

# THE CHRISTIAN AND THE GOVERNMENT

*Romans 13:1-7*

## Introduction: What does our world think about the word “submission”?

### I. Submit to the Governing Authorities (v.1, 3-4, 7)

#### A. Why Does Paul Raise This Issue?

- o It's a practical issue in the lives of those in Rome, and in every age
  - Roman government was suspicious of Christians and considered them insubordinate rebels
- o Christians tend toward two extremes:
  - #1: Reject the legitimacy of government and rebel against it
  - #2: Consider government the “savior” and solution to all our problems

\*\*Both of these reactions make the same mistake: they assume our Kingdom is of this world (and thus we must either cast off government, or rely on it 100%)
- o One of the best indicators of a true believer is someone who submits
  - Theme of submission dominates the pages of Scripture: submission to God, children submitting to parents, wives submitting to husbands, submitting to church leaders, etc.

\*\* Key point: Everybody submits to somebody. Even Christ submitted to the Father!

\*\*Key point: If a Christian cannot submit to human authorities, why should we think they would submit to a divine one?

#### B. What Does Submission to Government Mean?

- o Respect the Government: “Respect to whom respect is owed, honor to who honor is owed” (v.7)
- o Obey the Government: “Do what is good (v.3)...be in subjection (v.5)...Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed (v.7)”
- o Clarifications:
  - Submission doesn't mean you always agree with the government
  - Submission doesn't mean you cannot work to change the government

- Submission doesn't mean you must sin if that government asks you to
- Submission doesn't mean there can never be a justifiable war against a government

## II. Reasons to Submit to the Governing Authorities (v.1-6)

### A. All Authorities Come from God

- o Since God is sovereign over all things, then "those [authorities] that exist have been instituted by God" (v.1b)
  - Paul also calls governing authorities "God's servant" (v.4) and "ministers of God" (v.6)
- o "Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed" (v.2)
  - To disobey government is to disobey God (with clarifications discussed above)

**\*\*Key question:** What authority in your life right now are you resisting?

### B. Government Has a Good Purpose

- o Government is a necessary institution; it exists as an "avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (v.4)
- o Implication: the main God-given role of government is to punish evil and keep society civil and orderly for the protection of all

### C. Rejection of Government has Negative Consequences

- o Punishment from Government: "if you do wrong, be afraid, for he [governing ruler] does not bear the sword in vain" (v.4)
- o Punishment from God: "those who resist what God has appointed will incur judgment [from God]" (v.2); "be in subjection...to avoid God's wrath" (v.5)

**\*\*Key point:** God takes seriously the authorities appointed over us

# Discussion Groups

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1. Of the two extreme approaches to government, to which do you tend? How does today's study help correct your understanding of government?

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2. What are some authorities in your life (government or otherwise) that you are struggling to submit to? How does this study provide fresh motivation to do so?

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3. How does Paul's teaching on government help you think about what its main purpose is? How might that help you evaluate governmental systems in the present day?

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