

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to Romans 13. I think sometimes our families are sent by God to keep us humble. I remember when I was pastoring a church in Alabama, and Jenni was a little girl. She saw me get up to preach and she said, "Daddy, what are you doing before you get up to preach?" I said, "Sweetheart, I'm over there and I'm praying and I'm asking God to help me." She said, "Well, why doesn't He do it?"

I told you about the Sunday I left church thinking I'd preached a pretty good sermon. I said to Cindy, "How many really great preachers do you think there are in this state?" She said, "One less than *you* think."

Well, I've been preaching through the book of Romans now for over a year and a half. I've been trying to remind you the first 11 chapters of Romans is all about what we believe and who we are in Christ. Beginning in chapter 12 through the end of the book, it's not about what we believe, it's how we are to behave, not what we are in Christ, but how we are to act now we are in Christ.

Paul has been addressing relationships, and relationships are what life is all about. First of all, he talks about our relationship with God: Offer yourself as a living sacrifice. Then he talks about our relationship with ourselves. He says, "Don't consider yourself more highly than you ought." Then he expands the circle and talks about our relationship within the church. That's why we have spiritual gifts. Then he discusses the relationships among friends: Show love to one another and hospitality. Last Sunday we talked about our relationships with enemies. I talked about how to deal with mean people. Today we're going to expand the circle a little wider and talk about how we relate to our government. And maybe you never thought the Bible speaks about God and the government. But Romans 13 is the classic passage in all the Bible about how we are to relate to our local, state and federal government.

Let's read about it here, beginning in chapter 13:1. "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except which God has established." This is important. "The authorities exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority, meaning government authority, is rebelling against what God has instituted. Those who do so will bring judgment, condemnation on themselves, for 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 he will commend you."

Verse 4 is an important verse. "For he [is government] is God's servant to do you good, but if you do wrong, be afraid. For he does not bear the sword for nothing. He [is government] is God's servant and agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary [this is the third time he says it] to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because [and here's another reason, underline the word] conscience." Here's the result. "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants who give their full-time to governing, give everyone what you owe him. If you owe taxes, pay taxes. If revenue, [means like import/export custom] then revenue. If respect, [it's actually the word *phobos*, from which we get our word "phobia." It means respect or holy fear.] If respect, then respect. If honor, then honor.

Some of you are going to be shaken up a little bit by this message because you might not have realized God's word speaks about government this way, and you may not realize God's word speaks about capital punishment in the way it does.

I GOD'S PRECEPT – SUBMIT TO GOVERNMENT (1-5)

First of all, let's notice God's precept. What is God's precept for us in relationship with the government? It is to submit to government. That's his overarching precept. God's word says, "If you're going to claim to be a Christian, you're going to be a good citizen." Listen to me. There are some people who are good citizens who are not Christians. I understand that. There are people in Tyler, Texas, who are good model citizens who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you're going to name the name of Jesus, and you're going to claim to be a Christian, the Bible says you out to submit to your government and you ought to be a good citizen as well. You say, "Why? What are the reasons?" In this passage, there are at least

Three reasons to submit to government:

1. A spiritual reason: God instituted law and order

It is God who set up governments. He instituted law and order. God is a God of law? That's why he gave all the laws in the Bible. Also God is a law of order. He doesn't want chaos; he wants order. You can write down this reference. I Corinthians 14:33, the Bible says, "God is not the God of confusion, but of order." God likes everything to be in order. Now, notice the word instituted there? In our world, God has set up several important institutions. For instance, he set up the institution of the family. In the family, he has established some lines of authority. The husband is the head of the family. The parents are to have authority over the children. When those lines of authority are broken, then chaos and dysfunction occurs in a family. Families today are falling apart because God's line of authority is not being observed.

God also established the institution of the church. And in the church, according to the New Testament, he has given us spiritual leaders who are to lead by serving. In churches where they don't recognize their spiritual leaders, those churches are splitting up and having all kinds of problems. But also, God instituted human government. If we don't obey these lines of authority God has established, then chaos results in our society. God wants our society to have peace and order, and that's why he established governments. Now, you may find this hard to believe, but the Bible says it is God who puts people in roles of leadership within governments. In Daniel 2:22, Daniel says, "God sets up kings and he removes kings." Now, those of you, like me, who love history, you may find it hard to believe throughout history God has been behind the scenes orchestrating events so everything will happen the way God wants it to happen.

Let me give you one example of government. Why do you think Caesar Augustus declared a census to be taken so everyone could be taxed? I'll tell you why. God needed a way to get Joseph and Mary out of Nazareth and into Bethlehem, the home of their ancestors. The Bible predicted the Messiah was not going to be born in Nazareth but in Bethlehem. It was predicted 500 years before it happened. Who gave Caesar Augustus the idea to have everyone go to his or her

hometown to be taxed at just perfect time? My friend, God was behind that. Are you trying to tell me, pastor, God put Hitler where he was? Yes, he did. Are you trying to tell me God put Saddam Hussein where he is? That's right. God has also put good leaders where they have been through the years.

I hope some of you are thinking ahead of me already, because you think faster than I talk. I hope some of you have already thought about, Pastor, did God put our president in the White House? I thought we went to the polls and voted for him ourselves. The Bible says, "God puts leaders in places of authority." Some of you are wondering, "Why in the world do we have a man up there, a man many people claim to have very lax personal morals?" Listen to me, please. Immoral leaders are God's reward for an immoral culture. Wicked leaders are simply God's reward for a wicked culture. Ladies and gentlemen, you may not agree with me, but for the last 30 years, America has departed from the moral standards made us great and we're going down, down, down, down morally. So are you surprised our government leaders both in the White House and legislature are living lives reflecting our culture? God is the one who sets up governments. He institutes governmental leaders. He said, "Because I do that, you need to submit to them." You say, "Even to the leaders aren't the greatest leaders?" Yes.

When Paul wrote these words, Nero was the Emperor of Rome. If you study Nero a little, you will discover he was a sadistic, cruel, wicked man. Compared to him, our president is the pope. Nero was terribly wicked. Yet Paul is writing this word and says we're to submit to the government authorities.

I hope some of you are thinking ahead a little about it, too. You ask, "Pastor, what about if our government tells you to do something forbidden in the word of God? What if our government tells us we can't do something the Bible says we can do? Who are we to obey?" Are you ready for this? You obey God rather than man on the rare occasions it happens.

Civil disobedience is right when there is a clear conflict between man's law and God's law

Sometimes Christians must commit civil disobedience and be willing to face the consequences of civil disobedience.

Let me give you some examples from history. Do you remember when Pharaoh issued the edict ordering all the boy babies in Egypt born to the Hebrews slaughtered? There were some brave midwives and mothers who committed civil disobedience. They said, "No, we're going to break the law. We're going to let these little baby boys live." One of them was Moses. When Daniel went to Babylon—and he was a prime minister—he submitted to the authority of the emperor. When they issued a law stating for 30 days you could not pray to anyone except Darius, the emperor, Daniel said, "I'm not going to do it." He opened up the windows of his room, as he did every day, he faced Jerusalem, fell on his face and prayed to the God of heaven. He was arrested him and threw him in a den of lions. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, when the law said every time a certain song is played, you have to fall down and worship this statue, they said, "No, we're not going to do it." And so when everybody else was on his face worshipping the statue, these three Hebrew boys were outstanding in their field, because they were the only ones out standing in the field, everyone else was on his face. They were arrested and thrown into a fiery

furnace. Sometimes we are called upon to obey God rather than men. When we do obey, we may face a den of lions. We may face a fiery furnace. But I assure you, God will be with you if you're true to him and honor him.

As I said a few weeks ago when I preached a message on what's right with America, when our government tells us we cannot pray in public, I don't know about you friend, but I'm going to pray in public. When our government tells us we cannot preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in a public setting, I don't know about you, but I'm going to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I do humbly and I do it sincerely, realizing I may have to face the consequences, and you may have to face the consequences of that.

If you want to know how the early disciples did it, take a moment and read Acts 4-5. They told Peter and John, "Stop preaching about Jesus." And they said, "We're sorry, we submit to you. We're not making fun of you. We're here before you to listen to you, but sorry, we must obey God rather than men." They preached, they were arrested, and they were flogged. They were beaten. But the Bible says Peter, John and the disciples left *rejoicing* because they had the privilege of suffering for Jesus sake.

Dr. Charles Ryrie is a very wise professor who served at Dallas Theological Seminary. Let me read to you what he writes about civil disobedience:

When civil law and God's law are in opposition, the Bible obligates Christians to protest or disobey. But when a Christian feels he should disobey his government, he must be sure it is not because the government has denied him his person rights, but because it has denied him God's rights.

All power of every government authority comes from God.

Do you remember when Jesus was standing before Pontius Pilate? Pontius Pilate asked him all kinds of questions and Jesus didn't say anything. He was like a lamb, dumb before its shearers. Finally Pilate said, "Hey! You better speak up. Don't you know I have power to kill you or save you?" I love the reply of Jesus. I believe he stared at Pilate with eyes like blazing fire and said in a voice cool enough to freeze over hell, He said, "You don't have any power except the power is given you from above." That's where government gets its power. There is a spiritual reason we ought to obey government, because God instituted it.

There's another reason we ought to submit to government. It is

2. An external reason. It is because God entrusted punishment to the State (the government)

God has said, "The way I'm going to get revenge against wrongdoers, those break the law, is I have given government the authority and the power to execute judgement." This means you don't break the law of America, because you know if you do break the law, you're going to be punished. If you rip off some material from somebody's house and you get caught; you're going to face the law. If you do something wrong, you face punishment. That's what it says here.

“Government has the authority to punish.” That’s why I firmly believe with all my heart our law enforcement officers are not “pigs,” they’re God’s servants to execute law enforcement. That’s why I believe our judges are not selfish people doing things out of their own motives, but are they are placed there by God as it says, as God’s servant to make sure punishment is given out when a crime is committed.

I don’t know about you, but every time I see somebody without a handicapped sticker park in a handicapped parking place, it angers me. You know what I really want to do? I want to bust their windshield in and slash their tires. That’s what I want to do. It just burns me up. But it’s not my job to execute punishment for them. That’s not a personal thing I’m to do. God has set up our government and our law enforcement to do that.

By the way, if you’re a Christian, you ought to obey the laws and shame on you if you ever even think about parking in a handicapped place if you don’t have a handicapped sticker. Boy, it is easy to talk about those people park without handicap stickers. What about driving over the speed limit? I’ve quit preaching and gone to meddling, right? I’m convinced the last part of my body to get saved is my right foot. But God and Cindy, in order, are working on me about that. I’ve been brought under conviction about it, friends. I hope you are brought under conviction about it, too. It is a spiritual matter. We are to obey the laws of the land.

Let me ask you, when you’re driving along over the speed limit and you see a state trooper parked there or policeman, what do you do? Screech! You slow down. Why? Because you don’t want to get a ticket. You don’t want to pay a fine. That’s what this is talking about. This is an external reason you obey the law: To avoid punishment. You don’t rob a bank because you’ll serve time for that. You don’t take another person’s life because you’ll be arrested and convicted for that.

Now this is the point at which I want to introduce a subject a lot of you may be confused about. What did the Bible say about capital punishment? Every time the State of Texas executes a prisoner on death row by lethal injection, people protesting the death sentence surround the prison. Most of these people claim to be Christians and claim to be making their protest based on the Bible. And the verse they always use is one of the Ten Commandments, the Sixth Commandment says, “You shall not kill.” Now is what it’s talking about? Does the Sixth Commandment say you can’t kill even a criminal who’s killed another person? Some people think the Sixth Commandment it means you can’t kill a fish and eat it, and they don’t. Some think the Sixth Commandment says you can’t kill a mosquito if it lands on you. They take it literally. Some of them take the Sixth Commandment to mean you can’t go into battle for your country and kill the enemy. But can I tell you verse in Exodus 20, the Sixth Commandment literally says, “You shall not commit personal murder.” There’s another word in Hebrew for general killing, and it’s not that. It’s not talking about personal murder. While murder is wrong, in certain cases, taking another one’s life on the basis of your state, your government, is justified.

Would you look there at verse 4 again? Romans 13:4. Halfway in verse it says, “If you do wrong, be afraid, for he is government does not bear the...” What’s the next word? Sword. He didn’t say, “Bear the whip or the lash or the jail sentence.” He said the sword. The Romans used a sword for one thing and one thing only: To behead a criminal. That’s what Paul was talking

about. The State, not an individual, but the government has the authority and the right to take another person's life. In fact, it's almost ironic to me to think about three decades after Paul wrote this letter to the church at Rome, he himself would have an intimate exposure to a Roman's sword when it separated his head from his body. He knew what he was talking about. That's what they use the sword for. And if you want to translate verse into our modern vernacular, we would read it this way, "For the government does not have lethal injection or the gas chamber or the electric chair for nothing." Keep reading. "The government is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

Now, the Sixth Commandment says you are not to commit personal murder but if you kill another person in the course of a war for your country, it's not murder. There are some of you men in this room right now who may be carrying a load of guilt because you killed an enemy in a war. Maybe you thought all along, "Boy, this is terrible. I've killed somebody. I've broken the Sixth Commandment." No, you haven't, because you were representing your government who has the power to bear the sword.

I'll give you a great example from the Bible. When David was fighting for the Israelites and killed Goliath, it wasn't murder. It was part of a battle. But later in his life when David ordered Uriah the Hittite killed for personal motives, because he committed adultery with his wife and wanted to get him out of the way. That was murder, even though he was killed in a battle, because the motive behind it was personal in nature. Do you see the difference? So if there are some of you men who fought for our country and you've killed another man, I don't want you to let the devil make you feel guilty about that. By the same token, our government, I believe, does have the right for capital punishment. Look at what it says in Genesis 9:6. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."

Do I have to tell you crime is increasing in America? There's a great book by Dr. Gordon Talbot I read recently called, *The Breakdown of Authority*. He points out right now in America a felony is committed every 20 seconds. Every 20 seconds a felony is committed. And over the last 30 years, church attendance in America has increased 3 percent, while the rate of illegitimate births have increased 300 percent. Sometimes we think, "Why are we spending all this money for the Lord's work and on churches?" He points out in his book that for every \$1 spent in America on and by churches, \$12,000 is spent for crime. \$1 to \$12,000. I don't mind telling you I believe the Bible says capital punishment is justified in the word of God.

In fact, I want to read a quote to you from Dr. Chuck Swindoll. Many of you respect Charles Swindoll as I do. Even though this position may seem a little extreme, I tend to agree with him. May I quote him? Charles Swindoll says:

I believe if crime is going to reach the media and television, so should capital punishment, and I do not say out of sadism. If the criminal is going to come out on top and we witness his work, we should witness the end result, and is his death. If the dead lie in the street in a pool of their blood, and the television cameras scan for all the world to see, I'm of the opinion the walls of the penitentiary should be open to the television camera. And on the day the criminal is put to death, should be televised as well. I know it is a severe position, but the Bible says government does not bear the sword for nothing.

You may disagree with position. You have the absolute right to disagree with that. This is one of those messages I know I'm going to get a bunch of letters this next week. You go ahead and write those letters and mail them to Billy Graham, Minneapolis, Minnesota. That's all the address you need.

All I know is that at my house when I was growing up, it worked at my house when my dad spanked my brother. Do you know how? I saw and I said, "I'm going to get better." I behaved for quite awhile after that.

There's a third reason we ought to submit to our government. There is a spiritual reason; God set them up. There is an external reason and then. There is

3. An internal reason: Keep a clear conscience

Look at verse 5. There are two reasons you obey the government, according to verse 5. One of them is because of possible punishment; we've already talked about that, but also because of conscience.

Now y'all don't get uptight because the last half of this message is just real, real short and I can see some of you are getting a blank anxiety. We've got a lot of blanks to fill in.

The best reason to obey the government is not because if you don't do it, you'll be punished. The better reason, the higher motive, is to do it is because it's right to do. Your conscience says, "Do what's right." God has given every one of us a conscience and your conscience is the part of you when you think about doing something wrong or you do something wrong, your conscience screams out from inside, "Don't do that!"

Can you let your conscience be your guide, as some people say? No, not really, because the Bible also says there are some people who become so hardhearted, their consciences have been seared like with a hot iron. It's like skin has been burned to the point the nerve endings have been deadened. There are some people who can commit all kinds of atrocious acts and they're morally numb. They have been desensitized to evil, and they do all kinds of terrible things and their conscious doesn't say anything. And the sad thing is there may be some of you in this room can do that. If you're in position, what a terrible place to be in. You can't let your conscience be your guide, you let the Holy Spirit be your guide, but you surrender your conscience to Jesus.

Look at what 1 Timothy 1:5 says. Paul writes to Timothy and says, "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." Now, if you're driving down the road and there's a state trooper in your rearview mirror, you're going to drive the speed limit because you don't want punishment. But it's a whole lot better if you're driving down the road and there's not a policeman in sight and you're driving the speed limit, because your conscience says, "Hey, that's the right thing to do. I feel good about that." You're not facing a moral dilemma.

This is a true story. I have a pastor friend in Alabama who was driving to a meeting in another county. He was late and he was supposed to head up the meeting. He was driving about 20 miles over the speed limit, when suddenly he remembered he had a Christian bumper sticker on his car. Suddenly, his conscience started giving him fits, saying, "What do these people think about you when you whip past them doing 20 miles over the speed limit?" So he faced this moral dilemma. He decided what to do. He pulled off the road, ripped off bumper sticker, got back in and kept speeding. That's what he did. By the way, have you noticed I don't have a Christian bumper sticker on my car? At least his conscience was operating and he felt guilty about that.

I want to ask you this. Do you feel guilty about breaking the law of man, being a Christian? Not because you're going to be punished, but because it's the right thing to do. The Bible says, "Listen to your conscience, if your conscience is surrendered to God."

II. OUR PRACTICE – GIVE WHAT YOU OWE (6-7)

All of is to set up the last part of this message. Not only is it God's precept to submit to government, but number two, our practice, you give what you owe to God. You give what you owe. That's what verses 6 and 7 is all about.

One time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Should we pay taxes?" He said, "Give me a coin, show it to me." He said, "Whose image is engraved on this coin?" They said, "Caesar's." Look what he said in Mark 12:17. He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." They were amazed at him.

1. Finances

In verses 6-7, Paul is saying, "This is how you ought to submit to your government as you submit to God." First of all, he talks about finances. Here's the principle, he says,

Give cheerfully to God first, but then pay your taxes willingly

That's why he says in verse 6, "Pay your taxes." What this is saying is a Christian pays their taxes.

I know a man who claims to be a Christian businessman. He once bragged to me that he does much of his business on a cash basis. He doesn't live in this state so don't try to figure out who it is. Do you know why he does that? He told me because by doing much of his business on a cash basis, the IRS doesn't know his true income, and he doesn't have to pay as much tax. He was almost bragging about that. But I've got to tell you, I lost a lot of respect for man.

Sometimes people have a bad attitude about paying their taxes. You may not know this, but as a minister, I am self-employed, and taxes are not deducted from my check. Every quarter I write a check to the Internal Revenue Service. I used to really resent this because I had a friend, another preacher, who just hated to pay it. In fact, when he wrote his check out, he wrote it to the Infernal Revenue Service. Of course, he got audited twice, too. I kind of adopted his attitude, but I've since been convicted. The Bible says you pay your taxes willingly. Pay what you owe.

Listen, you are bound by the word of God to pay the taxes you owe, but there's nothing spiritual or patriotic about paying more taxes than you have to pay by the law. And the law has set it up honestly so many times it's a choice between giving to God and His work or giving to Uncle Sam and his work. is absolutely the truth. In fact, those of you in our church who tithe regularly to the Lord's work, you'll find you pay a lot less in terms of taxes because you do that. Some of you don't, you pay more taxes as a result of that. Should you tithe because it will help you at tax season? Absolutely not. That's the wrong motive. You do it because you love God. You want to obey God.

Have you been reading in the paper about all the churches in Smith County that have been broken into and ripped off? We've even had people break into this church and steal some of our equipment, right here in this room. What do you think about somebody like that? Doesn't it burn you up, and you think they ought to put them under the jail. Well, you'd better be careful, because the prophet Malachi says if you're withholding your tithes from God, you are robbing God. The Bible says you're probably in the same category as somebody who breaks into a church and steals equipment. You give to God cheerfully first, and then you pay your taxes.

Several years ago, the Internal Revenue Service got an anonymous letter. It said:

Two years ago I cheated on my taxes. I have enclosed a money order for \$200, because I feel guilty and I can't sleep at night. If I still can't sleep at night, I'll send the rest of the money.

Has God the Holy Spirit convicted you today as a Christian citizen you ought to do what's right when it comes to paying your taxes? It talks about finances.

2. Fear

This means if you respect God, then respect the government.

Fear displeasing God more; fear the punishment of government

The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." My friend, you cannot be a good Christian citizen unless you have a holy awe and fear of God.

3. Fidelity

When it comes to fidelity, honor, you

Honor God's character first, honor the position of leaders

Some of you heard what I said about our president. You may think I do not honor him or his position. I want to tell you I do. I pray for our president. Some of my friends who are in the military taught me this principle. "Sometimes you don't salute the man, but you salute the uniform." You salute the rank. The position of president of the United States is one is put there by God, and we're to honor them and respect them, not necessarily because of their character, because God is the only one whose character deserves honor. We respect and honor the position.

How do you relate to your government? What does it mean to be a Christian citizen? Pray, pay, and obey. You pray for your government, you pay your taxes, and you obey the laws.

CONCLUSION

Have you been disturbed like I have at the thousands of people who died in the Turkey earthquake? Over 12,000 people perished. This week from a reliable source I read that in 1993, geologists were surveying part of Turkey and they drew a fault line for a possible earthquake right through one of the little villages. They went to the village leaders and said, "You're on a fault line. We recommend you move your village five miles down the road." It could have been done because there weren't a lot of permanent structures there. Instead the village leaders decided they didn't want to move their village. So they bribed the geologists and cartographers were making the map to draw the fault line around the village. When the earthquake hit just a few days ago, village was totally destroyed.

God has drawn a moral standard, a line. He says, "That's my boundary. That's my spiritual fault line. You better move your life to get in line with it." And too many Americans are saying, "No, I want to move God's line and change God's standard to fit my life." This is a recipe for destruction, because the Bible says, "There's a way seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of destruction."

Ask the Holy Spirit to convict your heart about being a good citizen, about praying for your government, about paying the taxes you owe, no more, but no less, and about obeying all the laws of our government? It is a spiritual issue. Would you just ask God to make you the kind of Christian citizen you can be a testimony to other people in the world?

OUTLINE

I. GOD'S PRECEPT–SUBMIT TO GOVERNMENT (1-5)

Reasons:

1. Spiritual–God instituted law and order

Civil Disobedience is right when there is clear conflict between man's law and God's law

2. External–God entrusted punishment to the state

"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." *Genesis 9:6*

3. Internal–Keep a clear conscience

The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. *1 Timothy 1:5*

II. OUR PRACTICE–GIVE WHAT YOU OWE (6-7)

Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him. *Mark 12:17*

1. Finances: Give cheerfully to God first; pay your taxes willingly

2. Fear: Fear displeasing God more; fear the punishment of government

3. Fidelity: Honor God's character first; honor the position of leaders



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes