

Romans 13:1-7

Submission to Authority

13:1-7 – 1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

- a. 1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.
 - a. Acts 18:2 - And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them,
 - i. A Roman historian, Suetonius, wrote that “he (Claudius) expelled the Jews from Rome, who were constantly exciting tumults under their leader, Chrestus.” Who this Chrestus was is not known.
 - 1. Claudius was poisoned in 54 AD, so the expulsion would have occurred prior to that time
 - 2. It is true that Romans government did not view Christians as anything more than a sect of the Jews until perhaps 80 AD.
 - ii. Suetonius’ history agrees with the history recorded by Luke in Acts.

- b. The point of this is that Paul was writing this to Christians, including Jewish Christians, when Rome was not and had never been popular among the Jewish people.
- c. Some notable exceptions.
 - i. Acts 5:29 - But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.
 - ii. Dan. 3:12 - There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”
 - 1. The three men didn’t protest the commandment of Nebuchadnezzar, they simply continued to do what was right. The three were delivered, and Nebuchadnezzar would be humbled by God soon.
 - 2. In this country, it seems that some group is always protesting, sometimes violently, when matters don’t turn out to suit them.
 - iii. 1 Tim. 2:1-2 - **1** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, **2** for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

b. **2** Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

- a. Human governments are ordained by God for the benefit of humans. It is not meant that God endorses all that governors plan and carry out. Governors who abuse their position and power will answer to God for that abuse. Christians are to pay taxes (Rom. 13:7) even though those taxes may be used by the government for purposes the Christian doesn’t endorse. The Governors will answer to God for using taxes for immoral purposes.
- b. The judgment incurred by resistance is likely judgment by the authorities.
- c. God does not favor anarchy. In Numbers chapters 11 through 17 there are several instances of rebellion against Moses, which were handled rapidly and even severely by God, as in the case of Korah’s rebellion.

- d. I don't like abortion. God does not like abortion. I don't want abortion to be funded by tax revenue, but it has been. There are non-violent ways to make my views known to elected officials, even if I seem to be part of a minority. At least in this country, no one is forced to have an abortion. No one can force us to not pray. There have been instances of genocide in other countries during my lifetime. Also population control.
- c. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,
 - a. Any form of government is better than anarchy. All forms of organized government depend on the law-abiding majority. Those in power should cater to the desires of the law-abiding majority. No government can abide unless that law-abiding situation be prevalent. Peking, Hanoi, Moscow, London and Washington would all be in ruins unless they defended the rights of the law-abiding majority!. It is because this truth is universal and timeless that earthly governments can serve God's purposes and be a minister of His for the good. This is what Paul is alluding to when he said rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil, even though Nero was a terrible persecutor of our brothers and sisters.
 - b. In post-modern America, in matters of religion, a very common view is that each individual determines what is true, independently from God. So we do have religious anarchy.
- d. 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.
 - a. If you do wrong – by violating civil law.
 - b. Bear the sword in vain – without reason
 - c. The avenger of wrong-doing is God. The ruler is God's servant and instrument.
- e. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.
 - a. Fear of punishment is an incentive to be obedient.
 - i. God's wrath is executed by the civil servant(s) when civil law is violated.

- ii. Christians who would not disavow allegiance to Christ and claim allegiance to Caesar were right to disobey the civil law during the early centuries, and many were punished by death (as the civil government thought of punishment).
- b. Conscience (or honor) is an eternal incentive to obedience, and also a reason to obey God rather than men.
- f. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.
 - a. It is right to pay taxes. The civil government provides roads, pays policemen to enforce laws, and pays military for defense, among other things. These are things that most of us cannot do individually, but collectively we can.
 - b. Some are disabled and therefore dependent upon family or the state for food and shelter.
 - c. Welfare availability can be misused.
- g. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.
 - a. Since they are God's servants, respect and honor are due as well as taxes.