

## In View of God's Mercy: Submit To Leaders

03.20.2022

---

Good morning, Church!

Open your bibles up to Romans chapter 13. We are going to find ourselves in the first 7 verses of this chapter this morning.

Whether you're joining us in person or if you are with us online today, I am so glad you're with us. This is an important morning for us to be together because, well, we have some things we need to talk about.

Have you ever had your spouse say to you "Hey we need to talk?"

Students if you're at school or out with friends and you get the "Come straight home when you're done, we need to have a conversation" text from your parents.

It makes us uneasy because it sounds like we are in trouble for something.

Well – This morning, church, we need to talk. I'm not mad, just disappointed.

Just kidding!

We are not in trouble. but this morning we are diving into a subject where, like most areas of life, we CAN do better.

Let us start with that this morning – before we dive into a controversial subject matter, I am asking all of us to be willing to look at ourselves and say, "I can do better."

I really think we should be starting every single day and Sunday with that mentality, but especially as we continue in our series this morning "In view of God's Mercy"

"In view of God's mercy" - We can do better.

So, when I say, "in view of God's Mercy" You all Say "We can do better"

Ready?

“In view of God’s Mercy”

*We can do better*

“In View of God’s Mercy”

*We can do better*

“In View of God’s Mercy”

*We can do better*

Oh wow – don't you all feel so unified and ready to go? ... remember that feeling here in about 15 minutes, ok?

My name is Rob, I am the student minister here at the church, and to be able to join you all this morning as we continue through the book of Romans is an opportunity and gift that is not lost on me, so thank you. I also want to thank Andy. Andy puts a lot of work into this series and Andy puts a lot of work into his overall planning. I imagine Andy reading each chapter of Romans and that is a tall task figuring out when he is teaching and when others can teach. He is very generous in that way. If you look at Romans 13, where we find ourselves this morning, I picture Andy making his decision like this:

“Romans 13, here we go, let see: *“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities...”* Alright Rob’s got that one.”

I have only been old enough to vote in 2 presidential elections (the two best ones am I right?)

Look, you must understand how intimidating this is for me, here I am trying to teach on submitting to governing authorities to the wisest, most politically savvy group of people in the world. You have this whole government and politics thing figured out, right? Oh, don’t be bashful now! I have seen your genius all over that academic journal.... what is called... Facebook!

That my friends, is the beauty of this passage in Romans 13 – as vital as it is for us to read and understand this passage, it is not a passage that is political in nature. At all. Instead, we find this passage right on the heels of Romans 12, what Keith

talked about last Sunday, and I do not believe that it is ordered that way by accident.

I do not believe for a moment it is an accident that right before Paul tells us to submit to governing authorities, he told us in chapter 12 things like:

- Love must be sincere
- Hate evil and cling to good
- Put others above yourselves
- Be joyful in hope
- Patient in affliction
- Faithful prayer
- Ect.

It is like someone knew we would need to enter this conversation and content with a clear grip on what things come above all. Because I look to Facebook, or the news, or I hear political conversations, and let me tell you what I rarely see:

- Love that is sincere
- Hatred of evil and clinging to good
- Putting others above us
- Joy
- Patience
- Faith
- Prayer

If these things are not made important to us before this conversation, then this hot topic conversation will naturally lead to the opposite. As we have seen. So, as we dive into Paul's words here in Romans 13, remember that when we look at things, anything, in view of God's mercy, those things appear differently to us. That is the beauty of romans and that is the beauty of Christ, Jesus changes everything, and that includes the way we look at our government and leaders of our country.

So let me make something clear out of the gate: This is not a political sermon. I am sure there are plenty of things that a group of you would love for me to say

and teach regarding the government, and there are plenty of things that a group of you are currently praying I do not talk about. Let me rest your fears:

Romans 13:1-7 is not a political passage; it is a passage that tells you and I as believers and members of society what our responsibilities are and who our loyalty belongs to. In view of God's mercy, here is how you and I are supposed to be in relation to governing authorities.

We, as a church, and me, as an individual are not going to build up walls where the bible does not build up walls, and we are not going to condone behaviors and actions that the Bible does not condone. Instead, we are going to take what the text says and do our best to walk in obedience.

I will tell you all something too, and I tell this to students often: Whenever you're here or anywhere someone is preaching or teaching the word – Have your bibles open. I love and trust Andy and believe he teaches from scripture, I teach what the Bible says, but remember this: Just because someone says something from a platform does not mean it is truth, it is truth if it is found and supported in Scripture. We are a bible teaching church, but just like anywhere else You should have your bibles open because it's not truth because it came from me, its truth because it comes from scripture, and you're much better off getting into it yourself than just through other people.

There are two different ways we are going to look at this text today:

There is the Exegetical View and the Hermeneutical View

Stay with me.

Those are big and odd words that really mean this:

**Exegetical: What this text means *in context***

**Hermeneutical: What this text means *for us***

Sometimes when I get to parts of scripture that confuse me or leave me with more questions than answers, I'll try and break it into these two categories so I can better understand what the goal of this text is. Also, when I can understand why the text was written in the first place, it can help me see what it means for me in my life now.

As we go through the first 7 verses Romans 13 we will look from those two views: What did it mean originally and what does it mean for us.

Let's jump in:

Starting in Romans 13:1 - Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

If you're like me, just from that first verse you have made assumptions and positioned yourself deep in your own beliefs. Stop, deep breath, first:

Let's start with why Paul was writing:

In Rome there was an Emperor named Claudius who reigned from 41-54AD. Claudius was an extremely harsh ruler – especially towards Jewish people and Christians. In fact, there was one point in his rule that he banished followers of Christ from Rome all together. He felt that they were causing religious disturbances and raised frustrations by gathering. It even got to a point to where he told the men at his borders to turn people who were Jewish away from Rome.

We actually see proof of this in Acts: 18:1-2 "After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome"

It was only a few years later when a new leader named Nero became the emperor of Rome and allowed Jews to return to the city.

It was at the very beginning of this new ruler, Nero's reign when Paul most likely authored the book of Romans.

This means that Paul is writing this to Jewish people who have just gotten back to Rome after being kicked out for being Jewish.

So, when Paul is talking to this Jewish audience, its more than likely that their frustration level with the governing authorities in Rome is through the roof! I know we probably can't relate to feeling angry or annoyed at the government, but that how they would have felt. Yes, Claudius is no longer ruling, but the hearts and minds of those he left behind are still present in Rome. To be Jewish is still not a walk in the park in Rome.

So now look again at Paul's words again in Romans 13:1 - Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Paul was writing to people who had been expelled from their home because of their beliefs.

Claudius was an evil man in leadership, and Nero, even though in the beginning he allowed the Jewish people back in, he ended up being just as, if not more detrimental to the Jewish people than Claudius.

And yet Paul says here that the authorities were established by God?

Is God responsible for every imperfect authority and person who is in leadership? Either in Rome or the United States?

Let's be clear about what authorities means: It means the government itself was established by God, and therefore has a purpose in the course of human history and in the lives of those who live under it.

The systems, the governing body, Rome as a democracy, was a system that was established and allowed by God. That doesn't mean God handpicked every ruler and individual who acted as a leader within the government, it means the entity that is government was established by him. This is what Paul was saying in verse 1 when he said "there is no authority except that which God has established"

Theologian Ralph Earle put it this way: "The primary emphasis is on the authority of governments to rule. It should not be inferred from this passage that all *rulers* are chosen by God, but rather that all *rule* is divinely ordained.... God has ordained that there should be ruling authorities to keep law and order."

No matter WHO is in charge or in a leadership role, I think we can agree that SOMEONE(S) has to do it.

If Paul will tell Romans to submit and obey the governing authorities, even when it is under the charge of evil men like Claudius and Nero, what do you think Paul's words mean for you and I? Not that we have ever had anyone evil or corrupt in the history of the American Government, right?

To start it means that this American democracy we live in was established by God. God didn't hand pick every president, cabinet member, or any other position, but He did establish the government itself. You may not like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, you may not have liked Donald Trump and Mike Pence, but your submission is not to individuals, it is the governing authorities. But even before that your loyalty is to Christ. God is responsible for the governing authorities, we

are responsible, in our democracy, for the individuals that lead in that government for a set amount of time.

Now hear this:

Even though we are to submit to the governing authorities, we at no point can allow the decisions of individuals to overrule the word of God. If you are worried reading this because why would God allow us to follow anyone who is evil or against *Him*? I think it is safe to say that if God has the power to appoint a government, He therefore has the final word. I don't know about you, but I am going to trust in the Ruler of Rulers and King of Kings over ALL political leaders, whether I agree with those leaders or not.

Keep going into verses 2-4

Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment 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 you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Stop here, and remember, Paul is talking to Jewish individuals who are frustrated at their country's leadership. He is not talking in defense of evil people or an evil government, he is instead calming a boiling pot situation. You have furious Jews who are at high risk of active rebellion against the Roman government. Paul knows that even though the government is not perfect, at this point, Nero let the Jewish people back into Rome. So, Paul is essentially telling them to stop while they are ahead. Take what you can get because God is using this time for something even if it's not something you and I understand.

Also, in the original language Paul's words for "whoever rebels" is a participle.

1. Rebels
2. antitassó - to range in battle against, to set oneself against
3. Present middle articular participle
4. A continual adjective
5. Not a one-time thing.

This is what allows the Romans, and I believe us, to stand up for what is right in God's law over what the government says. There will be times when rulers and the government go against the will and word of God. Paul doesn't say to the Romans or us that we are to lay down and submit to evil. Instead, Paul is saying don't make a habit of disobeying the system. If it is within God's word and loyalty, walk in obedience. Standing up for what is right is right, standing against the entire government in every way continually, is not.

You may not love where our government has been or where it is now, I'm sure there are enough differing opinions among us to fill up a few internets. But I think when we hear that statement "For the one in authority is God's servant for your good.", at least for me, my initial thought is... *well that can't always be true right?* No, it's not true, *if you're looking at individuals*, but if you stop looking at the ruler and start looking at the system, I think you'll find that there is a lot of good that we have here in America that plenty of nations, Rome included, wished they'd had.

Under the American Government we have certain "unalienable rights" which means we have rights that are unable to be taken away or transferred. The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or property. Within that umbrella you find freedom of speech, freedom to assemble, freedom of religion, and many more freedoms.

If you allow that perspective in for a moment – I, think you'll find that those rights while echoed by our government are rights given to us by God. Meaning under this governing authority He has appointed to be over us, we have more freedom and ease to follow Him than anywhere else in the world. And instead of enjoying and using that freedom for God's kingdom, many of us do nothing but complain about all the things our country *is not*.

Something is wrong with that, and we need to do better.

No, Paul was not writing to us about the US Government, but I'll put all my chips on the table because it's a safe bet that he would probably tell us to stop complaining and stop fighting ALL THE TIME. He told persecuted Jews to relax and respect the government. What do you really think we would be told about all our continual frustrations and complaints?



If we get too caught up with the rulers, we won't be able to appreciate the system. So let's keep on typing up Facebook posts and sharing videos of how terrible Joe Biden is or how unbelievable Donald Trump is, keep voicing your opinions on the rulers and allow yourself to miss out on the ability to appreciate this nation and the freedoms God has given you through it. But let's stop and ask ourselves: Are we being obedient to God through this?

Let's keep going in **verse 5** – This is my favorite part of this passage for us. Paul says **"Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience."**

How about that – We don't submit out of fear, we submit because we have a conscience. We have a normal gauge within us that determines what is right and what is wrong. Paul told these angry Jews that they need to stop getting mad and obey not because it's not safe to do wrong, but because it's just not right. To rebel against the government continually is just not right. There are times when we stand against evil, but our conscious and moral compass, another gift from God, will naturally lead us to submission to leaders.

Paul gives examples of this in verses 6-7:

Here is where Paul gets specific: Church, here is what the Romans, and we, are supposed to do:

**This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."**

Paul very much is plagiarizing here; he is referring to something Jesus said in Mark 12

Some men had gone to Jesus to ask Him a question about paying taxes. They were trying to trap Jesus into saying something that could get him in trouble with the government. This is because they expected Jesus to stand against the government and not submit to them,

**look at verse 15-17**

**Should we pay, or shouldn't we?"**

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.

The question is raised here – how do we know what to give to God?

Well, Caesar's image was on the coin, so that is why he deserves it back through taxes and such.

Jesus doesn't say it here, but there is an implication that the thing to give to God is what his image is on.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind **in our image, in our likeness**, so that they may rule over the fish **in** the sea and the birds **in** the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26

We are called to give ourselves over to God.

Do you see Romans 13 isn't about politics, it's about loyalty? It's about belonging.

I am an American citizen. But I first am a citizen of Heaven.

If, in view of God's mercy, we look different and look more like him, then that has to change the way to we love and treat others. All others, even those we politically disagree with.

Joe Biden bears the image of Christ just as you and I do, and he is loved and valuable to God. If that is true, what do they deserve from us?

Donald Trump bears the image of Christ just as you and I do, and he is loved and valuable to God. If that is true, what do they deserve from us?

I think Jesus and Paul have said and understand something more deeply and truly than we do: Governments, rulers, leaders, they come and go. Just like you and I come and go, your neighbors come and go, your families come and go, your bosses, your children come and go, this life is temporary, this government is temporary, but the Kingdom of God is eternal and it's a MUCH bigger deal than our American government which has risen and will eventually fall.

In view of God's Mercy, submit to leaders.

What does that submission look like? It looks like giving them what they deserve, and for far too long WE have decided ourselves what people deserve. However, in view of God's mercy, the mercy that NONE of us deserve, we can do better. We can be better.

As followers of Christ who bear the image of God and submit to HIS loyalty above all, it's time for us to give respect and honor to our leaders.

We need to be praying for Joe Biden.

We need to be praying for Kamala Harris

We need to be praying for Donald Trump

If me telling us that we need to pray for them frustrates you. That is called conviction and there is nothing wrong with a little conviction.

In view of our own mercy there are plenty of people who do not deserve our love, support, prayer, encouragement, etc.

But in view of God's mercy, it's not up to us.

In view of God's mercy, we can do better.