

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon Title: The Christian and Society, Romans 13:1-7

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My two points are as follows:

- 1.) Paul told the Roman Christians to respect those in authority
- 2.) Paul expected Roman Christians to be stellar citizens

INTRODUCTION: God has provided three institutions: the home, the government, and the church. In Paul's letter to the Romans up to this point, he's addressed mainly the church. In Chapter 13, Paul addresses how the Christian should relate to the government.

As I understand it, with the timing of the book of Romans, the Roman Christians had not experienced heavy persecution—yet. I said that earlier, but I was getting ahead of the story. Later the terrible persecution would come. The persecution they were suffering about the time they received the book of Romans would have been minor to what they would endure in the future. The book of Romans helped them prepare for the day in which they lived and believers of the future.

I heard someone say “God provides governments and leaders to either punish a people or bless them” and while that may be true when you look at the world situation today you find good people in the middle of terrible oppressive governments. It's a bit difficult making such a simple statement that applies to all people of all times.

First, PAUL TOLD THE ROMAN CHRISTIANS TO RESPECT THOSE IN AUTHORITY

SCRIPTURE: Romans 13:1 *“¹Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”*

I know Attorney General Jeff Sessions used that scripture recently when referring to people crossing the border and having their children separated from them. And some of you are probably hoping I'll address whether Mr. Sessions used the scripture in context or out of context. I'm sorry to disappoint you but I didn't study the situation close enough to make a determination. I can tell you this, however: politicians should be very careful about using the Bible to enforce policy in the same way that preachers should be very careful about politicking.

EXPLANATION: The government has an authority that has been established by God, but that does not mean every leader is God's leader, it does not mean that every government is God's government.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 13:2-5 *“²consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. ⁴For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.”*

EXPLANATION: But what happens when a person is told to do something that is against God? Well, we have the whole Bible, Paul was writing to the Romans about their particular situation. And, obviously, the general principle is true.

ILLUSTRATION: One example is Daniel, in the book of Daniel, Chapter 6. King Darius was going to put Daniel as chief administrator, over his kingdom. Some jealous people came up with a dirty idea. They got the King to make it illegal for

anyone to pray to any god other than to him as King. It's hard to believe, but the King fell for it and the men went and watched as Daniel followed his regular prayer routine. Daniel refused to follow the new law that violated God's law.

ILLUSTRATION: Another example is Acts 5 we read about the apostles being arrested and put in jail. That night an angel of the Lord appeared to them and told them to tell of their new life in Christ. The next morning the rulers went to get the men in jail but they were no there.

SCRIPTURE: Act 5: 27-29 ²⁷ *The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest.* ²⁸ *"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."*

²⁹ *Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"*

EXPLANATION: Charles Ellicot, a Christian minister, and writer in the 19th Century, wrote one of the best explanations of this chapter: He says in looking upon this scripture, at first sight, it would be easy to assume the Apostle is preaching two separate doctrines: "the doctrines of divine right and passive disobedience and that the duty of obedience is grounded in the fact that the power wielded by the magistrate is derived from God" and a person must obey without thinking about it.

A whole lot of governments have come and gone since Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome. Ellicot suggested that we take into account who Paul wrote to and why he said what he said. Jews inherently knew in their history that government and politics were one and the same. We've certainly studied a lot of this in the Old Testament. The Jews knew of the prophesied Messiah who they then believed would set up an earthly kingdom and free them from oppression. They fervently believed it! Now consider Jews in Rome who learned about Jesus and became followers of Jesus, even though he had ascended into heaven and was no longer with them. If they believed he would return someday to set up his earthly kingdom they could have very well considered plotting to overthrow the Roman government.

They probably believed as Ellicott says, that the "dominion of the Messiah was to be not spiritual, but a literal dominion, in which they, as a people, were to share."

EXPLANATION: Since the church at Rome composed of mostly Jews, Paul knew it wouldn't take much talk of the Messiah to set their fanatical tendencies ablaze so he precludes a great disaster by giving instruction as to how the Christian should relate to the Roman government.

EXPLANATION: Think of it, the Jew who couldn't stand living under the Roman government, especially in Rome itself, yet had come to faith in Christ, was being instructed by Paul to view government in a different way. Instead of opposing, become a good citizen.

ILLUSTRATION: Let me illustrate: in 1988, Pat Robertson of the Christian Broadcasting Network ran for the Republican nomination for president. Some of his supporters just went crazy over him and his campaign. I remember people saying it was not possible for him not to be elected because it was America's day with destiny and since Pat was a Christian, God would just have to make him president. I remember people saying every Christian should support him because he would bring revival upon our land. I remember one guy who went so far as to say Pat Robertson would bring about a theocracy. He was pretty confident himself. Some of you may have been caught up in that fervor. But in the end, it wasn't meant to be. George H. W. Bush was elected – and the country didn't collapse without Pat as president.

So as we look at Romans 13 we absolutely must consider the context in which it was written. Paul was writing to a particular group of people about a particular government – both those people and that government have passed. But we must keep in mind that Paul's instruction is good and any exceptions are few and few between.

APPLICATION: A person or group who rebels against government authority should count the cost well in advance because verse 2 says those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. But if those people or group believe God is on their

side, and if he is, then God's judgment will not be a judgment of condemnation. Take, for example, our Founding Fathers who signed the Declaration of Independence. They felt very strongly God was on their side and that the British Parliament's demands were oppressive. *And apparently, they were right because there was no judgment of condemnation from God which followed.*

APPLICATION: If you respect the law you'll stay out of trouble. I've never gotten a speeding ticket for driving under the speed limit.

APPLICATION: If the government tells you to disobey you, you should obey God.

APPLICATION: I realize there may be internationals watching this message over YouTube and they do not believe I can relate to their situation. Here is my encouragement to you. Seek God's guidance with all your heart. I don't mean that as a non-statement and an easy way out. I mean it wholeheartedly.

Second, PAUL EXPECTED THE ROMAN CHRISTIAN TO BE STELLAR CITIZENS

Paul goes on to hit the real sore spot— taxes.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 13:6-7 “⁶ *this is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing.* ⁷ *Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*”

EXPLANATION: You are probably thinking I can't believe the preacher is preaching about paying taxes. Well it's right here in the scripture you know on the way to the church this morning I drove in freedom, I wasn't stopped by any type of military group, I was not asked for any ID, I drove on roads that were in pretty good shape, I stopped at red lights that were put up and paid for by tax money. We passed five accidents on the way to church this morning and at all of those accidents there

were policemen helping, there were ambulances on the way, and all of it was paid by taxes.

No one really likes paying taxes, but they must be paid and it's interesting how the scripture right here legitimizes taxes. There are a lot of "no tax" people in our country today. It's just not possible to run a country where there are no taxes and people make voluntary payments. I don't really want to get sidetracked here... what Paul meant was that Christians are a part of society and must pay their share like everyone else.

APPLACATION: God's people follow God's word and resist if necessary. If we feel that God is on our side but do our best to promote what good is happening in society. And, trust God that he is still on his throne and that he is leading the leaders of our nation. And, let us pray for the leaders of our nation. Let's pray for them all the time, let's ask God to give them wisdom in their efforts today and their efforts tomorrow.

We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; including one hundred percent of our elected leaders. But we can thank God we can all turn over a new leaf and we can all start over. And, as a part of society that we are, I believe the body of Christ will grow if we also are stellar Christians.

In other words, while Christ calls us to be separate from the world, the separateness does not allow us to break the law; it does not allow us to refuse to pay taxes it does not give us exceptions just because we are Christians.

CONCLUSION: Our greatest citizenship as believers in Jesus Christ is our citizenship in heaven. This is also temporary governments will come and they will go. Taxes will come and they will go, it's interesting how when there's a tax cut over here there's a tax raise over here. I mean it's all going to go, you the parties Democrats tax, Republicans tax, they just argue about how it's going to be taxed but they're still going to get it. You know what all of that is temporary all of it is going to go and one day there won't be any democracy. It'll be gone government as we know it will be gone, voting as we know it will be gone. And, people talk about the one world government, the mark of the beast and all this kind of stuff. Let me tell

you one day there's going to be a one world government and Jesus is going to be KING! Jesus will come to this earth and set up an earthly Kingdom and it will be different than any of us know. We can't even relate we can't even imagine what it might be like.

Are you ready for the second coming of Christ? Are we as ready today as the first generation Church was? One day Jesus is going to return! Will you be ready?

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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