

**Romans 13:1-7 (NKJV)**

**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.**

1

**Rom 13:4 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.**

2

**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.**

3

**Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals***

- Dedicated to Lucifer, whom he calls, "The very first radical known to man who rebelled against the establishment and did it so effectively that he at least won his own kingdom."
- "What follows is for those who want to change the world from what it is to what they believe it should be. *The Prince* was written by Machiavelli for the Haves on how to hold power. *Rules for Radicals* is written for the Have-Nots on how to take it away ... This means revolution."

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- In contrast to Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*, the apostle Paul writes:

**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.**

- Two dramatically different philosophies as to our relationship to government – God's and Satan's – who was the first radical, rebel and revolutionary

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- Satan has been working throughout history to overthrow God's sovereignty and destroy His Messiah and Messiah's disciples
- One of his methods is to convince Christians to become revolutionaries, to disobey God-ordained government
- Many American Christians struggle to know how they should understand and apply Rom. 13, and that is because our form of government – a constitutional republic – opens the door to challenge government

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- Further muddying the waters is that many Christians think our nation was founded as a “Christian” nation, which is was not
- Some of our key founders – e.g., Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson – were deists and did not believe the Bible to be the Word of God
- Many of the other founders were freemasons – e.g., George Washington – a very prominent, high-level mason who had a skewed view of the Bible and was united with a Satanic brotherhood or fraternity – freemasonry

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- Many within our nation and even our early government were Christians – and there certainly was a greater degree of morality than we find today – but it is important to understand that America has never been a so-called “Christian” nation
- Our form of government, though it is quite good, for it recognizes the inalienable, God-given rights of all mankind, is not a perfect government by any means – it is man-made

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- The Bible does not mandate a form of government for the Gentile rulers of the world
- It seems to leave that for mankind to figure out, recognizing full well that man is going to make a mess of things
- In fact, God sometimes has to intervene when man’s governmental mess treads on His sovereign will – e.g., Tower of Babel, book of Esther, and Psalm 2
- The ultimate governmental mess will come during the tribulation – antichrist’s one-world government, which God will destroy

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- The best form of government is a monarchy, led by a righteous king, for that will characterize the millennial kingdom
- Christ’s coming Messianic government will be a glorious reign of righteousness for a thousand years – a time of peace and prosperity
- But could it be that carnal Christians – who do not learn to submit to governmental rulers in this age – will have difficulty submitting to Christ’s rule “with a rod of iron” in the age to come?

10

- 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.
- God has ordained three institutions, not merely two:
    1. Home
    2. Church
    3. Government
  - Some American Christians think the U.S. constitution is our lawful government, and *that* is what we are obligated to submit to

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- But God makes clear that we are not merely to submit to the constitution, the law of the land
- We are to submit to the AUTHORITIES – people!
- v. 3 says RULERS – again, people! – whether they abide by the constitution or not
- In other lands, the form of government could be a monarchy or a dictatorship, but regardless, we are to submit to the rulers of our government

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- Remember: Nero was emperor when Paul wrote this, and he was a despotic maniac
  - God puts people like this in power from time to time, and He has His purposes
- Zane Hodges says the Greek makes clear that:  
God does not merely *allow* certain men to rule, He *arranges* it.
- God makes very clear that we are to submit to (i.e., “be subject to”) the governing authorities, including rulers who are hostile to Christians

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- There are things we can do as Christians in America to reshape the government and its policies, at least to some degree
- We can (and should) vote
- We can voice our objections through proper channels, typically through our elected representatives
- We can also pursue legal options if the rulers get out of line and violate the laws of the land
- All of this is made possible by our constitution

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- Most importantly, we can pray! – and we are commanded to do so in 1 Tim. 2:1-3
  - But at the end of the day, we are obligated to submit to our rulers and obey them, even if they are out of line
- Commentator James Stifler (1839-1902):  
Within this limit it does not forbid teaching and agitation for better government if these do not lead to resistance, but under this principle it is hard to see how a Christian can lead in a rebellion. Paul's words are unmistakable, and yet there stand Cromwell and Washington!

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- Commentator James Stifler (1839-1902):  
Civil government has its source in God, and all constituted power is appointed and ordained by him. The cruel abuses in governments ... do not invalidate their divine charter any more than the abuses of marriage rob it of its sacredness. Any government is preferable to anarchy, just as poorly enforced marriage laws are better than none. Man abuses all God's gifts.
- That being said, there is a biblical principle that: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

16

- If the government orders us NOT to confess Christ, we must confess Christ nonetheless, for this is a biblical mandate
- If the government orders you to worship the king or idols of some sort, or to stop praying you must disobey, like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Daniel

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- If the government is killing people, we must do our best to save people – e.g., midwives sparing the babies that Pharaoh had ordered to be killed; Moses' mother saving him; Queen Esther and Mordecai plotting to save the Jews from destruction
- By way of modern example – women in China who have refused to abort their second child, despite the government's one-child mandate; many Christians who saved Jews during the Holocaust

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- If you disobey the government, you must be prepared to pay the price – fines, imprisonment, persecution, or even death
- When Peter and the other apostles said, “We ought to obey God rather than men,” they were beaten and threatened – and they had already been imprisoned
- The bottom line: God orders you to obey the governing authorities, whom He has ordained, unless the government’s decrees violate God’s commands

19

Zane Hodges:

In modern “democracies” there is a temptation to categorize laws as good or bad, where the latter category furnishes justification for disobedience. But unless the law runs counter to a direct divine command, there is no Biblical authorization to disobey it. On the contrary, this passage commands obedience. Moreover, Paul warns that the failure to submit to this authority entails consequences.

How did this go over with the first century Jews?

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James Stifler:

Only a few years before, the Jews in Rome had rebelled and were expelled ... Priscilla and Aquila among them ... [Paul] knew that Jews everywhere disputed the authority of Rome, and that they held the fanatical doctrine, sometimes appearing sporadically in more modern church history, that God's child is directly responsible to God alone and that the king's authority is a usurpation.

21

James Stifler (cont'd):

That a Gentile prince could have divine authority was a doctrine hard for a Jew to accept, especially when that authority was exercised over him. If Paul was hated for this teaching, as he must have been, by the Jewish nation, Titus [the Roman emperor] gave him a thorough vindication twelve years later. The disregard of this verse was the Jews' national ruin.

22

- The Jews hated Rome and resisted Rome’s authority, but their opposition to the Roman government ultimately resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70)
- Thus, a serious warning:  
Rom 13:2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.
- Those who disobey government rulers at any level – federal, state, or local – are resisting God’s ordained authorities, and will face consequences by the rulers

23

Rom 13:3 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.

Rom 13:4 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.

- For the most part, rulers won’t bother you if you are obeying and doing what is right

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- Government does not bear the sword in vain
- In other words, they have the authority – which is God-given, whether they recognize His ultimate authority or not – to punish, all the way up to capital punishment, if necessary
- v. 4 – God refers to governmental authorities as “God’s minister” – the word is *diakonos*, which means *servant* – the word from which we get *deacon*

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- They are God’s “avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”
  - So live righteously, obeying the laws of the land, and you will have nothing to worry about
- Rom 13:5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake.

26

Two motivations for obeying government:

1. The wrath of the government upon law-breakers
2. A violated conscience for disobedience

Rom 13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing.

Rom 13:7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

27

- Nobody likes taxes, but God says to pay them nonetheless
- Jesus paid his taxes – He rendered to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s
- We may not like how the government uses our taxes, but there are proper ways of correcting that – and it’s not by refusing to pay your taxes!
- Give fear to whom it is due and honor (respect) to whom it is due

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- Respect the authority of the governmental leaders, not just at the highest levels, but all the way down to the level of police officers and sheriff’s deputies
- You may not like their attitude or their methods, but you must honor their position of God-given authority
- There is absolutely no place for Christians to resist arrest or mouth off at the police officer

29

- Paul then takes the opportunity to broaden his admonition from government authorities to all mankind (including unbelievers)
- Rom 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- This does NOT mean “don’t have a mortgage or loans or credit cards”
  - It means “keep current on your payments” – and, in the broader context of the text, it is keeping current on taxes

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- In the second half of the verse, God commands that you have but one outstanding debt – a debt to mankind – a continual obligation to love one another
- Then Paul adds, “He who loves others fulfills the law”
- That is important for his Jewish audience to hear, for they had been focused on keeping the Mosaic rituals for sanctification

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- Paul has condemned this, focusing instead on the importance of submitting to the Holy Spirit, by faith, for the grace to be victorious over sin and self
- Now he tells them that to love others is to fulfill the Mosaic law
- Loving others is selfless; it is the law of Christ
- Those who live in this manner please the Lord and will hear “Well done” when they meet Him in judgment

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- Paul goes one step further and teaches that love-living doesn’t merely fulfill the Mosaic rituals, it also fulfills “the righteous requirements of the law”
- v. 9 Paul lists several of the ten commandments by way of example

Rom 13:9 For the commandments, “*You shall not commit adultery,*” “*You shall not murder,*” “*You shall not steal,*” “*You shall not bear false witness,*” “*You shall not covet,*” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”

33

- A child of God who is truly loving others will not be committing adultery or murdering (even inwardly, in the heart) or stealing or lying or coveting (lusting)
- Paul says all the commands are summed up in this one: Love your neighbor as yourself
- This applies not merely to other Christians but to all mankind
- Paul makes the point again for emphasis:  
Rom 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

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- Love never hurts anyone, and that is why love fulfills “the righteous requirements of the law”
- Incidentally, this kind of agape love is not about feelings; it’s about actions

Bob Wilkin: While believers are no longer under the law of Moses (Rom 7:6; Gal 4:5-7, 10-11, 21-31), they ultimately fulfill it since the commands of the NT likewise center on love for one’s neighbor. A by-product of Christians heeding the law of Christ (Gal 6:2), is meeting the moral standards of the law of Moses, even without knowing the law of Moses.

35

- In closing the chapter, Paul warns: **WAKE UP CHRISTIAN!**
- Shake off your spiritual slumber!  
Rom 13:11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.
- The word *salvation* in Romans is not used to refer to *initial* salvation, that is, regeneration – the point at which you first believed on Jesus and received eternal (age-lasting) life

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- Rather, *salvation* in Romans refers to *ongoing* salvation – *soul-salvation* – sanctification unto maturity, so the believer can hear “well done” at the Judgment Seat of Christ
- *That* salvation is now nearer that when you believed
- The next thing on the agenda for believers is the rapture, immediately followed by the Judgment Seat, which determines whether or not one’s soul has been saved

37

- If the soul has been saved, abundant reward will be given, in the form of a) crowns (symbolizing authority to rule), and b) white robes of righteousness (symbolizing purity), and c) glorification (glowing in some degree, sharing in Christ’s glory, and d) inclusion in the New Jerusalem as Christ’s bride and co-regent in the Millennium
- If the soul has not been saved, the believer will be naked and ashamed, relegated to the relative darkness outside New Jerusalem, which is the earthly realm of the kingdom

38

• So wake up Christian! For there is much at stake!

Rom 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

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- Works of darkness will result in negative reward at the Bema, so by God’s grace, cast them off!
- Put on, by appropriating God’s grace through faith (Rom. 5:2), armor of light
- Could this armor of light represent the glory that will be bestowed on those who live righteously now?
- *Walk properly*, that is, live in an honorable manner, pleasing the Lord ...

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- Not in revelry (carousing) and drunkenness (controlled by something other than the Holy Spirit, including illicit drugs)
- Not in lewdness (sexual immorality) and lust (sensuality)
- Not in strife (fighting, contention) and envy
- Rather, put on Jesus Christ – let Him be your provision to live righteously
- Don’t give way to your flesh
- There is much at stake!

41

Your salvation is nigh!  
The reckoning regarding your soul-salvation  
will be here before you know it,  
and you want to be ready!  
Are you ready?

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