

This passage deals with the Christian's subjection to government. We should read it along with these verses from the previous chapter: *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"* The idea in both is that some courses of action are closed to the believer, being reserved for God or His earthly instrument the government.

Some other verses on our relationship with society in general to consider:

*Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time (Col. 4:5)*

*But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own*

*affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one (1 Thess. 4:10-12)*

*He [an overseer] must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7).*

*If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler (1 Peter 4:14-15).*

*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:12)*

### Questions:

1. Does the fact that God ordains or institutes governing authorities mean they must be godly?
2. Are there any Old Testament examples of God giving authority to an ungodly ruler?
3. What is meant by "judgment" or "damnation" in verse 2?
4. How do we avoid trouble with the government?

5. Verse 4 says the ruler carries a “sword”? What does this mean in our time?
6. What does verse 5 mean about “conscience sake”? How does this generally apply to us?
7. We live in a democracy where “we the people” are the governing authorities (in theory anyway). Do these verses apply to us in the same way?
8. Are there any circumstances where “civil disobedience” is the duty of the Christian? What are the principles governing disobedience?