

TITLE: OBEYING AUTHORITIES (EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO)

TEXT: ROMANS 13:1-7

INTRO: Due to their unwillingness to worship the Roman emperor, early Christians were accused of being rebellious citizens of the Empire. However, this was incorrect, and Christians pleaded their case by stating their religious requirement to be submissive to those in authority. Today we still have this requirement, regardless of the whether or not we like it.

I. SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITIES (v. 1-2):

- A. (v. 1) Paul begins this discussion with a command: *“Let every soul be subject unto (to subordinate; obey) the higher powers.” Titus 3:1–“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work”*
- B. Why? Because God ordained (appointed) them. Government is a Divinely-established institution, not a necessary evil.
 - 1. Government is necessary to keep order and peace. Without policemen, imagine what criminals would do!
 - 2. You can't have true freedom without government (law vs. liberty). Without law, anarchy would reign (strongest survive).
 - 3. Most government 'rulers' today are **not** Christians, but the *system* of government is still “of God” and must be respected.
- C. (v. 2) Whoever resists (opposes) this power /authority (i.e., government) resists what **God** has ordained. These people will receive damnation (judgment & condemnation as lawbreakers) by these powers (punishment according to civil law), but also by God (i.e., this is sin, and they will be punished accordingly by God if they do not repent)! This fact is seen in v. 3-4.

II. PURPOSE OF AUTHORITIES (v. 3-5):

- A. (v. 3a) These rulers aren't a terror (fear) to good works. Laws aren't designed to punish someone for doing good things! Since Christians are supposed to be doing good works, why should we need to question our obedience to our government? (**1 Pet 3:13-14** -But even if you do suffer for righteousness, *“happy are ye; & be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.”*)
- B. (v. 3b) These rulers *are* a terror to evil works. If you choose to break the law, expect repercussions (v. 4 gives details).
- C. (v. 3c) Do you want to *not* be afraid of the powers that be? Do what is right, then you'll receive praise from them. If you don't want to live in fear of the law enforcers, don't break the law! A Christian who worries about this may need to analyze his life and deal with his lawless actions! (E.g., speeding – this is “resisting the power” (v. 2), and will bring judgment!)
- D. (v. 4) These powers (gov., law enforcement, etc.) are God's ministers to you **for good**.
 - 1. They're purpose is for our **good**! God intends for civil authorities to do what is right!
 - 2. This is the ideal. Of course, having free will, even these “ministers of God” can choose to be corrupt (but this doesn't change the fact that the *system* of government is from God).
- E. But if you do evil, be afraid! Christians ought to be the least of their concerns! Cops ought to expect *never* to have to pull over a Christian for speeding! The IRS ought to expect *never* to find a Christian cheating on his taxes!
 - 1. But if we choose to break the law, know that they “beareth not the sword in vain.” They can & will administer punishment!
 - 2. They are revengers (punisher; one who carries out justice) to execute wrath! These ministers of God have the authority to carry out the appropriate measure of discipline. Clearly this description includes capital punishment! This was a law of God's prior to the law of Moses (**Gen 9:6** – *“Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”*). It is always carried out in a legal manner, otherwise it would be murder.
- F. (v. 5) Therefore (because of the **purpose** of government- v. 3-4), it is necessary to be subject (subordinate–v.1). This is a general command to be subject to our government. Be subject to **all** laws, not just the “big” ones (murder, armed robbery, etc.). **ALL!** **Two reasons** to be obedient: Retribution & Righteousness (Fear and Love motivation):
 - A. Retribution: *“not only for wrath”* – (the wrath of the government (v. 3-4), but also the wrath of God).
 - B. Righteousness: *“but also for conscience sake”*
 - 1. As Christians, Paul's readers had their minds trained properly according to God's will. When this is the case, your conscience will stop you from doing what is wrong.
 - 2. On this topic, Paul has now trained them to be obedient to the government (even one as corrupt as the Romans), so they should be able to do the right thing because of their consciences.

III. OBLIGATION TO AUTHORITIES (v. 6-7):

- A. (v. 6) *“For this cause”* (because of v. 5), pay tribute also (tax)! Why do I have to pay tax? This is *my* hard-earned money! Because they are God's ministers (obviously not in a religious meaning, but as those who are fulfilling a role He has required – and which every society clearly needs)! We should do this willingly and without complaining (**Phil 2:14** - *“do all things without murmurings & disputings”*).
- B. (v. 7) In case we're already looking for loopholes, Paul says, *“Render to ALL their dues.”* (custom=toll – synonym of “tribute”)
- C. Do Christians have a logical problem in paying taxes to our government, since it supports abortion, etc. with this money? This is NOT what Paul says. The Roman government was extremely anti-Christian, no doubt using tax money to persecute & kill Christians. Yet Paul says to pay your dues, tribute, & custom! If you owe money, pay it. You cannot control what is done with that money, and *you* are not the one spending it for such things (**1 Cor 8** – eating the meat didn't connect you with the idol!)
- D. However, this doesn't mean that we don't legally fight governmental corruption through our right to vote for better candidates.

CONCLUSION: Our ultimate authority (highest auth) is God Himself. And He has commanded us to be obedient to Him, as well as to our government (with *His* authority always superceding any other – **Acts 5:29**). Christians should be the best citizens in the land! We should set the example for our friends, co-workers, etc., but especially for our children! They need to learn submission: to parents AND other authorities. Parents don't seem to realize that when they adopt the “best friend” approach to parenting, it teaches the child that he is on the same level as the parents (and therefore NOT in submission to them). This spills over into his attitude toward civil & academic authority. When kids today don't even obey their own *parents*, why would they feel the need to obey other adults, teachers, cops, judges, etc.?