

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

Number: 609

Verses: Romans 13:1-7

Topic: Submitting To Governments

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Romans 13:1-7 HCSB *Everyone must submit to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are instituted by God. (2) So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves. (3) For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do good and you will have its approval. (4) For government is God's servant to you for good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not carry the sword for no reason. For government is God's servant, an avenger that brings wrath on the one who does wrong. (5) Therefore, you must submit, not only because of wrath, but also because of your conscience. (6) And for this reason you pay taxes, since the authorities are God's public servants, continually attending to these tasks. (7) Pay your obligations to everyone: taxes to those you owe taxes, tolls to those you owe tolls, respect to those you owe respect, and honor to those you owe honor.*

Submission to governing authorities is not as simple as Romans 13 makes it sound. For instance - should Christians have submitted to Stalin, Hitler, Idi Amin or Pol Pot? Should Moses have submitted to Pharaoh and should Elijah have submitted to Jezebel? Romans 13 is the "default" position for Christians in relationship to a normal functional secular government. But Scripture also paints a picture of other kinds of government and how the people of God responded to them! There are seven basic Church-State postures that we see in Scripture. To make it easy I have started them all with the letter R.

- 1. Rapport** - when there is orderly and godly government - Nathan, Priests & David and Solomon
- 2. Respect** - when there is orderly pagan government - Daniel & Nebacudnezzar, Darius
- 3. Rebuke** - when there is significant systemic sin - the prophets relationship with most of the Kings of Judah
- 4. Rejection / Keeping One's Distance** - When there is despicable , dangerous, disorderly and profane government - Daniel & Belteshazzar, Jesus and Herod.
- 5. Resistance/Civil disobedience** - When there is a clearly Anti-Christian authority - Peter and the Sanhedrin.
- 6. Reformation/Restoration** - When there is an idolatrous government - Ahab, Jezebel vs Elijah, Elisha & Jehu. OT reform movements.
- 7. Revolution/War** - When there is a very oppressive and evil government - Moses & Pharaoh, Maccabees & Antiochus Epiphanes.

These responses were so common a part of the Jewish heritage that they were widely

known as being rather difficult to govern! Paul is not repudiating the stances of Moses, Elijah or Nathan but is rather ensuring that Christians do not think that belonging to the kingdom of God gives them the right to be a poor citizen of the kingdoms of this world. Paul is advocating a kind of dual citizenship – a citizenship in Heaven and a citizenship on Earth, with the heavenly citizenship of course taking priority. Christian faith is no excuse for tax evasion!

Thus Romans 13 must be taken in the light of the whole of Scripture and of common sense. If you decide that because you are a son of God and a “child of the King” that you need not pay taxes, obey the speed limit, or obey airport restrictions on carrying weapons on planes – you will get yourself in a lot of trouble and that trouble, in some way will be an expression of God's judgment: *So then, the one who resists the authority is opposing God's command, and those who oppose it will bring judgment on themselves.*

Paul makes clear Who is boss – governments are “God's servants to do good” and they must serve Christ or perish (Psalm 2). Indeed eventually all non-submitting governments will be utterly abolished:

Daniel 2:44-45 MKJV *And in the days of these kings, the God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other peoples, but it shall crush and destroy all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. (45) Because you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it crushes the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what shall occur after this. And the dream is certain, and its meaning is sure.*

Revelation 11:15 MKJV *And the seventh angel sounded. And there were great voices in Heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ. And He will reign forever and ever.*

It is interesting that on one hand Scripture says that authority is ordained by God (Romans 13:1) and on the other hand that it is ordained by Satan!

Luke 4:5-8 MKJV *And the Devil, leading Him up into a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. (6) And the Devil said to Him, All this power I will give you, and the glory of them; for it has been delivered to me. **And I give it to whomever I will.** (7) Therefore if you will worship me, all shall be yours. (8) And Jesus answered and said to him, Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."*

1 John 5:19 HCSB *We know that we are of God, and **the whole world is under the sway of the evil one.***

Which is correct? Paul's version, Luke's version or that of the apostle John? There are many accounts of people gaining political power through doing deals with the Devil. Most notably a revolutionary in Haiti who went to the forest and sacrificed a pig and promised the nation to the Devil for 100 years if he would be successful in his slave revolution – and indeed that happened! There indeed seems to be places (often with long occult histories) where the Devil seems to appoint the dictatorial and terrible leadership (which is part of the reason why we should pray for our leaders 1 Timothy 2:1-4).

The theological doctrine of the "divine right of Kings" which lasted all through the Middle Ages and into the early modern period – though even Thomas Aquinas disagreed with it (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_right_of_kings) was largely based on Romans 13:1 – that all authority is of God's creation. Many historians think that Paul was writing just before the outbreak of serious Roman persecution and was advising the Christians to "keep their nose clean" when living in the city that was the center of Imperial power.

Nevertheless Christians should be "law-abiding" and not rebellious or fractious. At times a "higher law" must be obeyed – such as hiding Jews from the Nazis or keeping Islamic converts to Christianity safe in Saudi Arabia. Indeed in Saudi Arabia, no Christian worship, not even a home bible study, is allowed on pain of death. In such a case there is a clear choice between God and government to be made!

North Korea has made the "Dear Leader" to be God and their secret agents will kill anyone trying to convert North Koreans to Christ. It is the only country in the world that goes that far. North Korea used to be the Vatican of the East it had so many churches, now Christianity has been all but wiped out! Again we see a clear tension between God and government and the list of such examples is very long indeed.

So what is Paul trying to say here? Under "normal circumstances" government is instituted by God to bring civil order and to punish wrongdoing as a servant of God - so it deserves respect, honor and taxes. Government is powerful and "not to be trifled with" for "it does not bear the sword in vain". The Roman Christians were to be good citizens and stay out of trouble and not attempt any religiously motivated revolutions against Caesar. That was good advice in the context of the day – and for many Christians today it still applies, but one day a wicked government will rule over the whole earth (Romans 13) and we are not to submit to its demands to renounce Christ or to take the "mark of the Beast".

Revelation 14:9-11 HCSB (9) *And a third angel followed them and spoke with a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, (10) he will also drink the wine of God's wrath, which is mixed full strength in the cup of His anger. He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb, (11) and the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or anyone who receives the mark of his name.*

Blessings,

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