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THE CHRISTIAN AND THE GOVERNMENT

Romans 13:1-7

Introduction: What does our world think about the word “submission”?

I. Submit to the Governing Authorities (v.1, 3-4, 7)

A. Why Does Paul Raise This Issue?

- o It's a practical issue in the lives of those in Rome, and in every age
 - Roman government was suspicious of Christians and considered them insubordinate rebels
 - o Christians tend toward two extremes:
 - #1: Reject the legitimacy of government and rebel against it
 - #2: Consider government the “savior” and solution to all our problems
- **Both of these reactions make the same mistake: they assume our Kingdom is of this world (and thus we must either cast off government, or rely on it 100%)
- o One of the best indicators of a true believer is someone who submits
 - Theme of submission dominates the pages of Scripture: submission to God, children submitting to parents, wives submitting to husbands, submitting to church leaders, etc.
- ** Key point: Everybody submits to somebody. Even Christ submitted to the Father!
- **Key point: If a Christian cannot submit to human authorities, why should we think they would submit to a divine one?

B. What Does Submission to Government Mean?

- o Respect the Government: “Respect to whom respect is owed, honor to who honor is owed” (v.7)
- o Obey the Government: “Do what is good (v.3)...be in subjection (v.5)...Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed (v.7)”
- o Clarifications:
 - Submission doesn't mean you always agree with the government
 - Submission doesn't mean you cannot work to change the government



- Submission doesn't mean you must sin if that government asks you to
- Submission doesn't mean there can never be a justifiable war against a government

II. Reasons to Submit to the Governing Authorities (v.1-6)

A. All Authorities Come from God

- o Since God is sovereign over all things, then "those [authorities] that exist have been instituted by God" (v.1b)
 - Paul also calls governing authorities "God's servant" (v.4) and "ministers of God" (v.6)
- o "Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed" (v.2)
 - To disobey government is to disobey God (with clarifications discussed above)

**Key question: What authority in your life right now are you resisting?

B. Government Has a Good Purpose

- o Government is a necessary institution; it exists as an "avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (v.4)
- o Implication: the main God-given role of government is to punish evil and keep society civil and orderly for the protection of all.

C. Rejection of Government has Negative Consequences

- o Punishment from Government: "if you do wrong, be afraid, for he [governing ruler] does not bear the sword in vain" (v.4)
- o Punishment from God: "those who resist what God has appointed will incur judgment [from God]" (v.2); "be in subjection...to avoid God's wrath" (v.5)

**Key point: God takes seriously the authorities appointed over us



Discussion Groups

1. Of the two extreme approaches to government, to which do you tend? How does today's study help correct your understanding of government?

2. What are some authorities in your life (government or otherwise) that you are struggling to submit to? How does this study provide fresh motivation to do so?

3. How does Paul's teaching on government help you think about what its main purpose is? How might that help you evaluate governmental systems in the present day?

