**Final Authority is from God**

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**Romans 13:1-7**

**Wednesday Evening**

**February 26, 2025**

**Romans 13:1-7**

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

**1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.**

Saints, Paul says that believers are to obey the government. These were wise words to this small group of believers living within the massive structure of the Roman Empire.

It wouldn’t take much for an imperial edict to fall on a group who might become known for causing unrest within the empire.

Their quiet submission would not guarantee peace, but at least it might allow them to continue to spread the gospel freely for a time.

Paul does not recommend either of the two possible extreme responses to the presence of a hostile authority.

He does not favor believers becoming like the Zealots, Jewish rebels who fought (often violently) for freedom from Rome; neither does he suggest that they withdraw to the desert to set up their own community far from the evil city.

Instead, Paul explains how Christian should live within the structure. Only then would they be able to share the gospel and transform society.

Why should they do this? Because all governments have been placed in power by God.

He allows all governments and leaders to function under his sovereign will. Government is ideally in place to protect and serve its citizens.

When governments distort or betray this function, those who run them will answer to God.

They are under God’s constraint and under his final judgment.

**Psalm 2:1-12**

1 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us."

4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." 7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' " 10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

**Daniel 4:34-35**

34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

**2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.**

Saints, Citizens of any government should respect their government and obey its laws. If they refuse to obey the laws of the land, they are ultimately refusing to obey God and can expect punishment.

For hundreds of years, however, there have been at least three interpretations of how we are to do this.

1. Some Christians believe that the state is so corrupt that Christians should have as little to do with it as possible. Although they should be good citizens as long as they can do so without compromising their beliefs, they should not work for the government, vote in elections, or serve in the military.

2. Others believe that God has given the state authority in certain areas and the church authority in others. Christians can be loyal to both and can work for either.

They should not, however, confuse the two. In this view, church and state are concerned with two totally different spheres—the spiritual and the physical—and thus complement each other but do not work together.

3. Still others believe that Christians have a responsibility to make the state better. They can do this politically, by electing Christian or other high-principled leaders.

They can also do this morally, by serving as an influence for good in society.

In this view, church and state ideally work together for the good of all.

None of these views advocates rebelling against or refusing to obey laws or regulations unless those laws clearly require a person to violate the moral standards revealed by God.

Wherever we find ourselves, we must be responsible citizens, as well as responsible Christians.

Are there times when we should not submit to the government? Paul does not address this question here, but other passages of Scripture give guidelines and examples.

The government can demand respect, obedience, taxes, and honor from its citizens inasmuch as God appoints governments to protect people.

When a government demands allegiance that conflicts with a believer’s loyalty to God, Christians must respond in a different way.

Believers should never allow the government to force them to disobey God.

Jesus and his apostles never disobeyed the government for personal reasons; when they disobeyed, they were following their higher loyalty to God.

**Acts 5:29**

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Their disobedience was not cheap; they were threatened, beaten, thrown into jail, tortured, and executed for their convictions.

If we are compelled to disobey, we must be ready to accept the consequences.

**1 Peter 2:13-14**

13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.

**1 Peter 4:14-15**

14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.

**3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.**

Saints, these verses focus on officials who are doing their duty.

Society needs leadership and positive constraints in order to ensure the safety and well-being of its citizens.

**1 Timothy 1:9**

knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers…

**Titus 3:1-3**

1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

Saints, when these officials are just, people who are doing right have nothing to fear.

Governments that serve well facilitate and encourage citizens to do right.

Christians are not to use their freedom in Christ as a handy excuse for disobeying the laws of the state.

Civil disobedience should come only after submission to authority has been practiced.

We should be informed and willing to question the motives of those who govern us, but we should be more demanding and more suspicious of our own motives.

We must be careful not to be ruled by our sinful desires. Our protest may not be spiritual but rooted in our offended pride or hatred of any authority.

This response is not directed by Christ or the Holy Spirit.

**4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.**

Saints, rulers are in their position only because God has placed them there.

**Proverbs 21:1-3**

1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. 2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts. 3 To do righteousness and justice Is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

All earthly governments are temporary—only Christ’s reign will be eternal.

To rebel against them is to rebel against their God-given authority.

In practice, the responsibilities and opportunities of the politically powerful and the politically powerless will differ.

For believers in a hostile environment, cooperation may be the most realistic approach.

Believers who have the opportunity to affect change must challenge, speak out, offer solutions, and confront the power structure.

**5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.**

Saints,believers have two good reasons to submit to their government: to keep from being punished and to keep a clear conscience.

Believers know in their consciences that obeying the authorities pleases God.

However, a believer’s conscience answers to a higher, divine authority;

if ever the human authority contradicted the divine authority, a believer must be true to his conscience in following the higher authority.

**Hebrews 13:17**

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

**Proverbs 24:21-22**

21 My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those given to change; 22 For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin those two can bring?

True citizenship is rarely rewarded. Faithfully carrying out our small duties may not gain recognition.

But Paul reminds the Romans that God notices every action.

When we obey the government because it serves God, God knows our real motives.

**6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.**

Saints, believers are called not only to submit to authorities, but also to support them by paying taxes.

**Matthew 22:21-22**

21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

**Mark 12:17**

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.

Taxes pay the salaries for government workers so they can keep on doing the work God intended them to do.

This was a heated topic at the time Paul wrote—he does not refer to this in any other letter.

Government taxation, and abuses of taxation, were causing great unrest in the city.

Christians might be thinking that they could get away with not paying the inflated taxes, but that would inevitably draw the attention of the authorities and put the believers at unnecessary risk.

So Paul says to pay. In this regard Paul followed Jesus, who told Peter to pay taxes so as not to offend the governing authorities.

**Matthew 17:24-27**

24 When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" 25 He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?"

26 Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. 27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

Paul is not teaching that all the authorities in Rome are God’s servants in the same sense as the believers are God’s servants.

The powers in Rome were arbitrary and often self-serving.

But they were God’s servants, ultimately responsible to the one who set them in place.

**7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.**

Saints, Christians are not exempt from fulfilling the expectations of any government.

**Malachi 1:6**

"A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'

This verse also prepares for Paul’s idea of debt in the next section. We must certainly pay taxes to the government, but our obligation also extends to others to whom we may owe a debt of respect and honor.

Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.”**