

Romans 13:1-14

“God In Government”

As you who've been with us throughout our study of the book of Romans know, the 1st 11 Ch's of this book deal with doctrinal illumination and revelation. As the transition was made into what became Ch 12 the transition was made into practical application, the exhortation as to how what we've *learned* is to be *lived* out. and I continue to re-emphasize that because we do well to remember what Paul speaks about from Ch's 12-16 of the book of Romans isn't a set of legal obligations as to how to lead a righteous life. We're made righteous because of the blood of Jesus Christ by the fact that you've humbled yourself before Him, given your heart *to* Him by faith, by that alone God imputes the righteousness of Christ to your account. What Paul is speaking of in this 2nd major section of the book of Romans isn't legal obligation, but how a life overflows out of love in response to the work of Christ on one's behalf.

You see if I've given my heart *to* Christ, and am desperately in love *with* Christ, then these are the earmarks that'll be in my life. This is the way that a life in love with Jesus properly responds. It's not about legalism, it's about love.

So far we've spoken about our dedication/consecration to God *personally*, we've spoken about our interrelations with in the body both *individually* and *collectively*. We've also received some exhortation with regards to the unbelieving world around us *generally*, even with respect to the way we're to treat our enemies. Now in keeping with the context, continuing to follow the flow Paul segues into our *accountability*, our *responsibility* to the government be it *locally*, *nationally*, or anywhere in between.

It's a healthy subject because often times believers struggle with where exactly we fit in. Because the bible teaches that we have a dual citizenship, we're in the world but not of the world. We're strangers and sojourners, just passing through, temporary residents. Paul (who was a Roman citizen) told the Philippians, "...our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," Phil 3:20 So to with you, so to with me, we're automatically given citizenship of whatever nation we're born in, but in Christ we're citizens of heaven as well. So what's the deal, how does that work out, who's law do we abide by and are there any exceptions? and The short of it is that the Christian, the heavenly citizens are to be the model societal citizens for a # of reasons of which we'll see today.

The least of which not being the fact that in willfully submitting ourselves to the ordinances of the land in which we live, be it on a local, state, or federal level reflects *well*, and brings *glory* to God. Are there ever any exceptions? Is there ever a time we're not to submit? I believe that there is, and we'll talk about that in a minute, but as for now we read.

Vs1

Why is every soul to be subject to governing authorities? Because A.) There is no authority *except* from God. and B.) The authorities that exist are *appointed* by God. The reality then being that our submission to governing authorities is one way that we submit ourselves *to God*, if He has *given* the authority, and He's *appointed* the authority than we honor Him when we *submit* to that authority.

Now there's a # of things that we should point out here, 1st of all the subject at hand is submission. and I know that this is shocking to a lot of guys, because most men think that all that the bible has to say about submission is, "Wives submit to your husbands."

It's a real eye opener for most men to learn that the precept of submission has a much broader scope than that. In reality the rule of submission applies to us all in various ways. and Just so that you know there in Eph 5 the mandate for the marriage relationship is *mutual* submission. Paul says that in the body we're to be "...submitting to one another in the fear of God." Eph 5:21 Then he goes on to break it down as it relates specifically to the family, and he starts with the wife, then defines it for the husband, then he speaks to the children. So submission and the Christian life are like hand in glove. We submit our lives to Christ, we're to submit to church leadership, we're to submit to one another, in honor giving preference to one another. and As we're reading here we're to submit, or as it's translated here for us "be subject" to governing authorities.

Paul underscores the fact that being in Christ is no exception for not falling in line with the laws of the land in which you live. He says, "Let every soul," now there's no getting around the fact that ever soul means every soul, that includes the believer. In Paul's day there were zealous groups, even as there are some out there kinda groups in our day, and they didn't recognize any king but God, and therefore refused to pay any tax but temple tax, and they were against the government under which they resided. But here we read that's unacceptable, every soul is to be subject to the governing authorities.

Why? 1st of All because there is no authority except from God. The bible teaches us that, "...power belongs to God." Ps 62:11 No matter which way you slice it you have to resolve that all power ultimately resides *in* and is issued forth *from* God, He's the Creator of all things, so there is no authority, even civil authority except from God. The scriptures teach that God has divinely ordained 3 institutions #1 Marriage/family (Gen 2), #2 Government (Gen 9) and #3 The Church (Acts 2). Our text today dealing obviously with the divinely ordained institution of government, God has ordained that man should have a governmental system and as you study Genesis Ch 9 you find that at its core is capital punishment. Now we have a couple a Vs yet to go before I potentially offend you with that so we'll leave it for now. But God has ordained that government is to be a deterrent to the sin nature with in man, if left unchecked a society will self destruct. So God in His grace ordained government to help keep us in check.

But not only does God *admit/allow* the authority, notice 2^{ndly} He appoints the authority. We read in Jer 27:5 where God has said, “*I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me.*” Now that doesn’t mean that every governing authority is “godly,” but that they’ve been set in their position by God. God doesn’t set governing powers in place for the purpose of only blessing, sometimes He uses them for chastening, or even judging. It occurred multiple times throughout the nation of Israel’s history that God would raise up an ungodly nation to take Israel/Judah captive in order to turn their hearts back to Himself. and Again I’d reemphasize the fact that just because God gives authority to a certain individual or governing power, that doesn’t mean they wield it righteously. But God will use it to serve His purposes ultimately, “Jeff are you saying that God appointed the Nazi regime? That He appointed Adolph Hitler, who absolutely murdered millions of Jews?” I’m not saying that, the Word of God declares that, does that mean God approved of his actions? Absolutely not, but what happened at the end of WWII? As all that footage of the horrible atrocities came to the light, bodies being bulldozed into mass graves, information as to the torturous treatment that the Jews were subjected to? It was after that that the League of Nations did what? They voted in favor of the establishing of Israel as a nation.

Just as the Word of God had declared would happen, that the fig tree (Israel) would bud and blossom again. The events on the prophetic calendar becoming clear, oh I might not like what’s happening, and we know that God doesn’t approve of man’s misuse and abuse of the authority He gives them specifically, but I realize that God’s in control ultimately. and He’s using the events of history, lining things up for the culmination of His coming, the establishing of His kingdom.

It’s a tough pill to swallow, but like we learned Wednesday evening trying to understand God’s ways will short circuit my brain, His wisdom, His ways, who can know the height, the depth, the width, or the length of them, they’re beyond our finding out. But God’s love I can rest *in*, lean *on*, and draw strength *from*. So when I don’t understand God’s logic, I rest in His love. Now that doesn’t mean that we’re not called to play an active role in voting or any of that, to the contrary. We have a responsibility to our nation to do the best we can to place those with the most godly convictions with a biblical world view in office. Yeah God’s in control, but He desires to move through you, through me in the accomplishing of His agenda. I’m glad that God seen fit to place into office the man we have there now, I’m not saying that he does everything as I would or I think he should. But he has a strong resolve, and we know he’s a believer. Again some things I don’t get, but I operate on limited information, he’s got information at his disposal that none of us do. That’s why we put into office the man we believe will do the right thing with the information he has, because we don’t always have the facts. Now I wasn’t in favor of his predecessor, but I have to trust that for whatever reason God appointed Clinton, just the same as He’s appointed George W. I know it’s hard to take in, but it’s what the bible teaches. God didn’t take a sabbatical, or step off the throne when Clinton came into office, or when some brutal regime governs the Sudan, He’s still on the throne.

Another reason God at times allows various governments to come into power is because He gives to the people what they want. He tries to lead them in the way they should go, but when they won't submit, He gives them over to the err of their own ways. Rom Ch 1 talks about that. It happened with Israel, they were to be a theocracy, governed by God, they wanted a king like the other nations. Now God would give them a king after His own heart, David was His choice, they didn't want that. So God gave them what they wanted, and as you know Saul was the result of that. He didn't do so well, he didn't follow after the edicts of God's heart, did his own thing, his own way. That's why we've got to be careful what we ask for, because we just might get it. So when we don't want a godly ruler, God says fine, but you'll reap (as a nation) the err of your own ways. and Thus we have states legalizing homosexual marriages, legalized partial birth abortion (We're the only country in the world that allows that by the way though it may be reversed in the not to distant future pray for that), we have prayer being eliminated from virtually any public format, the bible removed from schools. and We can't figure out why our prisons are over populated, crime rates are skyrocketing, drug and alcohol abuse is out of control, teenage pregnancies and suicide in epidemic proportions. We're reaping the harvest of our own ways as a nation, there's no getting around that fact, you take a holy, righteous, loving and compassionate God out of the equation, what do you expect? Man left to himself will self destruct.

So God will appoint powers that will even rebel directly against Him, they don't recognize Him, even though He appoints them. Remember when Pilate was questioning Jesus, but Jesus wouldn't answer him? Pilate said, "*Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?*" Jesus answered, "*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.*" John 19:10-11

It's a lesson Nebuchadnezzar had to learn, he thought he was all of that and a bag of chips, the most powerful man on the face of the earth. Remember he had a dream of this image, head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron mingled with clay. and Daniel interpreted the dream for him, told him that he was the head of gold, but that the Medo Persian empire would come after him, they were the chest and arms of silver, and he spoke to him of the various empires that would rise to power throughout world history.

Well, right after that Nebuchadnezzar had an image of himself built, of all gold, and he demanded that any time the trumpets were blown that everybody bow down and worship it. In open prideful defiance, (Of course you have Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego that come into play there) but God dealt with him, dealt a massive blow *to* him. Turned him basically into a beast of the field, hair grew all over him like bird feathers, his fingernails grew out like bird claws, and he grazed out in the field eating grass for 7 yrs. and Daniel told him that he was going to be that way until he understood that, "*...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.*" Dan 4:32

At the end of 7 yrs what did Nebuchadnezzar say of God? *“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”* Dan 4:34-35 So there is not authority except *from* God, and the authorities that exist are appointed *by* God.

Vs2

So Paul tells us here that we need to understand that since God ordained authority, and appointed authority, that when we don't submit *to that* authority we're in reality rebelling against God's ordinance, the way He's ordained and established things to be. So as we come against our Government, we're in reality coming against God. Now let me qualify that statement, I've already stated the fact that though God ordains leaders, it doesn't mean that He approves of sin in their lives, or godless decisions that they make. I posed the question earlier, *“Is there ever any exceptions?”* Because the bible teaches us that God desires obedience over sacrifice and that we would hearken is His desire over the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Here's the deal, our citizenship in Heaven takes precedence over our citizenship on the earth. and As long as our government doesn't ask us to participate in ungodly activity, or forbid us from participating in those things which are supported scripturally (i.e. fellowship, the study and proclamation of the Word of God, prayer etc) than we're to be obedient, submissive, model citizens. Paul to Timothy, *“I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”* 1 Tim 2:1-3 We're to pray *for* our leaders, and be submissive *to* our leaders. But when our leaders, or when our government, or when your husband or parents, or whomever is over us requires an ungodly, or unscriptural act of us, be it actively, or passively, our loyalty has to lie 1st with our citizenship in Heaven. I cannot violate the revealed will, and written contextual Word of God.

The bible is full of such examples, remember when Pharaoh commanded the Jewish Midwives to kill all the little boys as they were being born there in Ex Ch 1? We read, *“But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.”* Ex 1:17 They feared God and refused to murder the babies, and God honored it. We read in Vs 20 *“Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty.”* Ex 1:20 We spoke a moment ago about Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, they refused to eat the king's delicacies so that they might honor the law of God, and God bless it, they were more fit and looked healthier than any of the others when it came time to review their health.

We know they refused to bow the king's idol later on, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were tossed in the fiery furnace, but God saved them alive, not even the scent of smoke was on their clothing when they came out. Of course we're all familiar with the scene in Acts Ch 4 when the disciples were commanded to quit preaching in the name of Jesus. Did they quit? No, so back on trial they went in Ch 5, "*But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.'*" Acts 5:29-32 Not only are we not going to quit, here's a nice healthy dose of the gospel for *you* to hear and be accountable for.

That's really the bottom line, we've got to obey God rather than man, but as long as man doesn't require us to not obey God, than we'll submit accordingly. Should it become illegal for me to preach the truth of the Word, perhaps sharing on the reality of the sin of homosexuality being considered a hate crime that's punishable by time in jail, then I guess you have a pastor with a criminal record because I have to obey God rather than man. But until I'm pressed into the corner of scriptural compromise I'll submit to our governing authorities.

Vs3

Now don't think that Paul was blind to corruption in government, Nero was on the throne in Rome as he was writing this. He'd been beaten and imprisoned multiple times because he was a godly man. But even so as we mentioned earlier a basic institution of government is to be a deterrent to wicked works. If you don't want to be tried as a murderer, don't murder anyone, there's no reason to be afraid of getting a speeding ticket until you supersede the speed limit. But if you break the law, you have reason to fear, notice.

Vs4

Notice twice in this Vs law enforcement agents are called "God's ministers" again that doesn't mean they serve God consciously. But that they're upholding God's ordained institution *personally*, they're His minister. Now, let me cut to the chase here. We read, "He does not bear the sword in vain." The sword was the Roman instrument of capital punishment, "What about crucifixion?" That was reserved for the lowest class criminals, the most common form of execution was that of beheading by the sword. The bible upholds the fact that civil government reserves the right to execute proper punishment in a given situation and if necessary the death penalty. We spoke last week of how we're not to avenge ourselves, but the proper law enforcement agency is free to do what it needs to do to protect and serve the people's best interest. Capital punishment was the very core of God's establishment of government among men. You find it in Gen 9:6 after Noah came out of the Ark, God having destroyed man from the face of the earth because the intents and thoughts of his heart was only evil. and God told Noah, "*Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.*" Gen 9:6

Murder is a capital crime, there's no getting around that biblically. Now you're free to have another opinion, but it won't be a scriptural one. "Well, what about turning the other cheek and all that?" Context, on a personal level, yes, on a judicial, governmental level, civil authorities and all of that, the sentence is to befit the crime. Civil justice is simply biblical. and When the deterrent is cast off, all you have to do is look at our society to see the fruit of it. and Let's not talk "Law, and grace" God ordained that institution before the law was ever given, and here in the NT its reiterated under our current dispensation of grace. Again it's the difference between a civil government and personal retribution, those are 2 different things. (Peter swung sword, Jesus told him live by it, die by it, murder a man, you'll receive capital punishment, Jesus acknowledged that.) Well, for those of you I haven't offended, lets finish up and see if I can get the rest of you.

Vs5

In other words we shouldn't obey just because we're afraid of the punishment, but because we want to honor God and not violate our conscience in disobeying the law.

Vs6-7

Timely conclusion isn't it? On this 2nd day of April in the heart of tax time. Let me make it brief, pay your taxes. If you were paid in cash so you didn't report it, you're not being a good witness, or a reputable believer, claim it, pay your taxes on it. Now I realize there are legal exemptions, nothing wrong with taking advantage of those, they're part of our governmental structure. Outside of that, it doesn't matter if they know about it, God does, and He's searching your heart. I had a brother here in the fellowship sell me a motorcycle, and so he and his wife signed the title, gave it to me, it was all good. Now they were above board in their integrity, hadn't done anything wrong, but when I got the title home I noticed that they hadn't filled in the amount that I'd paid for it. I came to him and I said, "Man you inadvertently had me in an integrity crisis, I could've put any amount I wanted in there, saved me a bundle on taxes. No body would've known the difference." Then the Lord began to search my heart, "I'll know the difference." So in the wickedness of my heart I tried to bargain with the Lord, because I borrowed from the bank a certain amount, and paid cash for the remainder. I thought the only paper trail leads to the borrowed amount, "God can I just claim that amount?" and God just busted me out, can you place a price on your integrity, what's it worth to you to compromise your integrity and violate your conscience and rebel against the law? Translation, "It's sin." So I had to do the right thing, I claimed every penny that I paid, and I paid the tax that was due. Didn't like, don't know that I agree with it, but I submitted to it, praise God I passed that test.

You can try to justify it all you want, "Well they do ungodly things with the tax money I pay in." That's not your concern, your concern is to obey the Word of God, and God will hold them accountable for their part, you pay your taxes, pay customs, respect those whom you're to respect, and honor those whom you're to honor. You don't have to agree with their position but you're to honor the office which they hold, the idea here is simple do the right thing by God and man. Let's leave Rom 12 and we'll close in Matt 22 (Vs 15-22) The Pharisees always seeking to entrap the Lord

Vs15-17

If He says “No” the Roman military will indict for insurrection, if He says “Yes” the Jews will hate Him because they despised paying taxes to Caesar, either way they think they’ve got Him.

Vs18-22

Translation, “Your money was issued from Caesar, the government, give it to him, pay your taxes, but your life was issued to you by God, give *it* to Him.”

Prayer Points: God we thank You for how practical Your Word is, speaking to us right where we live, we recognize Lord that You are in control sovereignly, so may we submit to You personally even in the simple things like obeying the law around us that’s been established ultimately to help us. God may we render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, but Lord may we give to You the very life that You’ve given to us, and again when we don’t understand Your ways, may we rest in, lean on, draw strength from Your love.

We’ve been speaking on the practical overflow of how our love for God is displayed in day to day living in even the simple things such as submitting to our government. But before you can live your life for God, your life has to *belong to* God. The bible declares that God so loved the world, so love you and love me, that He gave His only begotten Son. Jesus was raised up on a cross, delivered up for our transgression and raised for our justification, so that whoever would believe on Him would never perish but receive everlasting life. If God is knocking on the door of your heart to day, do yourself a favor, open it up and let Him in, allow His forgiveness to flood your life, and fill the void in your heart.