

The Christian and His Country

by Timothy Tow

A Christian's duties to their country include submitting to those who rule over them, paying their dues, including taxes, and contributing to the welfare of their country, while also praying for their nation's leaders and government.

Scripture: Psalm 130:3, Proverbs 24:21, Romans 13:1, Romans 13:6, 1 Timothy 2:1, 1 Peter 2:17

Topics: "Christian Citizenship", "Submission To Authority"

Description

Timothy Tow delivers a sermon on 'The Christian and His Country' on the occasion of Singapore's 36th Anniversary, emphasizing the dual citizenship of Christians in the Kingdom of Heaven and their earthly country. He contrasts the living conditions in Singapore with the poverty in Cambodia, highlighting the importance of gratitude towards the government and God's blessings. Tow stresses the duty of submission to authorities, paying taxes, and serving one's nation with honor and loyalty, including fulfilling obligations like national service. He concludes with a call to pray for the nation's leaders, seeking peace, salvation, and God's guidance for a just and prosperous government.

Transcript

Text: Rom 13:1-7; I Tim 2:1-4

On the auspicious occasion of the 36th Anniversary of Singapore becoming a nation, it is appropriate for me to speak on "The Christian and His Country."

A Christian has two countries. The first one is the Kingdom of Heaven , which on earth is the Church. The second is our country, Singapore . To me Singapore is the best country in which to live.

By way of contrast, let me introduce you to Cambodia where we have sent three Korean missionary families. One of them, Jonathan Lee, is labouring in Phnom Penh , ministering to a slum village. Here, along a side road is haphazardly built a long row of wooden houses. Every shack consists of one room -- a living room, which has a corner for the kitchen. That's all. There is no bathroom, no toilet. For personal convenience these poor villagers have to climb a six-foot wall on the opposite side of the road which lets them down into a big field overgrown with tall grass. This is where they relieve themselves, rain or shine. As to taking a bath, I have not found one for them.

Now Jonathan Lee is constructing a church complex in the middle of this slum village. To relieve these poor people he has constructed two bathrooms and toilets for use of both sexes.

As for Singapore we all have clean bathrooms and waterborne toilets plus full electric power for airconditioning. What a contrast, like between heaven and hell. Are we grateful to our Government? Do we thank God for Singapore ?

In the present economic downturn our Government is doing all she can to subsidise the needy. Are we also thankful for this? Government and people, we are in the same boat. There is a Chinese saying, "Being in the same boat let us row together to save the situation."

What are our duties? Let us submit to those who rule over us, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Contrary to this benign government there was a mistaken notion by early Chinese settlers against the British. When I was a boy I noticed that the uneducated who came from China to Singapore feared what the authorities might do to them. So, whatever government officers sought of them for an answer they would only say, "I don't know." How they nicknamed the government officers showed up their non-cooperative, negative attitude. They called the police inspector, "Big Dog" and the bailiff "Ground Ox."

Even Christians among these illiterates had the notion to evade paying tax when going through customs. Once I gave a deaf carpenter of Kelapa Sawit our Malaysian country church some work to do in our church in Singapore. On one of my preaching appointments to Kelapa Sawit I gave him a lift home. Without notifying me he hid a parcel of a few dozen small locks in a corner of my car. We went through the Malaysian Customs. The customs officer waved us over, for surely I looked very innocent. Once we got out of sight of the Customs, the deaf carpenter burst into laughter. He then showed me the parcel of smuggled locks on which we might have to pay \$5 to \$6 tax. To him, that was a saving of a big sum of money. But he did not realise, I being the driver of the car, might be fined \$1,000! "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil " (Rom 13:3). "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (v.4).

Thank God we have progressed in knowledge and ethics after these many years. Yet, in the upper class, there also lurks the folly of the deaf carpenter to take advantage of the Government. I have known of an elder of a Malaysian Church who did not pay the full income tax for which he was fined three times. Gratefully his name was not published. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Ps 130:3). "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (vv.5-7).

The next duty to our nation involves young men. When they attain 18 years they are required to enter national service. Although all must join the army, there are those who are not happy about it. An old Chinese proverb says, "Good sons don't carry arms" but it is out of date in today's society. Then there are the Jehovah Witnesses who are so-called Christian conscientious objectors. In the United States they might be exempted, but not Singapore . One final step to get out of this soldiering business is for the rich to migrate to such a place as Australia with their growing up sons.

Being a loyal citizen, I have advised my son to take the positive attitude. Do not be like those who try to shirk or malingering but rather to plunge into it with good spirit - to defend your nation and to learn a new

vocation, the art or science of war. Therefore aim to be an officer! Praise God, my son took my advice. He became an officer and was honourably discharged at the end of the Service. When he applied to join NUS he gained easy entrance because of his good performance. We parents should guide our sons to play a part for the nation, instead of trying to shield them. Instead of the old Chinese proverb, "Good sons don't carry arms" say, "Good sons are honoured for carrying arms." We must contribute to the welfare of Singapore in order to enjoy her benefits.

Finally, Paul tells us to pray for our nation, for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty . . . that all men will be saved (I Tim 2:1-4). Our Prime Minister and President and all ministers need God's blessings and guidance to be a just and good government. Even Japan, a Shinto country, would ask the Church in Singapore (during the Japanese Occupation) to pray for their Emperor Hirohito. As a result Hirohito had the longest reign of over sixty years.

We, as a Church should all the more pray for God's blessings upon our Senior Minister and Prime Minister, for long life and good health that we may enjoy a peaceful realm under their hand.

Above all that we have the freedom to preach, that souls might be won to God's Kingdom, that the door to missions might remain wide open. Then will God doubly bless our beloved Singapore which has all along been blessed with law and order, peace and prosperity, preservation from all natural disasters and political unrest. O Lord, continue to bless Singapore , our country, that we may be a blessing to others. Amen.

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