

Governing Authorities
Romans 13:1
July 20, 2022

Context

Theme of Romans: The gospel of God (1:16-17)

Chs 1-11 The gospel as the power of God for salvation

12:1-15:13 The gospel and the transformation of life

- 12:1-2 Consecration
- 12:3-8 Humble service
- 12:9-21 Love
- 13:1-7 Submission to government

15:14-16:27 Conclusion

Our responsibility to governing authorities (1a)

Our overarching responsibility

There are other responsibilities

- *Example: 1 Tim. 2:1–2* “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

“every person”

1. All people, believers and unbelievers alike, have this responsibility before God
2. No one is exempt
3. A responsibility God has given to all people, in all parts of the world, under all forms of civil government

“the governing authorities”

1. All governing officials who are in positions of authority over us
2. Includes lawmakers, law enforcement officers, judges, etc.
3. Includes federal, state, and local authorities

“be subject”

1. Includes obedience as to the Lord
 - The only exception is when a governing authority requires disobedience to the clear instructions of Scripture
 - **Acts 5:29** “But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’”
2. Includes acknowledging their authority over us
3. Includes genuine honor and respect (1 Pet 2:17)
4. When obedience to God requires civil disobedience, we are to do so with respect, and with willingness to suffer whatever penalties the authorities may decide
 - Daniel 1, 3, 6
 - As Christians we should seek to clearly explain why we cannot obey

This submission is part of the new way in which the Christian is to live

- *Robert Haldane (1839):* “This is contrary to the wisdom of the world, which takes offense at such subjection, and contrary to the proud heart of man, that would make religion a pretense to cover its secret reluctance to submit to disagreeable restraints.”¹

The grounds of our responsibility (1b)

verse 1b

Question: What is taught earlier in the Bible about God instituting government?

Question: What is the purpose of government?

¹ Robert Haldane, *Romans*, 576.

In Romans 13:1b, the apostle speaks of the governing authorities “that exist”

- Paul is not merely teaching the divine origin of civil government as an institution, but the divine appointment of each existing ruler

The governing authorities are “from God” and “have been instituted by God”

- LSB “have been appointed by God”

From a merely human perspective, civil authorities come to power through force, or heredity, or popular choice. But the renewed mind (12:2) recognizes behind every such process the sovereign hand of God.

God in His providence has conferred on every ruler the authority he/she possesses.

1. A delegated authority, not an absolute authority
2. Therefore...
 - The men and women under their authority are to be subject to them as to the Lord
 - The authorities are accountable to God for how they exercise their authority
 - **John 19:11** Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has **the greater sin.**”

Conclusion

Is your submission to God seen in submission to the governing authorities?

We need to be clear on the biblical teaching, because, the way things are going, it will only become harder to submit to our governing authorities