if that avenue is closed, by patient suffering. As the old saying goes: “The Christian is forbidden to do evil but he is bidden to suffer evil.” That patient attitude is not impossible for one who believes firmly that God sets up all authorities and knows what he is doing.

We do not, it should be admitted, always know in detail and precise point just what God has in mind in His providential care of our political affairs. In a few instances, usually with the aid of the perspective of a long history, we can clearly see the hand of God writing the history. As just one case in point, the grim times of America’s early years under the Confederation must have been a sore trial then, but now we see them as a hinge event that helped bring in the stable and satisfactory government under the Constitution with its many blessings for the country and for the churches in the country.

In most instances, however, especially when the events are contemporary, we cannot definitely see all the detail of God’s providence in our politics and history. Blessed are they who do not see all that and yet believe that God’s providence is at work in the establishment of all authority, both the good and the bad. Those who believe that will certainly readily agree to Paul’s declaration in Point 4.

The person who rebels against government authority is actually in rebellion against God.

The rebel may think he is only trying to put down a bad ruler in the interest of obtaining better government for the country; he ought to know, as the believers do know, that he has come into conflict with God Himself to the harm of all concerned. What God said to Judge Samuel after the people had rejected his regime—“They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them,”—was spoken in the time of the exceptional theocracy but it applies for all time to all rebellions against all types of government.

God’s order calls for government authority and God’s providence is at work in its establishment and God’s will commands obedience to authority. How could it be otherwise than that the rebel against government authority is in rebellion against God!

To avoid unclarity and confusion in the matter, two special points need to be made. One revolves around a definition of opposition and rebellion in our time and circumstance. The other has to do with the Scripture’s own exception to the rule, an exception that does not in any way, however, involve an inconsistency.

Regarding the first matter, we need to bear in mind that in our arrangement of political affairs there are divided powers and provisions for orderly dissent and legal redress of grievances.

In such a situation what often appears to be opposition and resistance to authority is actually obedience to government and does not come under the prohibitions of Romans 13.

A President was recently forced out of the White House midway in his term. Certain men played leading roles in the ouster. Were Cox and Sirica and Rodino violating Romans 13, 2? The judgment would have to be, so far as outward conduct is concerned, that they were not opposing but were serving government authority as they carried out their appointed tasks.

In the same light are to be viewed “test cases” that challenge not in the interest of lawlessness but out of concern for clarification or constitutionality. There might be an appearance of opposition to authority but the appearance would be deceiving in such instances. One need not be a calamity howler to suppose that in the near future our church body might have test laws seeking to further equal rights at the expense of our religious convictions regarding the public ministry. We should be thankful for the opportunity of such tests and use them wisely.

The occasion could arise that might make it necessary for the believer to disobey his government’s command that requires something of him that God has forbidden as sin.

This happened to Daniel, to Peter and John, to the persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire, and to others at the time of the Reformation. Today in less fortunate lands than ours tyrannical governments are commanding what God has forbidden and forbidding what God has commanded and Christians are disobeying these governments. It is written: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Does Paul fail to mention this exception in Romans 13 because he is unaware of it or he does not agree to its validity? Of course not. Paul does not make specific mention of the point because he assumes it, because he knows his readers will understand without a special reminder. What Acts 5, 29 states explicitly actually implicitly in Romans 13, 1-2.

The whole thrust of Paul’s discourse here is that opposition to government is so bad because it is actually opposition to God. God is set above government in clear and unmistakable terms if therefore a government commands the Christian to do what God forbids, the higher authority must be heeded. That is God. Paul makes it abundantly clear that he too believes: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

His next statement is also altogether in harmony with Peter’s declaration to the council. This is point 5:

Those in rebellion against authority bring judgment on themselves.

God is not mocked, certainly not when his authority and the authority he has established are flouted and rejected. The rebellion results in judgment. Sometimes it is the flouted government authority that carries out the judgment. Even the unbelieving world regards treason as the crime of crimes. Sometimes the judgment is executed by God, either here or hereafter.

Also in this matter we need to be careful about pointing fingers and linking events in a cause-effect relationship. Occasionally, often with the Bible’s aid, we can say of the execution of rebels, “They were in condemnation indeed justly, for they received the due reward of their deeds.” Too often the full grasp of the matter lies beyond our ken. But we know that God is not mocked and that the mills of his justice grind exceedingly fine.

The important thing is that we do not bring this judgment on ourselves. We have so little reason to cast ourselves into the rebel role. If the bicentennial recollections and recitations say anything to me it is that “the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places” and that “I have a goodly heritage.” I have so little reason to rebel in this free and happy and prosperous land. Conversely, I have every reason to shun the part of the rebel. The grass isn’t greener on the other side. The judgment is threatened. Most of all—“How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” This holds true also in 1976 when a general anti-establishment, anti-authority, anti-Washington, anti-obedience mood prevails. This concludes Part One. What follows is a presentation of—

Part Two: Governments Serve As God’s Agents (3-5)

For government officials are not a cause of fear for good works but for the bad. If you do not want to fear authority continue doing what is good and you will have praise from it. For a servant of God it is to You for good. But if you practice what is bad, fear! For not in vain does it carry the sword. For a servant of God, an avenger for wrath it is to him doing what is bad. Therefore there is necessity to be obedient, not only because of the wrath, but also because of your conscience.

The first of the major thoughts in this section we number point 6:

Respect government authority as God's minister.

Along with the obedience the Christian is to demonstrate over against authority should go the proper attitude toward the authority itself and all the officials invested with it. This is an attitude of genuine respect. There is no place for any hate-the-fuzz philosophy. The government official, says Paul, is a servant of God. He is consequently worthy of double honor, as one in the high calling of God's representatives and as one who as such functions in a way that benefits us.

Paul, one can surmise, would find some of the so-called humor centering around a supposedly bumbling President on the tasteless side, to say the least, a case of going too far too often. Some humor aimed at the White House or city hall may be a natural part of the American political and social scene. Some Presidents, like Lincoln and F. D. Roosevelt seem to have thrived on extra large doses of ridicule and invective. A study of Romans 13, will, however, suggest that today's natural reaction to the recent Washington debacle is getting out of hand and may result in tomorrow's greater ill. If disrespect for the highest official becomes the order of the day, few will be inclined to follow the Apostle's injunction in point 7.

Respect authority as God's agent for good to those that do good.

Citizens who obey their government, Paul says, have no reason to look upon it as an object of hatred or a source of evil. They can and should expect to receive from it what is good and beneficial for them. And who can enumerate all the benefits that have come to us and to our church body in the past years through the government provided for us in this country! Religious liberty, freedom of worship and conscience, separation of church and state automatically come to mind as outstanding national blessings. But these only begin a long, long list of instances of our government serving us "for good."

There is another side of the coin not to be overlooked. Christian citizens live alongside of unbelievers. Christian citizens live with the old man inside of them. The wickedness that ensues must be held in check if there is to be an orderly and bearable life here below. That is why Paul immediately adds point 8:

Respect authority also as God's agent for wrath to those that do bad.

The government function to punish the evildoer is unfortunately necessary and indispensable. One shudders to think how our country's two-century history would read, had there been no such function operative. Even a slackening of the function in the last years has produced results not at all desirable.

Recently a tendency has developed in our society to emphasize the rights of the person arrested and convicted. That in itself is not wrong. In a country that prides itself on being democratic and in its constitution guarantees equality of all citizens in the eyes of the law, this is very much in place. The Miranda decision and others like it may have been needed to provide a balance in a judicial system that for too long favored the one with the most money for legal fees.

What is wrong is the imbalance in the other direction. Misguided ethical and religious thinking has caused many to come to view the punishing function of the state as something evil in itself, to be opposed instead of supported. We do not have to apologize, certainly not to our old man when he is running amuck, for the states God-given assignment of "being an avenger for wrath to him doing what is bad." "Not in vain," says Paul, has the state been given the sword.

The forces of evil, and that includes the old man in us, have every reason to fear this power of the state. The wrath and the sword fall on those who deserve the punishment and in the process instill the fear that deters others from evildoing.

The term sword is more than a general symbol of the power of the state. In Paul's day and in his state, the sword was the instrument of execution. Roman citizens, being punished to the ultimate, were beheaded.

There is currently much controversy in our day about the death penalty. All kinds of arguments on both sides of the question are suggested. An erroneous one sometimes advanced by those in favor of abolishing the death penalty is that the spirit Christianity expressed in the New Testament is at variance with the death penalty. The Old Testament, they say, may have had its "shedding of blood" punishment but we should have advanced beyond that.

No matter what else might be said, that argument is dead wrong. The New Testament does not forbid the death penalty. Paul in Romans 13, 4 declares that the state does not bear the sword in vain. The declaration is, in fact, a part of his admonition in point 9:

It is necessary to be obedient to authority for wrath's sake.

If better reasons are being ignored, if the old man is threatening to have his evil way, then what is there left to prevent the disobedience and evildoing but wrath, fright, punishment? One might wish that higher motives for obedience would prevail and it would not have to come to this last resort. But if lawlessness and disobedience can not be checked in this evil world in any other way, then let wrath have its opportunity.

The concept of the police state is repugnant to Americans. We look back with shame on episodes in the past two hundred years of our country's history when the government's punishment came too heavy, too quickly, too often on citizens. Thank God that such incidents are more exception than rule! What would be even worse, however, would be a country where there would be no wrath or fear or punishment, no regard for the authority of government or God. God spare us such a circumstance and to this end employ in us a second, a greater motivation to obedience discussed in point 10:

Obedience to authority is especially necessary for conscience' sake.

Unbelievers and believers alike have been endowed by God with inner equipment that enables them to know right from wrong both before and after the fact. The warning and the accusing voice of conscience should be a powerful check to disobedience; the motivating and approving voice of conscience should be a powerful impulse to obedience to authority. Since conscience is God-given, it ought to be heeded as God's own voice within us. It can only be contradicted at the price and peril of becoming guilty of opposition to God Himself.

Conscience does not always avail because people by repeated violation turn their once tender and insistent and correct conscience into one that is inactive or erroneous. This is a matter for all of us to bear in mind. There are so many civil laws for us to break and it is so often so easy to break them that we are in danger of developing disobedient habits and ineffective consciences.

There will be many good results from a thorough observance of the country's bicentennial this year, but the best of all possible outcomes would be a quickened conscience within all of us as we are led by the celebration to a fuller appreciation of our citizenship's opportunities and obligations. These are described in some detail by Paul in the final verses of the passage under consideration that bring us to

Part Three: Governments Merit Our Faithful Service

For on this account also you pay your taxes; for they are God's public servants constantly attending to this matter. Give all their due—tax to whom tax, tariff to whom tariff, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor is due.

This portion of our passage is headed by the general and summary statement in point 11:

For the service they render, public officials deserve our support.

Checking and punishing evil, promoting and rewarding good is what government is all about. Public officials, Paul says, are carrying out this assignment on our behalf diligently and continuously. We whom they serve, we who benefit from their service will necessarily have to and want to support them at their assigned tasks.

If money is needed by the government, taxes will have to be collected and these, Paul says, "you pay" simply as a matter of course. As an additional incentive, he reminds us that the public officials we support are actually "of God." Here is another stress on the truth that the relation between us and our government is also and primarily a relation between us and God. This we should bear in mind as we turn to the specific responsibilities of our citizenship that Paul enumerates in the concluding words.

The first two can be put together in point 12:

We will pay tax and tariff to whom they are due.

It was through tax and tariff that the Roman citizen supported his government with monies it needed to carry out its assignments. For most of us the term "tariff" may not have the significance it had then, but we are not unfamiliar with the twin term.

We all pay taxes and when another April 15 comes around, we do well to recall this injunction of Holy Scripture. The bite will not seem so large, the form will be filled out fairly, the bill will be paid less grudgingly if we bear in mind what Paul here teaches about the necessity of taxpaying and the motivation of the Christian taxpayer.

The next encouragement to faithful Christian citizenship is in point 13:

We will fear the public officials to whom fear is due.

Here Paul is pointing back to what he has previously said about the right kind of fear toward authority that keeps one from getting into a situation in which one has good reason to fear the state's wrath. This matter has already been treated and the discussion can turn to point 14:

We will honor the public officials to whom honor is due.

There may be a difference in the degree of honor accorded various public officials, with the President at the top of the scale and lesser national, state, and local officials ranking lower. There is, however, a similarity also. All public officials—at the top and those filling subordinate positions, those making or executing or interpreting law—are all, Paul has said, God's public officials whose function he has ordained and whose authority he has decreed.

We will therefore be willing to supply the due, not only for the sake of the government official involved but also for our Lord's and our conscience's sake. The official may have faults or may be of the wrong party but the office and its authority and its primal Author cloak the officeholder with an honor that covers unappealing characteristics and human weaknesses. Among the Presidents of this country have been adulterers and bribe-takers and cursers and duelists—the list of presidential vices could, no doubt, be extended right down to the end of the alphabet. Each new incumbent of the office, however, receives the high honor due the high office.

There are, of course, many other civic responsibilities that lie upon us beyond the four Paul here specifically enumerates. To mention only one of special significance in an election year, it is our obligation in this constitutional republic of ours to cast an intelligent ballot whenever we are given the opportunity to vote on issues and officials. This civic assignment and the many others we have are all implied and included in the brief list Paul supplies, even though they are not spelled out there.

Above all else, we are not to neglect the opportunity and privilege of service to the state we have in prayer. The times are evil and the nation and world are troubled. With some of our services we seem to accomplish so very little. Our tax monies are swallowed up in huge spending programs and mounting deficits. The public servants we fear and honor conduct themselves as though that were their least concern. But the fervent prayer of the righteous accomplishes much. Our regular and our special anniversary prayers on behalf of the nation and all its authorities are needed and useful. They are our sure hope for the future, our best gateway into a God-blessed third century.