

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

In The Grip of God's Grace

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Romans 13:1-7 - "God's Strange Servants"

Romans 13:1-7, " *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. 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. 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.*"

In our study of Romans 12 we saw the Christian in his relationship namely 1) to God, 2) to himself, 3) to other believers, and 4) to his enemies.

As we come to Romans 13, Paul; speaks about three more transformed relationships of the child of God:

1. Our relationship to the State (vs. 1-7)
2. Our relationship to the Law (vs. 8-10)
3. Our relationship to the Lord's return (vs. 11-14)

Today we look together at the subject of the Christian and his relationship to the State or Government.

This subject, and this text are the source of great controversy.

- Separation of Church and State

I hope to bring some clarity as to what the Bible teaches on this subject.

The Church and the State have different roles and as Christians we have duties to both.

Illustration: The story of the Pharisees and Herodians attempting to catch Jesus in his words.

Mark 12:13-17, *“And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marvelled at him.”*

What is our duty to the State?

The answer is found in our word: **Submission**

Three things about submission:

1. The Precept of Submission (to the State) Vs. 1a)

Romans 13:1a, *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers...”*

Notice that it’s a command – a passive imperative.

Also, it’s for everyone – ‘every soul’

Paul is saying that Christianity and good citizenship should go together.

What about Bad government?

When Paul wrote this Epistle, Nero was Emperor of Rome.

I Peter 2:13, *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;”*

Christians are to be law abiding citizens of the State.

Is there no limitation to our obligation of submission?

Yes, we can brake only those laws that to keep, would require disobedience to God’s word.

You can’t say, God told me it was okay to speed because I was late to church.

Illustrations from the Bible:

1. Exodus 1 - When Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the new born boys (they feared God).

2. Daniel 1 - When Daniel, Shadrach; Meshach; and Abednego. were commanded to eat the Kings food that was unclean so breaking the Mosaic dietary laws.
3. Daniel 3 - When King Nebuchadnezzar issued his edict to worship his golden image.
4. Daniel 6 - When King Darius issued a decree that no one pray but to him for 30 days.
5. Acts 4 – When the Sanhedrin banned preaching in the name of Jesus – we must obey God rather than man.

Illustration – Corrie Ten Boom – Hiding Jews from the Nazi's

In each case found in scripture, civil disobedience was to demonstrate submissiveness to God, not defiance of government.

II. The Purpose of Submission (to the State) (vs. 1b-5)

Romans 13:1b-5, "...For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. 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. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

Five reasons to submit to government:

1. Human government is ordained of God (vs. 1)

The reason for our submission is found in the fact that civil government has its source in God.

There are three divinely ordained institutions:

- Family
- Government
- The Church

The starting point in our submission is the *Sovereignty of God*

God is the one who sets up the rules – good or bad!

Illustrations:

Romans 9:17, *“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.”*

Nebuchadnezzar – Daniel 4:34-35, 37, *“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”*

... Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Three times in Daniel 4 the text says that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men.

We in the USA need to remember this!

Government leaders need to remember that they are given the authority by God; so they are under and accountable to God.

Illustration – Jesus before Pilate

Footnote: there is no best form of government.

2. To resist government is rebellion against God (vs. 2)

Illustration – Korah’s rebellion against Moses (Numbers 16)

3. Government serves to restrain evil and promote good (vs. 3-4a)

Illustration - Paul uses his Roman citizenship

Acts 22:27-28, “Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.”

Thank God for our laws and the police department.

Notice the words: 'good' and 'evil' in verse 3

How do we know good from evil?

God's law – the higher authority.

4. Government is empowered by God to inflict punishment for disobedience (vs. 4)

Notice the words: 'minister of God'

'to protect' – able to punish

'the sword' – Capital punishment

Romans 12:19, *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."*

God uses Government!

5. We should submit to Government for conscience sake (vs. 5)

I Peter 2:13, *"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;"*

We are to live with a clear conscience – a higher reason than others.

Is your conscience clear? - Is the Holy Spirit grieved?

Are you breaking the law?

III. The Particulars of Submission (vs.6-7)

Romans 13:6-7, *"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."*

1. Pay (vs. 6) – pay your taxes

We owe the government not only obedience but also taxes. –

Matthew 22:21, *"They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."*

Pay (vs. 7) – customs

Pay – fear

Pay – honor – respect the office

Parents; teachers; police; bosses

Acts 23:5, "Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

2. Pray

1 Timothy 2:1-2, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

3. Preach

1 Timothy 2:3-7, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity."

We are to be the conscience of the nation through faithful preaching and godly living.

The Government can punish evil doers, but it can never pardon a man's sin and change his heart.

Only God can do that.

In Matthew 22:21, Jesus said, "... Give therefore...to God the things that are God's.

Have you given to God your heart?