Tommy Clayton
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Romans 13:1-7

Submitting to Your Government, Part 2

Intro: Turn with me again to Romans 13.

It doesn't take Paul long to get to one of the hardest realities we face as believers. We're still in this world—a world that is opposed to God. A world that is under the influence of Satan.

Jesus saved us *from* this world but not *out* of it. Not yet. He left us here. We're called to resist being conformed to this world, *but not to escape it*. To live instead as missionaries. Salt/light.

Gospel doctrine leads to gospel culture. Paul is continuing to answer the question in this chapter: How does the gospel transform our human relationships? We've already seen in chapter 12 how we treat our enemies. We bless them. We don't curse them. We live peaceably. We don't avenge ourself. We feed, cloth, forgive, and love our enemies. We overcome evil with good. The gospel changes everything.

Submitting to the Government is part of our reasonable service. How does God's mercies transform our attitude toward state authorities. **IOW**…How does the Gospel shape the way we live under & relate to the ruling government?

For the 1st century church Paul is writing to, one of the primary places they had to "overcome evil with good" was in their relationship with governing authorities.

Many of the those inflicting evil on the Christians and cursing them were governing authorities. And the way they were to overcome them, according to Paul, is by submitting to and honoring them, even when they don't deserve it.

In 12:18, Paul wrote "as much as possible, live at peace with everyone." That would include the government. How to maintain peace? Honor and submit when you can.

Frankly, this letter is probably *exactly* what Jewish Christians in Rome needed from Paul. He is a tremendous pastor. I have learned so much by watching him shepherd the church in Rome.

He wants those Christians to know: Our objective is not to overthrow the government. Jesus certainly did not call us to do that. To deeply and faithfully engage, yes. To overthrow, no?

Our role is not to overthrow human governments. To influence? Yes. To be salt and light? Yes. To speak prophetically to rulers and those in authority and rebuke them for unrighteousness and warn them of judgment to come like John the Baptist did with Herod?

Of course. But that is different than thinking that Christians are supposed to bring in God's rule with themselves as the rulers

Paul wants to make clear to Caesar IF he reads this letter, that when he comes to Rome, it is as a Christian missionary, not a political agitator and to the Roman Christians that their role is to ***influence***, not ***overthrow***.

When Paul wrote these things, none of the authorities were Christian. "The 'authorities' he is referring to were at best unfriendly, and at worst actively hostile, toward Xians. This is a totally pagan and in many ways corrupt government context.

SLIDE: The title of today's message is Submitting to Your Gov't. 3 pts. about that submission: Commanded. Conditional. Challenging

Pt. # 1 Submission Is COMMANDED: He did not say love the government with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Only one person gets that allegiance. God. No. Submit. Let every soul. First for emphasis. Singular for effect. *Every Soul. Submit. To Higher Authority.* The word *submit* is a verb. It's a command.

SLIDE: Submit/Hupo-Tasso = Arrange. *To recognize one's place under someone else in a hierarchy established by God.*

Be subject. Place yourself under. It's a word of order, a military term in origin. Placement terminology. Not "OBEY" but submit.

SLIDE: The government's rule is not absolute in our lives. Paul says that submitting to them is a way of submitting to God, which means if obeying them ever caused us to disobey a direct command of God, we are duty-bound to practice civil disobedience. We'll discuss that pt. next sermon (conditional).

SLIDE: Today we'll finish our question from last week. Why submit? 5 reasons to submit to your gov't. "for"

1. ALL AUTHORITY IS FROM GOD: (vv 1-2): 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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

You and I were born into a world of authority. There are visible and invisible authorities. arch-angel. Term of rank. Chief or first. There are ranks of angels. Jude tells us that And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains **—Jude 6**

SLIDE: God created mankind, and He created us to live in a world of order. And He has put authority structures in place to lead and govern people, protect them, and to restrain expressions of sin.

1. **Government**: Sword of Justice/Punishment
2. **Church**: Keys of Access
3. **Family**: Rod of Correction

Apart from those divinely ordained structures, fallen man would be living in a constant state of turmoil and unrest. Like the Israelites in the book of Judges, where "There was no king in Israel in those days and every man did what was right in his own eyes."

Authority and submission are inescapable realities built into the very fabric and DNA of creation. Even before the Fall.

Master and Commander (Russell Crowe plays Captain Jack). He is in chart of a British Ship hunting down a French ship that has wreaked havoc on the British naval forces. At one point in the movie, he has an insubordinate crew member flogged for disrespecting a higher ranking commander (who is weak). A

conversation with the doctor and his personal friend on the ship ensues where Captain Jack says this:

Men must be governed. Often not wisely I grant you, but there are hierarchies even in nature

All authority, including the gov't is from God. He established all governments—not only ordained the good ones, but ALL them, even the governments we would consider evil.

He raises up nations and governments, and casts them down. He is sovereignly guiding and directing all nations of the world. It's His

So…*Because* God is over all things, and has *established* all governments, we are not to resist them but rather to submit.

IOW: Submitting to the gov't is an issue between you and God. Just like submitting to any human authority put into place by God is an issue between you and God. Which means…it's worship.

2. THEY ARE IN PLACE FOR YOUR GOOD: (vv 3-4): 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, 4 for he is God's servant for your good.

Governments protect law-abiding citizens, and put a stop to rebels. They maintain peace, prevent anarchy, and keep society safe. They restrain the sinful inclinations of man's heart.

SLIDE: They are there for our protection, for our *good*.

When there are no governing authorities, mayhem ensues. When there is a deficit in law enforcement, crime rises. Looting. Riots.

One of government's jobs is to promote the good—the general welfare—of its citizens. That's how healthy governments have seen themselves throughout history. The Preamble to Const…

SLIDE: "to insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity…"

We tend to focus on all the controversial or corrupt stuff government workers have done, but the vast majority of government work provides things we are grateful for:

- Protect Citizens.
- Enforce Laws. Uphold justice.
- First Responder Services (fire/911)
- Defense. Military.

The government promotes human flourishing and peace.

SLIDE: Peter said something similar: Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **1 Pet. 2:13–14**

Paul's logic here is simple, clear, and powerful. If you want to be unafraid of the rulers, do what is good. If you're driving 110 mph on I4 and you pass a cop with his radar pointed at your vehicle, you will be afraid. You'll panic. And you should.

I remember being so paranoid when I was driving in a strange part of Orlando and running a yellow light that was photo-enforced.

3. THEY ADMINISTER JUSTICE: (vs. 4): 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.

The sword = Represents the power to punish and make war. We submit to government because they have been given the authority by God to punish those who do wrong. The punishment described here in v. 4 is described as "God's wrath." Capital Punishment???

Paul describes this enforcement of justice as "bearing the sword." These authorities have been given the role of carrying out the appropriate punishment to lawbreakers.

One of the reasons we submit to the gov't is because they have the divine right to punish evil and enact justice. They are avengers. Remember? Authorized by God Himself.

One Roman general, when given a sword of promotion to administer justice by his superior officer, was told, "A sword for *you*…and if need be, for *me*!" Nobody is above the law.

The government is to keep society safe by enforcing suitable punishments according to the crimes. They bear the sword.

When governments allow injustice to thrive, for the strong to trample or the weak—whether that is a criminal with ordinary citizens, or the cause of the oppressed in the courts; the foster child in the home; the unborn in the womb; a predatory lender with the elderly; or an individual whose religious freedoms are crushed by a powerful corporation—when governments allow those things to happen, they are failing at their God-given jobs.

The government bears the responsibility to protect its citizens from enemies—at home and abroad—and they are given the sword, or the gun, or the bomb, for that reason, and when they use it they use it in his name, whether they are Christians are not.

They must bring justice. God has even given us what justice looks like in His Word. The punishment must fit the crime.

SLIDE: Lex Talionis If there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. **—Ex. 21**

Even the most wicked regimes throughout history have been a deterrent to murder, theft, and other crimes.

Oppressive…Communist, Socialist, or Totalitarian—as wicked as they are, they still punish murders and rapists. Even the most cruel, ungodly tyrants in history still enforced laws to keep people from running loose and causing mayhem and destruction.

Vlad the Impaler (Dracula) was a severe ruler. History says he set a golden chalice in Wallachian town square beside a well for 7 yrs… He told his citizens that anyone could drink from it. But nobody could move it. It stayed put for 7 years. Why? Fear.

No society can long survive unrestrained murder, theft, sexual immorality, and violence. Good behavior is essential for any nation's self-preservation. Without it, society self-destructs.

In some places, you can steal a car and instead of replacing it, you get 3 square meals a day at the expense of the taxpayers.

But in other places the pendulum swings the opposite way. In some countries in the Middle East you might get your hand chopped off for stealing a loaf of bread. This is a radically imbalanced judgment, as the punishment does not fit the crime.

As imperfect as our American system is, it is still in place for the sake of punishing those who do evil. Even though nations have a confused sense of justice, they still have the sense to impose consequences against evil, and that justice comes from God.

Even in some places in the Middle East, if you are a citizen, you're still probably safer on the streets at night than you are on the streets of some big U.S. cities, because if you mess around in those countries, you don't last very long. And they, at least know what crime is and they deal with it.

4. BECAUSE OF CONSCIENCE: (vs 5): Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

Christians cannot only be motivated by avoiding God's wrath, or the fear of being punished. But *a desire to please God in all things*

In other words. This is our reasonable worship—remember?

Now….Why does God care how we think about the government or how we relate to the government for that matter?

What in the world does my relationship to the government have to do with my faith? Why does God care?

First, because the government was his idea, not ours. It's planted deeply into our DNA because we were made for a king. We were made to serve royalty. Sin wrecked that. We don't want to serve and the kings we crown are tyrants. Democracy is medicine…

Secondly, God's name is at stake. His reputation. We're called by his name. We follow His Son. We show the world what God is like and how the Gospel changes us.

Remember in Job when God said (he brought Job up) to the devil. Have you considered my servant Job? (My servant…I LOVE that). there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" **—Job 1:8**

He didn't say (Have you considered my servant Job? He's a rebel rouser. He's an agitator. A revolter. He's insubordinate.

And third, God cares about all of our lives. Not just what we do on Sundays. Not just what we do around other Christians. He has a much bigger picture in mind than that.

SLIDE: "My heart, Christ's home" by Robert Munger…

It's brilliant and impactful. The idea is this: you might think of your life as a house. Jesus Christ is asked by you to come into the house. Why? Ordinarily, you start by giving Jesus a section of your life where you need his help. It could be an area of sin you want to be dealt with. It could be a problem you want to be dealt with. Maybe with your family?

So…Jesus comes into your family room. That's fine. But see, Jesus is different. He won't stay in one room. He won't. He doesn't act like a guest because he's not. When you treat him like a guest, you're not recognizing his authority and Lordship over all your life.

A guest is somebody who comes in but doesn't take liberties. You don't do things without permission of the owner. If you're brought into the living room, you don't go check out the bedroom. You don't start opening up the refrigerator and the pantry like toddlers do. No. That might offend the host. You're a guest, not the owner. But Jesus…He isn't interested in being our guest. He owns the house

The study/library. Thought Life
The dining room. Appetites/Desires
The living room. Relationships
Work room. Your career
Rec room. How you find relief.

Hall Closet. It's locked. Strong odor. Effects whole house. Secrets We never find out what's in the hall closet in the book. Ours…?

We are no longer rebels. We once rebelled against God but through Christ He has forgiven our sins, brought us near, and made us His friends. Now we enjoy peace, and we are called to forsake that spirit of rebellion. We are peacemakers.

Put simply, Christians are not looking to start a revolt. We are reformed rebels, ladies and gentlemen.

For us, obedience is not merely outward compliance with the requirements of government. This we can expect from unbelievers, if for no other reason than the fear of punishment.

God is not just after our obedience. But a WHOLE new kind of obedience. We live as servants of God. Peter says this too.

He desires a fuller, deeper, obedience from the heart. For the sake of conscience, do what is right in His sight. Out of love for Him.

With mere outward compliance, you obey because you're afraid of getting caught. With inward obedience, you obey because you want to have a clear conscience before God. To please Him!

Because of conscience, believers are to be model citizens, with a reputation as being law-abiding and obedient, rather than rebellious. A reputation of being respectful of government rather than opposing it. We must speak against sin, speak against injustice, speak against immorality, but we must do it within the framework of civil law and with respect for civil authorities.

What would our nation be like if only Christians were citizens? Would there be riots? Looting? Disrespect for governing authorities? Would there be peace? What difference would our presence make? It's an interesting though experiment…

5. THEY ARE MINISTERS OF GOD: (vv 6-7): 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. **—Rom 13:1–7**

This is the 3rd mention in this section where Paul refers to those in government as servants/ministers of God. 2 different words…

The word translated in the ESV as "servants" in v. 4 is the word *diakonos*. "Deacon." These authorities are called "deacons" there.

But the second word is *leitourgos*. It is where we get the word liturgy. It was used in the New Testament and in the early church to describe a religious servant, a minister of God.

Paul describes state & gov't authorities as Ministers & Deacons. So think about this: The President of the United States is a servant of God. Senators, Congressmen, House of Reps, Judges, all the way down into the State and Local level—all servants of God.

That is, in the sense that they carry out a God-ordained service. They uphold a divine institution. Think of a police officer walking up to your car wearing a clerical garment, or the president…

They may not know God at all, but they represent Him. Despite the fact that the great majority of civil leaders would reject the idea that they are devoting themselves to God's service, Paul makes clear that they represent a divine institution.

This is why you pay taxes. (v. 6)

The Levites were the tribe that was responsible for maintaining the Tabernacle and the religious service to God for the whole nation. And they received the tithe. Israelites were to give a % of their income to the Levites to keep the whole OT liturgical system running. In the same way, these are called ministers of God, and we pay taxes to keep this system of authority in place.

Again…we don't count on being model citizens. There was only one of those. Are you trusting him and Him alone…?

Let's pray…