

**Subjection**

*Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.* Romans 13:5

Please read 1 Peter 2:13-17 today and notice the similarities with what Paul is teaching. Peter makes it clear that we are to subject ourselves to human institutions for the Lord's sake. Peter says that it is the will of God that we should silence the talk of foolish men by doing good. Paul says that we will be able to determine the will of God if we are renewing our mind so that we can live a transformed life! He reminds us that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2). Paul summarizes his thoughts from 12:1-4 in the verse we are looking at today. We must subject ourselves to avoid God's wrath (incur judgment - verse 2). But even more so because of conscience (the awareness that God is sovereign over the authority). Subjection to authorities is subjection to God. They are the authorities he has placed in this realm. Subjection implies obedience, but there is the understanding that when governing authorities go against the clear teaching of God, the follower of Jesus may need to make a stand. But even in so doing, they recognize that they are subject to the governing authorities. Consider Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3). They could not bow down and worship the image that had been set up, but they knew that in so doing, they were still subject to Nebuchadnezzar. Ultimately, they entrusted themselves to God and his reign, subjected themselves to him, and left it in his hands whether or not he would save them from the authority he had put in place. Consider what it means to subject yourself to authorities for the Lord's sake.

**Saturday, October 31, 2020****Owed**

*For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

Romans 13:6-7

As you read the list today, consider what is owed to those who are the ministers of God. Read ahead to verse 8 and see that Paul reminds his readers that the reason we pay what is owed is because of the love of God that flows through us. That love flowing through us is a continual debt that needs to be paid. It reveals itself in this context as it pays what is owed. Financially, yes, but even more importantly, in respect and honor. I think about the different ways I have heard people talk about those in authority. I think about the way I talk about them—or think about them. Do I respect the authorities, realizing it is something I owe them? Do I honor authorities, realizing that valuing them is something I owe them? Peter tells his readers to honor the emperor—the very one who would be persecuting them! Thinking about this allows me to get under the surface of my pride. My pride stops me from honoring others. My pride stops me from respecting them. It is hard because the sin nature in us is so strong. Our autonomous streak is so wide. Each person in authority is to be honored and respected. We are to pray for them as image bearers and servants of our amazing God. It is easy to join in the rhetoric that is so harmful. If we do, it causes us to be a terrible witness to the world around us of the difference Jesus makes in the life of a person. We can disagree without dishonor or disrespect. Today, consider how you can show respect and honor for those to whom it is owed—those in authority.



Pastor Chuck Cervenka



## Transformed Living - Recognizing the Sovereignty of God

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

Romans 13:1-7

Monday, October 26, 2020

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## Authority

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* Romans 13:1

Please read Romans 12 and 13 today. As much as possible, try to avoid the headings and the chapter break. This will allow you to get a sense of the flow of the original letter that was sent to the church at Rome. The passage we are looking at this week is a well-studied passage with volumes written on it. We are tempted to read it looking for the escape valve—a loophole. Paul speaks with a broad brush and states that all authorities are established by God. This can cause angst as we look at authorities over the course of history that have been anything less than what we may consider holy. Evil governments have been in place and sinful rulers have made laws that are not God-honoring in any fashion. So what does it mean to be in submission to those authorities? The answer lies in the sovereignty of God. God is the supreme authority. All other authority falls under his sovereign control. He has a kingdom. It is eternal and it is unshakeable. God reigns over his kingdom from his throne in the heavenly temple where all things are under his authority. Yet he has created a world for mankind and within the world there is a need for order. That order comes from the authorities that God establishes. Due to the fallen nature of the world and the sinful nature of mankind, those authorities can be corrupt. But that does not mean that they have any authority outside of that which has been given them by God. Jesus reminds Pilate of that fact quite clearly in John 19:11, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” Today, consider how you have viewed the governing authorities in the past. Have you viewed them as being under the authority of God? How can it bring comfort to you to know that God is sovereign over them all?

Tuesday, October 27, 2020

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## Resist

*Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.* Romans 13:2

Please read Romans 12 and 13 again. It is good for us to view this passage in context. Having established that God is supreme over all authorities, Paul moves to the conclusion that resisting the governing authorities placed by God is actually resisting what God has appointed. Not only is it resistance to God, it will incur judgment! This is where the autonomous nature of mankind begins to bristle. Surely this must be hyperbole—an overstatement of what is meant. Perhaps Paul is speaking of a “good” authority as opposed to one that is evil. We can rationalize not resisting a “good” government, but surely we are supposed to resist a “bad” government. Remember, followers of Jesus are first and foremost citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20). We await the return of the King from there! He is our King. As we serve him as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) we subject ourselves to the temporary rulers he has put in place here, realizing that he is working out his plan for things to be where they need to be for his return. If we resist the authority he has appointed, we resist the plan that he is working out for his good. This can be difficult to grasp and understand. History has shown many times when people have resisted authority. God has used that resistance as well, but it does not mean that resistance is what he has commanded. Consider how Jesus responded to the governing authorities as you ponder this verse today. Remember that it is in the context of viewing God’s mercy with a desire to be transformed by thinking biblically. Also remember that we are not to overcome evil with evil, we are to overcome evil with good (12:21). Ponder today what it means to not resist the authorities that are in place. Consider what it means that judgment will come to those who do.

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

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## Servant

*For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.* Romans 13:3-4

When you think of a servant of God, what do you think of? The word used for servant here is “diakonos,” which can also be translated “minister” or sometimes “deacon.” The verses today help us understand that since God is sovereign over all, all are his servants. Some are willing servants; some are not so willing. Some are aware they are his servants; some are not. But all are serving his purposes. Even those who appear to be serving evil are serving the purposes of God. The sovereignty of God must be grasped as we seek to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We must realize that God is working out his plan. It is a plan that started before the creation of anything that we see. The Bible reveals the plan of God for redemption. When the metanarrative of the Bible is considered, we can see how this timeless plan of redemption is unfolding throughout time. God is patiently and consistently working out his plans through his servants—those willing and those unwilling. Nothing can thwart the plan of God. As I write this, we are in a time of election for president in our country. Because God has allowed us to live in a country where we can vote for our leaders, we should vote. And we should pray for God’s leading in our hearts for the people we vote for. But we must be careful to remember that whoever gets voted in will be a servant of God, just as every governing authority of all time has been. Ponder this role of the governing authorities as servants of God. How does that impact how you respond to them? How does it impact how you pray for them? How does it cause you to think about your role as a servant of God?

Thursday, October 29, 2020

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## Wrongdoer

*For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.* Romans 13:3-4

Please read Habakkuk today? Habakkuk is living at a time when the people of Judah are far from God. They need correction and Habakkuk cries out to God to correct the injustices that are being done. God answers that he will send the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to do so! This is shocking to Habakkuk. How can God use such evil to correct that which is not all that bad? (see Hab. 1:13) God reveals that he will indeed judge Babylon as well, but first he is raising them up to serve his purpose of disciplining the nation of Judah. (Again, we see that God is the authority over all authorities and that all authorities are his servants.) God tells Habakkuk that the righteous must live by faith (2:4) as they wait for the final justice of God to come. Faith is the key. Paul will pick this up in his teachings, as will the author of Hebrews. God will punish wrongdoers. He will use the authorities of earth to do so in this realm. But who are the wrongdoers? Consider the government at the time of Paul. It was a government that had put James to death by the sword (Acts 12:2). Rome was a corrupt government as have been all governments. Our world is defiled by sin. Each leader is defiled by sin. Rome was overthrown. Babylon was overthrown. Judah was overthrown. Judah was “good.” It was not the wrongdoer—or was it? God disciplines those he loves. He will not let his children remain in sin. There are times when God uses even corrupt governments to purify his people and get them back on track. There are times when the people of God are wrongdoers. God is not looking for those who come near him with their lips but whose hearts are far from him. He is looking for his children to worship him alone, to serve him alone. Consider the times we are in today. Is there any way in which the people of God may be doing wrong? Might it be that God is looking to discipline his people once again?