

ROMANS 13:1-7

Introduction:

1. Here in Chapter 13, Paul is going to talk about our attitude toward government. Paul had shown us the believer's spiritual and social gifts to the local church. Now, he shows the believer's relationship to human government as a matter of divine action on how a Christian is to act.
2. In today's lesson, Paul is dealing with how the Christian is to act under Roman rule and to help believers avoid as much conflict with the government as possible.
3. One of the ways God executes wrath and judgment upon evildoers is by the means of human government. This is one of the four Divine Institutions God created at the start of creation. The other three are:
 - *Volition - This means man's freewill to make decisions in life, to discern right from wrong - the key to life (Genesis 1).
 - *Marriage - It was structured to show stability in society (Genesis 2).
 - *Family - This is the safeguarding of the human race (Genesis 4).
 - **Nationalism - This is the fourth one called human government. God established it by dividing the nations in the world (Genesis 9).

Genesis 9:5-6 - And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Gen. 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.
4. God ordained "human government", holding man responsible for the life of his brother and to even execute capital punishment.
 - *In every ordered society, there must be authority and the submission to that authority. If not, you would have total chaos and a state of anarchy - which you cannot survive.
5. The responsibilities of a nation's leaders are to be both Godward and manward. God's Word frowns on civil disobedience.

Romans 13:1 - 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.

1. It is important to know that Apostle Paul wrote this epistle to the believers in Rome. They were living under a totalitarian government that suppressed others and did not tolerate any individual to threaten their rule.
2. This verse commands believers to submit to those in authority over them. The "higher powers" means the delegated authorities that govern over the people. God has given, or delegated, to man the responsibility to punish evildoers.
3. The story of the tower of Babel shows how man used his new found authority to plan organized rebellion against the very throne of God. But despite the abuses of governmental power, human government is still a divine institution.
4. The last part of this verse shows that God is the ultimate and highest authority. "*the powers that be are ordained of God*" means God has given man the human authority to do what God's justice is to be in

human relationships. God, though being the highest authority, has ordained governing authorities to rule over their people.

5. One of the greatest lessons in the book of Daniel is that God keeps a firm hand on history. Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon, had to learn that God rules. Daniel 2:37 - *Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.*
 - a. We see king Nebuchadnezzar's pride show in Daniel 4:30, even though he knew the source of his success came from the God of heaven. Daniel 4:30-31 - *The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan. 4:31* *While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.*
 - b. Neby finds out who is the ruler over all in Daniel 4:32-34.

Daniel 4:32-34 - *And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan. 4:33* *The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. Dan. 4:34* *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:*
 - c. Nebuchadnezzar now understood God's divine power in Daniel 4:37 - *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.*
6. Peter tells this to his brethren to submit unto the higher powers over you in 1 Peter 2:13-14 - *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 1 Peter 2:14* *Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

<p><u>Romans 13:2</u> - Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.</p>
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1. Paul goes on to show that governments are approved of God and since governments are appointed by God, they must be obeyed.

*They are there to represent God's rule on the earth and therefore must uphold divine principles of righteousness. Anyone who disobeys, or rebels, against the government is disobeying and rebelling against what God has ordained and they deserve punishment.
2. There is an exception: When our government goes contrary to our Christian responsibilities from the commands of Scripture to cause us to sin, then, of course we have every right to stand and say "No".
3. Government authorities are put in place by God to punish lawbreakers, murderers, and to fulfill God's purpose in the world. They are disobeying God and bringing down on themselves the law's penalties.

<p><u>Romans 13:3</u> - 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:</p>

1. Governments are responsible for our national safety and to protect the communities. Whether under a dictatorship or a democracy, law enforcement in general seldom bothers the law-abiding citizen. The only people who should live in fear are the lawbreakers.
2. The Bible teaches us in Paul's epistle of Galatians that in the last days it will be marked by increasing lawlessness.

Galatians 5:19-21 - Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal. 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal. 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

3. We are to walk in the Spirit, being obedient to God, to be conquerors.

Galatians 5:16 - *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Romans 13:4 - 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.

1. Governments are not only responsible to protect the community, but they must also punish the criminal. This verse brings up the scriptural view on the subject of "Capital Punishment".
2. The ruler - whether a president, congressman, governor, or judge is the "minister of God", being God's servant and representative. God has them in place to protect us and punish the evildoers.
3. God has even given to government the power of life and death - to execute wrath on one that does evil in society. The "sword" was an instrument of capital punishment used by the Romans.

*Capital punishment, when consistently practiced, is a very effective deterrent to crime - because death is mankind's greatest fear.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 - Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

4. You cannot enforce law and order without capital punishment. You must have an effective deterrent to have justice to an evil act. God ordained human government for holding man responsible for the life of his brother. This fear of punishment makes people think twice about murdering someone.

Genesis 9:6 - Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

5. What did Paul think about capital punishment? Did he consider it to be cruel or unfair? The answer is in Acts 25:11 - *For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.*

*Paul knew there were certain crimes worthy of death and those guilty of such crimes must be executed.

6. Our judicial system is far from perfect. There are times the guilty are justified and the innocent condemned. But, there is a true and righteous Judge Who sees all and will make the wrongs right one day.

Romans 13:5 - Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

1. This means that we should be obedient subjects of the government for two reasons - the fear of punishment and the desire to maintain a good conscience.
2. It is good that we know we are to be good law-abiding citizens. This subjection helps to give us a clear conscience with God, because we know this is what He wants us to do in life.

I Peter 2:12 - Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

*Verses 6 & 7 will now address our duty to pay tribute (taxes) for the solvency of your country.

Romans 13:6 - For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

1. Nobody likes paying taxes! However, since government has been set in place under God, we are to pay taxes for government to exist.
2. Our officials in government need to be paid for their services (policemen, firemen, and public servants) - all who minister and serve on our behalf.
3. These officials are giving their talents in carrying out God's will for the stability of society and they are entitled to this support. It therefore stands to reason that those who benefit from these services must pay for them and the payment is in the form of taxes.

Romans 13:7 - 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. The fact that believers are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) does not exempt them from the responsibility to human government. They are to pay whatever taxes that are levied on their income.
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.
2. Paul uses five important words to describe our obligations to our government in this verse.
 - a. "render" - Paul is commanding believers to give what is owed, to fill their obligations and to pay their debts.
 - b. "tribute" - This would correspond to our income and property taxes, especially to Caesar & Rome here in this context.
 - c. "custom" - This was an indirect tax on imported goods, or tolls, and on tariffs.
 - d. "fear" - They were to be in awe of authorities' responsibilities to their country. This would be the publicans back in Paul's time. These were the most hated men in the country.
 - e. "honour" - This is to be given to everyone who is set over us and to those who are given special roles by the state. We are to lift up those who are willing to serve in public office.
3. As Christians, we should never speak ill or in a derogatory way of the President of our country - whether Democrat or Republican. The people choose who they want to lead the country and we are to be as good citizens as best we can.

**Next week, we will finish Chapter 13, where Paul tells us how we are to walk in love to one another.