

The Way
Maturity of the Church
Lesson 30: Believers Response to Civil Authorities

We are indebted to [Ethnos360](#) for providing the basis of these lessons

Review (Where We've Been)

Because of all God has done FOR US, what does He expect FROM US?

- To present our bodies as a living sacrifice and renew our minds (Romans 12:1-2)
- To use our spiritual gifts for the good of the church and the glory of God (Romans 12:3-8)
- To behave in ways that mark genuine believers (Romans 12:9-21)
- To live submissively under government authority (Romans 13)

Message

Let's begin with Jesus. He brought all kinds of people together. Matthew 22 has two enemies working to try and ensnare Jesus or trip him up. The Pharisees were an extremely religious group, who hated Caesar and paying taxes. The Herodians were not religious, but a political party made up of both full-blooded Jews and mixed-blooded Jews that favored the Roman occupation and taxation. This motley crew begins with flattery calling Him teacher and blowing wind at Him.

Matthew 22:17 (ESV) Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" **18** But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? **19** Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. **20** And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" **21** They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." **22** When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

Caesar's mint vs. God's mint

Paul does not answer all questions that can come up. And the early church likely had a lot of questions especially since the political situation between Rome, the Jews, and the early church was volatile. Claudius had expelled all the Jews over their dispute involving Chrestus (Christ). At this point, the Jews had returned, and it was tenuous to say the least.

Jerusalem's Zealots were still very active and Paul did not want their views and attitudes to influence the church. Paul begins with Jesus' simplistic concept of "Rendering to Caesar what is Caesars and to God what is God's. Then, he helps believers learn how to live under unfriendly or hostile governments.

Paul's teaching here does not answer some more pressing issues like:

- What do Christ's followers do when government departs from the roll that God has given it?
- What do Christ's followers do when government is committing moral wrongs?
- What do Christ's followers do amid revolution?
- What kind of government is best? Democracy, Republic, Socialism, Monarchy

So, as we read we do not want to read into Scripture (Eisegesis) or read with American political contexts. We rather want to (Exegete or practice exegesis), or read what the author wanted to convey to us.

Our Submission to Human Government (v.1-2)

Romans 13:1-7 (ESV) 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.

The idea Paul is conveying is that there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist were instituted by God

Old Testament Examples:

In a time when there were no kings in Israel, it was a very dark time. We find that God's people were living their lives on their own terms. **Judges** record it as "every man did that which was right in their own eyes."

II Samuel 1 - David hears of the death of King Saul. The man who had been chasing, threatening, and trying to kill him for years. No more running. It was finally over. David was now the King. Did David celebrate? No, he was upset with the one who claimed the death of King Saul. David called King Saul, the Lord's Anointed.

Daniel 2:20 (ESV) Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. **21** He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings...

It is God who sets up governments, yes, even the bad ones, and He takes them down as well. In Exodus we have God squaring off against Pharaoh. Nebuchadnezzar is an amazing example of this. We have godly men standing up against an evil king. In the end, Nebuchadnezzar is humiliated, living like an animal but ultimately, he praises God giving Him the true glory he deserves.

Considering God’s sovereign authority, how should we be in our world? We ought to be the best citizens in the whole community or country.

When do we say “no” to government?

- **If we are asked to violate God’s Commands**

In Acts 4-5 we have a situation where Peter and John are told not to speak Jesus’ name.

Acts 5:42 (ESV) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

- **If we are asked to commit immoral acts**

Falsifying records, perjuring for the sake of the department, or covering up evil or illegal deeds

- **If we are asked to go against our Christian conscience to obey the government**

Some are pacifist Christians because of their belief and values. On the other hand, some feel it is their duty to defend our freedoms and our country.

Our kingdom is Heaven and our king is Jesus and we live and serve for His glory, first.

The Role of Government (v.3-4)

Romans 13:3 (ESV) 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.

What does Paul call rulers/and governing authorities here? **Servants of God**

They may not realize this, but they are the *diakonos* (Greek) or deacons of God. Their job is to humbly serve the people. Could you imagine if members of the House, Senate and the White House grasped this idea?

What if the ones we elect and send to represent us in government understood that they are called and serve the people for God?

This is why God calls those committed to Christ to serve in our government. It is not an area of life we should reject from consideration. We should carefully count the cost for those we elect into office. That they represent God's ways.

What is their stand on unborn life? What is their stand on marriage? What is their stand on giving innocent children puberty blockers when other nations clearly have discovered the tremendous irreparable damage it causes?

Simplistic Obedience (v.5-7)

Romans 13:5-7 (ESV) 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.

Render to the government what is theirs, and render to God all that is His.

One commentator put it this way. "We may dislike our government but at least it is not anarchy. We trust that God knows what He is doing. Everything happens according to His plans."

I Peter 2:13 (ESV) Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. **15** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. **16** Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. **17** Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

In all we say and do, we represent Christ in GOOD or BAD ways. How do we engage and talk to people we do not agree with represents Christ.

In this final section, Paul pulls it all together.

The civic and personal responsibilities of a Christ follower are monumental.

We are not pot stirrers, people who goad others, “last word word-getters.” Is God honored by my words and attitude representing Him?

Paul opens this last section of the chapter with what seems to be financial talk; however, the debt we owe here as Paul teaches us is not money.

Honest Horizontal Love (v. 8-10)

Romans 13:8 (ESV) Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. **9** For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The debt we owe that we can never repay is love. We are called to represent Christ’s love to a lost and broken world. This is a tall order that it seems most Christians have given up on. If we could love God fully and love our neighbor selflessly, we would never conceive of breaking any of the law.

Paul lists some commandments. We would not need these commands if we just kept the love our neighbor command. Jesus came and fulfilled the law. Loving God supremely and loving His neighbor.

We say, “But people keep letting me down.” You and I repeatedly let God down by our actions, attitudes, and thoughts. And yet, He still loves us. We look at the love Christ has not only for those around him but the love he has for you and me. This is what changes and compels us.

Augustine read the next several verses and the Spirit spoke to his soul and changed his life forever. He was broken he took what he wanted, he fathered a child with one of the random women he slept with, he partied, he tried to live how the world told him. And he realized he was miserable, lost, and broken. Finally...

Urgency to of Surrender (v.11-14)

Romans 13:11(ESV) Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. **12** The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. **13** Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. **14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Application (What You Need to Do)

Paul loves the “Put Off and Put On” concept.

Paul calls us to...

- **Wake Up from Sleep** - Wake from inactivity - Come to Real Life
Redemption is Near - In Paul’s time they were expectant of Christ’s return. Today we see the Bible coming to life in the Middle East. The Dead Sea is coming to life. The Jews are ready to begin rebuilding the temple. We live in light of Christ's imminent return.
- **Cast off the works of Darkness**
- **Put On the Armor of Light** - Found in God’s Word
- **Walk Properly**
 - Away from Harmful Pleasures
 - Away from immoral behavior that lacks no shame
 - Away from constant strife and jealousy
- **Put On Christ** - His love, kindness, Mercy, Grace, Compassion, TRUTH.
- **Put off the flesh and desires of the flesh** - Stop playing with cheap fake things. The illusion of truth and value. It is empty, broken, and leaves us wanting.

See the world and those in it as people for whom Christ died. He loves them and so should we.