

—Romans 13.1-7 —
Contemporary Issues 2024
Governing Authorities

Rom 13.1 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.

► Our text is often read in isolation to create a divine right for rulers, so that whatever they command is what _____ commands, and opposition, disobedience, or resistance are forbidden under _____ circumstance. Paul's words must be read in light of their broader context, including Paul's and Jesus' example of how to _____ out these principles. Looking at their example, we can conclude that Christians are not required to:

1) Give up their _____ under the law (Acts 22.24-29; 25.1-12);

2) Passively accept _____ under color of authority (Jn 18.22-23; Acts 16.36-38; 23.2-3);

3) Passively accept _____ in society (Mt 22.23-33; 23.13-36; Mk 6.17-18; Lk 3.1; 9.7-9).

► We also want to keep in mind the example of the early Christians who _____ for refusing to say, "Caesar is lord" and to burn incense to the emperor.

Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bithynia-Pontus, to Caesar Trajan c.112AD: "[The Christians] meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and b[an]d themselves to a solemn oath, not to [commit] any wicked deeds, [and] never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of a meal [consisting of] ordinary and innocent food." (Pliny the Younger, Letters, X.xcvi.)

• If rulers have a divine right, then the early Christians _____ needlessly and foolishly, and are not _____, but examples of what _____ to do.

► The early Christians read Rm 13 in light of its greater context – that "God sent forth His Son" in "the fullness of ... time" (Gal 4.4), i.e., at just the _____ time, which was the time when the claims of Jesus and his kingdom would _____ all over the claims of Caesar and his empire.

Rm 1.1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was 4 ... declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead. 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name ... 7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil 2.9 God ... has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on the earth ..., 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Mat 16.13 "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

Daniel 7.13 "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days ... 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

Acts 17.6 "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 7 ... [T]hese are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus."

► All of that helps us understand what Rm 13 does _____ mean, but what _____ it mean? The key is vs 7, "Render therefore to all their due," which in the Greek begins with a quote and ends with a paraphrase of Jesus' words, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mt 22.21).

Mat 22.17 "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus ... said, ... 19 "Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" 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."

Paul is saying the same thing: There is a duty we as Christians owe under the Lordship of Christ to _____ authorities, but it is not absolute, for it is limited by the greater duty and submission we owe to _____ as Lord. Moreover, our civil authorities also owe the same duty and submission to _____ as Lord that we do. We as Christians need to conduct ourselves in a way that serves _____ those duties.

► We get glimpses of Paul and Jesus applying these principles, as well as Daniel and his three friends in the OT.

Acts 23. Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" 4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" 6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.

John 19.10 Then Pilate said to Him, ... "Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

Dn 3.12 "There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up." 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ... 16 [They] answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, ... 17 ... our God ... is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." ... 6.10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

► The kingdom of Christ is redemptive, its purpose is to restore – to throw out the bathwater, not the _____. Christ's kingdom preserves God's original architecture in marriage, family, church, and civil community. The fact that all

these institutions after the fall spend much of their time dealing with _____, should not blind us to the fact that apart from the fall, they would have existed for purely righteous purposes (Gn 1.28). That in a nutshell is Paul's point in Rm 13.

- Vs 1: This a truism, since God has all authority; but this does not mean that there are no _____. Positions of authority (husbands, parents, elders, judges) are ordained by God and are _____ as created. That doesn't mean they haven't often been _____ by Satan and sinful men.

- Vs 2: Whoever seeks to be a _____ to themselves by resisting imperfect but legitimate authority will incur God's judgment. But that does not preclude principled protest against _____ of authority.

- Vs 3-4: This is _____ scriptive – this is the way God created it to be – but it is not necessarily _____ scriptive of authorities in a fallen world.

- Vs 5: We must respect the positions of authority God has ordained – we must not lightly _____ – but at some point, principled opposition to those who wickedly pervert God's authority becomes a matter of _____ obedience to God's _____ authority.

- Vs 6-7: A certain submission and obedience are owed to Caesar as a civil ruler, but it is not absolute, for Caesar himself bears God's _____ and is therefore duty bound to render himself unto God, both personally and officially. Our obedience or disobedience to civil rulers must be born of principled obedience to God, not of _____ under authority itself, as is often the case with fallen men. In the 1st century, the Jews fomented rebellion against Rome to reverse who was on _____. The apostles wanted to make sure the Romans saw that the Christians weren't part of that.

► Christ leavens his people, then pours _____ into the world (Mt 13.33; Acts 1.8). The early Christians, following Daniel and his friends, were human leaven. They were _____ citizens. At the same time, they served a higher _____ and lived in such a way as to call all, including Caesar, to do the same. And they were willing to _____ rather than deny Jesus as Lord.