

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Submission to Authority

Romans 13:1-7

2000

Introduction

In Romans 1-11, Paul revealed to us the glorious mercies of God expressed to us in a reconciled relationship with the Father through faith in the finished sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Then in chapter 12-15, Paul indicates that God's mercies should produce tangible, measurable, and obvious changes in the way that we live our lives.

1. In our relationship with God: Romans 12:1-2
We are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing in His sight.
2. In our relationship with other believers: Romans 12:3-16
We are to be rightly related with our brothers and sisters in Christ and to use our God-given gifts to build others up.
3. In our relationship with unbelievers: Rom 12:17-21
We are to live in a loving and respectful manner even with our enemies.

Now in Romans 13:1-7, Paul declares that the fruit of God's mercy should also impact the way that we respond to authority in our lives.

I The Source Of Authority

- A. Everyone must **submit** himself to the governing authorities [Verse 1a]

Everyone = An emphatic statement meant to include every single believer.

Submit = Hupotasso = "To be in subjection to, to obey"

A Greek military term meaning "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader". In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of cooperation and support."

- 1 Peter 2:13-14 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors ..."

Historical background on Roman rule:

The political situation in Rome was not favorable toward the early church. Nero had just begun his reign as the fifth emperor of Rome when Paul wrote this letter. At that time, Rome was known for its merciless and murderous dictators and its corrupt and godless authorities. Human slavery was rampant and injustice was common – especially for those of little means. Taxes were exorbitant and government-approved extortion by the tax collectors made the financial burden almost unbearable. And yet, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul tells us to submit nonetheless.

1. There is **no** authority except what God has established [Verse 1b]
It is God who sets up governments and God who dismantles them. Even wicked, ungodly leaders have been divinely appointed by God for His eternal purposes.

Illustration:

Nebuchadnezzar:

Jer 27:3-9 "... With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it, and I give it to anyone I please. Now I will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him ..."

Pilate:

John 19:10-11 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

2. The authorities that exist have been **established** by God [Verse 1c]
In the book of Daniel, we are told that God "sets up kings and deposes them" (Daniel 2:20-21) and that He is "sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes. (Daniel 5:21).

Application:

God is neither a Republican nor a Democrat. He is not a Socialist, a Communist, a Marxist, or even an American! The biblical picture is that God not only sends us good men sometimes, by his grace, to lead us and heal us, but also he sends us bad men at times, to punish us.

- B. Everyone who **rebels** against authority: [Verse 2a]

Rebels = Antitassomai = "To oppose or resist"

1. Is rebelling against what **God** has instituted

Obviously, if every human government is established by God, then to rebel against civil government is to rebel against God who has established it.

Ex 16:6-8 "So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, ... "Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" ... You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

2. Will bring judgment on themselves [Verse 2b]

"They have themselves to thank for the punishment they will receive." NEB

2 Peter 2:9-10 "... the Lord knows how to ... hold the unrighteous for the Day of Judgment, while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority."

C. Everyone is affected by their **response** to authority

1. Rulers hold no terror for those who do **right** [Verse 3a]

Terror = Phobos = “To fear”

Illustration:

If you drive 35-mile per hour in a 35-mile per hour zone, you can be at peace. You have nothing to fear. However, if you are going 55, you will have to be constantly on the alert for signs of *blue lights*.

2. Rulers hold terror for those who do **wrong**

Prov 24:21-22 “Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious, for those two will send sudden destruction upon them, and who knows what calamities they can bring?”

Illustration:

Yeas ago I became friends with a man who was running from the law. I don’t know exactly what he was wanted for. He seemed like a nice guy, but he carried a hand gun with him wherever he went along with a loaded sawed off shotgun. He made it clear that he would never be taken alive. Now I assume it wasn’t over a speeding ticket that he took such a life and death stand. But the fact was clear; here was a man who lived in fear of the law – always running, always looking over his shoulder. Later I heard that he was finally cornered by police and, true to his word, died in an ensuing gun battle with police.

- a. Do you want to be free from fear? [Verse 3b]

1. Then do what is right and you will be **commended**

1 Peter 2:14 “or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.”

Illustration:

Every now and then our elected officials will recognize some outstanding achievement by one of the citizens of Kauai. That is one of the functions of government – to commend those who do what is right.

Are there any exceptions to this principle of submission? YES!

There are 3 circumstances under which a Christian should resist authority:

1. If you are asked to violate a command of God

An example of this occurred when the disciples were instructed by the Jewish religious leaders to no longer preach or teach in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:19 “But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves

whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.”

Acts 5:29 “Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!”

You see, the Lord had commanded the disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...” Matt 28:19.

So, to obey the orders of the Sanhedrin would have required disobedience to God, which they rightly refused to do.

2. If you are asked to do something immoral.

The Jewish midwives who were ordered by Pharaoh to murder every male baby born to the Jews (Ex 1:17).

3. If you are asked to violate your conscience.

Daniel resolved not to eat the food from the king’s table because he did not want to violate the Mosaic dietary laws. But even in this case, Daniel 1:8 tells us that he went to the chief official for permission not to defile himself. And we’re told that God gave Daniel favor with the official.

If we do find it necessary to disobey civil authority, we should do it with respect and honor and with a willingness to suffer whatever penalties or consequences may result.

II The Purpose Of Authority

A. Authorities are God’s **servant** [Verse 4a]

Servant = Diakonos = “An attendant, waiter, deacon”

The government is God’s servant to humbly serve the needs of the people.

This why we still use the term “public servant” to describe elected officials.

1. To do **good** to those who do right

The general function of human government is threefold:

a. Protection: Protection of the law abiding citizens - Acts 21:27-37.

b. Punishment: Punishment of evildoers - 1 Pet 2:13, 14.

c. Promotion: Promotion of the welfare of the community.

1 Peter 3:13-14 “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.”

2. To **punish** those who do wrong [Verse 4b]

We are never to take the law into our own hands. Instead, our God-appointed authorities are authorized to carry out just punishment against wrongdoers.

Rom 12:19-20 “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.”

- a. He does not bear the sword for nothing
The sword was Rome's symbol of power and authority. The Scriptures teach that God has given government the power and authority to use force when necessary. That is why governments have armies, police forces and courts of law -- to protect its citizens and to punish evildoers.
- b. He is a servant of God
Rom 1:18 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men ..."
- c. He is an agent of wrath to bring punishment
1 Peter 2:13-15 Governing leaders are "sent by God to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."

Application:

We often complain and grumble about our government. But just imagine what life would be like without these public servants. We would discover quite quickly how fallen mankind really is. The government authorities are the only thing standing between us and total anarchy.

Judg 17:6 "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

The result was anarchy. And if you need evidence for this, just think back to the riots in LA following the Rodney King trial.

B. Authorities are to be **submitted** to: [Verse 5]

- 1. Not only because of possible punishment
- 2. But also because of **conscience**

As believers, we have a higher motive for obedience to authority than fear of punishment. We should be obedient not just because we are afraid of being caught and punished, but because we want to please God and maintain a clean conscience before Him.

Titus 3:1-2 "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men."

Acts 24:16 "So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man."

Application:

How can I be right with God when I fail to refuse to submit myself to the authority He has placed over me? I cannot claim a life that is pleasing to God while at the same time rebelling against His instituted authority.

Areas of concern:

Running a business illegally

Not being licensed in a business that requires it

Not paying GET tax

Cheating on taxes

Underreporting income

Taking pay under the table

Participating in illegal activities

Some Christians defend their right to smoke marijuana. They say that it's a natural herb provided by God for our enjoyment.

The Bible clearly forbids the use of recreational drugs referring to it as sorcery or witchcraft (Pharmakeia - Gal 5:19-21).

But even if a believer rejects the Biblical position, the irrefutable fact is, marijuana is illegal in this country. So if a person willfully continues to use marijuana, he will suffer the consequences: in the form of a guilty conscience, a diminished intimacy with God, a fried brain, or the legal consequences as it relates to the law.

Ripping off insurance companies

Committing acts of financial fraud against the government

Now Paul addresses the hotly debated issue of that day:

Should Christians pay taxes to an ungodly government?

III The Application Of Authority

A. We are to pay our **taxes** [Verse 6]

But you may say, "I refuse to pay taxes because I'm not in agreement with the way the money is being spent!" Well, if you use that logic then I'm sure Paul, living during the time of Rome's corruption, had an even stronger case than you, and yet he said, "Pay your taxes!" Jesus said the same in Matthew 22:21.

Matt 22:16-21 "Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

Illustration:

There is nothing wrong with taking advantage of every deduction and benefit the law provides, but no one, especially a believer, is justified in failing to pay his taxes.

I'm reminded of the man who wrote to the IRS and said, "A few years ago I cheated on my income taxes. My conscience has been troubling me, and I

haven't been able to sleep. So I enclose a check for fifty dollars. If I still can't sleep, I'll send you the rest."

1. For the authorities are God's servants

Servants = Leitourgos = "A person performing a religious or spiritual service"

Eph 6:5-6 "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart."

2. For the authorities give their full time to governing

1 Timothy 5:18 "The worker deserves his wages."

B. We are to give to everyone what we owe [Verse 7]

Give = Apodote = "Render"

1. If you owe taxes, pay taxes

Tax = Phoros = "A combination of income and property tax"

But don't act like everybody else acts about taxes. The world grumbles and gripes and groans at paying taxes. You have a right, of course, to protest injustice and to correct abuse. But don't forever be grumbling about the taxes that you have to pay.

2. If you owe revenue, pay revenue

Revenue = "A toll or goods tax" (i.e. - GET tax)

3. If you owe respect, pay respect

Respect = Phobos = "Fear"

In this context, it probably means having sincere respect for civil and governmental authorities that collect taxes.

4. If you owe honor, pay honor

Honor = Time = "To highly esteem"

1 Peter 2:17 "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king."

Application:

I confess that I have often spoken of our country's leadership in less than honoring and respectful ways. But the same principles that apply to how I should treat people in the church, should apply to how I speak of those that God has placed in authority over me.

Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

1 Tim 2:1-4 “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone -- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Conclusion

Have you experienced the mercies of God? Do you call yourself a follower of Jesus? If so, there are several characteristics that should mark your life as a believer:

1. You have offered your body as a living sacrifice to God, holy and pleasing in His sight.
2. You are rightly related to your brothers and sisters in Christ and are using your God-given gifts to build others up.
3. You are loving and respectful even toward your enemies.
4. You are submitting yourself to governmental authority in obedience to the command of God.