

## SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation  
TITLE: Politics and the Gospel

SCRIPTURE: Romans 13:1-8

DATE: September 23, 2018  
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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

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I think you would agree with me that the political climate we live in today is worse than it's ever been. We live in a politically divided country. The question is: Does God have anything to say about it? The answer is, "Yes." Romans 13:1-8 speaks to the issue of God and government--of Politics and the Gospel. But what you read in this passage doesn't sound anything like the political rhetoric you hear today.

The Gospel that saves us is the Gospel for a divided world. Our main calling as a church is to put the Gospel on display in our divided world. But if we're not careful, our political convictions can easily eclipse the Gospel. Christians today have a unique opportunity to hold firmly to our political opinions with humility and hope, without being mean-spirited. Remember, Romans 12:2—"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." Rom 13:1-8 lays out what this non-conformity looks like in the world of government and politics.

READ Romans 13:1-8 —

First and foremost, the main idea of this passage is—"Let everyone be subject to their governing authorities." Why is that true? —*because*—

(1) God's in \_\_\_\_\_ or who's in \_\_\_\_\_ (13:1-2). (cf. Daniel 4:17; Jeremiah 27:5-8, Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

(2) No political leader can \_\_\_\_\_ God's plan. Ultimately, there will be \_\_\_\_\_. (12:17-19; 13:3-50)

(3) Therefore, we should pay taxes, honor and respect to our leaders (13:6-8) because our governing authorities do promote good and punish evil (13:6-8).

Are there any exceptions? Yes, devotion to God sometimes calls for \_\_\_\_\_ to governing authorities. When would that be? "If the state commands what God \_\_\_\_\_ or the state \_\_\_\_\_ what God commands then civil disobedience is a Christian duty."

The great temptation in hearing a message like this is to dismiss it out of hand because many of us have strong political convictions. But, if we do not live the Gospel in our politics then we won't live it effectively in the other areas of our lives.

Jesus lived his life under the rule of Roman authority. And, the Roman authorities crucified Jesus. From the Cross, he asked his Father in Heaven to forgive them. How does Jesus life and death and the teaching of Romans 13 intersect one another?

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*For Discussion —*

Have someone read Romans 13:1-8.

1. How do you square Paul and his friends personal experience of injustice at the hands of the Roman government with what he writes here? Why is he not naïve in telling us to subject ourselves to our governing authorities?
2. How do you personally process v.2—"Whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed?"
3. How do you reconcile the fact that "God's in charge of who's in charge" with the evil things that governments sometime do to innocent people?
4. What is God's answer to the evil things that corrupt leaders sometime do? (hint: look back to the end of chapter 12).
5. What could Paul possibly be thinking when he basically says that Nero and his ilk were God's servants?
6. What are we commanded to pay taxes? What's the primary responsibility of all governments?
7. How do you obey the command to honor and respect leaders who you don't think are worthy of honor and respect?
8. When is the only time that disobedience toward authority is justified? Why is it justified?
9. As you grasp the idea that God's in charge of who's in charge, how will it change you? How will your life be different as a result of this message?

OR try this approach ...

Have someone read Romans 13:1-8 and, then ask: From what you heard in Charlie's message or what we just read right here--*What are some of the "AHAs" you took away from what you learned?*

When someone volunteers an "AHA"...ask follow up questions to dig deeper and to keep the discussion going. Ask the group, *"Anyone else have this same "AHA"--what do you think about this insight?"*

After you've exhausted topic. Throw the original question back out to the group--*"Who else had an "AHA?"* Repeat the pattern above. Follow up questions then get input from the group.

If someone says, *"I didn't really have an "AHA," it's more that I don't understand..."* Then go that direction. Ask follow up questions to help them clearly articulate the issue then ask the group for input. *"Anybody else think about that/struggle with that?"*

*"So, how would you answer that question?"* Whoever answers--ask follow up questions, ask for input from the group on that answer (*What do you think about that?*), etc. It's been my (Charlie) experience that you can have a great discussion around this approach to community group conversations.