Tommy Clayton
7/21/2024 - GLC
Romans 13:1-7

When To Resist Your Government

SLIDE: 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. 3 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. 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. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 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.

INTRO: Submit!!! How's that land on you? Probably the same way is lands on me. Nails on a chalkboard. And depending on the authority you're called to submit to…perhaps *impossible*.

Depending on where we live, we don't get a vote "literally" in which authorities we submit to, do we? Your father. Your husband. Your employer. Your king. Teachers. Supervisors. America…freedoms.

When you become a Christian, you don't contract out of that, whether your authority is a Christian or not. Paul wrote the Corinthians explaining to them what to do if they became a Christian but their spouse did not. Should they divorce? If we become a Christian but our parental authorities do not, should we run away? Quit our jobs? Leave our country?

That's not always advisable. If you are in danger & able, obviously.

But listen, when Jesus rescued you, he saved you from the world but not out of the world. Not yet. No, you're a living, breathing, walking testimony of his saving work. A trophy. A monument.

The world needs you. God doesn't. But your neighbor does. Martin Luther once said that God doesn't need your good works but your neighbor certainly does. God left us here. He doesn't have temples on the earth anymore that are made with human hands. We're his temple. We in a sense, demonstrate, mediate, and spread God's presence on the earth. The world needs us, friends. That's a summary of what the rest of Romans is about 12-16.

It's not for the faint of heart. We needed 11 chapters of how transformational our salvation is (how the gospel changes everything) before we got our marching orders. The commands and instructions came rapid fire in chapter 12. And it began with priestly language. Offer yourself up to God as a living sacrifice. That sounds hard—and glorious. It's our reasonable worship/service. He gets glory from us obeying. That's the context…

SLIDE: Submit to the higher governing authorities. In Romans 13, Paul's application of the gospel is pretty astonishing. The more you know his audience and context, the more astonishing it is. Let me help you with that. Let's look at our outline. Point # 1 was:

It's Commanded: We covered 5 reasons why it's commanded.

1. All Authority is from God (vv. 1-2)
2. They are in Place for Your Good (vv. 3-4)
3. They Administer Justice (v. 4)
4. Because of Conscience (v. 5)
5. They are Ministers of God (vv. 6-7)

We covered those in great length. Open and shut case, right?

The Bible makes it clear: ALL human authority comes from God. Good and bad. Benevolent and Oppressive. Righteous and Evil. And we are to *submit* to our governing authorities. That raises an important question: what happens when the government oversteps it's boundaries or violates our freedoms? Then what? *When* do we RESIST our Government—and better yet, *how* do we? Next point.

Pt. # 2 Submission Is CHALLENGING: *Let Every Person*.

Why is this command challenging? Because I don't want to be under authority—even good ones! I don't want to be governed. I don't want to be told what to do—especially when it's by people who are unsympathetic to my most deeply held belief, or worse, mock it, or even worse, who are hostile to it and oppose it with force, which is the case with the Romans Emperors who were in power during Jesus' ministry and when Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome. Caligula & Nero.

SLIDE: The most evil men and women in history. 2 Emperors.

Paul would not have approved of or endorsed the vast majority of what the governing leaders of his day did. His guy not Caesar.

Most of them were psychotic. Sexually deviant. Mentally unstable.

Caligula: emperor during Jesus' ministry, had his mother and bother killed to remain unchallenged. Openly committed incest with three of his sisters. Frequently cross-dressed and went out in public. Replaced the heads on statutes of Romans Gods with his own. Chose random people from the crowds of gladiator games and throw them into coliseum to be attacked by wild animals.

Caligula was self-indulgent, cruel, sadistic, and sexually perverted. An insane tyrant who demanded and received worship as a living god. His reign was marked by cruelty, debauchery, and madness.

Caligula was followed by *Claudius*, whose wife, Agripinna, Nero's mother, poisoned him with mushrooms and murdered him with help. Her son, *Nero*: at the age of 17 became emperor/Caesar—ruler of the largest empire the world had ever seen, 3 years before Paul wrote this letter to the Roman church in 57 AD.

He was the cruelest and most sadistic emperor of all time. No surprise there. As Christianity spread, so did his cruelty.

"Over 60 million people (a fifth of the world's population), lived in the Roman empire when Nero reigned. But his tyrannical 14 year reign would bring Rome's Golden Age to an end. He was a perverse, cross-dressing megalomaniac who murdered his

mother, brother and wife and anyone else who stood in his way. His cruelty, violence and grotesque appetite for self-indulgence brought the Roman Empire to the brink of political and financial ruin. He viciously persecuted the Christians and they would remember him as the ultimate embodiment of evil: the antiChrist."

He once got mad at his pregnant wife and kicked her to death. He felt bad about it later when he saw a boy who resembled his murdered wife. So…he castrated the boy, married him, and called him by his dead wife's name.

In the summer of 64, Rome suffered a terrible fire that burned for seven days, consuming almost three quarters of the city. The people accused Emperor Nero for the devastation, claiming he set the fire for his own selfish purposes, which was probably true.

Nero laid blame for the fire on the Christians. He ordered the arrest of a few Christians, who—under extreme torture—accused others, until all Christians were implicated and became fair game for retribution. Many Christians were rounded up and put to death in the most horrific manner, largely to the amusement of the citizens of Rome. Most Romans felt their execution was justified.

Romans emperors were sick men. Demonic. Possessed? Perverted. Incestuous. Murderous. Erratic. Deceptive. Cruel. Unjust. Inhumane. Unstable.

That's the context in which Paul says submit to your authorities.

So, be careful in your objections, thinking (or *saying*), "I can't honor and submit to a gov't leader whom I don't respect as a person and whose policies I don't approve of."

One Bible scholar wrote of this chapter: "The increasingly secular West is only just beginning to experience the level of hostility that first-century believers faced; the 21st-century persecuted church experiences it every day."

Pt. # 3 Submission Is CONDITIONAL: The government's rule is not absolute in our lives. Paul says that submitting to the government is a way of submitting to God. So if (more likely WHEN) the government oversteps it's own god-ordained

boundaries and encroaches on our freedoms, we are not only *free* to disobey, we are *compelled* to. A higher authority. Sam Waltong and Buddy Wallace illustration?

So. Resist. How? First, we avoid extremes. **Escape & Attack**.

Years before Jesus war born, a group of devout Jews known as the **Essenes** grew concerned at the rising level of corruption in Israel. They felt threatened by the pagan Greek influences and wanted to preserve their holy way of life.

They responded by separating from the culture. They renounced the world, moved out into the wilderness near the dead sea region, and lived out their days in caves waiting on the Messiah to come. True Story folks. Original doomsday preppers. They couldn't get far enough away from the city they had grown to despise and fear. They took vows of celibacy & poverty. They shared all their possessions with one another. They adopted strict dietary laws and devoted themselves to the study of God's Word. Purists.

From the writings they left behind, it appears they were opposed to anything secular. Anyone outside their group was viewed with contempt, disdain, and as a threat. They referred to outsiders as "Men of perversity who walk in the wicked way" and were disgusted with anyone who didn't adopt their lifestyle

For years, they carried on a quiet, almost monastic way of life. But instead of bringing hope to a dark, lost world, the Essenes kept their light hidden in the wilderness. **They made no disciples, had no lasting impact, & left no legacy.**

Evacuate and Separate. Run away. Cut yourself off from the world. Hide in a cave. Build a wall. Wait for Jesus…They were out of touch. Out of reach. But the other extreme is ***Attack***!

Being a Jew and trusting in Christ carried with it a national-based challenge. Because their OT Scriptures told them in Deut. 17 when they placed a king over themselves, it must be from among their brothers, their kinsmen. Check this out:

When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set

a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' You may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. **—Deut 17:15**.

The OT said clearly that a ruler of the Jews was always to be a Jew. They must never acknowledge as a ruler over them who was not their kinsmen. That was deeply ingrained into Jewish thinking. When they were conquered by a foreign power like Rome, they felt conflicted. They felt that to recognize a Gentile or foreign ruler was to sin and compromise.

The Maccabean Revolt of 167 BC was a Jewish uprising in Judea against Gentile Rule. The Maccabees rebelled, revolted, and over decades, recaptured Jerusalem to regain their freedom. The festival of Hanukkah celebrates that victory. The Maccabean revolt was seared into Jewish memory. It shaped the way first-century Jews thought about foreign power

So we must avoid those two extremes. Instead, there's a middle way. A way of wisdom that honors Jesus and honors the authorities. All throughout biblical history, you find examples of believers who submitted to authorities who were either sinful, foolish, insane, or incompetent. But you also find examples of those who resisted those rulers and did it with wisdom.

What if a ruler commanded us to throw our newborns into sea?

What if the mayor commanded us to stop preaching Jesus?

What if a King command us to worship an image?

What if a ruler commands us to pray to him alone?

Those are all biblical/historical realities.

SLIDE: **Hebrew Midwives. Daniel. Shadrach. Apostles.**

SLIDE: If the state commanded us to do something that God forbids, *or* forbids what God commands, then we ***resist!***

Where might Christians do that today? When the government requires a Christian doctor to violate his/her Hippocratic oath and perform an abortion or forces a healthcare provider to pay for it. If the government requires a policeman to punish someone without due cause or pressures a judge to enforce justice in biased ways that serve the powerful.

If a boss requires you to lie for financial gain/increase profits.

If the government ever tries to force me to perform a same-sex wedding—by God's grace I will resist.

If government ever forced us to be silent about the gospel or refrain from teaching our convictions regarding what God says about right and wrong. In all those situations we obey God rather than men.

Paul did not live in a voting democracy—the Emperor was the absolute Ruler—so that's about all he *could* do. But in our country, "we the people" sit in the ruler's chair, and that means we bear some responsibility for how authority is used. The "sword" that God has given to earthly rulers lies, at least partially, in our hands —because we have been given the prerogative to choose whose hand it goes into and how they use it. **—J.D. Greear**

3 HINTS at limitations in this passage actually:

HINT #1: He is God's minister. Therefore he is accountable and subservient to God. He can't TRUMP God. He has boundaries.

HINT #2: Because of conscience sake. We don't obey the gov't out of fear, but our of our loyalty to King Jesus. Obeying the just laws of the land—even the ones we don't particularly like or agree with, we do out of heart of gratitude for the God who ordained those authorities.

And at the same time, we have limits. Our conscience is bound to the word of God. Martin Luther told his human authorities that when they asked him to recant his writings about the gospel. Some he did. But not all. His conscience forbade him.

HINT #3: Give what is owed to all. We don't always owe obedience to our rulers. Now, I'd be a terrible pastor if I told you that you are allowed by God, even commanded by God to resist the government when they overstep their boundaries or violate your most basic freedoms. I'd be a terrible pastor if I told you that, but then did not show you from Scripture HOW to rest.

So…how do we resit the government as followers of Jesus. We who don't want a reputation of being revolutionaries or revolters or agitators or disturbers of the peace.

First, we submit to what we can. We obey the laws of the land. We pay what is owed. Of course we are going to have disagreements with some laws, maybe many laws. Maybe you think your tax rate is too high. Or your HOA fee is too high, or the tolls on I4 are too high. Or the speed limit on the highway near your home is too low. We follow the channels. We follow protocol. Paul followed protocol when he disagreed with the ruling of the local court of his guilt. He appealed to Caesar. As a Roman citizen, he possessed that right and he exercised it.

You can give honor while not giving obedience. Daniel's friends and Paul addressed rulers with respect, honor, and honesty. "We won't obey your edict, O King. We may suffer from it. That's okay. God can deliver us if He wants. But either way, you've overstepped your boundaries." That goes for any earthly authority. A parent. A teacher. An employer. An elder or church leader. That's one of the ways we keep our conduct honorable.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. **SLIDE**: Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor. **—1 Pet. 2:12–17**

Hear the context? Keep your conduct honorable! This is honorable and good and right. It helps rulers to respect us.

Then Daniel said to the king, "***O king, live forever!*** 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad **—Dan 6:21–23**.

The primary concern of those people involved was to demonstrate their **submissiveness to God**, *not their defiance of the gov't*.

When Daniel resisted his king, he did so honorably. His praying was "as he was accustomed to doing" it wasn't for show. He did nothing different to try and showboat his resistance, and neither should we. You can see Daniel's reputation because it pained the king to carry out the sentence against him. The apostles resisted honorably. They didn't start preaching when it was forbidden. They had always been preaching.

So…here are some ways to resist that are honorable.

Pray. Obey the Law where you can.
Honor the authorities.
Be engaged (vote)
Pay attention as best you can. Not naive. Head in sand.
Hold leaders accountable. (peaceful protests)
Contact your elected officials state/local congress and senators
Volunteer at an election if you have concerns. eyes on the ground.
Raise awareness.
Donate to a cause. Fund what you like.
Take part in a campaign (individually, not church).

Resist the government. But don't resist arrest. The apostles did not break out of jail. They were released by an angel.

Violence is never permitted. Jesus rebuked Peter. Put your sword away. Our objective is not to overthrow the government. Jesus certainly did not call us to do that.

Jesus made it clear that his followers were to offer their lives for their enemies, not take the lives of their enemies—like he did.

Christians need to respond in humility, grace, meekness, and faithfulness. Christians should not be arrogant, quarrelsome Studying for this made me extremely thankful for the ease with which I can live as both a Christian and a law abiding citizen.

Betsy Ten Boom. To German Nazi's who burst into her family's home and asked "Are there any Jews hidden in this house?" "Yes. They're hiding under the table!" She said. She was being honest…

SLIDE: First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 1Tim2

Paul closing out this section saying to give what is owed to our authorities reminds me of a conversation Jesus had in Matthew 22 with the religious leaders who tried to trick him, back him into a corner. "Entangle him in his words." You can't do that with Jesus. He'll always win and leave you in the dust.

"Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" **—Mt 22:17**.

In those days taxes were paid to Rome, who had moved into Jerusalem as an occupier. And they were oppressive.

Jesus knew what the tax would be used for. To pay the salary of the one who would authorize his unlawful murder. It would pay the salary for the ones who arrested him, abused him, struck him, spit on him, pluck out his beard, shove a crown of thorns upon his brow, mock and spit on him.

Jesus knew those taxes would be used to fund the building of the Roman Coliseum where countless Jews and Christians would be tortured & killed for their faith. He answered wisely. They marveled

Many believe there is a subtle teaching in Jesus' response that undermines the government's claim on our lives. At least the government's *complete* claim. The government does not own me. God does. I do not belong to the government. I belong to God. And listen…that goes for all human authority.

Parents. Employers. Church Elders. Presidents and Kings.

Jesus said render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's…

The coin has Caesar's image on it; but whose image do you have stamped on you? God's.

So give Caesar the tax because his image is on the coin; but give God your all because his image is on you.

That means you never obey Caesar in a way that would make you disobey God, because while Caesar has his image on the coin God has his image on you. He has higher claim.

Let's pray…