

First Southern Baptist Church - May 24, 2023

Be Subject to Higher Powers - Romans 13:1-7

Introduction

1. Issues - being cooperative with our government - supportive
 - capital punishment
 - God's "ordaining" of evil powers - Osama Bin Ladin? - Hitler?
2. Authority and submission
 - the theme of authority in Scripture
 - the theme of submission in Scripture
 - parents, government, employers, church leaders
3. What about bad government?
4. No one likes to submit
5. The wider issue - living for Christ in a secular world... Bonhoeffer

*"But it is not always the world which ejects the Christian from his secular calling. Even in the first century we find that certain professions were regarded as incompatible with membership of the Christian church. The **actor** who had to play the part of pagan gods and heroes, the **teacher** who was forced to teach pagan mythologies in pagan schools, the **gladiator** who had to take human life for sport, the **soldier** who wielded the sword, the **policeman** and the **judge**, all had to renounce their heathen profession if they wanted to be baptized. Later the church - or was it perhaps the world? - found it possible to lift the ban on these professions."* - The Cost of Discipleship (240)

Verse 1 - Be Subject

1. "Subject"
 - define "subject"
 - is it like the wife is submissive to husband?
 - is it like the child is to "obey" his parents?
 - is it like being subject to your boss?
 - *-the powers don't submit us... we submit ourselves
2. Field test...
 - was Paul always submitted to the powers that be?
 - was Jesus always submitted to the powers that be?
 - check out Luke 2:51-52
 - compare with John 2:1-4 (did Jesus "talk back" to His mom?)
 - was Jesus "subject" to Pilate at His trial?
 - Jesus paid taxes... "render unto Caesar..."
3. The "higher powers" - government is in view here
4. No power but that which is of God
 - "ordained" - sounds like it is an active choice of God
 - "ordained" means appointed
 - God raised up Cyrus to throw off Nebuchadnezzar
 - in the book of Acts it is often the civil government (outright pagans) who intervene to "save" the Christians/ Apostles
5. Theologically all authority comes from God

- He is the source of all power
- some leadership abuses power
- what about this... God intended man to live under authority - ???
- 6. *What if Government demands believers disobey one of God's commands?
 - we must obey God not man - Acts 5:29
 - see Daniel 3 where they were thrown into a fiery furnace
 - known in our day as civil disobedience
- 7. Obey the laws of the land?
 - God's laws, man's laws
- 8. So... have faith in the Power behind the power
 - do you believe that God runs Washington DC?
 - Paul wrote the Romans while Nero was Emperor of Rome

Verse 2 - Resisting the "Power"

1. Resisting the "ordinance" of God
 - *-define "resisting"
2. Receive "damnation"
 - that sounds serious... does it affect my "freedom of speech?"
 - does that affect my government bashing?

Verse 3 - Rulers are not a Terror

1. To good works... but to evil works
2. Afraid of the "ruler?"
3. Do what is good and the ruler will praise you
4. A general rule of thumb

Verse 4 - He is the Minister of God

1. "Minister" means servant (*diakonos* in verse 4 and *lietourgos* ... in verse 6)
 - so does this mean that our government leaders are "deacons?"
2. The Power behind the power - is God
3. He bears the sword
 - not in vain
 - capital punishment? - in the New Testament?
 - bearing the sword, means that they have the right to enforce justice even to the point of capital punishment
4. He is a "revenger" of God
 - compare with the last verses in chapter 12 about vengeance
5. He is an extension of the rule of God?
6. They are ministers, and don't know they are ministers

Verse 5 - Be Subject for Conscience Sake

1. You "need" be subject
 - fitting or proper
2. A motive to be "subject"
 - "in the Lord"
3. Powers that be are not the only powers that be

4. It's a heart thing

Verses 6-7 - Pay Taxes

1. "For this cause"
2. Pay tribute "also"
3. The reason - "they are God's ministers"
 - consistent with the "honor" that they are due
 - consistent with the theme of authority and submission
4. Render their dues
 - tribute to whom tribute is due (we pay taxes to the government) -financial
 - custom to whom custom is due (we pay various taxes) - financial
 - we know what custom's taxes are - entering the country (toll roads)
 - fear to whom fear is due (we respect the government?) - spiritual
 - honor to whom honor is due (so we honor the government?) -spiritual

The Spiritual behind the Physical*
5. Pay taxes, no matter how galling

Ways believers can express willing submission to government:

1. Vote (we have no excuse)
2. Pay taxes (6)
3. Pay tolls (7)
4. Give "respect" (7)
5. **Pray (1 Tim. 2:1-3)**