

The Church and the State

Sunday, March 29, 2020

Romans 13:1-7 (ESV)

1 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.

Dig Deeper

The Bible has much to say about the Christian's relationship with those in authority. Spend some time searching out and discussing these other related passages.

- Proverbs 24:21
- Daniel 2:21; 4:17
- Mark 12:13-17
- Acts 4:13-22; 5:27-32
- 1 Timothy 2:1-2
- Titus 3:1-2
- 1 Peter 2:13-17; 3:13-17

Digesting the Text

- According to Paul, why is it important for Christians to submit to governing authorities? What does our relationship with those in authority over us indicate about our relationship with God?
- According to Paul, why has God given the government the authority to "bear the sword?"

- Paul gives some practical examples of submission to governing authorities (vv. 6-7). What are other ways that we can practice submission to those who are in authority?
- What impact does our civil obedience have upon our Christian witness?
- Is there ever a reason to disobey authorities? If so, what would be the basis of such disobedience? How can you pray for or serve those around you who might be suffering in this time of quarantine because they are trapped at home with someone who abuses their authority?
- Who are the governing officials in your life? Make a list of them and take some time to pray for them by name. Is there a way that you can find to be a source of encouragement to one of them this week?
- What is the real fight that Christians are facing right now? How do you need to prepare yourself for the crisis yet to come? How do you think "church" as we've known it will change moving forward?