

Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. (Romans 13:5)

I. The Need For Submission

- a. Why do we need to submit when our Father is in heaven? We all have duties and responsibilities to perform in this world that are associated with our witness.
 1. God has established three institutions: home (Gen 2:18-25), government (Gen 9:1-17), and the church (Acts 2). Since God is of order, He expects order to be within these institutions.
- b. Paul wrote *Romans* when the current authorities were mostly hostile toward Christians.
- c. We must remember that *submission* is not *worship*. Our submitting to civic authorities is not bowing down and it is certainly not blasphemous. (Matthew 22:21)
- d. Paul is not saying all the Hitlers, Stalins, Amins and Saddams of our times, were personally appointed by God, that God is responsible, or that their authority is not to be resisted.
- e. All human authority is derived from God's authority. Jesus said to Pilate, '*You would have no power [exousia, authority] over me if it were not given to you from above.*' (John 19:11)
- f. Today, we have people who teach riot and rebellion in the name of Christ, but this is unbiblical. Paul explains why:
 1. **For wrath's sake (God's in charge)**: Rulers must have the power to establish security, afflict punishment and even take life for the protection of others. We may not always be able to respect "the person" in office, we must respect the office.
 2. **For conscience sake (Be conscientious)**: Christians should obey simply because it is right. We are commanded in verse 7 to pay what we owe: taxes, revenue, respect and honor. If we do not pay what is owed, we show disrespect to the law, officials, and to God. We may not agree, but we must render what is owed. Do the right thing.
 3. **For love's sake (The Christian ideal)**: When we practice love, there is no need for law. Our motive for obeying God and helping others is the love of Christ in our hearts. Laws cannot change the heart; man's heart is still selfish and can be changed only by God's grace.
 4. **For Jesus' sake (Be found faithful when He returns)**: Christian citizens ought to be the best citizens/neighbors. We all should have a good name among people, because we carry the name of Christ. We may not always agree on politics or parties, but we should all agree on our attitude toward human government. (Read Phil 2:14-15)
- g. Does "Owe no man anything" refer also to Christian's financial practices? Some people believe that it is a sin to have debt (mortgage, credit cards).
 1. The Bible does not forbid borrowing or legal financial transactions that involve interest. (Matthew 25:27; Luke 19:23)
 2. The Bible does forbid the charging of high interest, robbing the "family of God", and failing to pay honest debts. (Exodus 22:25-27; Neh 5:1-11)

II. Thoughts and Considerations for Action

- a. Verse 2 has been misused by church and government leaders.
- b. How was the "resistance" of Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Jesus different from what Paul is discussing in Romans chapter 13?
- c. How can the application of Romans chapter 13 be helpful in social justice activities/ministries? (e.g. MLK/civil rights movement/immigration/gun control)
- d. If you apply Micah 6:8 to your understanding of authority you will always be on solid ground.